CHAPTER - III

SOVIET POLICY TOWARDS NICARAGUA:

(i) 1979-1985

(ii) 1985-1990
The aim of this chapter is to trace the background of the dictatorial regimes and the popular "Sandism". It also highlights the success of the Nicaraguan revolution and the Soviet response to it. It also examines the Soviet instruments to help this new government and its related constraints. Finally, the Soviet pragmatic approach under its 'new thinking' and the dilution of its commitment to Nicaragua is to be analysed.

Of the various opportunities, the newest and most visible for the Soviet expansion in the Central American region was provided by Nicaragua. Following victory of the Nicaraguan revolutionary forces in 1979, it soon became apparent that a number of new leaders were committed to Marxist-Leninist who could be expected to be receptive to Soviet overtures. The Sandinistas by dint of their own talent and native potential strived to transform the old order in the country. The Soviet Union's sympathetic response to the Sandinista revolution was in conformity with its proclivity to assign a significant role to the countries of the Third World to forge an alliance with them. In the proceeding chapters we now discuss the general trends of the Soviet policy towards Nicaragua. It may be useful here to analyse the causes and effects of the Sandinista Revolution and the circumstances under which the advent of a new era in Soviet-Nicaraguan relations began.
Background : Nicaragua - A Historical Outline

On 19th July 1979 one of the most sanguinary dictatorships in the Latin American region was finally demolished by a popular revolutionary insurrection. The Sandinista victory became an eloquent testimony to the culmination of a long history of popular struggles in Nicaragua. The Nicaraguans were fortified in their revolutionary purpose both by their awareness of history and by the growing conviction that there was no non-violent way out of the structural imposed which held the vast majority of their fellow countrymen in misery.

The cross-current of ideas that inspired the revolution in Nicaragua did not emerge full-blown in the politically changed atmosphere that characterised Latin-America after the Cuban Revolution. Rather, these beliefs had their roots in the national past, in the history of a nation that strove to free itself from the shackles of foreign domination and internal despotism. Sandinism (Sandinismo) stood as repository of national consciousness and became the ideological vehicle through which the national past was recaptured by the Nicaraguan peoples. Suffice to say, the "ideology of the Nicaraguan Revolution is at once the recuperation of a long history of national struggle and the specific Nicaraguan manifestation of the new wave of
revolution that is sweeping the Third World.

Nicaragua, a small central American republic of about three million people, emerged a source of inspiration and hope for all freedom-loving people and the biggest challenge to American policies in Central-America.

The Nicaraguans were relatively homogenous and culturally integrated people. All these proverbial natural resources (timber, minerals and hydroelectric, geo-thermal energy) notwithstanding, most Nicaraguans were still suffering in the gruesome pangs of abject poverty when the popular Sandinista forces finally achieved power. Most Nicaraguans were deprived of living a dignified life—they had inadequate housing, dressed and ate poorly, and had little or no access to education, health-care, and other public services. "The average life expectancy at birth in 1979 was 53 years, ten years shorter than that for America as a whole and a full eighteen years short of the equivalent statistic for Cuba."

The Republic of Nicaragua gained its independence in three stages in early nineteenth century. "It was first United for a short period with Mexico in 1821, then with the United Provinces of Central America and got her independence


as a sovereign republic in 1838. Since 1855 to 1934, the country had witnessed a relatively callous political atmosphere under a series of regularly "elected" conservative and liberal presidents. However, the ignominious hegemony of the pro-U.S. conservative elites, supported by traditional oligarchy and the power of the catholic church ultimately came to a dead end in a powerful uprising which pitchforked to power a liberal.

By 1925, an anti-U.S. interventionist sentiment grew among the Nicaraguan people and prompted many uprising against the U.S. installed government. This struggle had gathered strength with the passage of time taking on clear nationalist, anti-imperialist overtones. No doubt the foreign troops were finally left in 1933. The corresponding vacuum was filled up by a well-organized and pro-American "national guard" headed by Commander Anastatia Somoza Garcia. He had used the guard as the central factor in fashioning and maintaining a dynastic dictatorship who had oppressed and abused the Nicaraguan people well over four decades.

3. The Indian Express (New Delhi), December 27, 1983, p. 8.
Rise of Sandinistas

When the country's political landscape was being torn by the conservatives and the liberal forces to get hold of national power, at the same juncture of time, a person called Augusto C. Sandino returned from Moscow in 1925 and "took up a banner of struggle against the U.S. intervention in a more radical form". The struggle got momentum among the people of Nicaragua and forced them to participate in resistance (last Liberal uprising) against the U.S. and pro-U.S. forces in the country.

The liberals, supported (on an agreement) by the U.S. and the conservative were tried to pursued Sandino to lay down arms. Nothing could, however, bow him down. He was backed and supported by toiling people of the country, who were reeling under poverty and deprivation since centuries. His army was comprising of peasants, miners, artisans and working class people. Although his own ideas regarding social and political change were, however, framed by western concept of liberalism. He said;

"We must expel completely from our homeland all North American citizens and their capital, who represent an imminent danger for the nation that innocently received them into its midst. We must develop our own industry trade.... Our projects should be based on the rights of the people to express their opinion.... On the liberty and independent of our republic"6.

6. The word 'Sandino'- is quoted in Jose Benito Escobar, Ideario Sandinesto (FSLN, Managua), p.7.
Sandino's popular national struggle was influenced by the ideas of nationalistic radicalism of the Mexican revolution while working for a U.S. owned company. Gradually he began to identify himself with a broad nationality embracing all Americans of Iberian and Indian descent. He was exposed to the radical nations of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), to militant anarchism, and to Marxist internationalism. Therefore, in his 1927 political manifesto, he assigned the struggle to the oppressed; its perspective was nationalist, its economic idea rooted in national development. He was well aware of the fact that Nicaragua's struggle was part of a larger world movement. Without being a Marxist, Sandino enjoyed an internationalist vision of a revolutionary nationalism that was linked to other revolutionary movements of the world. Although, riding on the crest of popular mass support Sandino confronted a technologically superior invader and finally forced out the mariners in 1933. Obviously, his primary objective had been achieved but he was killed and the forces were disbanded in 1934 before he could achieve the far reaching political and economic change in the country.

8. Ibid, p.69.
Since then, despite Somoza's dictatorial attempts to distort the popular appeal of Sandinism, he could not succeed in resetting the clock of history back. Popular struggles of minor magnitude did continue till 1940s and this era of struggle smoked of guerrilla actions by both old Sandinistas and young patriots such as the "Generation of 44"[^9].

In the 1950s, the historical conditions of the World had changed substantially. The concept and model of bourgeois democracy came under heavy scrutiny in the many Third World Countries. Nationalist movements in these countries tended to turn to socialist ideas to explain their past and justify their present realities and nourish them revolutionary movements. But the type of Marxism that was espoused by the Latin American communist parties in general was dogmatic, sectarian and inefficacious. Quite obviously, the development of Nicaragua was not altogether a new style of growth. Nicaragua's Moscow-affiliated communist party was founded in 1944 and maintained the closest of ties with the Soviet Union. The PSN's was ill-equipped and far from the national reality of Nicaragua. In addition, "the PSN had

[^9]: The "Generation of 44" refers to a young group of militant who emerged in 1944 as a consequences of labour and student demonstrations against the dictatorship of Somoza dynasty.
long been hostile to the armed struggle and maintained throughout civil-war that the Sandinista strategy was too daring and tried to back up US efforts to find an alternative to Somoza\textsuperscript{10}. Although "the PSN fell in line with the Fronts military strategy after the FSLN had Unified early in 1979, even in the last few months of war its role was confined to propaganda support\textsuperscript{11}.

In contrast, however, the Cuban revolution became a conspicuous paradigm to inspire some guerrilla activity in the late 1950’s. As the Cuban revolutionaries responded to U.S. pressures and threats by deepening the social transformations on the island and openly advocating Marxist-Leninist ideas, their example became increasingly attractive to the young militants in Nicaragua. "In 1961, a group of young radicals who had fled the country formed an organisation called the Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional (FSLN) to launch an armed struggle against Somoza rule"\textsuperscript{12}. There were three founder members of the front- Carlos Fonseca Amador, Thomas Borge and Silvio Mayorga. They launched a movement that was the continuation of the popular


\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Indian Express}, n.3, p.8.
struggle of Augusto Sandino’s guerrilla army. Drawing heavily on the Cuban revolutionary experience and the writings of Che Guevara and Fidel Castro, they began to re-interpret Sandino’s writings, led by Carlos Fonseca. The Sandinistas resorted to guerrilla fighting. However, after initial failures, in fighting with the superior military power of the National Guard, convinced that more political and organizational work was necessary to ensure mass participation in the struggle against the Somoza’s dictatorship.

The process of disintegration and collapse of the Somoza regime began in the early 1970s under Anastasio Somoza Debayle. The insatiable greed and repressive excesses of the dictator alienated Nicaraguans of all classes. On the top of it two major events hastened the process of popular ignominy when the capital city ‘Managua’ was devastated in 1972 by a cataclysmic earthquake. Somoza and his accomplices were appropriating the international relief funds into their own pockets. After a lapse of two years, under mounting struggle by Sandinistas, the Somoza’s regime declared a state of siege, clamped complete censorship of the press and launched a campaign of terror in rural areas where “hundreds of peasants were raped, tortured, and murdered indiscriminately, many others were taken away never to be
found again. Reports of Somoza's oppression and rampant corruption were brought to limelight by La Prensa, a leading opposition daily. Under heavy pressure from Washington, Somoza lifted the state of siege and reinstated limited freedom of the press in September 1977. The FSLN demonstrated its potential by attacking National Guard outposts in several provincial capitals. Simultaneously, "the twelve", a group of prominent business, religious, and professional leaders, denounced the regime and called for a solution which would include the FSLN.

Unwittingly adding fresh fuel to a smouldering fire, the cold-blooded murder of Pedro Chamorro, the La Prensa's editor and the subsequent government attempt to hush up the matter, triggered a series of nationwide general strike.

At the same time, the political atmosphere became more surcharged when the U.S. President Carter's letter of Congratulations to Somoza for his promise to improve the human rights situation, was disclosed. Unnerved by these eventualities the FSLN in August 1978 launched out the "Operation-Pig Pen", in which a small group of commandos seized the national legislative palace and held over 1,500 hostages until the dictator conceded a series of stinging

demands. Next strike against the Somoza dictatorship came from another prolonged businessmen's strike and the famous "September Uprisings" in which young people in most of the cities of Nicaragua, assisted by FSLN regulars, rose up against the dictator. Inadequately armed, the insurgents were eventually forced to withdraw from one city after another, leaving Somoza's troops to carry out a "bloody and indiscriminate 'mop-up' operation against the civilian population, bringing the death-toll to over 5,000.\textsuperscript{14}

The final stage of liberation was about to start. From October to June (1978-79), elaborate preparations were made from both sides for a 'find offensive'. Somoza clandestinely tried to transfer capital abroad cunningly negotiating with the traditional opposition and the Americans. While on the Social Democratic parties of Western Europe and the logistical support of such widely desperate governments as those of Costa Rica, Panama, Venezuela and Cuba, the FSLN expanded its ranks and rearmed itself with weapons.

In the month of June 1979 the 'Final offensive' was declared. One by one, Somoza's garrisons were overcome neighbourhoods. Meanwhile, the United States strived hard with utmost urgency to arrange a political compromise. But

most Nicaraguans repudiated these schemes for what they contemptuously called "Somocismo without Somoza". The United States also made a last minute attempt to urge the organization of American states to send a 'peace-keeping force' to Managua but the OAS repudiated this proposal unanimously. On 27th July, Somoza fled the country and, two days later, the FSLN entered Managua and accepted the surrender of what was left of the guard. After almost two decades of struggle in which 50,000 people died, approximately 2 per cent of the population, 75 times the US death-toll in the entire Vietnam conflict.

The Nicaraguans stood at the grave of one epoch and cradle of another. "The social configuration of political power in Nicaragua changed abruptly"\(^{15}\). Unlike the Somoza's who owed their strength to a foreign-trained military establishment and a small internationalised economic elite, the Sandinista, drew their strength from the common mass. "To prevent the revolution from sliding into the hands of one strongman, the Sandinistas evolved a form of collective leadership"\(^{16}\). "A National Directorate of nine commandantes with equal rank and power was formed to guide the

\(^{15}\) Walker, n.5, p. 20.

\(^{16}\) Indian Express, n.3, p.8.
country." Commandate Daniel Ortega, a 37-year old revolutionary, was chosen as coordinator of the National Directorate and head of state. The formal structure of the government - the governing Junta of National Reconstruction, the Council of State and the various ministries - reflected a genuine and pragmatic desire on the part of the revolutionary leadership to maintain a pluralistic, multi-class approach to revolution. Accordingly, any avid observer would rote that government oriented its policies to uplift the human condition of the mass of the people. In a comparative analysis,

"Cuba, Maxico and Nicaragua, these three countries can be said to have successfully undertaken the restructuring of society and polity. Ushering in basic socio-economic changes, all the three major revolutions also introduced in their make have political values, practices and structures. More importantly, the revolutions established new political equilibrium in favour of the revolutionary masses. The emerging revolutionary elites have also based their rule in popular support and draw their sustenance and legitimacy from the masses." 18

Immediately after the FSLN victory, conservative ideologues dubbed Nicaragua as a dangerous extension of the Soviet influence, and Nicaraguan revolution as another


'Cuba'. While pointing to the assistance, although minor, the Cubans had given to the Nicaraguans during the war and the presence of Marxists in the FSLN. In fact, the revolution was an unusual and original blend of pragmatic Marxism and progressive catholic thought. The revolutionary government made a concerted effort to protect individual liberties; to preserve a responsible private sector; to avoid one-man rule. "So what Nicaragua really uniquely reflects today is the new pluralism in the world"19.

"From the communist perspective, the Nicaraguan Revolution and the Civil War in El Salvador has become the most important event in Latin America since Allende's election as President in Chile"20. Some generalizations could be made between both movements. The guerrilla operations against both incumbent governments were spearheaded by local leaders. The local communists did not remain on the bed-rocks of the revolution. And the Soviet Union maintained close ties with the tiny Communist parties in each country and had relatively little initial contact with the revolutionary mainstream.

Soviet Union watched with interest, the events in Central America in 1978 and early 1979, but appeared not to

have anticipated fully the Sandinista victory"\textsuperscript{21}. The Soviet research agenda did not give Central America a high priority, and analysts in Moscow indicated their pessimism about the future before Somoza regime fell. But they were to receive a pleasant surprise afterwards. Alerted to the revolutionary opportunities in Central America, the Soviet publications gave attention to developments in El Salvador only. "The Sandinista revolution marked a dramatic long-term departure in Soviet relations with Central America\textsuperscript{22}. This event generated a formal overhauling of Moscow's political line for the region, unlike the Cuban revolution two decades earlier. For the first time since the adoption of the strategy of "peaceful transition to socialism" at the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in 1956, Moscow began to advocate revolutionary armed struggle in certain areas of Latin America. Beginning in the late 1970s the more pro-revolutionary elements among Soviet scholars came out strongly in favour of guerrilla action. In the first three issues of the journal \textit{Latinskaia Amerika}, after the Sandinista success, the Soviet Latin Americanists discussed at length over the Nicaraguan Revolution. Most scholars emphasized the point that the Sandinistas were the

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.

revolutionary vanguard. Elaborate analysis about the formation of the Sandinista movement made it perfectly clear that the Nicaraguan socialist party - the Nicaraguan communists - were only one small group of many which joined forces to overthrow the Somoza.\(^{23}\) Maidanik firmly asserted that "the need to support new left forces was an important lesson of revolution."\(^{24}\) As Mikoyan pointed out, "The title (revolutionary) vanguard is not bestowed forever, but must be continually justified in the course of the class-struggle - it may be forfeited, and it may be acquired."\(^{25}\)

**Nicaragua Revolution and the Soviet Union:**

The strategy of the Soviet-led communist movement in Latin America underwent a transformation, under the impact of the Nicaraguan revolution. The impact had been mainly in emphasis rather in substance. The Sandinista triumph over Somoza impelled the communist parties in Latin America to accept the reality that such broad, loose national fronts were leading and winning revolutions without them. Sergei Mikoyan accepted it in unequivocal terms and reserved the thesis that "military political fronts of the type of the 26th of July movement in Cuba and the Sandinista National

\(^{23}\) Blasier, n. 20, p. 92.

\(^{24}\) Ibid.

\(^{25}\) Ibid.
Liberation Front in Nicaragua showed that they are capable in certain cases of reducing political parties of the proletariat as a revolutionary vanguard\(^\text{26}\). The success of the Sandinista strategy bolstered communist spirits in the region and gave a new hope of victories through armed struggle as well as electoral politics in other countries. The very success had also emboldened the communists in El Salvador to break their commitment from legal tactics.

Within hours of the Sandinista's triumph the CPSU, General Secretary Brezhnev's message of congratulating the Nicaraguan people on their victory was broadcast in the city. The journal Kommunist's quoted Brezhnev as reaffirming the "sacred rights of each nation and of each country to select its own developmental path"\(^\text{27}\). Kommunist's treatment of the revolution showed that the Nicaraguan Communists were only one of many forces involved in Somoza's overthrow\(^\text{28}\). Tuchnin, in an article in Izvestia, exposed "the burdensome legacy which was left upon the Nicaraguan people by the death threats of the dictatorship, accompanied by the destruction of the capital and other cities, the killing of civilians had ruined economy"\(^\text{29}\). An article in Pravda by

\(^{26}\) Ibid.

\(^{27}\) Ibid., p.93.

\(^{28}\) Ibid.

\(^{29}\) Izvesta, 20 July 1980, p.4; Reprint in CDSP, vol. 32, no. 29, 1980, p.11.
L. Kostanyan published on 25 July lauded "the government of Nicaragua, upholding human principles and fulfilling its promise to observe human rights, is scrupulously adhering to the terms on which the remnants of the dictatorial regime's armed forces laid down their arms\textsuperscript{30}. Hailing the Sandinista triumph, the Politburo members, Andrei Kirilenko, stated that the Soviet Union rejoiced because the people of Nicaragua had smashed the shackles of imperialism and promised to embark on a road of independent development. Although Brezhnev was skeptical of the FSLN's ability to topple the Somoza regime but later, he, too, responded positively with a strong resolve "to develop multi-faceted ties with Nicaragua", Moscow quickly extended diplomatic recognition to the Sandinista regime\textsuperscript{31}.

The Soviet Union had minimal role in the guerrilla war fought by the FSLN and was almost away from giving any material help to them. Even the PSN was not in favour of guerrilla strategy, though later it played a minor role for the Sandinista's success\textsuperscript{32}. Of course, it was Cuba, not the


Soviet Union, whose role in the revolution was instrumental in the Sandinistas success. Cuba helped train the leadership of the FSLN and also provided much needed arms to fight the Somoza's military. Even many Cuban military advisors fought with the FSLN in its final campaign in 1979. In addition, it was Cuban mediation which enabled the critical unity agreement among the three contending Nicaraguan guerrilla factions making it possible for the revolution to succeed. This coalition consisted of the Social Christian Party (PLC), the Nicaraguan Democratic Movement (MDN), the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and some private sector organisations, whose interests were represented by the superior council of Private Enterprises (COSEP) and two trade unions. Virtually the entire intelligence and security system in Nicaragua was modeled after that of Cuba. The Cuban experience also taught the Sandinistas how to avoid alienating their entire middle class, to influence the U.S. domestic opinion, to manipulate European opinion and the Socialist International, and to use economic aid to develop their economy etc.

The Cuban presence was most visible in the military realm. Some 3000 cuban military personal were stationed in

Nicaragua; approximately 2000 others served in paramilitary capacities\textsuperscript{34}. Cuba's primary contribution was, of course, political\textsuperscript{35}. Cuban press enthusiastically announced the Sandinista victory. Initially, the Cuban government, prior to July 1979, deliberately adopted a low profile because it might provoke the U.S. action against the Sandinistas. In distinct contrast to this, the Soviet Union, tried to contain Cuban enthusiasm. An article in Pravada, entitled "A step towards victory", which reported Somoza's departure from Nicaragua, as very low-key affair\textsuperscript{36}. There was no acclamation of FSLN success and the emphasis was heavily on the probability of the U.S. intervention.

Practically, the Soviet Union lagged far behind Cuba in seizing the opportunities offered by the revolutionary upheaval in Nicaragua. The Soviet Union stayed along from changing political scenarios in Nicaragua and apparently non-participant in the victory of the Sandinistas. Only in mid 1981, two years after the Sandinistas regime had come to power, the Cubans had become thoroughly involved and the Soviet Union became heavily committed. "The Soviet Union had


\textsuperscript{35} Millar, n. 10, p.195.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p. 196.
performed and followed a low-risk, low profile, cautious and restrained role in Nicaragua\textsuperscript{37}.

By January 1980, the first Soviet personnel arrived in their Embassy at Managua\textsuperscript{38}. This not only implied the recognition of the new Sandinista government of Nicaragua, but also of various facets of bilateralism that had been initiated. By March 1980, the Soviet Union and Nicaraguan government concluded several wide ranging agreements on economic, technical, scientific, cultural, and political developments followed. An air treaty was also signed between them. Both the countries agreed to cooperate in developing Nicaragua's mining industry, transport and communication. They also signed an agreement, to cultural and scientific cooperation, a consular convention, and a trade agreement\textsuperscript{39}. All this was in sharp contrast to Moscow's reluctant and gradual embrace of Cuba in the early 1960s. Within a few weeks, five Soviet Generals paid a secret visit to Nicaragua\textsuperscript{40}. But in terms of material support Managua could not gain much substantially from the Soviet Union in


\textsuperscript{40} Leiken, n. 22, p. 316.
comparison to the assistance it got from neighbouring small countries. It was another four months later, the Soviet leaders themselves called "the 'new chapter' in the Soviet-Nicaraguan relations", which began in the spring of the following year, when a Nicaraguan delegation consisting of the four top members of the Sandinista leadership paid an official visit to Moscow and met with the Soviet Premier Thikhanov\textsuperscript{41}. The most significant outcome of this visit was the affirmation of clear-cut ideological understanding between the CPSU and Sandinista Liberation Front very much along the lines pursued by the Soviets with other revolutionary organisations elsewhere in the world\textsuperscript{42}.

Both sides agreed to develop bilateral relations on the basis of a strict observance of the principles of equality, sovereignty, mutual respect and non-interference in each other’s internal affairs\textsuperscript{43}. They also agreed for a joint communique on the total elimination of the practice of hegemonism from international relations as an extremely important area of the struggle for lasting peace and international security\textsuperscript{44}. The Soviet and Nicaraguan

\textsuperscript{41.} Limberg, n. 31, p. 99.

\textsuperscript{42.} R. Narayanan, "Soviet Union - Watchful Reticence", World Focus, (New Delhi), vol. 64, April 1985, p.11.


\textsuperscript{44.} Ibid.
representatives discussed the possibility friendly ties between the CPSU and the FSLN. They expressed mutual desire to develop these ties in the interest of further deepening the bilateral co-operation, in the area of planning between the USSR State Planning Committee and the Republic of Nicaragua's Ministry of Planning. Another milestone in the new era of Moscow and Managua relations was that Managua had established all such relations with several East-European countries such as German Democratic Republic (GDR), Bulgaria and others. From the military point of view, Moscow agreed to loan a few helicopters to Nicaragua and GDR sold on credit 800 military trucks to Managua. Moscow equipped the Nicaraguan army with arms etc. during 1980. "Under Moscow's initial military agreement with Nicaragua, the Soviet Union would provide some 125 million dollar between 1980-1982, including 250 Soviet technical and military personnel and a range of armaments comprising fifty T-54/55 tanks, missiles, transport aircraft, and anti-aircraft guns."


The Soviet propaganda and analysis switched their emphasis to defence against American after the failure of the Salvador incident which was supported and backed by Soviet Union. The Soviet Union undoubtedly continued to supply arms, but the Sandinistas were denied the two forms of assistance they most urgently sought - MIG aircraft to compensate for Honduran air superiority and desperately needed foreign exchange.

However, as the Sandinistas began to consolidate their power, and Moscow's interest to maintain the Nicaraguan revolution heightened in the light of its involvement in Afghanistan, the Soviet commentaries began to adopt a more positive tone.

However, the pro-Soviet inclinations must be understood first as a reaction to repeated United States intervention in Nicaraguan internal affairs. The Soviet Union came to be looked upon as a natural ally. In August, 1979, the Sandinista delegation supported the Soviet-Cuban Vietnamese position in the non-aligned meeting in Havana. Later, in the United Nations, in the face of overwhelming Third World condemnation of the invasion of Afghanistan, the Nicaraguan delegation abstained. The Soviet optimism about Central America reached a peak in the winter of 1980-1981. Boris Ponomarev, the leading member of the CPSU Central Committee and an authority on the Third World described that Nicaragua
revolution as a "major success", and for the first time Central America as a region where "Socialist oriented" states were emerging. Two months later he alluded to Nicaragua's "taking the road of transition to socialism".48

At the invitation of the USSR government Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, Minister of External Affairs of the Republic of Nicaragua, visited the Soviet Union in 1981. In this visit "the Nicaraguan side expressed gratitude to the Soviet Union for its humanitarian aid to Nicaragua's people, in the form of food and medicines. A programme for cultural and scientific exchanges between the USSR and Nicaragua for the period 1982-1983 was signed and notes were exchanged on question of the development of consularities".49

The period 1979 and 1982 witnessed vigorous constructive and productive activities under the new revolutionary regime which made tremendous efforts to wipe out the black legacy of decades of exploitation by the successive Somoza dictators. The Soviet Union expressed its solidarity with these efforts which were aimed at overcoming devastation, restoring the economy, establishing democratic principles of governance and following a policy


of non-alignment and above all peaceful co-operation with all countries\textsuperscript{50}. The accomplishments of the Sandinistas during this period were commendable—rural health, literacy which increased by 37 percent, land reforms, housing programme etc. The Soviet policy makers had always appreciated the efforts of the Nicaraguans and the actual record of the USSR in respect of diplomatic and economic ties with the region ever since the Sandinista's advent to power in Nicaragua had been noteworthy. They were not ignorant from the fact that the revolution in Nicaragua implied a quest for its own form of rapid change consistent with its national realities. Any attempt at imposing a new model of development alien to the Nicaraguan realities could drive things to an explosive turn. The Soviet policy towards Nicaragua was characterized by a new flexibility in Soviet ideology. One of which was, more in tune with the realities of Central America, where lack-luster local communist parties were quite often alienated from emerging revolutionary currents.

It is the fact that Soviet Union maintained a low profile posture towards Nicaragua and did not speak out that it was disinterested with the developments in Central America. "The growth of revolutionary movement with an anti-

\textsuperscript{50} Clement, n. 45, pp.76-77.
imperialistic ideological orientation in Central America is admittedly welcome to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Policy towards Nicaragua had always been determined by the U.S. concern over what it termed as the 'soft under belly' attitude. "The trouble that is going on down there ... is revolution exported from the Soviet Union", was what Ronald Reagan claimed when he was first elected to the office of the presidency. The US attempts to contain this "red communist aggression on the American mainland" with a confrontational attitude had unfolded a crisis and the Nicaraguans resisted it with all their tempo.

In his address to the 25th CPSU Congress Meeting, February 1981, Brezhnev stated that, "the revolutions in Ethiopia, Afghanistan and Nicaragua were the most important 'new victories' since 1976". Even Ponomarev wrote that, "states of 'socialist orientation were emerging in Asia, Africa and Central America", though no explicit reference was made to Nicaragua. In addition, references to Nicaragua as a state of Socialist orientation was confined to an article in the academic journal Latinskaia America and


52. Rotherberg, n. 48, p.7.
did not appear in official statements. For the Soviet Union 'socialist orientation' was regarded as reversible process. But despite this enthusiasm, at an official level, Moscow was no keener to grant Nicaragua the "socialist" status which would demand a major Soviet commitment. Historically, Moscow was least interested in another Cuba which was an economic burden to them at this stage. They carefully avoided any scope of similar treatment which Cuba had during "Bay of Pigs" - (1960-62).

Theoretically, it was difficult for the Soviet ideologists to grant the FSLN a status equivalent to the officially recognised Communist parties in Central America. But problem was resolved by classifying the FSLN as "Vanguard parties",

Which are capable of leading a developing nation towards socialism. But which are made up of petit bourgeois rather than working-class elements and which are substantially inferior to communist parties in the level of the theoretical maturity of their cadres, in the degree of these revolutionary influence on the working people, and in their ideological, political and organisational experience.

53. The exception was an article on 'The USSR and the developing countries in Prada, 13 June 1983, which referred to countries with a socialist orientation, in particular, angola, Afghanistan, Nicaragua and also Certain Arab States'. In Rotherberg, n. 48, p. 10, footnote 35.


The policy of caution was the guiding force behind any Soviet assumption regarding Nicaragua. To save Nicaragua and the states in the region. The Soviet Union had consistently reassured the United States, the West Europeans and the Latin Americans, that "its relations with Nicaragua did not have aggressive implications." \(^{56}\) The Soviet representative at the ceremony in Managua was careful to stress that "Soviet-Nicaraguan relation are not directed against any third country and will not affect anyone else". When asked in August 1982 how the USSR would respond in the event of direct aggression against Nicaragua. Yurii Fokin, Secretary-General of the Soviet Foreign Ministry, replied - "we will support Nicaragua politically in every way." \(^{57}\) Personally, one Soviet official admitted that in the case of U.S. invasion against Nicaragua, what would Moscow do? "What would we do? Nothing." \(^{58}\) The Soviet Union did not need unending trouble, embarrassment, loss of money, and material resources. But in both the economic and the military spheres, the rule of thumb for the Soviets had been caution, prudence, and limited commitments.

\(^{56}\) Ibid.

\(^{57}\) Retherberg, n. 48, p.11.

Significantly, another high-level Nicaraguan delegation, under the leadership of Daniel Ortega, visited Moscow in early May 1982. This time he was received by General Secretary of CPSU, Brezhnev himself. The two leaders discussed many national and international issues. Besides, they satisfactorily reviewed the previous economic, scientific-technological and cultural ties between the two countries. "An inter-governmental agreement was signed providing for an economic and technical cooperation, including deliveries of Soviet machines and equipment and cooperation in hydroelectric, mining, industrial, and agricultural activities."

By and large, the relations between the Nicaragua and the Soviet Union improved and their ties especially economic cooperation, became stronger with the passage of time. When the U.S. aid to Nicaragua was terminated due to an allegation that it was serving as a channel to support El Salvador guerrillas, it was the Soviet Union which came to rescue her from economic difficulties. "The Soviet Union announced its intention of providing Nicaragua with twenty thousand tons of wheat worth about 4 million US dollars."

---


60. Ibid.
"In October a high official in Moscow estimated that the Soviet aid to Nicaragua was about 150 million US dollars including exports credits and materials for production such as semi-manufactured and raw materials"61.

However, it was too early to predict the ultimate influence that the USSR had gained in Nicaragua or to assert that the Sandinistas had fallen under Soviet Communist. But the Soviet non-commitment to Sandinista government by the end of 1982 had shifted to strong commitment. "On 21 December 1982 Yurii Andropov, Brezhnev's successor and head of the Soviet Defence Council, vowed to extend Soviet support for worldwide 'liberation' in order to facilitate the advance of the people of Asia, Africa, the Arab East, and Latin America"62.

As a matter of fact, the Soviet interaction with less developed countries had involved several types of relationships and levels of commitment. They had used different policy lines to deal with different types of countries. Nicaragua was always considered only a good friend of Soviet Union. "They never signed a friendship treaty with Nicaragua, which always ranked relatively low

61. Ibid.

along with Algeria, Libya, and Benin. In this sense, the
Soviet Union seemed to regard Nicaragua as a low-cost, low-
risk involvement.

Economic Relations between the Soviet Union and Nicaragua,
1979-1984:

The Soviet policy towards Nicaragua could be divided
into two phases of evolution of its policies. The first
phase was the exploration period (1979-1981) during which
the Soviet Union was rather unsure about the Sandinistas.
Obviously, the Soviet role in the reconstruction of a
Nicaragua, torn by wars was, negligible compared to that of
Cuba and Mexico. "According to UN data on aid to Nicaragua,
up to 31, August 1981, the USSR provided only 3 percent of
the total aid". However, in contrast, the CMEA countries
donated 23.37 percent of the total aid received by
Nicaragua. The second phase known as the "growing
commitment" period (1981-1983), in which socialist aid from
Eastern Europe and the USSR became more significant.

---

63. Jerry F. Hough, "The Evolving Soviet Debate on Latin
America," Latin American Research Review, vol. 16,
no.1, 1981, p. 16.

64. Cuba alone contributed 16.14 per cent. see in Blasier,
n. 20, p.17.

65. UN General Assembly, Assistance to Nicaragua, Special
Economic and Disaster Relief Assistance; Special
Programs of Economic Assistances, Report to the
Secretary General, A/37/135, p. 10, October 6, 1982 -
quoted in Varai, p. 152.
Perhaps, this was because of mounting pressure by the United States and the declining popularity of the Sandinistas in some Latin American countries and even among the Social democrats in Western Europe. The situation forced them to demand greater assistance from the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union's economic relations with Nicaragua did not develop with similar pace as it did in the case of political and military relations. As in the case of military supplies, the increase in Soviet economic aid and trade had been directly related to the policies of the Reagan administration. Initially the Sandinistas themselves were quite happy that the Soviet Union was keeping a distance from them. In the light of the U.S. reaction over whether aid should be given to Nicaragua or not, Castro advised them the need for workable relations with the Americans. It was not only because of political compulsions but also for compelling economic reasons. Indeed, even many Nicaraguan leaders themselves recognized the deficiencies of Cuba as a model for development. As Xavier Gorostiga, one of Nicaragua's leading economists, put it,

"the politics of isolation" which Cuba had adopted as the price of withstanding US pressure offers the world one particular experience that should not be repeated... Cut off from its traditional markets and even from neighbouring countries in the region, Cuba has been forced to survive in a cold war environment, in which
socialist countries provided the bulk of the aid needed to survive"66.

In the formative phase, the Sandinista leaders, were getting the bulk of export revenue from traditionally (privately) owned agriculture. They were reluctant to make any change in traditional setup, which might provide an unnecessary pretext for US hostility.

Though, "prior to 1979, Nicaragua’s small, open economy had strong trading and financial links to the markets of the United States and Western Europe",67 after Sandinista came to power, the US trade with Nicaragua had steadily decreased. From 1980 until the end of 1983, the U.S. exports to Nicaragua dropped from 36 per cent to 18.1 per cent, while imports declined from 27.5 per cent to 19.4 per cent. In contrast, Nicaragua’s trade with the CMEA countries had increased dramatically. Since 1980, exports shot-up from 2.7 per cent or 12 million US dollars to 12.7 per cent or 55 million US dollars, and imports climbed from a mere 2 million US dollars to 134 million US dollars, or from 0.2 per cent to 16.6 per cent.

Within the Eastern bloc, the Soviet Union alone was the


most important trading partner of Nicaragua. During the six years from 1979 to 1985, bilateral trade between the two countries increased rapidly. At same point, the Soviet export to Managua exceed the latter's exports by a wide margin. Consequently, this led to a further deterioration in trade between the two countries. This situation had more worsened from 1984 onwards. "It was because of wide margin in these trades, and due to heavy amount of petroleum products delivered by the USSR, which was more then one half of Nicaragua's petroleum needs"68.

As Nicaraguan economy was primarily agricultural her main exports to outside world, specially to the Soviet Union, was coffee. In return they usually imported machines and oil from the Soviet Union. Import costs was mainly financed by Soviet concessionary credits. "Between 1979 and 1983, these credits amounted to $ 215.9 million"69.

Subsequently, during the 1982-1983 period, Nicaragua's trade with developing countries, particularly those of Latin America, as well as, CMEA countries increased. On the whole, the total volume of Nicaraguan exports in 1983 increased by 6.4 per cent. Trade with Cuba increased by 1,338.8 per cent as compared to Zero, Bulgaria, 78.8 per cent; GDR, 59.8 per cent; and Czechoslovakia, 32.7 per cent. Trade with other


69. Ibid.
Latin American countries had also expanded. Donations and aids from the Soviet Union and through other sources mainly from Eastern Europe and Cuba had reached Nicaragua in the form of educational, health and food assistance. In 1984, Cuba sent 1,500 Cuban teachers to Nicaragua. In the same year, the USSR supplied 50,000 tons of wheat as a food donation. The "Soviet economic aid during the first three months of 1984 was estimated at 100 million US dollars to 150 million US dollars, an increase of about 25 per cent over 1983".

A number of other Third World countries such as Algeria, Iran, Iraq, India and Turkey had received more development aid from the Soviet Union than that by Nicaragua. In spite of new increases in Soviet assistance to Nicaragua, this aid remained well below Nicaragua's actual needs. In March 1985, Fidel Castro finally criticized Moscow for its meagre support of Nicaragua.

Soviet Military Aid to Nicaragua: Unfolding of a Crisis:

The Sandinistas came to power on the strength of broad anti-Somoza coalition. With the passage of time, the conflict of interests surfaced in the open. The trouble started with re-orientation of Sandinista's economic policies in response to an unsatisfactory economic performance of the private sector. On the other hand, under the strong need of national reconstruction, the government was impelled to announce a
package of new measures which was broadly pro-poor. The measures included de-capitalization law, a broad agrarian reform and a decree expropriating major private firms accused of de-capitalization. Predictably, the internal opposition came from the class-conscious landed oligarchy, latifundista\textsuperscript{72}, stripped of its privileges in the wake of popular policies. The FSLN was accused of advancing "Marxist-Leninist" project behind the backs of the people, and thereby leading the nation towards untold devastation. On the other side, Sandinistas' triumph and later their pro-people policies were seen as a potential danger by the neighbouring totalitarian states, for the continuation of their own immoral, inhuman, illegitimate military rules. in their respective countries. the military dictatorships of its neighbouring countries such as El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras were particularly hostile to the Sandinista from the very beginning and obviously, this "club of dictatorship" convinced with each other to raise the bogey of "Sandinista dictatorship".


\textsuperscript{71} \textit{The New York Times}, March 28, 1984, p.4; Miller, n. 10, p. 213.

\textsuperscript{72} Latifundista - A Spanish word for landowning class.
As a matter of fact the Sandinista army badly needed the Soviet military assistance to protect her sovereignty. It was estimated that between 1981-1982, the total delivery of military resources to Nicaragua from the USSR, Eastern Europe, and Cuba were worth 28 million US dollars, while overall transfers in the 1981-1983 period seemed to have been mainly aimed at covering Nicaragua's defence requirements. "The USSR sent, among other things, land-to-land AT-1 snapper and AT-3 Sagger anti-tank missiles, AS-6 Gaianful and SA-7 Grail anti-air missiles, twelve 122 mm BN-21 artillery batteries and forty-eight 57 mm anti-air machine guns. The Nicaraguan navy also received four Dabur-type launches". According to Carl J. Jacobson Report, the tendency in the supply of Soviet armaments to Nicaragua until 1983 was towards the delivery of light arms and basic logistic equipment for the army. The nature of Soviet military assistance to Nicaragua was basically discreet defensive, this was recognized by several highly placed US officials. Fred Ikle, the Under Secretary of Defence, too, conceded that the "Soviet supplies, are not aimed at enabling Nicaragua to develop a confrontation with any of


74. The Jacobson Report : Soviet Attitude towards, Aid to, the contacts with Central American Revolutionaries (US Department of State, April 1984), p. 16.
its neighbours but, are destined to increase the effectiveness of the Sandinista army in its struggle against the groups that are fighting the government of Managua\textsuperscript{75}.

Significantly the United States, which traditionally enjoyed the status of a "self-professed Big brother" in Western Hemisphere, abruptly joined the group to oppose the Sandinistas. From the very beginning, Washington was keenly and cautiously observing the developments in Managua. But in 1981, when President Reagan replaced Jimmy Carter, the later's "wait and watch" approach towards Nicaragua was dumped and replaced by the "policy of open hostility". Hence the unholy alliance of neighbouring dictators, Somoza's former "Death Squads', National Guards - who once performed as private armies of the landlords - and a small bunch of traitors, who deserted the Sandinistas, came together with a view to destroy their common enemy - the popular nationalist Sandinista revolution. The United States graciously accepted the role of directing the show with military and financial assistance. The foreign policy of Reagan, catapulted the United States of America from an era of detente into one of cold war, increasing instability, unpredictability and brinkmanship "precisely at a time when the actual U.S. power

was declining and going through "Vietnam Syndrome."\(^76\)

When the differences grew and the opposition could not match with those of the Sandinistas, then many groups like PLC, MDN, and PSD along with few private organizations broke their alliance with the FSLN. Later a few of the dissociated groups turned to arms while large number of the opposition groups remained in Nicaragua and continued to participate in the government. However, former Sandinista allies leader Eden Pastora and Alfonso Robelo joined former Somoza supporters and ex-National Guard members and were engaged in several political and military counter-revolutionary (Contra) group activities. Beginning covertly in 1980 and escalating overtly since 1981, aided and advised from the US; finally, built several counter revolutionary factions into guerrilla armies that grew to 15,000 troops by 1985. The main contra organisations were the Honduras - based Nicaraguan Democratic Forces (FDN) backed by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and the Costa Rica based Revolutionary Democratic Alliance (ARDE). In March of 1980, CIA trained and equipped anti-Sandinista commandos, operating from base camps in Honduras, made forays in the north eastern districts of Nicaragua.

\(^76\) Susanne Jonas, " The Nicaraguan Revolution and the Reemerging Cold War", in Walker, n. 15, p. 373.
On the other hand, Reagan administration clamped vindictively some measures to clip off the Sandinista wings. In 1981, he launched a covert war against Nicaragua to destablise or discredit the Sandinistas. He granted covert aid worth nearly 20 million US dollars (through CIA) to the Nicaraguan rebels who were operating in four loosely-led groups while cutting off US bilateral assistance to Nicaragua. The following year, Washington also made an "open effort to block its access to vitally needed hard currency credits, particularly the long-term, low-interest loans available through World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank (IADB). Subsequently, "when Washington imposed embargo on trade with Nicaragua, ironically it hurt more the Nicaraguan private firms which was dependent on US supplies".

In response to these developments, the Sandinistas declared a "state of emergency" internally and imposed stringent restriction on the opposition. Although the FSLN did not yet regard the internal opposition as aligned with the US supported contras, neither did they trust the internal opposition to remain loyal to the regime. In fact, the emergency provision (law) was clearly aimed at limiting the opposition's ability to create an internal counter

revolution. In this sense, the covert contra war crippled the internal opposition in its efforts towards power-sharing. The leaders of the Nicaraguan opposition lamented that Reagan's hostile policy measures were constricting the political space available to the political opposition.

In the year 1982, the FDN, the ARDE and Atlantic coast rebel groups began pressurising Sandinista government from North, South and East. The CIA and Argentina army provided training and financing valued at 30 million US dollars. The Sandinistas reported 78 acts of combat in 1982, five times more than the previous year.

However, when these pressure mounted against the FSLN, Moscow became more assertive in its stances with regard to the Central American cauldron and particularly so in Nicaragua. Till the summer of 1981, the Soviet scholars had described the FSLN regime as a government with "Socialist Orientation", but in mid-1982, the Soviet journals began referring to Nicaragua as a "Peoples' Democracy", a label quite often used to describe the post war regimes of Eastern Europe. The Deputy Director of the International Institute of Economics and World Affairs, Oleg Bykov emphasised that US attempts to explain the revolutionary ferment in Central America as, "the hands of Moscow are beyond common sense - it is a childish, non-scientific, cowboy explanation" 78.

Izvestia, on 8 January 1981, described the Washington administration's actions in respect to Nicaragua, as an "openly provocative and bellicose character. The current outbursts of anti-Nicaraguan hysteria by Washington to destabilize the situation in that country"\textsuperscript{79}.

When US joined the so-called 'Central American Democratic Community' - the other members being Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Venezuela and Columbia - Soviet Union denounced this alliance, which aimed at repressing the revolutionary process in that region\textsuperscript{80}. Nicaragua was not even informed that the meeting was being held and Panama was deliberately excluded from this group. Pravda raised doubts on these hobnobbings as "an attempt to create the preconditions for Nicaragua's political, commercial and military isolation hampering that country's good neighbourly relations with its bordering countries".

On 15 March 1982 Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko applauded the Mexican initiative to ease tension in Central America by calling on the US to refrain from threats on the use of force against Nicaragua and to begin a peaceful and constructive dialogue with Cuba while working out a system

\textsuperscript{79} Izvestia, 8 January 1981, p. 4; reprint in CDSP, vol. 33, no. 2, p.11.

of non-aggression pacts between Nicaragua and its neighbours on the other. As Brezhnev was to emphasise it further, "certain ideas expressed by Mexican President J. Lopez Portillo with respect to the need for easing the current tension in the Caribbean and in Central American have been well received in the USSR." It may also be recalled that in December 1981 reacting to the possible U.S. threat to intervene directly or indirectly in Nicaragua, the then Soviet Ambassador German Schlipanikov, speaking to Managua radio, emphatically asserted that the Soviet Union will assist Nicaragua in rebuffing US attack or her: "We will support Nicaragua in the struggle for peace, defence and reconstruction in any circumstances." In the month of April 1982 two draft resolutions moved by Panama and Guyana in the UN Security Council in response to a complaint from the Nicaraguan government were vetoed by the United States. The Soviet Union, a permanent member of the Security Council, criticized the US action vehemently which "constituted a shameful act of debunking on the part of these same overseas defenders of human rights and freedoms."


Later in response to Mexico's preliminary proposals for peaceful settlement of Central American crisis, while the Soviet Union offered its unqualified support, it avoided to back it up physically. The Soviet Union restrained itself from making any formal security commitments to Nicaragua. It seems that Moscow did not expect Nicaragua to turn into another Cuba and feared that the expansion of Soviet involvement is that country could provoke the U.S. reaction. The Soviet Union, however tried its best to help Nicaragua financially and technically. "The Soviet policy and postures towards Central America throughout the first three years since the Sandinistas came to power ran in two parallels: first, a gradual assessment of events in Central America and a modest commitment of economic and military support to Managua and second, a cautious and circumspect reaction to US military pressure on Nicaragua\textsuperscript{84}.

While there was a remarkable continuity in the Soviet-Nicaraguan relations, the interventionist operations against Nicaragua by the US and the Contra rebels brought Nicaragua more close to the Soviet Union. The key strategy of the major rebel groups against the Sandinista government were economic sabotage. Danial Ortega, at a press conference in Managua, said: "Nicaragua has become the victim of an

\textsuperscript{84} Narayanan, n. 42, p. 12.
armed intervention similar to that launched against Cuba by counter-revolutionary mercenaries at the Bay of Pigs" 85.

In the year 1983, nearly 1,500 former Somoza "national guards" armed with American arms invaded the Nicaraguan departments of Nueva Segoria, Jinotega, and Metagalpa from Honduran territory. The bombardment of key Pacific port and Managua airport revealed the nature of interventionist actions. The Soviet newspaper Izvestia on 24 March 1983 castigated these acts in most vehement terms: "The incursion of the Somozaist bands with the outright blessing and support of Washington is nothing less than a new stage in the military, political and economic aggression of the U.S. against the Sandinista Revolution. But the Nicaraguan people are fully determined to deal a fitting rebuff to the interventionists and their sponsors 86.

On March 25, 1983, Yurii V. Andropov met Daniel Ortega, who stopped in Moscow on his way back to Managua after participating in the 7th Non-aligned Summit at New Delhi. During the conversation, questions concerning Soviet-Nicaraguan relations, as well as other important international problems were discussed. Andropov expressed


141
confidence that Nicaragua would succeed in defending its freedom and independence and declared the sincere solidarity of the Soviet Union and all Soviet people with the Nicaraguan people in their just cause. Later that year, on 26 October, a Soviet government statement premonished the aggressive actions by the United States endangering the sovereignty and security of the republic of Nicaragua and exacerbated the situation in all of Central America. The press statement noted that a policy of interference in the affairs of sovereign country and people which represents a gross violation of fundamental principles of international law, the UN Charter and the provisions of the Helsinki final Act. "The USSR government resolutely condemned the US's aggressive policy towards Nicaragua and declared the Soviet people's unwavering solidarity with the Nicaraguan people in their just struggle for an independent and free development of its own choice."

Significantly, by the year 1984, the Soviet Union's attitude and help to Nicaragua became more conspicuous. The frequency of combats with the contras also increased a lot. The Sandinistas reported 948 combats that year. The Nicaraguan ports were mined by the rebels with CIA

assistance, causing international outrage and the press revelation of CIA "terror" manual led the US Congress to suspend all contra aid. Nicaragua also filed a suit against the United States in the International Court of Justice charging Washington with waging a 'covert' war to topple the government in Managua but the former declared openly that it would not accept the jurisdiction of the World Court over its action in Central America. The U.S. also vetoed a Nicaraguan resolution in the Security Council which sought to condemn the mining of harbour without naming the US and which was supported by 13 of the 15 members, with Britain abstaining.

But the Soviet Union, in any case, did not want a direct confrontation with Washington over Central America. On the contrary, it was pleased to see American attention and resources being diverted from other areas in the world where the Soviet Union had a greater interest. Fearing that Reagan might be tempted to stagemanage another 'Cuban crisis' in Nicaragua following unconfirmed reports of Soviet shipments of MIG-21 planes to that country, the Soviet ambassador in Washington hurriedly called on State Department officials to assure them that the Soviet cargo contained only speed boats and not MIGs.

As the war and violence, imposed by the US backed Contra, encircled Nicaragua, unabated, the government was
left with no option but to announce a national election to be held on 4 November 1984. The primary objective in calling for election was to "legitimise the power of the Sandinista Government in the face of mounting U.S. criticism that the regime was degenerating into totalitarianism contrary to its earlier commitment to political pluralism". The election of 4 November which, by all accounts was fair, returned the Sandinistas to power with a 67 per cent popular vote. The nine-man Sandinista Directorate was replaced by a single identifiable leadership reposed in Danial Ortega.

The Soviet Union welcomed the new development of Nicaragua. The Soviet policy makers appreciated the resolve of Sandinistas to continue the process of establishing the revolutionary democracy that began after Somoza was overthrown. Earlier, in June 1984, the CPSU General Secretary, K.U. Chernenko, held a meeting with Ortega, who visited Moscow for a short duration. Chernenko expressed support for the Nicaraguan leader's efforts to achieve a national revival and declared the Soviet Union's solidarity with the Sandinista struggle. Tuned with other previous leaders, he also criticised the hegemonistic policy of the US in Central America and Caribbean and expressed support for peaceful political settlement of the region's problem by

88. Narayanan, n. 77, p. 5.
means of negotiations on an equitable basis. He further went up to emphasize that infringement on the people's inalienable right to self-determination and violations of the basic norms of inter-state relations were intolerable. The Soviet ambassador to the UN, Troyanovsky, coming out of the emergency meeting of the UN Security Council called at the request of Nicaragua, warned American correspondents that if the U.S. attacked Nicaragua it would be a war and not a walkover89.

Pluralistic Nicaragua and the New Soviet Policy, 1985-1990

With the emergence of Gorbachev as the new party leader in the Soviet Union there began a complete overhaul of the Soviet domestic and foreign policies. He was the first of the Soviet leaders who acknowledged that his country was suffering from economic problems of gigantic magnitude for which external factors were as much responsible as the internal. The several decades of post-World War II confrontation and competition with the West had brought greater difficulties for the Soviet Union than producing gains. The Soviet Union's involvement with conflicts in the Third World or her commitments to their economic and technological development were simply unsustainable. Therefore, in order to facilitate an early recovery of its

89. The Times of India (New Delhi), 12 November 1984, p. 9.
faltering economy the Soviet commitments to the Third World had to be substantially scaled down.

It was also recognised by Gorbachev that the Soviet Union and the Socialist community did not only lose the economic and technological competition with the West, the former had also been greatly isolated from the later. The world economy was dominated by capitalism and the Soviet Union must try to join it even at the terms determined by the former, because that was the only possible source of aid, investment, technological support and above all trade. For this there was a need of giving up all those ideological rhetorics which the Soviet Union used to articulate her commitment to anti-capitalist struggles. Thus, in Gorbachev's scheme of things there was a logical consistency between the domestic need and imperatives of foreign policy. The Soviet policy towards the Third World in general and Latin America in particular, from 1985 onwards needs to be considered in the light of the foregoing formulation.

Historically, Gorbachev's prospective visit to Latin America posed some dilemma for Soviet leadership. Apart from Leonid Brezhnev's 1974 visit to the Second Cuban Party Congress in Havana, no Soviet general secretary had ever been to Latin America. The Soviet media accountes suggested Gorbachev's route of foreign tour included Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico, and there was some expectation that he
might stop over in Nicaragua. However, the Soviet leader’s stay in Managua might have been detrimental to Nicaragua but its impact on U.S. was of a greater significance. The U.S. congress quickly revised its earlier decision to cut off aid to Nicaraguan insurgents. The quick reversal of Reagan’s Nicaraguan policy was the result of his strong personal views on Nicaragua, Gorbachev’s symbolic visit to Managua would have an effect on ongoing process of normalization in US-Soviet relations. On the other hand if Gorbachev would have ignored Sandinistas, it might have been construed by Soviet Third World clients elsewhere as a sign of his weakness.

Significantly, in 1985, President Ortega and an entourage of 30 high Nicaragua officials visited Moscow to seek hard currency credit to build up an economy which was devastated by six-years of contra war. It was reported that the Soviet Union, influenced by the high profile Nicaraguan delegates, had granted an assistance of some 200 million dollars. In reaction, Reagan in an unusual move, imposed the sanctions which prohibited all imports of goods and services of Nicaraguan origin and exports of goods from the US. He also banned the entry of Nicaraguan aircraft carriers and ships. But these vindictive moves had never unnerved the Nicaragua leadership. They got more inspired and emboldened by increased Soviet interest in Central America and an
upgrading of the Soviet commitment to provide military and economic aid as assured by Gorbachev to Daniel Ortega.

Though commitment had its own place, on a broader strategic level. Moscow was not keen to translate its growing investment in Nicaragua into a net strategic gain vis-a-vis the United States. For the Soviet Union the strategic advantage of establishing a military presence (naval as well as air) on the Pacific side of Central America, based in Nicaragua, would be significant. It would facilitate deployment of Soviet submarines off the Pacific coast of the US, as well as extend the time the submarines could remain on station, and it would shorten transit time to and from there bases. It would complicate the US ASW (antisubmarine warfare) problems and reduce the possibilities for early US interception of Soviet submarines leaving their bases in the Soviet Union. It would facilitate Soviet surveillance of movements of US submarines and other naval vessels in the Pacific ocean.

Strategically, the use of Nicaraguan ports by the Soviet submarines was not likely to result in a major shift in the East-West strategic balance, not to alter critically the effectiveness of the US strategic deterrence posture. Yet if Soviet Union succeeded in establishing her presence in Nicaragua then why only here! Furthermore, the Soviets might attempt to use other Central or Latin American ports
for similar purposes. Naturally, as with their Cuban involvement in the 1960s the Soviets denied any intention to use Nicaragua for military purposes. "On 3 July, 1986, the Soviet delegates to the United Nations categorically rejected the fabrications about the USSR's intentions to use Nicaraguan territory for military-strategic purposes. However, there is no doubt that the Soviet ability to maintain a military presence in the Western Hemisphere could injure the US global power image and would provide the Soviet Union with a major psychological political gain. And for that it was obligatory on the part of the Soviet Union to provide every possible assistance to those countries which were fighting for their survival.

Though, the Soviet military assistance to the Sandinista government began shortly after their triumph in 1979 the former came to help Nicaragua economically, militarily and obviously psychologically in a big way in the 1980s only. As Nicaraguan crisis deepened, and the need of proper equipment mounted, the Soviet defence assistance came to rescue her. Beginning from urgent needs of the Sandinista army. In mid 1981, the Soviet Union delivered a huge amount of military assistance to them. By the beginning of 1985,

enough T-55s had been delivered to permit the formation of five armored battalions of twenty-two tanks each. "The Chief of Staff of the Sandinista People's Army (EPS), Cuban-trained Jaquin Cuadra on being interviewed in early 1985, acknowledged the number of such tanks, adding that the Sandinistas planned to acquire a total of 150." Under an agreement, the USSR also supplied two transport helicopters for six months which included the training of Nicaraguan pilots.

By the year 1985, the Soviet military assistance went up to worth 280 million dollars. In the same year EPS were equipped with Soviet and Eastern European arms. Most observers predicted in 1985, that there was to be a substantial increase in Soviet assistance in future. Among weapons systems, other than T-54/T-55 tanks and different categories of missiles, the Soviet Union supplied M1-8 and M1-24 helicopters. By 1987, these weapons systems provided by Warsaw Pact countries to Nicaragua consisted of approximately twenty items and nearly 1000 in numbers. These transfers along with important supplements from the USSR's East European allies had provided the raw material for an


92. SIPRI, n. 73, 1986, p. 269.
expansion of the Sandinista armed forces (EPS). "The numbers of EPS were increased from a level of 9,000 at the end of the Somoza Period to some 25,000 officers and men in the regular forces, 25,000 in the reserves and 30,000 in the militia at the end of 1986"\(^93\). "A high level Sandinista defector, Major Roger Niranda Bengoechea, in 1987, was warned by U.S. officials about the FSLN's continued and heightened military build-up. His revelations were belatedly confirmed by Nicaraguan Defence Minister, Humberto Ortega, that some 250,000 men and women were already under arms. M. Bengoechen was also informed that the FSLN planned to raise the level of Nicaragua's armed forces to 600,000 by 1995, under a new defence accord with the Soviet Union"\(^94\). Obviously, the training of these forces were handled by a corps of advisers from the USSR, Eastern Europe, and Cuba.

By comparison, the United States also had military advisers in every country bordering Nicaragua. The strength of the US military personnel in Central America was, 14,568, including 9,568 in Panama, plus another 5,000 stationed in Honduras in 1984. As a result, Nicaragua announced that it


was prepared to send all foreign advisors home if other Central American countries did the same. According to the Contadora group, Nicaragua still maintained this position ever since. In fact, "on May 2, 1985, 100 Cuban military advisors left Nicaragua as had been announced in February by President Ortega"\(^95\).

It was also revealed that the Soviet military technicians had constructed a communication systems in northern Nicaragua, in an attempt to enhance intelligence-gathering capabilities through satellite systems with an existing installation in Managua, thereby enabling the Sandinistas to react more quickly to rebel offensive.

Suffice to say that, in spite of its limited scope, "the Soviet military assistance to Nicaragua, had had considerable impact in the context of the regional crisis"\(^96\). The Soviet assistance was primarily aimed to respond to the most critical and urgent deficiencies in the Sandinista army (EPS/FAS) even though it was a cautious and low-risk policy.

The same cautious attitude was also displayed in the Soviet economic and technical assistance to Nicaragua. However, in spite of its limitations, the Soviet aid had


\(^{96}\). Yopo, n. 46, p. 115.
bolstered the embattled revolutionary regime and had given a face-lift to the devastated Nicaraguan economy.

However, as it has already been pointed out, a serious re-formulation of the Soviet foreign policy had started as soon as Gorbachev came to power. Among the most far reaching implications of this re-formulation was the substantial scaling down of the Soviet commitments to the Third World countries.

The sign of reversal of the Soviet commitment first came in Gorbachev's speech at 27th CPSU Congress in 1986. Subsequently, as the Soviet reform unfolded themselves, the indicators of change became more conspicuous. Like many other countries of the Third World Nicaragua was also to suffer from the impact of Soviet foreign policy shift.

Nevertheless, the Soviet economic and technological assistance to Nicaragua under Gorbachev were by no means insignificant. In April 1986, both sides signed an agreement on agricultural cooperation and a series of other projects (mostly long-term) to develop Nicaragua's fishing, mining and energy resources. The Soviet bilateral economic aid to Nicaragua for 1987 stood at 250 million dollars.

In January 1988 the Soviet Union and Nicaragua agreed on an economic plan involving 294 million dollars worth of
Soviet aid per annum till 1960. "Soviet Union also agreed to supply 300,000 tones of crude oil, during each of the aforesaid year worth about 100 million dollars. Though the amount of supply was drastically reduced97.

The USSR's reluctance to make an economic commitment can be explained by the fact that there was very little compatibility between the Nicaraguan and the Soviet economies. Though Nicaragua had little to offer to the Soviet Union, the latter still opted to buy a considerable portion of agricultural products from the former. By the end of 1987, approximately 39 per cent of the total Nicaraguan trade was with the USSR and Eastern Europe. In return, till 1988, Nicaragua was virtually dependent on the Soviet Union for its petroleum needs. In late May the Nicaraguan government publicised its growing concern about sources of oil shipments for the year. External Cooperation Minister Henry Ruiz announced that of the 765,000 tonnes of oil Nicaragua would need in 1987, the Soviet Union was expected to supply only 300,000 tonnes and the last shipment of which arrived at the end of that month. Other Comecon countries were due to send a further 320,000 tonnes, which still left the country running short of the estimated requirements. Nicaragua's attempts to obtain oil from Mexico or Venezuela

or Algeria had all proved fruitless. The Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman Gerradi Gerasimov responded that "if other countries cut back, it does not automatically mean the USSR should increase its supplies", but states that "Moscow was prepared to negotiate on the issue". An agreement to send a further 100,000 tones was announced in early September, thus averting a crisis, although a shortfall of some 55,000 tones still remained.

Finally, Nicaraguan Revolution was a new un-perceived assets for the Soviet Union. Strategically it was important which opened another gateway for the Soviet Union in Central America. Sandinistas consolidation of Power and later restructuring of their war-devastated economy were not possible without the Soviet and the Cuban economic and military assistance. Moscow's policy toward Managua was consistently guided by cautious, low cost and low-risk involvement.

The later dilution of the Soviet commitment to Nicaragua under Gorbachev was among others, probably intended as a signal to Washington that Moscow would be prepared to negotiate a solution to the endemic conflict in Central America. In addition, it also expressed the Soviet leaders' irritation with Sandinista's economic mismanagement and alleged waste of Soviet aid.

From indications it appears that the Soviet Union's
commitment to Nicaragua had been made cautiously, reluctantly, and largely in response to the US policies towards revolutionary movements in that region, which opened a window of opportunity for the USSR to counter the US pressure on Afghanistan.

The Soviet Union's motivation to support Nicaragua seems to have been more pragmatic than ideological. The assumptions is also supported by the fact that the Soviet did not consider Sandinistas as Marxists. The two countries never had a friendship treaty. Much of the Soviet aid and assistance to the Sandinistas was in response to the "judgement that Washington is seeking to overthrow the Managua government". On the other hand, Moscow was not prepared for a new burden and made it clear that - "it is not prepared to underwrite the Nicaraguan economy". The Soviet Union's own economic limitations prevented her from increasing trade and providing more aid to friendly nations. In this sense the Soviet interest in Nicaragua was partly conditioned by her relations with the West also.

Conclusion:

In totality, the Soviet behaviour displayed a gradual increase in interest, activity and with somewhat greater clarity since the Sandinista succession in the Nicaragua. This was a product largely of the weakening American grip on regional politics and the growing independence and self-
assertiveness of regional actors. Notably, Soviet involvement in the Nicaraguan instability, displayed a pattern of oscillation between periods of optimism and activism, and pessimism and relative passivity. This pattern appeared to be determined largely by three factors:

(a) The credibility of the United States capacity to resist the Soviet Union-Cuban involvement in the Nicaragua.

(b) Emergence of pro-US but anti-Sandinista, contras, factions, which was forcing Managua to drawing huge amount of the soviet military assistance.

(c) The Soviet policy of "new thinking", which was by product of ailing Soviet economy. Under such precondition, the Soviet policy seemed strongly constrained by the risks associated with confrontation with the United States in Nicaragua. Thus Soviet Union followed calculated caution more to back Managua’s call for bilateral talks with the United States and the Contadora Groups peace initiatives.
This chapter seeks to analyse 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 U.S. interference in the above mentioned countries and subsequent outcome of their involvement.

Introduction:

The Soviet attention to Central America had been first attracted by Sandinista's victory in Nicaragua in 1979. Till then, traditionally, the region was exclusively considered as a US security zone. The guerrilla success in Nicaragua not only aroused Soviet interest in Central America, it also encouraged the other leftist forces of the region to adopt guerrilla strategy in their struggles. Though the guerrilla movement as such was not new for the region, the Nicaraguan success certainly rejuvenated the enthusiasm of the leftist forces of the region.

Though initially sceptical, the Soviet Union now found the entire region to be ripe for revolution. Thus, the
Soviet involvement in these developments was quite natural. The Soviet help to the liberation struggles in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras had been of usually guided by the strength and potential of these movements to achieve their goal. Each country represented a different model. The political systems of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras were dominated by military regime which served national oligarchies and US corporate interests in their respective countries. The only democratic country of the region was Costa Rica where the government had come to power through popular election.

On the other hand, the pro-Soviet Communist parties of all these countries, except that of Costa Rica, were illegal. In the absence of any formal relation between the Soviet Union and the Communist parties these countries were simply serving the Soviet-Cuban interests in their respective countries. The FNLS success in Nicaragua, forced all these Communist parties and other leftist-revolutionary groups to come together and to form 'political-military' front and unitedly fight against the regime.

The Soviet approach to the Central America was determined largely by her famous 'two-track' policy, i.e., Moscow tried to have formal state to state relations and, at the
same time, encouraged the guerrilla tactics of the leftist forces in the region.

Throughout 1970s and 1980s, the whole region was under the grip of the popular struggle of the guerrilla forces. However, the election of Reagan as U.S. President coincided with rolling back of the revolutionary wave in Central America. The open financial and military support of the Whitehouse to the counter-revolutionaries succeeded in eventually defeating the leftist movements.

Even the Soviet Union was careful not to create another Cuba in Central America. The caution in the Soviet foreign policy in the region was also guided by the US intervention in Grenada in 1983. Furthermore, to be a major power affecting the politics in the region also required a full scale economic backing to Soviet policy. This was not possible for the Soviet Union with its troubled economy. Thus, the no-win struggle in Central America certainly was another source of Soviet illusion about the revolutionary success in the region. The constraints in her domestic political economy, finally, made her to give signals to all the revolutionaries to follow popular negotiations rather than a popular struggle against the established regimes.
United States traditional interventionist policy and unequal division of wealth, which were possessed by the country's oligarchy and United Fruit Company, were the two root causes of the current series of conflicts in the region. Ironically, the conflict in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala provoked Latin American leaders to take unprecedently bold initiatives, including the formation of a Central American Peace Plan (Contadora peace initiatives). The peace steps were taken not because of a Soviet threat, but because they feared that US would once again send troops south of the Rio Grande, which would provoke instability throughout the region. Finally, the formal end of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, paved the way for much stronger negotiation between the government and the guerrilla forces to end decade-long conflicts in the region.

El Salvador And the Soviet Union

Keeping in mind, the traditional, geographical and international reality of the country, the Soviet Union was never recognized by El Salvador. Politically since independence 1838, San Salvador (capital of the country) was dominated by a combination of national oligarchy and the right-wing military forces, representing the U.S. interests. This
oligarchical rule, however, produced an ideologically polarized, socially impoverished and politically unstable country in the region. There had been a marked contrast between the wealth of the few and the poverty of the many. Two-thirds of the population of the country received less than one-third of the disposable income. More than 40 per cent of the rural population were landless peasants. Tens of thousands of Salvadorans were killed during the violent military repression throughout the twentieth century. The situation of political turmoil became the starting point for a decade dominated by the civil war, in which the oligarchy, the army, the liberal and right-wing political parties and the guerrilla groups fought for their control over the country. This was also the decade in which the United States finally intervened, prompted by the threat of the revolutionary political change in this smallest Central American country.

El Salvador had predominantly been a agricultural economy, which produced largely a single crop 'coffee' for export. "The country cannot live with the coffee market, and cannot live without it."¹ The economic and political life of the country had been dominated by a small number of leading fourteen families called los catarce grandes which

control the coffee industries too. These industries were usually the source of their huge wealth.2

Racially, the country represented homogeneous class culture. A small 'white' upper class and the five per cent of the population classified as Indian, the bulk of the population are usually mestizo in origin.

The role of Catholic Church had usually been predominant in the whole social and political life of the country. But when the combined repression, of the oligarchy and the army, gradually increased over the already oppressed masses, the Church moved closer to the people, and became their most vocal supporter. The Church delivered the message about the linking of religious power with revolution had been broadcast to the entire region and presumably to the rest of the Catholic world." This was indeed one of the most interesting developments in the recent history of Central America. However, the right wingers viewed this development as the Communist infiltration of the Catholic Church.

The revolution and the revolutionary were not new to Latin American people because the entire history of Latin

2. Ibid., p.74.

163
America was an unbroken story of the revolutionary struggles. However, the revolutionary changes in Cuba and Nicaragua had mostly changed the entire thinking process of Central American revolutionary groups.

During the Sandinista revolution, the Soviet Union was largely an ignorant spectator. She did not realize the potential and usefulness of the guerrilla warfare tactics in the Central American region. But the success of this strategy in Nicaragua, had justified the viability of Che-guevara's old tactics. On the other hand, it had once again renewed her interests in the region, though the area has always been considered 'a zone of Washington's influence'.

However, besides the Sandinista victory, the bitter civil-military conflict in El Salvador had also attracted the Soviet attention. Moscow considered El Salvador as next most possible revolutionary ground in the region. Even Soviet publications started giving attention to developments in El Salvador. The very premises were based on the fact that the country had a higher development of the capitalist

4. ibid., p.92.

164
forces, a larger working class and a more marked class struggle.

The pro-Soviet Communist Party of El Salvador (CPES) was always considered a natural ally to fulfil Moscow's objective in the country. The CPES was the oldest Marxist-Leninist organisation in the country and had marginal presence in Salvadoran peasantry and working class.

Tactically, Moscow had constantly been following her "two-track" policy in the region. Thus, she was helping the leftist insurgents, while seeking to improve state-to-state relation with the country. Nevertheless, in the absence of El Salvador's recognition of the Soviet Union, Moscow had been left with no choice, other than depending upon the pro-Soviet CPES to promote her objectives. In the meanwhile, in 1974, Moscow established trade relations with El Salvador.\(^5\)

In spite of her initial lukewarm approach to the strategy of armed struggle the Soviet Union continued to support a number of "political-military" fronts, and coalition of the various guerrilla groups. El Salvador was one

of the first country to follow the Soviet strategy of coalition which later constituted a new combined guerrilla front, the Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation (FMLN).

However, Cuba remained a revolutionary model for El Salvador's revolutionaries. At the same time, "Cuba demonstrating its utility to the USSR and gaining leverage as Moscow's key Latin American ally, while keeping the pressure on the Soviets to provide the strongest possible backing for Sandinista and other revolutionary groups in the region". However, the Cuban assistance cause more in terms of training, diplomatic attention, propaganda, rather than direct weapon supplies. The FMLN tried to obtain as much assistance as possible from the USSR and Cuba, directly or via Nicaragua. However, the Soviet Union failed to extend the quantity and quality of help as expected by El Salvador. Even Jorge Shafik Handal, the General Secretary of the PCES, visited Moscow twice seeking military aid and political support for the Salvadoran struggle.


166
Formation of the FDR and the FMLN, and Soviet Response

By the early 1980s, the liberal reformers and revolutionaries were exhausted to watch the civilian-military Junta's game of musical exercise. On 18 April 1980, they forged a political alliance, the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR). The FDR, included the chiefs of popular organizations, Union leaders and some religious figures. Alvarez Cordoba, a slightly left of the centre politician, was named as a head of the party. Guillermo Ungo and Reben Zumora (ex-Christian Democratic Party leader) were chosen to complete the triumvirate. The FDR agreed that El Salvador desperately needed basic political and economic change. They believed that to meet the challenge from the right and the United States, the combined leadership agreed on tactics of public repudiation of the ruling elite. Furthermore, they were spreading their political thinking by demonstrating, protesting and organizing public against the government. However, besides their political action, they also recognized the need of revolutionary activities.

In the meanwhile, the political and the revolutionary activities of the people reactivated army repression more ferociously. The political space gradually narrowed, which forced various leftist parties and groups to engage in armed struggles. Their efforts, however, were uncoordinated.
Even theoretical and ideological differences among them led to organizational antagonisms and hampered them to construct a unified military command. Eventually, however, the leaders of each faction came to realize the need and importance of their unity on the battle front.

Under this realization, on 10 October 1980, the various factions of like-minded parties came together and formed a unified front called the Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation (FMLN). Most of the leaders of the revolutionary groups resurrected Farabundo Marti's houses to promote a unified command to launch an armed struggle in the country. Ideological differences remained secondary to unified war strategy.

"This alliance became known as the Revolutionary Coordina-

9. The FPL, ERP, RN, CPES and PRTC.

10. G.W. Sand, *Soviet Aims in Central America: The Case Study of Nicaragua*, (NY: Praeger, 1989), p.57. Augustin Farabundo Marti, a Salvadoran Communist during the 1930s. He was the key organiser of the Salvadoran Communist Party in 1931. He led a peasant uprising in 1932 and was later killed. But the seeds of revolution inculcated in 1932 by Marti had now begun to germinate in the form of new revolutionaries in 1980s.

11. *Keesing Contemporary Archives* (KCA), Vol.26, no.7, June 1980, p.30323. "They were the Popular Revolutionary Bloc (BPR, having the FPL as its armed wing), the Popular League (PL) with its armed wing the Popular Revolutionary Army (ERP), the United Popular Action Front (FAPU) - its armed wing, the Armed Forces of National Resistance (FARN)."
dration of Masses. They also announced their aims: to overthrow of the existing military-civilian junta regime, the installation of a "democratic revolutionary government"; the nationalization of country's means of production, the banking and financial system and foreign trade; the creation of a new army, and to investigate cases of missing persons dating back to 1972."\(^\text{12}\)

The CPES, followed Moscow's endorsed strategy of guerrilla alliance. It played an important role in achieving consensus among different factions of guerrilla groups, which led to the formation of the FMLN. In addition, the decision on the part of the CPES to make new strategic shift and follow armed struggle in 1980s, however, had originated within the Communist party leadership and had nothing to do with the Soviet initiatives.\(^\text{13}\) Indeed, the decision for alliance provoked more concern than satisfaction in the Soviet Union. It was because it showed that the CPES's strategy, sometimes, did not correspond to Moscow's expectations. It usually behaved more independently from the USSR in terms of strategy and tactics.

To examine the guerrilla's perception of the USSR, one has to see the relationships between the Soviet Union and the revolutionary groups in the region. There were very

\(^{12}\) ibid.

\(^{13}\) Varas, n.7, p.94.
complex range of revolutionary groups in the region that differed on the question of ideology. These were very much prone to functionalism and leadership rivalries. These practical features of the organizations had proved the unviability of any durable relationship with the Soviet Union. It also discouraged, further, to judge accurately the actual potential of these groups.

Initially, Moscow was skeptical about the role played by the small armed groups and had never considered the fruitfulness of their efforts to achieve their revolutionary goal. But, first Cuba and then Nicaragua forced them to realize the futility of these groups. Instead, Moscow still relied upon native Communist parties. But now she endorsed the alliance between these small groups with the pro-Soviet Communist parties.

In their strategy, the FMLN perceived that the USSR could be a source of logistic and military support for them. Since the FMLN was still unrecognized by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), reliability of donor was in question. They were skeptical of the Soviet intention and perceived that it could be suicidal once a guerrila offen-
sive took off and the military needs were not met in time.\textsuperscript{14} In addition, the Salvadoran guerrillas also recognized that assistance given by Moscow was scarce and ill timed. Even to maintain regular contacts with the Soviet Union was not possible by them in the crisis condition. They knew that any overseas assistance required a well-developed communication infrastructure and local public support. In May 1984, the FMLN convincingly argued the difficulties of receiving military assistance from Cuba and Nicaragua into Salvadoran territory.\textsuperscript{15} All these problems, plus the reputation of the Soviets of withdrawing support without even warning, made revolutionaries skeptical about the real significance of Soviet endorsement of armed struggle in Central America.

In spite of the presence of the CPES in the FMLN, the coalition did not expect so little aid from the USSR because both the FMLN and the Soviet Union's interests were identical and opposite. The Soviet Union wanted their control over the guerrillas, which ultimately raised the latter's mistrust of the role of Soviet Union. The FMLN tried to obtain Soviet military aid during the height of domestic


\textsuperscript{15} P. Ramet and Lopez-Alves, "Moscow and the Revolutionary Left", Orbis, Summer 1984, p.357.
conflict as they also tried to get it from France and Spain or from the overseas black market in Libya. 16 "Soviet backing, however, came essentially to Cuban and Nicaraguan covert arms transfers to the guerrillas in El Salvador. 17 They also knew that any overseas assistance would not really decide the struggle in their favour. Of course, military aid might have changed the nature of struggle but not enough to eliminate or keep guerrilla active and alive, or to defeat or to maintain elite in power.

El Salvadoran Revolutionaries and Civilian Military Junta

Historically, the country had predominantly been ruled by a coalition of oligarchy and military forces. This alliance had constantly been trying to prevent the advent of democracy in the country. The extreme exploitation of the people, produced revolutionary movement asking for change. As society modernized and produced a middle class democracy gradually became an essential part of political discourse. People were exposed to the anti-fascist ideology that inspired them to fight in World War II. Nevertheless, revolution remained, for some of the middle class people, the only road to democracy. However, the popular upsurge mostly was

crushed quite ruthlessly by the undemocratic regime.

Interestingly, in 1960, under Alliance for Progress Fund from US, some initiatives had been taken to modernize El Salvador's economic infrastructure. Which consequently, more peasants were forced off their land and became either rural proletarians or city labourers. The economic growth was accompanied by greater political activities. The circumstances brought various Marxist groups together to discuss on their line of action. Debate, however, produced a split in opinion between the advocates of armed struggle, who pointed to the futility of electoral process, and the Moscow oriented majority that eschewed the guerrilla model. The guerrilla success in Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions was another source of attraction for the radicals to follow the same path in EL Salvador.

On the other hand, the people's popular resistance grew day by day and became a constant feature of the national life. Such volatile socio-political nature of the country led to a military coup on 15 October 1979. The coup was organised by a group of reform-minded junior army officers. The civilian-military junta declared an end to the 'state of anarchy'. The junta even invited left, centre and right to
join the new governing group. With the installation of new civilian-military junta government, the objectives of the oligarchy had been fulfilled, i.e. to stop the revolutionary 'left' from coming to power. The junta survived for a year. They did some fundamental reforms, which were even supported by the revolutionaries and they made peace with the new government. But the issue of the role of the armed forces, however, would remain a bone of contention.

The military-dominated junta was transferring formal power to a civilian president and successfully consolidating its presence in the state, expanding its network of control and maintaining its institutional autonomy. Politics of the centre came into working with its capacity but it had no power. In January 1980, all civilian members resigned from their posts due to right-wing command. But in Washington the slogan remained: "Keep the Center alive".

The "Final Offensive" and Soviet Policy towards El Salvador

The election of Ronald Reagan as a President of the United States had signalled a sense of fear among the revo-

olutionaries of El Salvador that he might follow more conservative policy towards them. To skip from such condition and forge any change in the country, the FMLN guerrilla, finally declared that the "final offensive" would occur before 20 January 1981, that was before Reagan's inauguration to his office. They also persuaded the Cuban and Nicaraguan government to take their support. The FRD-FMLN leaders coordinated their political-military strategy.

Meanwhile, expected revolutionary attack had forced Carter administration, unwillingly, to release the frozen U.S. military aid to the Junta, headed by Jose Nepolean Duarte. Later, the very decision conclusively initiated the process of war in El Salvador. The revolutionary organisation appealed optimistically to all democratic forces of the country to unite in the struggle against reactionary regime and their forces.

On the contrary, the American magazine The Nation, noted that the Washington intended to use the aggravation of the situation in El Salvador "as a convenient excuse to send


the US marine forces in El Salvador and crush the revolutionary upsurge in the region."\textsuperscript{21} The recent $57.8 million military and economic aid and some military advisors to El Salvador were a step forward in this direction.\textsuperscript{22}

As declared earlier, the war started in January 1981 and had raged throughout the country. The combat units of the FMLN carried out a number of bold operations against government troops. The flames of the El Salvador people's armed struggle were blazing with ever-increasing intensity. The poor farmers and peasant turned guerrillas. The blood from what was known as 'final offensive' spread thickly throughout the Salvadoran villages and cities. The popular mass demonstrations gradually grew into a real civil war. Continuing their successful offensive, they occupied scores of towns and villages throughout several provinces by attacking military posts and ambushing army columns. Life in the capital, San Salvador was completely paralysed. The government forces, in spite of having superior arms and weaponry, could not secure even its citadel capital, San Salvador.\textsuperscript{23} The Central American News Service reported -

\begin{itemize}
\item 21. ibid., March 26, p.5/CDSP, No.5, 1980, p.17.
\item 22. ibid.
\end{itemize}

176
"that more than 50 cities and towns are in the patriots hands." 24

By mid-1981, the FMLN's effort began to stall. The guerrillas were highly motivated and better trained, albeit not as well equipped as the El Salvadoran regular army. Even though, they appeared to have the upper hand, the initiatives they took initially and seized a large area of the country, could not be maintained. The guerrilla units were forced to retreat from some of their occupied territories, because they lacked the people to defend them. The organisation itself lacked the wherewithal to maintain the necessary administrative-military structures. When the revolutionaries abandoned occupied villages, the peasants fled and became refugees or faced the wrath of the military. On the other side, the military also learned some painful lessons, and returned to its barracks to lick their wounds.

The FMLN mmilitary achievements, however, strengthened the Reaganites, who demanded more aid from Congress to deal with the threat of Communism in El Salvador. Meanwhile, through both the covert and overt channels, the White House military assistance to El Salvador was ever increasingly

continued. Washington started malicious campaign against Cuba and Nicaragua and accused them of "giving support to the guerrillas in El Salvador and supplying them with weapons and ammunition." However, the fabrications supported by a US "confirmation reports' that "the Soviet Union, Vietnam, Cuba and other countries in the Soviet bloc are secretly aiding the leftist insurgents in El Salvador." 25

Alexander Haig's thesis report on Soviet-Cuban subversion in Latin America appeared in a 'White Paper' released by the State Department of the US government. 26 The document claimed that the U.S. administration had definite evidence that the Soviet Union, Cuba and the other Communist countries were sending weapons to the Marxist-Leninist guerrillas. The Soviet Union, using Cuba as its surrogate, was conducting indirect armed aggression against a small third world country.

In spite of 'White Paper', the U.S. government could not prove that guerrillas were receiving any support from these Communist countries. Few months later, when the first critical report about the credibility of White Paper appeared, it was found to have been fabricated by the US State

Department. Even J. Bushnell, Deputy Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs, was forced to admit under pressures of questioning by reporters, that "the US has no direct evidence of Soviet arms deliveries to the Salvadoran guer­rilla." John Glassman, the principal author of the paper, admitted that much of the document was based on speculation, not evidence. On the other hand, The New York Times admitted that "it is abject poverty and political repression, rather than "Communist agitation from abroad", that is the cause of the action by the masses, which are gathering momentum." The US administration faced a mounting tide of revolutionary events that was already beyond Washington's control. Before any reaction over the validity of reports, $ 25 million of military aid went to El Salvador.

Even though the FMLN's first offensive proved successful, but the cost of the civilian life was too heavy for the revolutionaries. Further, the defeated US trained El Salvadoran army, however, learned from its mistakes and launched fresh attack. Throughout 1981-82, under the changing political and strategic scenario, the FMLN leadership was forced to discuss the possibility of new strategic plans. Mean-

27. ibid.
while, under the impact of the civil war, hundreds of thousands of Salvadorans continued to leave their country and became refugees in neighbouring countries.

Since the revolutionary liberation struggle of the country became national in scope and the position of the governing junta, which found itself getting isolated and weakened with every passing day, the U.S. administration began drawing plans for democratic change in the country. By July 1982 America was able to manage an election in El Salvador. Amidst the promise of reforms and the free election, the U.S. managed to ensure that the basic reactionary character of the Salvadoran oligarchy and military remained in tact and unreformable.

In the election to the Constituent Assembly the U.S. supported the Christian Democratic Party (PCD) candidate Duarte lost the election. Instead, Robert D'Aubuisson, a retired major and the leader of the extreme right-wing coalition and was termed a 'pathological killer' by the former US Ambassador to El Salvador, polled the largest number of votes and gained a majority of seats in the

30. ibid.
'Constituent Assembly'.

However, the FDR-FMLN were not in favour of the election and wanted to disrupt it. They even sought to persuade opinion in the US that fair election were impossible because of the endemic violence. If representative of the FDR/FMLN were not able to participate, they argued, that the preferred choice of a large segment of the Salvadoran people would not be represented. Hence, they were totally barred from it. The White House managed it so expediently that media reported as if it was legitimate. On the other hand, the election results disappointed Washington's Salvador manager because a 'wrong person' had been elected.

The American dollar worked wonders, as compromise was reached between Duarte and Robert D'Aubuisson. The Junta was replaced under US pressure by constitutionally elected President, the extreme right agreed on the proposal that the PCD, Duarte could serve as President of temporary coalition government, who represented the same circle that his predecessors did.

The whole election fiasco was nothing but to create

32. Martz, n.29, p.103.
enough space for US State Department officials to squeeze the US Congress for more aid. Even President Reagan signed the necessary paper acknowledging improvement in human rights in the region, a lie that Congress nevertheless accepted.

By October 1983, the guerrilla leaders shifted their strategy of offensive war. The war against the Salvadoran armed forces, they realized, had become a war against the United States, too. The American-aided low-intensity war had started destroying the revolutionaries from all sides. Now the guerrilla forces started a new strategy to sabotage private and public sector owned by oligarchy. Nevertheless, the FDR-FMLN could not succeed in destroying the basic pieces of the Salvadoran economic infrastructure, such as dams or major power generation plants.

Amidst the offensive from both sides the right-wing forces, continued to block land reforms and army was repressing the civilian populace in villages. And yet the Reagan administration mounted the propaganda offensive to label the guerrilla as terrorists and a tools of Moscow, Havana and Managua to make the whole campaign an integral part of the greater cold war.
The report of the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America, chaired by former Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, acknowledged that the violent upheavals in Central America had their roots in history of repression and continuing unequal distribution of wealth. The reports, however, offered justification for continued US aid to El Salvador on defensive grounds. It said that the Salvadoran guerrillas had Soviet, Cuban and Nicaraguan links, who worked here as agent of revolution. But it did not convince US Congress that the American tax payers should fund this war. Although, the experts on both sides attacked and defended Reagan's policy to the region.

Peace Initiatives and Revolutionary's Response

By 1983, the United States role in the region had markedly overcome from "Vietnam Syndrom" with the invasion on Grenada. This event had an enduring impact on the Soviet-Cuban and Nicaraguan's role in another parts of the region. No one wanted to confront with the United States. On the other hand, the leadership succession was another problem for any meaningful Soviet role in the region.

El Salvadoran President's move for "peace" was nothing but a sense of urgency on Washington's part that to checkmate any further people's support to revolutionary. In the
mean time, the FDR-FMLN's leadership had also realised the demand of the time and considered other constraints in its guerrilla course.\textsuperscript{33} Thus, on 15 October 1984, the first talk was held. Both sides mutually agreed to take further course of action to end violence in the country. But the second such talks, scheduled to be held on 19 September 1986 was deliberately blocked by the Duarte Cabinate.\textsuperscript{34} Because his menter either wanted the continuance of the war or total defeat of the Guerrillas. Re-election of President Reagan in November 1984 was the other biggest blow to the peace initiatives. On the other hand, it also ensured the continuity of same U.S. policy for another four years, but with some restriction posed by the democrats, who had majority in Congress.

It was the colour of money, not the popular struggle of the masses that told much of the war story in El Salvador. Till 1988, the U.S. military aid to San Salvador jumped from $533 million in 1985 to $3.55 billion in 1989. The military dynamics with which the war began, however, continued to prevail. As soon as one side achieved a tactical advantage,


\textsuperscript{34} ibid., 21 September 1986, p.5; Reprint in CDSP, Vol.38, No.38, October 22, 1986, p.20.
the other learned how to counter it. The guerrillas usually reacted faster and with more imagination because they had less resources, reserve manpower (between 6000 to 12000 men) than the US aided and advised military.

By the late 1980s, the tide of the Cold War gradually started to touch the ground reality of the world. 'No ending of' fight between the Soviet Union and the United States, ultimately pushed them towards peace negotiation in 1987 on various international and regional issues. The result was the end of their aggressiveness in the foreign policy.

By the same time, the formation of the Contadora and their peace initiatives became a routine part of diplomatic life. Initially, Duarte or White House or the FMLN, all of them saw it rather cautiously. It was a result of the apparent White House obsession with the Central American civil war, which began to cause a deep concern among Latin American, West European and Soviet leaders.

In 1988, the elections were held in both the United States and the El Salvador. George Bush became the new U.S. President. In El Salvador, the right-wing ARENA again got majority in the assembly and Alfredo Cristiani became new
President of the country. The new U.S. administration also began to show a change in attitude which ultimately moderate the entire perception of Reagan era towards Central American conflict.

The FMLN also realized the importance of 'space', given by the changing political scenario and on 24 January 1989, offered a peace proposal. In essence, the FMLN announced that the guerrillas now possessed the political will to make peace and overcome the numerous obstacles created by a decade of war.

Inflexibility on San Salvador's part, led to the renewed FMLN armed struggle. It was one of the biggest military operation since the beginning of the year. The lack of dialogue between the military and political opposition and the Christian Democratic Cabinate, had once again dragged the entire country into 'no win war', and destroyed thousands of lives.

After a long silence, the Soviet Union finally appeared on EL Salvador's political scene and boldly criticized the adament attitudes of both sides. Moscow hoped that, "the

parties should came to an understanding to solve their political disputes. But use of force to get solution have no prospect of success. Serious negotiation, mutual restraint, a readiness to compromise, and political realism - this is what is needed, in our view, for an immediate resolution of the crisis. The Soviet Union consistently advocated the peaceful solution in El Salvador, based on accords that the Salvador government and the FMLN reached in Geneva (1990) and Caracas (September 1989) through the mediation of the United Nations envoy Alvaro De Soto.

"The White House and Moscow issued a joint statement, simultaneously in Washington and Moscow on October 20, 1990, calling on the government and the FMLN to intensify their negotiation, to reach a political settlement and to conclude a ceasefire as soon as possible. They also called on both sides to refrain from military actions which could threaten the prospects for peace. The announcement led to speculation that the Soviet government was intending to restore diplomatic relations with El Salvador."

Five leading guerrilla commanders of the left-wing FMLN issued a declaration on 25 September 1990 which "called for a 'democratic revolution' to end a decade old civil war.

The hegemonic political and economic power of the military and the big oligarchic families, to re-establish the nation's sovereignty and to create a lasting peace."40 This proposal also advocated the demobilization of both of the government and rebel forces, the creation of a civilian-controlled security force, a new constitution, judicial, electoral, political and agrarian reforms. They also welcomed the end of the cold war "as it makes clear that our struggle is in North-South one and not an East-West one".41

By the end of 1990, the change in American attitude, and national and international political reality, finally, convinced the right-wing idol Roberto D'Aubuisson accepting the left-wing legislators into the El Salvador assembly. The new space for the revolutionaries meant that the left candidates now could participate in election without risking their assassination. The Salvadoran bussiness class, the professionals, even some of the aristocracy grudgingly accepted the inevitability of a negotiated end to the war. On the other side, White House also ordered the US Embassy in El Salvador to 'settle it'.42

40. ibid., Vol.36, No.9, Sept. 1990, p.37707.
41. Ibid.
42. ibid., Vol.36, No.10, 1990, p.37771.
From "final offensive" to a political party, the entire guerrilla war against the oligarchy and military coalition proved a fiasco. Though the guerrilla forces fought this war bravely and skillfully, they were unable to translate their objectives into practice. On the other hand, the United States proved successful in its objectives to prevent the revolutionaries from winning a military victory. Decades of war killed more than 5,00,000 people. The CNN reported in October 1994, "that more than 300,000 people were killed by El Salvadoran military".

In the absence of the Soviet challenge, the White House was the lone arbiter of the fate of the Salvadoran people. The interventionist strategy of the U.S. remained a way of her policy in Central America.

GUATEMALA AND SOVIET UNION:

Till the middle of the 1980s, Guatemala had virtually no relations with the Soviet Union. Though for a brief period the relationship between the two countries had been established especially when the USSR was recognized by Guatemala in 1944, this was without any exchange of their

43. Blasier, n.3, p.17.
representation. However, when the Cold War started, the Guatemalan government, like other governments of the region, followed Washington's policy towards Moscow.

For the Soviet Union, politically, Guatemala was representing a system of right wing, reactionary military dictatorship. The politics of the country was essentially characterized by a highly personalized, centralized and dictatorial government. Traditionally, the country had always been considered as an area under the United States influence and was dominated by the U.S. supported military regimes. There was not much scope for any state to state relationship between the two countries. However, the presence of the Guatemalan Labour party (Partido Guatemalteco del Travaja - PGT) were considered by the Soviet analysts as an important instrument to enhance her objectives in the country.

Historically speaking, the Republic of Guatemala gained her independence from the Federation of Central American States in 1838. Since then the country's political history had experienced the periods of dictatorship and occasional

44. Millar, n.5, p.11.
democratic government, interspersed with revolutionary upheavals. "In December 1984 the Constituent Assembly (elected in July 1984) drafted a new constitution based on that of 1965. This was further approved in May 1985 and came into effect in January 1986."46

The society had traditionally been divided between **Radinos** and **Indians**. The former included the people of Spanish origin who constituted an aristocracy that governed the country, operated the economy and dominated society. The Radino class comprised four components; the large landholders, emergent middle class, the peasantry and the urban labour force. The Indians, more than half the population, were removed from national affairs. Many existed in a condition of virtual servitude.

Geographically, Guatemala is surrounded by three countries namely, Mexico, Honduras and El Salvador. Obviously, any change in these neighbouring countries usually affects the Guatemalan society. One common important feature of these three countries was that all of them were controlled and dominated by the orthodox military government.

The main source of the national wealth had been

agriculture, specially coffee and banana plantation. Over 50 per cent and 12 per cent of the national income from exports came respectively from coffee and banana industries. These industries had been controlled by the United Fruit Company of Boston. However, the UFCO represented the interests of powerful Americans with their investments in the Guatemalan property. The important members of Congress, high State Department officials and CIA officials either owned major stock in the company or had family ties with UFCO executives.

By mid-century the UFCO owned more than 40 per cent of country's most fertile soil. They even controlled nation's railroads, communication system as well as the port facilities and power generation sector of the country. The UFCO was not merely a big giant banana company, but its size, wealth and power made any Central American government appear a shade less than the sovereign. The tiny Guatemalan oligarchy, which had welcomed this American giant because it offered the possibility of US protection, possessed some 70 per cent of the remaining acreage, while the majority of the rural population, mainly Indian, held only 4 per cent of the

total land. Thus, this unequal class division, which persisted from Spanish colonial times, was perpetuated by autocratic rule and their repression.

Since mid-1950s, a series of events had changed the social and political size of the country. The ouster of popular government from power and in its aftermath the emergence of the crisis finally led to the bloodiest sequence of military rule in Guatemala. Even in these adverse situations, the revolutionary activities, had gained some ground, and become a part of the size of the Guatemalan people. To understand the reasons behind the revolutionary warfare, emergence of the military government, the forcible ouster of popular government by United States, thereby altering the destiny of the Guatemalan people, it is necessary to understand the Leitmotif that guided American policy since the early nineteenth century.

There were two sources of unremitting guerrilla wars which was fought in Guatemala between revolutionaries and state army. One was the skewed division of wealth possessed by the traditional oligarchy in the country. On the other hand, for centuries majority of the people were deprived of

48. ibid., pp.127-128.
land and social justice. The second was related to the factors that had encouraged US interests which finally provoked President Eisenhower to intervene in Guatemala's politics and thus overthrew the elected government of President Jacoba Arbenz in 1954.

In 1951, Colonel Jacoba Arbenze was elected President of Guatemala. He enjoyed the support of the liberal reform-minded fellow officers, and more crucially the support of progressive sectors of civil society. A candidate of the Labour Party, Arbenze was also favoured by the PGT, and had a wide range of support among the middle class. He was affectionately named, 'Red Jacoba' for his radical idea and policies, by his friendly Communist intellectuals.

Surprisingly, like his predecessor Arevelo (during 1944) President Arbenze had also followed the land reforms programme, the very source of poverty. Later, government had expropriate the UFCO's property and tried to reduce their monopoly over power sector etc. All such efforts were to get holds over the national source and reduce the U.S. interests in Guatemala. These reforms had a big negative impact on the UFCO's interests in Guatemala. But regardless of the UFCO's unscrupulous behaviour, there was a basic principle of business that no government could expropriate
US property and get away with it.

On the other hand, Arbenze's reforms had also sparked the excitement among the people and the revolutionary groups which was soon spread throughout the region. One Latin revolutionary concluded that, "a brave leader is embarking on needed changes without asking permission from Washington."

Therefore, under-pressured from her interest, the United States took decision to oust Arbenze from power. The US economic and military aid were cut which made it very difficult for Guatemala trade and credit to develop. Even possible loans, or favourable trade from outside United States, were also 'loaned on' by the State Department officials.

Finally, with the help of the CIA and the UFCO, on 18 June 1954, an elected popular government was overthrown by them. An army Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas became the new President of Guatemala. He declared that all expropriated land would be returned to UFCO and the oligarchy. The PGT was also outlawed by the government.49 A step toward Guatemalan sovereignty thus, was sunk again by the Monroe Doc-

trine in 1954. The entire social and political life was once again reverted back to the same traditional path. The military had only one duty to perform honestly, i.e. to defend the interests of the oligarchy.

Under such socio-economic and political conditions of Guatemala, the revolutionary groups visualized that the country was ripe for a successful guerrilla war. The leaders like Yon Sona and Turcios Lima (ex-army men and trained in counterinsurgency) declared revolutionary war against their former service and the oligarchy. Their complete turn about from being army officers to leftist guerrilla intended on overthrowing the government and converting the vast private estates into public property.50

During 1961-66, the guerrilla activities of revolutionary groups got successes and, once again, they proved that the Cuban formula could be successfully implemented elsewhere in Central America, especially under the condition of gross racial and class exploitation that existed in Guatemala.

By the 1970s, the revolutionary vacuum was re-filled by the group of the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP).51 The

50. ibid., p.59.
EGP was influenced by Marxism, costroism and liberation theology and was equipped with new forms of Indian race consciousness. The EGP was made up of members of various Indian groups, former student revolutionaries, workers and ladino peasants. They were united under shared understanding of political realities of the world. By 1975, the tiny guerrilla group's shots rang throughout the country. Even, some new groups has also made their presence felt in the country. Eventually, they cooperated but the ideological infighting prevented an early Union of the revolutionary forces.

In the meanwhile, the EGP's whereabouts was unknown to the government. Consequently, the army started counterinsurgency. They brutally tortured and killed civilians especially Indian people. Between 1970-1975, more than fifteen thousand Guatemalans were systematically killed or vanished - a report by the International Commission of Jurists said.\(^{52}\) However, when army was unable to locate the EGP bands in jungle raids, they dropped napalm bombs in the area. Even then the guerrilla forces grew and fought heroically.

\(^{52}\) ibid., p.30320.
The oil discovery in 1970 and an earthquake in 1976 were the events which had greatly influenced the life of the oligarchy and the poor masses of the country. The newly oil-rich Guatemalan economy had added more property to wealthy Guatemalans and even the military had also got some sweet percentage for 'insuring' the oligarchy's property.

On the contrary, the earthquake destroyed the nation. The vast majority of poor people died in it. The oligarchy and the military, even, stole the relief money that came from outside Guatemala. The Government's decision to cut all state supports to the poor and increase of prices further, squeezed the populace to the point of desperation. More significantly, the an alliance between the homeless and working class had occurred.

Emergence of Cold War

Emergence of the cold war in the late 1970s between the Soviet Union and the United States, had almost changed the very fabric and strategy of the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary war in Central America. The Nicaraguan experience had kindled in other revolutionary groups of the region a hope to victory in their respective countries.

The changed perspective had forced the Guatemalan
Communist Party to revive its old tactics. In an interview, the leaders of the PGT said that the military organization of Guatemalan Communist was the vanguard of the struggle that the country's progressive forces were waging for national liberation and social progress.53 He further argued that the benefits of coalition front had greatly helped first Cuba and now Nicaraguan's revolutionary forces to come to power. "The question of the unity of all the country's revolutionary forces into an anti-imperialist and anti-oligarchic front is now an urgent item on the agenda."54 The PGT had always followed pro-Soviet orientation and closely supported each of Soviet positions on international affairs. Certainly, it followed the Soviet endorsement of front politics too.

The decision to unite all revolutionary organisations was firstly initiated by the PGT. Soon other organisations like the Organization of People in Arm (OPRA),55 the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR) and the Guerrilla army of the poor (EGP), finally came together and had formed the Guatemala National Revolutionary Unity (URNG)56 in January 1981. These differ-

54. ibid.
ent groups brought with them varied military and political experiences. The URNG had been dedicated to combine political and military task for revolutionary change in the country. Its leadership announced that "their unification is the revolutionary struggle". 57 In its political programme, the URNG said that "to struggle against repression, and guarantee human rights; to achieve economic independence and to solve the working people's fundamental problem; to build a society that represents the interests of 'All country's patriotic and democratic forces; and conduct a policy of non-alignment and international cooperation'. 58

Eventually, the discussion how finally turned into action. Guerrilla units hit the headquarters of the detective squad, police stations and the Air Force Command Centre in Guatemala city. By 1982, their movement had gained wide scope. "The guerrillas are conducting combat operations on six fronts, and rebel forces zone of operations which covers over half of Guatemala's territory." 59 The main reason for their success was that '53 per cent of Indian population' 60

59. ibid.
60. ibid.
was actively participating in combat operations against the puppet regime. Many western journalists reported that the country has turned into a second Central America "powder keg" for its mighty northern neighbours.

Whether planned or not, the guerrilla wars of the 1980s, had permanently changed the Guatemala society. It freed human labour, the potential to produce wealth, to contract itself to agrobusiness or urban employers. It took away the age old Indian poems and songs, forcing the population to become refugees and assimilating them into the landino culture.

However, the successive military regime continued their repressive policy. This crusade was accompanied by mass arrests, torture and killing. On western press accusation, the government replied that "there are no political prisoners in Guatemala, only dead politicians." Even Vice-President F. Villagsan Kramer, had accused President Garcia of prosecuting and physically destroying political, public and trade union figures.

For United States, Guatemala was part of the so called

62. ibid.
'iron triangle', which feared that the loss of this strategic ground in the struggle against the revolutionary movement in Central America would be too big to compensate. The US tried its utmost to protect its economic privileges in this country, where the assets of direct American capital investors alone amounted to $221 million.63

In 1982, American Press reported that the number of civilian victims in Guatemala was approaching 3,000 for the past six months.64 Instead, frightened by the sharp upswing in the guerrilla struggle, Reagan administration opened the floodgates of its military and economic aid to the 'constitutional' President of Guatemala. In addition, the Pentagon continued to rely on the method of Guatemalan force in pursuing its policy in the region, banking primarily upon anti-popular dictatorial regimes.

The fighting between guerrilla and the armed forces continued from April to November 1984. But the heaviest fighting coincided with the offensive of the OPRA Group in March and April in the Suchitepequez department.65 Though

by early 1985, the army's counterinsurgency move received another success, which forced the guerrilla groups to retreat from this department. The guerrilla liberated territories found unable to defend them against army attack. Poorly trained and armed villages could not defend themselves against the trained army.

After three decades, in the first democratic election of 1985, Cerezo Arevalo became first genuinely elected President of Guatemala. He promised that he would devote his first steps to solve the country's most urgent problems of terror, to ensure human rights and to restore democracy in the country.

In consenting to turn power over to a civilian government, the military left behind a country in ruins. Through underhand dealings and backed by guns, the military regime - so called 'peoples choice' - succeeded one another to power. And each of them had excelled the other in applying the most savage methods of repression. The terror and brutality, elevated to the level of state policy, finally gave rise to public protests and opposition from progressive and patriotic forces, who rose up in armed struggle against the usurpers.

However, Arevalo took a strong stand in favour of peace
in Central America and openly declared his refusal to follow Washington's line of trying to isolate Nicaragua. "Any isolation means confrontation", he said in an interview "and we want peace, the development of ties, and integration". 66

Guatemala city and the White House, however, failed to realize that nothing short of redistribution of wealth could serve the interest of stability and order. The key factor of Guatemala politics lay in the very area which Arbenz was midst of tackling when he was ousted from his office, i.e., almost 90 per cent of the population was desperately poor and just 10 per cent had access to the everything of life.

By 1986, many national and international changes and recent revolutionary defeat forced the leaders of the guerrilla groups to re-think their strategy. After much of discussion, they were agreed: to take advantage of any opening of political space; continue to engage in armed struggle where practical; and in the spirit of Contadora and the larger Central American peace process, to pressurize for negotiations at the same time. The change in Soviet approach after U.S. invasion on Grenada was another reason for them to rethink their strategy.

The facade of democracy also allowed the revolutionaries to re-enter in political domain, primarily in the protest movements of working class. On the economic front, they utilized their newly found political space to organize protest movement. In the countryside, the guerrilla units surprised the over-confident military and slipped back into those territories, which they once held. Maintaining a low profile posture, the URNG waited for ideal opportunities and struck army patrols without any warning. Under the new strategy, they also tried to destroy the economic interest of the country's oligarchy. In spite of all such extreme acts, the guerrilla leaders wanted to capitalize this newly political environment to negotiate with the government.

In October 1986, during an official visit of Spain President Arevalo indicated his preparedness to negotiate a peace with the leaders of Guatemala guerrilla organisations. Later "the representatives of Guatemalan government and the URNG, further, re-opened "low-level" talks at undisclosed location in Madrid, Spain, on October 7-9, 1987.67 A joint communique stated that the meeting aimed at seeking "peace and democracy". After this meeting, the dialogue was not

resumed until 1989.

On the other side, neither Guatemalan army nor United States was ready to allow the URNG in any National Peace dialogue. Even the army did not want to join in. The political deadlock was so high that no party was ready to other's proposal. Even in March 1988, "after a meeting with the URNG, President Arias called on President Aravelo to reopen talks with the armed opposition." Much awaited formal talk began in January 1989. "In June the URNG proposed a 90-day ceasefire, which would begin on July 1990. Simultaneously the high level political dialogue were also on to dismantle the "instruments of repression". 68

As the period of President Reagan was over, the Pentagon strategy was also shifted from 'low-intensity war' strategy to one of the negotiations with the guerrilla forces. When President George Bush took over charge of the White House, his policy was characterised as 'no military aid and no war'. The US Congress, dominated by democrats, also put emphasis on discontinuation of American aid to brutal repressive military forces in Central America.

On the other hand, the end of the 1980s was also the

end of the Soviet global activism. Further, the slump in national economy and compulsion to shift her foreign policy from the conflict to cooperation areas were conclusively forced Moscow to follow pragmatic policy in both the national and international fronts. The newly found East-West friendship had finally provided a much needed space to Moscow to resolve their dispute through negotiations. The very background of both the Soviet Union and the United States, finally, gave their stamp on Contadora peace initiatives in 1990.

The wars that commenced with the overthrow of Arbenz government in 1954 and led to the building of a self-conscious military continued unabated throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Although weakened over the decades, the Guatemalan revolutionaries had proved their capabilities to fight the US counterinsurgency forces. This no-win low-intensity war between the Guatemalan army and the guerrilla proved too costly as thousands of Indian and civilian people died, killed and became refugees in neighbouring countries. The guerrilla strikes ended only when the ruling apparatus showed their willingness to meet the basic needs of the Guatemala population. Nearly forty years later the issues of land reform remained the pressing question. The tragedy which was begun by the United States in 1950s will endure
HONDURAS AND THE SOVIET UNION:

Throughout the post-World War II period the relationship between Honduras and the Soviet Union was overshadowed by the Cold War. In the end of the 1980s, when the Cold War met its natural death, diplomatic relations between the two countries were established.

For the Soviet Union, Honduras was representing a system of capitalist, liberal-bourgeois government which was often dominated by the military regimes. Though the country had had routinely elected governments, the military and bourgeoisie were undemocratic, unprogressive and divided. The society at large was characterised by class domination representing class-antagonism. Geographically, the country's territorial closeness to other three neighbouring countries (i.e., Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala) which were facing political crisis, suddenly brought to Honduras a very special place in the United States' calculation of the region. However, in such a condition, any viable Soviet strategy was non-functional Honduras.

69. Millar, n.5, p.11.
Despite all these characteristics, the presence of Communist Party of Honduras (PCH) provided a viable source for Soviet Union's strategy. Though the PCH was illegal, it was quite familiar, and popular among the people, especially the working class.

The country had been discovered by Columbus in 1502 who named it Honduras, meaning 'depths'. The Republic of Honduras gained independence from Spain in 1838. Since then the country had seen violent conquests and colonization. For a long time it was ruled by United Province under Guatemala. The country was, however, alternately ruled by the conservative (1840-1876) and the liberal (1876-83). The eighties of the last century had been always treated by them as a 'golden age' in their history because of tremendous educational development. In the same period, the country's capital had also been shifted from Comoyagna to Tegucigalpa.

Historically, the governance of the country, for a long time, had come from two sources. First was the Honduran Constitution and elected government, and second was the Headquarters of the United Fruit Company (UFCO). Both the Palacio Nacional (Nation Palace - President's house) and

office of the UFCO had used to pass orders. But everyone knew that the UFCO's order mattered most. North American firm, United Fruit and Standered Fruit, these two groups, had the reputation of making and unmaking governments at their whims. Between independence in 1838 and 1984, there were 126 different regimes and 14 constitutions.71

Out of the factions of the nineteenth century, a system of two-party had evolved by 1916 in Honduras. Power has alternated in the present century between civilian, military and coalition civilian-military governments mostly involving the Liberal Party of Honduras (Partido Liberal de Honduras - PLH) or the Conservative National Party (Partido Nacional - PN).72 However, both the parties were divided by personalities rather than by principles. They equally ready to sacrifice the country's interest for their own benefit. However, the PN appeased to enjoy a longer period in power, i.e., from 1932 to 1954, than its rival PL.

Society as a whole, had been represented by feature of extreme poverty, rural backwardness and single crop banana


The banana industry was dominated by United Fruit and United Brand Company of the U.S. The transnational companies owned 88 per cent of the arable land. This grave situation was the product of the unchecked foreign monopoly, which finally gripped the country's oligarchy. These two companies had not only control over "banana economy" but also 'banana republic'. Honduras' largest banana producer, the Tela Railroads Company (an officiated United Brand Co.) had not only monopolized the production and export of banana, it had even taken full control of the country's maritime and railroads transport. Along side they controlled, power stations, post and telegraph and telephone services. They had their own customs services and police force also.

The substantial changes, however, occured in the post-World War II period. By the mid-1970s the banana economy was replaced by the chief export crop, coffee. The process of industrialization had also started. This did not mean that

the society at large got benefited from it, though some Hondurans did. The gap between poor and rich grew sharply. These poor forces were soon overcome by the Communists.

On the political front, by the early 1980s, outside the legal spectrum, there emerged several guerrilla groups in the country. The illegal Communist Party of Honduras (PCH) was one among them. The other organizations were the Morazan Front of Honduran Liberation (FMLH), the Popular Liberation Movement (MPL) and Central American Revolutionary Workers' Party (PRTC).\footnote{77 T.P. Anderson, "Honduras in Transition", \textit{Current History}, Vol.84, no.500, March 1985, p.117.}

The National Patriotic Front, made up of the PCH, the Christian Democrats and a number of other left-wing parties and mass organization, as well as the country's leading trade unions, had been involved in political struggle of the people of Honduras.\footnote{78 \textit{Pravda}, Feb. 19, p.5/CDSP, Vol.33, no.7, March 18, 1981, p.11.} The Morazan Front for the liberation of Honduras was the only revolutionary party of Honduras, which was involved in waging an armed struggle against the reactionary regime. These revolutionary forces had used to help those peasants and workers, who were struggling against
the existing regime for better working conditions and higher wages.

One of the significant change during 1950s was the professionalisation of the military, which until then not even had a proper military academy. In 1963, under the leadership of General Oswaldo Lopez Arellana, an assertive new officer class swept away the civilians, politicians and established a military rule that would last, except for one brief interlude, until 1982.79

Policywise, for the Honduras revolutionaries groups Cuba, not the Soviet Union had been a revolutionary model. But Sandinista victory had rejuvenated even the less powerful guerrilla groups of Honduras. A Honduran leftist, who fought with the Sandinista, explained in 1985 "for the first-time young Communists could see a revolution triumph, a revolution that spoke Spanish."80

However, unlike its neighbours, Honduras had hitherto been free from fulfledge guerrilla activities, although the "Francisco Morazan Front" (named after 19th century military leader) had recently emerged with the intention of pursing a

80. Peter Clement and W. Raymond Duncan, The Soviet Union and the Central America, p.287.
revolutionary struggle in the country. Furthermore, they also tried to instigate rural unrest, such as that which was currently being experienced in neighbouring Central American countries. In addition, El Salvador's experience had inspired Honduran revolutionary to fight for social and political transformation of their country. The people's movement in Honduras stepped up its activities, in turn, military responded by intensifying repression.

The Soviet Union had no connection with Honduras. Pursuing her two-track policy in the region, there was no space for state-to-relationship with Honduras. The country throughout 1980s was governed by the pro-US governments and military personnels. Thus, obviously for Moscow there was the PCH only, which was always considered by it a traditional viable source of activities in its hand. Though having only 650 members, the PCH had followed the broad coalition with like-minded Marxist-Leninist groups. In 1983, the MPL and three other groups united and formed the Honduran Revolutionary Movement (MRH). The MRH, as an umbrella group

83. Anderson, n.77, p.117.
had also insisted to unite few other like-minded proliferated small leftist groups of Honduras. Even though, the MRH's advocacy of armed struggle and subversive activities had received a tiny support from Honduran society, it led an upsurge in labour unions, church organisations and some other sectors of the country.

Geographical proximity of Honduras to other countries of the region made her as an asset in the Reagan's policy. Because it had less powerful revolutionary activities, and could use against other crisis-ridden countries. Therefore, in an effort to stabilize Honduras and use it as a buffer state between Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. White House tried to encourage the establishment of civilian rule. The US, a traditional key player in the region, had two important interests in Honduras. First was to protect American corporate interests involved in United Brands and second, as the Somoza dynasty crumbled in Nicaragua, El Salvador drifted towards civil war, and guerrilla campaign intensified in Guatemala. The US saw Honduras, which borders on the three as the key to restoring regional stability. In pursuing this policy, the United States had dou-

84. Clement, n.80, p.290.
bled its economic and military aids of $45 million and $3.9 million respectively. However, they also pressurised dissident group officers in February 1980, not to carry out a coup against the Junta.

After much of negotiations, elections were held in January 1982, after a decade or so, the first elected civilian President Roberto Suaza (a candidate of Liberal Party) took office. However, it was also open to all between the parties (PN, PL, Christian Democratic Party - PDCH) and the Superior Council of the Armed Forces (CONSUFA) that whatever the result of the election, it would be final.87

"It was apparently no accident that the United States had chosen Honduras as the object of its close attention. Important political and social changes were taking place in Central America, changes which were openly anti-imperialist in orientation. An extremely tense situation had also developed in Honduras itself. Therefore the US feared that a revolutionary explosion might occur in Honduras. This fear pushed her to take "fire-prevention" measures. It was designed to prevent an explosion by means of gradual 'democratic liberalization' and at the same time, to turn this strategically located republic into the regions 'gendaims' (Eagal Eye)."88

In the meanwhile, as expected, on the very first day of

87. ibid.
President Suazo's term, Gen. Paz was replaced by Gen. Gustavo Alvaraz Martinez. He was a fanatical anti-Communist and well known friend of the oligarchy and banana companies. As a Chief of the armed forces, he had dominated the Superior Council and purged it of his rivals. All these quick actions of Alvaraz had made it clear to the people and the civilian government that the military had not really ceased to run the country. For the government it was impossible to take any measure that could touch the armed services or national security. The President Suazo appeared to be little more than a puppet.

Keeping of Honduras' geographical proximity in mind and encouraged by Gen. Alvarez and his anti-Communist feeling, the United States began a massive military buildup in Honduras. In 1983, Gen. Alvarez proved to be a key player in US effort to revive the moribund Central American Defense Council (CONDECA) and made ready that Honduras would play a key role in any possible move against Nicaragua, with or without CONDECA and to help counterinsurgency move against any crisis ridden countries. General Alvarez was dismissed in 31 March 1984. Since then many other heads of the armed forces came and followed same anti-communist line.

By the early 1980s, the Sandinista had consolidated
their power in Nicaragua and El Salvador was locked in civil war. Both these conditions had presented grave challenges for Honduran government. Because most of the anti-Sandinista National Guard (NG-Contsas) fled their country and poured across the Honduran border. In addition, the civil-war and long, rugged border with El Salvador had become another source of Honduras' crisis, especially El Salvador's crisis had been intensified and forced thousands of Salvadoran to slip into Honduran territory as refugees. Sometimes the Salvadoran revolutionaries evaded their foes by slipping into Honduran mountains.89 The border dispute between the two was another source of traditional conflict. However, defying peace treaty of October 1980,90 the Honduran army took advantage of the chaotic situation of the country and occupied some disputed pockets of El Salvador in 1982.91

In the meantime, inside the country, both the revolutionary activities and the military's repression continued. In August 1983, Gen. Alvarez "claimed that some 3,000 Hondu-


rans were recently being trained in guerrilla subversion and destabilization. They were mainly trained in Cuba and the Soviet Union and that recently 200 of these guerrillas had crossed into Honduras from Nicaragua. 92

However, the fledgling armed guerrilla struggle received its greatest setback. In August 1983, Jose Maria Rayes Matos of the PRTC invaded the Honduran department of Olancho from neighbouring Nicaragua with some 2000 armed followers. 93 Also along, in an unknown capacity, was James Carney, known as Padre Guadalupe, a Chicago-born priest who had been expelled from Honduras in 1979, the invasion was a fiasco. Both of the Groups were killed by the Honduras forces on September 18. The counterinsurgency move of Honduran forces had forced like MRH to limit itself to small actions. 94

In 1983, President Reagan in his visit to Honduras, reiterated the US's desire to increase military aid. Though the army was not facing any shortage of American grants. Helped by the flood of American dollars, Honduras built up one of the largest and sophisticated air force in Central

93. ibid.
94. Anderson, n.77, p.117.
The annual United States non-military and military aids to Honduras rose to 90 million dollar in 1983 to $161 million in 1985. At the same time, however, President Reagan had announced a U.S. undertaking to 'defend Honduran sovereignty and territorial integrity', reaffirming his country's commitment to 1947 treaty of Rio (the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance) and to the 1948 Charter of the Organisation of American States (OAS).

On the other side, in February 1985, a new opposition alliance, the Democratic and Constitutional Opposition Coordinator (CODECO), was formed by members of the PN and the PCD and left-wing liberals. They criticized the undemocratic character of President Suazo and also labelled charges of corruption, human rights violation disregarding the constitution and interference in the internal affairs of political parties, business, trade unions, professional bodies and student organisations. One spokesman for Student organisation in Honduras told journalists that "among other things, this is drawing this republic, with the open consent of its government into the orbit of its aggressive policy.

It has inundated this country with its military specialists, who are teaching Honduran army unit's anti-guerrilla tactics."\textsuperscript{98}

As a matter of fact, after the mid-1980s, the honeymoon period of United States-Honduran relations did not last long. Honduran military officers and civilians alike began complaining that the amount of economic aid was not sufficient. They were also criticizing President Suazo and America over the military training being given to Salvadoran army at CREM. "We don't want to train people who will attack us later" - one Honduran military officer explained.\textsuperscript{99}

By 1986, President Suazo was replaced by elected President Azcona. It was the first time in 55 years of Honduran history that a civilian leader, voted to power by free election, had taken over from another elected civilian President. In January he reaffirmed Honduran commitment of friendship with the United States and peace and neutrality with her immediate neighbours.\textsuperscript{100}


\textsuperscript{99} Anderson, n.77, p.116.

\textsuperscript{100} KCA, Vol.32, no.4, April 1986, p.34289.
As the Honduran economic condition deteriorated, the labour unrest gripped national politics. There was a slight increase in guerrilla activities in the country during 1986-87. Though they were divided but they were quite active, mostly in remote areas of the country and along the Atlantic Coast.\textsuperscript{101} Their continued presence was a source of growing concern to the military.

But the greater concern, however, was the presence of the Contras in border areas. However, the Contras had not only created problems for coffee grower but their presence also aggravated security problems with Nicaragua. Throughout 1986 and 1987, there were many Nicaraguan military incursions into Honduras in pursuit of Contra forces. It seemed that the incident might escalate into a major clash between the two countries, but these fears had mostly remained unrealistic. On the contrary, many observers indicated that there was an unprecedented rise in corruption within the military command, due to the presence of Contras in Honduras. They were also blamed for their alleged involvement in drug trafficking.\textsuperscript{102}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{102} KRE, Vol.34, no.5, May 1988, p.36012.
\end{itemize}
Throughout the 1980s, the Honduran foreign policy was dominated by the conflict in Central America and the relations with the United States. The White House's interests in Honduras, was particularly to use that country as a military base for US covert operations against the Sandinistas and train and help the contras, while Tegucigalpa government was of greater concern to the US economic aid and military assistance and private corporate investment in the country.

Many Hondurans, however, criticized the US aid programme, charging that it was insufficient, misused and directed to support the military and the Contras. They also charged that the US aid was unpredictable, the Congress frequently failing to make good on Reagan administration's promises. Even then in 1987, the US grant to Honduras was $131.6 million of economic aid and $61.2 million in military assistance. The Reagan administration tried to sell 12 F-5E fighter aircrafts to Honduras, which fueled a controversy that the proposal represented a dangerous escalation of the regional arms race.

On the other front, the end of the 1980s gripped by peasant protests, increased terrorism, renewed guerrilla activities, persistent problems raised by the Contras, contributed to violation of human rights in the country. An additional factor was the presence of thousands of Salvadoran refugees. During 1986-87, the number of political killings, disappearances and military torture was quite high due, mainly, to the serious political and social problems.

The Azcona administration had repeatedly been criticized and charged with providing a front for President Reagan's policies in the region. Obviously, it was difficult to separate relations with the United States from Honduran policies toward the rest of Central America. However, the Honduran government reiterated its support for regional peace efforts like those initiated and undertaken by the Contadora Group and by Costa Rican President Oscar Arias Sanchez. But Hondurans' deep suspicion of the Sandinistas, combined with their economic dependence on the United States, made them reluctant to entrust their security to any regional arrangement. The adoption of the Arias peace plan by Central America's President presented a tactical and security problems for Honduras. In case, if fully implemented, the plan would require the Honduran government's
denial of the use of its territory by the Contras, an action that would alienate the Reagan administration and risk open clashes with Contra forces. But on the other hand, failure to abide by this provision could burden Honduras with the responsibility for the failure of the plan. They also feared that the failure might cause liberals criticism in the United States and Europe and increase the nation's international isolation. Anyhow, the search for a peaceful solution to Central America's conflict, while vital for Honduran economic prospects, seemed to offer more risks than hopes and once again to place the nation in a no-win situation.

Relations with individual Central American states encountered a variety of problems. The unresolved border dispute, refugee problems, fighting along the border and civil-war inside the country contributed tensions with El Salvador and Guatemala. Relations with Nicaragua were dominated by the Contra issues, the violation of its border and allegation and counter-allegation. "Nicaragua accused Honduras of being a United States Satellite, and Honduras responded by criticizing Soviet influence in Nicaragua". 105

The Honduran relations with the rest of the world were

less important. This was possibly restricted by the economic and military aid dominance of the United States. Several high-level Honduran delegations visited Europe, but the results were generally disappointing. In 1987, Honduras tried to expand ties with the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, even though she did not have full diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. But its effort to broaden contacts with the Socialist bloc was widely seen as a signal to the United States not to take Honduras for granted.

Although, in the 1980s, Honduras became the focus of greatly increased international attention, she neither got security nor prosperity. By almost every standard, socio-economic and political situation deteriorated drastically. Lacking faith in both friends and foes, the Azcona now the new President since 1989, approached the peace process with extreme wariness.

The country was physically occupied by two foreign armies, namely of the United States and Contras and sometime other armies also operated in Honduras' territory. The political system, barely able to withstand fractious parties, polarizing personalism and excessive klepticalism was responding to the added demands imposed by extreme exile politics. The country's chief ally, while talking peace,
prepared for war.

Honduran democracy was limping on, overshadowed by the military and burdened with a catastrophic economic situation. Institutionalized cynicism, in the form of corruption and venality was on its height. The military was profiting from drugs, businessmen willingly defrauded the State and top level politicians were either ignored of it or involved in corruption.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, revolution appeared to carry the dynamics of the future as it spread in Central America. The heroism of Che guevara and Fidel Castro, the romantic idealism of Sandinistas, the inspiring images of Farabundo Marti rebels and armed Guatemalan and Honduran peasants became a source of hope for change in Latin America. By the end of the decade, however, it was counterrevolution that prevailed. Even before the formal collapse of the Soviet Union, the age of revolution had waned.

Instead of inaugurating a new era of liberation, as revolutionaries believed, the uprising of the 1970s and 1980s had symbolized the end of an historic era that had endured more than a century. During the struggle, peoples aspired to nationhood, meaningful concepts of sovereignty
and independence. By the 1970s, transnational corporations and multilateral lending institutions controlled the commanding heights of the economy of the most poor nations.

COSTA RICA AND THE SOVIET UNION:

The relationship between Costa Rica and the Soviet Union became visible first in mid-forties, when the latter was formally recognised by the former in 1944. But when the tide of the World War II was over, soon Costa Rica pulled her hand from the Moscow.

For the Soviet Union, obviously, the Costa Rican Society did not represent a mature class-antagonism ripe for revolution nor its military bourgeoisie were unprogressive and fascist. Rather the society was plural, representing one of the oldest functioning democratic system in the region, which was governed by the highly educated people and the national capitalist liberal bourgeois.106 The governance was, however, fully tilted towards the United States.

Despite all these factors, however, the legal functioning and presence of the Communist Party of Costa Rica (CPC-Partido des Comunista del Costa Rico) and pro-

106. Millar, n.5, p.11.
Soviet Costa Rican Popular Venguar Party (PVP) were considered by Moscow the prospective foreign policy tools in their hand.

The discovery, settlement and colonization of Costa Rica took place under somewhat of unusual conditions. The Great Columbus landed in the region in 1502 and saw the possession of gold ornaments by inhabitants. Probably this led him to name it Costa Rica (Rich Coast). The country was first organized as a province in 1540 and was eventually placed under the provincial administration in Guatemala. The country achieved independence from Spain in 1821 and became a Republic in 1850. In 1871, the first Constitution was promulgated. Though frequently modified, it remained Costa Rica's basic law until 1949. The new 1949 constitution established the country as a democratic state with an executive president directly elected for a four-year term and Legislative Assembly.107

Politically, in World War I and II, Costa Rica was a US ally, but not a military participant. Since 1948, there had been no army in the country which had been forbidden by the

new Constitution. In a continent where pronunciamientos (frequent coup d'etat) was endemic and people were generally subjected to whims of ill tempered Colonels, Costa Rica had happily escaped coup d'etatas with which Central American history has been filled.

Costa Rica is a Whiteman's country and an island of European blood. Population comprises only 1.8 per cent of Negroes (black Indians) and Mulattoes and usually living mainly on the Coast. The rests of the population are whites connected to the modern Ticos. The entire Spanish speaking population is highly educated.

The Church has enjoyed an important place in the society, particularly in its political and social role. Roman Catholicism is a predominant religion in Costa Rica. It has succeeded in influencing 97 per cent people's style of life. Kindness, gentleness, good manners, and concern for security and well-being are undoubtedly the most notable traits of the Ticos.

After a brief aberration of attempted military rule in

108. Niedergang, n.73, p.362.
109. ibid., p.363.
Costa Rica democratic principles were restored in its government. First of all, the army was disbanded. "It had never happened anywhere in Central America before. Symbolically, the Bella Vista military barracks, that breeding-ground for Chiefs of Staff, and house of possible pronunciamiento, was turned into a Fine Arts Museum." 111 Jose, one of the great leaders of the country in 1940s, was neither a left-wing extremist, as the conservatives said, nor a right-wing extremist, as the Communists said, though he struck a blow on either side. He nationalised the banks and also banned the Communist Party of Costa Rica.

As planned, Jose Figueres handed the torch of democracy to first elected President of Costa Rica, Otilio Ulate, and left politics. He re-emerged in national politics, as a National Liberation Party (PNL) candidate for President 1953 and became elected President of Costa Rica and acquired the nickname 'Don Pepe'. During his tenure San Jos became the place of shelter for democratic leaders who forced into exile by the military. The United Fruit Company, an American multinational, which had a great presence all over Latin America had to come under negotiation with Figueres.

The agreement said, however, that about 45 per cent of

111. Niedergang, n.73, p.364.
Company's profit had to be paid to the State. The Company's Schools and hospitals were also placed under direct government control. Her monopoly over railways, electricity plants and cocoa and hemp production was also taken away.

By early 1960s, however, the appearance of Cuban Revolution and subsequently of Castroism in the Caribbean had profoundly changed the whole political scenario of Latin America. Although Don Pepe was not in power, his party (PNL) tactics, tried to lead the democratic fervour as a 'third force' in Latin America. This was the time, when the entire Western hemisphere was gripped by military regimes. In such a condition, to talk about political pluralism and democracy, and its success in Costa Rica, was, indeed, a historical events. But this 'third force' had one major weakness, i.e., its model was of the United States. On the contrary Jose Figueres said,

"We are American first and foremost. Nothing will ever change that violent extremism is a waste of time. We must with the United States, condemning their mistakes and weaknesses when we have to, of course, but also trying to understand their point of view.... We are in western camp and must do nothing to assist Russia in the east-west conflict."112

This determination, together with his anti-Communist

112. ibid., p.367.
principles and pro-American reformism of Don Pepe did not fully satisfy the people's natural revolutionary excitement of the new thinking of Castroism.

In contrast to other outlawed Communist parties of the region, the Communist Party of Costa Rica (PCCR) was legal. The PCC, with other Marxist-Leninist groups, was allowed to function within the country's Constitution, though it was also following the traditional Communist tactics. The pro-Soviet PCC, also known as a Popular Vanguard Party (PVP) was allowed to build its electoral strength through broad united fronts, infiltrate in workers and students organizations, and trying to build a respectable image of responsibility.

The PVP had very nominal electoral presence in the country's democratic politics.113 As one of the leading members of the United Front, it had only 4,000 members. The organization was highly divided into factional politics and differences in opinion over a variety of national and international issues. Obviously, these weaknesses had hampered their visibility in public. But contrarily, the PVP was clearly advancing Soviet and Cuban interests in Costa Rica by echoing Moscow's foreign policy position. It further

113. Blasier, n.3, p.89.
helped to create workable condition for other front partners in national politics.

Historically, the Soviet Union had no role in this region, though Moscow always aspired for that. The USSR did not have diplomatic relations with Costa Rica in the pre-war period. But in 1944, with the green signal from big brother United States, Costa Rica routinely recognized the USSR but did not exchange her representatives until 1970.114 As expected, the Soviet government responded immediately and in November 1944, both Moscow and San Jose formally established their relations. But in post-war scenario, the relations became almost non-existent. "Ties were again re-newed at the end of the 1950s. The first Soviet scholarship was given to a Costa Rican student in 1958. Within two years the Soviet Press Agency TASS began to function in San Jose in 1960."115

The prelude to normalization of relations between the two countries were provided by a commercial opening in 1969. The excess industrial production of coffee and then refusal of her traditional market to absorb such surplus production had compelled Costa Rica to search a new buyer. Then the

114. ibid., p.44.
CMEA countries came to rescue her from this economic crisis. With the help from Secretary General of the PVP, Manual Mora, in June 1970, a commercial agreement was signed between Costa Rica and the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{116}

In 1970s, the international political scenario was broadly characterized by detente. After Cuban revolution, any foot-step in Western hemisphere was perceived by the Soviet a sign of greater strategic importance. Obviously, relations with Costa Rica was also seen by them from same perspective.

However, the opening of the Soviet embassy\textsuperscript{117} in San Jose provoked a criticism against the government's decision. But the Figueres administration had remained firm on his policies. Costa Rica's relation with the Soviet Union was more practical than tactical, as far as economic interests were concerned.

In February 1972, they had exchanged their diplomats.\textsuperscript{118} Besides diplomatic and commercial relations between the two countries, the Costa Rican-Soviet Institute

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{117} ibid., Vol.30, no.8, Aug. 1984, p.33028.
\textsuperscript{118} ibid., Vol.30, no.11, Nov. 1984, p.33457.
\end{flushright}
was created in 1973.\textsuperscript{119} In December 1973, the Cultural and Scientific Treaty of Cooperation was signed between the two countries.\textsuperscript{120} In 1978, Mikhail Ghergadze representing the USSR at the Presidential inauguration, said, "Soviet-Costa Rican relation has been of mutual benefit and has been based on respect, equality, cooperation, and non-intervention in the respective affairs of each nation."\textsuperscript{121}

The Sandinista victory in Nicaragua and in its aftermath, its growing regional and international impact virtually put the Soviet Union under a suspicious bracket. However, the Costa Rican government had always supported Sandinista cause and helped them in fighting the Somoza dictatorship.

The success of the Sandinistas had bolstered the guerrilla activities in the region, so much so that even a plural democratic Costa Rican society could not remain untouched by it. Though the PVP's activities were peaceful and nominal, they always worked as linkage between the Costa Rican government and the Soviet Union. Under broad

\textsuperscript{119} ibid., Vol.30, no.12, Dec. 1984, p.33502.
\textsuperscript{120} ibid.
\textsuperscript{121} Varas, n.7, p.253.
coalition strategy, the PVP along with other like minded progressive organisations had finally followed the Soviet and Cuban line to form the leftist Peoples United (Pueblo Unido - PU) coalition. The PU's representation in the "Congress" was non-existent, but their strong trade union had enormous impact on Costa Rican national politics.

Numerically, in mid-1980, Costa Rica's labour force was estimated about 34.8 per cent of the total population. The structure of the economically active population in 1981 was approximately: agriculture 26.7 per cent; Service - 24.4 per cent; Industry - 15.4 per cent and other sectors - 33.5 per cent. The trade unionism had started gaining ground in Costa Rica long back in 1960s. There were various trade unions, around which the labour force and its various small organisations cause together. There were, however, two major trade union organisations. "The first was Costa Rican Confederation of Democratic Workers (Confederacion Costarricense de Trabajadores Democraticos - CCTD) which had 50,000 members; the second was, the United Confederation of Workers (Confederacion Unitaria de Trabajadores - CUT). It was


123. ibid.
linked with the PU coalition and consisted of over 50 affiliated unions with a total membership of some 55,000. 124 Both these organizations had been working especially around the United Front Company's banana sector. But CUT had very promising presence in electoral arena of the country.

Besides the electoral role of the PVP, it often followed traditional Communist tactics to organise strikes and demonstrations to press its demand democratically to the government agency. One of such activities in mid-1979 was Atlantic Coast zone labour strike. 125 The "Four-Week" strike of 20,000 workers of the Standard Fruit and United Brands banana plantation took place in December 1979-January 1980. 126 It was identified by the government as a political movement, subvertive in nature, and in which international agitators participated. 127 About 5,000 plantation workers were involved in another 'Seven-Week' strike in July-August 1981 over the quality of life and wage demands. 128 The government responded immediately and declared two members of the diplomatic staff of the Soviet embassy persona non

124. ibid., p.109.
127. ibid.
128. ibid.
grata.  

Moscow, however, refuted Costa Rica's charges and subsequently suggested that San Jose measure did not improve relationship between the two countries.

During 1979-80, political development in Asia and Latin America had forced to change the existing international political scenario. In the meantime, the White House welcomed Ronald Reagan, the new President. Suddenly, he chose to intensify Cold War with the Soviet Union. And, the western hemisphere became his first priority in his foreign policy agenda. One of the prime concerns of the United States was to limit the influence of the USSR-Cuban axis's role in the region.  

To a great extent the control and the hegemony of the United States over Caribbean and Central American region primarily determined its strategic activities in other parts of the world. The Soviet analysts also recognised that stability in the Caribbean would possibly give wider margin of action to the United States in other parts of the world.

However, joining with the United States, the Costa Rican interim foreign minister, Bernard Niehaus, "strongly

130. Varas, n.7, p.252.
condemned the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and termed it as typical imperialistic action."\textsuperscript{131} This statement was further supported by opposition which later pressurised the government to break-off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. The relations became more tense when the Costa Rican foreign ministry indicated that the USSR had been consistently violating the agreement between the two countries. It referred to the number of officials of the diplomatic mission and demanded that this number be reduced to eight. On the basis of these grounds, in November 1982, San Jose had asked 17 Soviet Diplomatic staff to leave the country.\textsuperscript{132}

Furthermore, the Costa Rican government denounced the Treaty of Technical and Economic Assistance with the USSR. In its opinion, from benefit point of view, relations with the Soviet Union had been lopsided and inappropriate. In her new policy as also under pressure from public opinion, Costa Rica was in favour of stronger economic ties with other Socialist countries. Important treaties with other Socialist countries were signed, such as a treaty of cultural cooperation with Poland, a commercial treaty each with the German Democratic Republic, Yugoslavia and Rumania.

\textsuperscript{131} KCA, Vol.26, no.11, Nov. 14, 1980, p.30571.
\textsuperscript{132} ibid., Vol.30, no.8, Aug. 1984, p.33028.
Even with Albania a commercial treaty was signed.\textsuperscript{133}

In early 1980s, Costa Rica was caught between two contradictory forces, that of an anti-Communist Reagan administration and a pro-Communist neighbouring Nicaragua.\textsuperscript{134} The San Jose policy makers found themselves pressed by the White House dictates to comply with an anti-Marxist foreign and domestic policy, while the country's geography was not permitting her to follow any hard modus vivendi with Marxist leaning Sandinistas. The combination of domestic crisis and foreign difficulties were further complicated by exile groups and dissidents living in Costa Rica. For years, the country had been a haven for political exiles from all of Latin America. These groups often displayed difference in their ideology ranging from far right to the extreme left.

However, labour strikes (the United States termed it political terrorism) tried to harm the economic interests. The United States permanent representative at the United Nations, Jean Kirkpatrik, claimed in August 1981 during a visit to Costa Rica, that the latter's democracy was being

\textsuperscript{133} Blasier, n.3, p.98.

undermined by "Communist subversion". Maintaining that the country was badly equipped economically to deal with political terrorism. She further said that the United States could assist in the area in police training.

In response, the Costa Rican President Carazo Odio refuted the US charges against inability to deal with such political terrorism. He sent two letters to the US ambassador to Costa Rica condemning the 'exaggeration and falsehood' in the latter's remarks and categorically rejecting any US military aid.

It was clear that United States wanted to anyhow penetrate, one by one, in all the Central American countries to fulfil her foreign policy objectives to destabilise the Sandinista government in Nicaragua from all corners. J. Kirkpatrik's statement also clarified the US interest in Costa Rica.

Moreover, the presence of Contra groups on the Costa Rican soil had spread the fear of international subversion,

137. ibid.
which began to surface in 1982. This country had been constantly rocked by bombing, political kidnappings and assassinations, and killing of anti-Sandinistas. Though Costa Rica had earlier rejected the US offer of military aid, it was now badly needing the same to ensure its security. Furthermore, on Costa Rican government's request, November 1984, 24 US special forces advisors (Green Berets) came to Costa Rica to train 750 civil guard officers to counter Nicaraguan subversive activities.\(^{138}\) According to the Central American Report of 12 April 1985, anti-terrorist squads had been formed in Costa Rica since 1982, with the assistance of United States, Israel and West Germany.\(^{139}\) It was formally reduced in the late 1987.

Traditionally, the relation between Costa Rica and Nicaragua had been more hostile than friendly. Border issues, political rivalries and threat of war were such as areas where they had disagreed with each other. Nicaragua was also the only country ever to have invaded Costa Rica. The fear of an actual military invasion by Sandinistas was further compounded by the presence and their anti-Sandinista activists of Contras who were operating from Costa Rica


\(^{139}\) ibid., p.34036.
territory. Moreover, the Costa Rican government was constantly pressurised by United States to allow the Contra activities to continue.

However, the Costa Rican disenchantment with the Sandinist regime began to escalate after 1982, which resulted from changes in the political orientation of either country. As Nicaraguan increased her ties with Cuba and the Soviet bloc, Costa Rica, did the same with the United States. Moreover, changes in government in Costa Rica and the consolidation of power by the Marxist forces in Nicaragua also made difficult for any further close relations between the two.

On the other hand, the Sandinistas also did not refrain from levelling charges against the Costa Rican government. They accused that the Costa Rican government was harbouring anti-Sandinista forces who said to be even receiving aid and support from it so much so that even the US aid to Costa Rica had been constantly diverted to the Contras. The same issue was raised by the Costa Rican opposition also and this had been a national political issue during 1985-87.

In such conditions, there were no space left for Costa

Rica to follow other than the policy of neutrality in dealing with the Sandinista government. Moreover, Costa Rica was actually pressed between the regional realities and the global East-West conflict. San Jose took decision to the close down some of the Contra offices and restraining their activities and decided to maintain a low profile relations with the Soviet Union. This policy continued till Gorbachev came to power in the Soviet Union and who later had given positive signal to Contadora peace proposal of Central American crisis in 1987.

At the same time, low economic performance and trade deficit had gripped Costa Rica's economy. The total estimated foreign debt of the country was US $4,500 million, one of the highest per capita indebtedness in the world.141 The economic tie-up with neighbouring countries was also affected badly.

In reference to economic relations between Costa Rica and the Soviet Union, they had little to offer to each other. Limitation of export items, always overshadowed their economic relations. Costa Rica had only coffee to offer to Soviet Union or CMEA countries. On some occasions, San Jose exported some rice and sugar to the Soviet Union.


245
On the contrary, Costa Rican imports of Soviet products were even more limited. Few tractors, jeeps, watches, glass, and some other items had been imported from the USSR. Though the trade between the two countries had never been significant, it provided a balance of trade, very favourable to Costa Rica. The devaluation of Colon (Costa Rican currency) was another hurdle in improving trade relations between the two countries. Looked at from all angles the Soviet-Costa Rican relations were largely restricted in their scope for obvious reasons which were more or less the same in the case of other Central American countries.

Conclusion

In the late 1970s and early 1980s revolution appeared to carry the dynamics of the future as it happened in many countries in Central America and throughout the Third World. The romantic idealism of Sandinismo, the inspiring images of Farabundo Marti rebels and armed Guatemalan as well as Honduran peasants became a source of hope for progressive changes in their respective countries.

By the end of the decade, however, it was counterrevolution that prevailed. Even before the collapse of the

Soviet Union, the age of revolution had waned in South and Central America. By the late 1991, only Cuba clung to the orthodoxies of the past.

The crude reality of 1990s, including the end of Soviet power simply left the revolutionary regimes of the Third World to their fate. It was indeed a formidable setback. Nor could the Americans maintain the global empire in the same way as they did during the cold war years. By 1991, the United Front Company of the USA was no longer holding the monopoly that could dictate terms to Central American governments and take advantage of their cheap land and labour. Instead, the UFCO was replaced by new corporate systems of Japan and Europe. However, till very recently the US interventionist behaviour towards its traditional area of domination in Central America had remained unchanged. For example, the U.S. invasion of Grenada (1983), Panama (1989) and Haiti (1994) demonstrated its inclination of maintaining its hegemony in Central America.

The Cuban and Nicaraguan successes in 1960s and 1970s respectively were no longer viable in 1980s. Even the Soviet support to the guerrilla fighters, was never regular and constant, due to which their interest was seem to be harmed. On the other hand, infighting and difference in
ideology and strategy combined with their small in number,
greatly hampered their understanding of the actual nature
and potential of the revolutionary movement.

The Soviet relation with the Central American countries
was quite a late development of history. During the inter-
war period only a select few of them recognized the Soviet
Union and tried to develop some semblence of relationship.
However, even these contracts of absolutely incipient nature
were disrupted by the realities of the post-Second World War
international politics. Thus, no meaningful economic or
political relationship between the Soviet Union and Central
American could develop till the end of 1950s when the suc-
cess of Cuban revolution opened a new chapter in the history
of the region. Soon thereafter the Soviet-Cuban relations
flourished as expected in many directions. However, the
Cuban success and the increasing Soviet involvement with
that country had encouraged the determination of the U.S.
administration to energetically counter any radical revolu-
tionary movement in South and Central America. The first
instance of the American determination was demonstrated in
the Cuban missile crisis. Subsequently America also re-
mained determined to repeat its performance.
It is in this context one can understand the limits and possibilities of Soviet interaction with the revolutionary movements in Central America which gained momentum in 1970s. It was obvious that the Soviet Union had to be cautious in the background of a determined American opposition to its presence in the region. So its assistance to the revolutionaries was quite limited in scope. This was, moreover, combined with four well thought out tactics. First, the Soviet Union avoided any direct involvement in the regional conflicts in Central America. Second, it extended its assistance and support to the revolutionaries through Cuba. Third, it advocated a politics of coalition, United front and wherever possible, the parliamentarianism. This was tried to be done by the local Communist parties which were small in strength but pro-Soviet in orientation. Four, closely related to the third tactic was the effort made by the Soviet Union to cultivate state-to-state relationship with the Central American countries whom it did not like to destabilise.

Apart from the American determination to challenge any Soviet ambition in the South and Central American region, the latter had a few other limitations, too. For example, an enthusiastic encouragement to revolutionary movements
needed a commensurate degree of material support which was beyond the ability of ailing Soviet economy in 1970s and 1980s. The continued commitment to Cuba was already a recurring burden. The Soviet Union was not prepared to make similar commitment to any other revolutionary movement in Central America. The prolonged fight and the failure of any emphatic achievement by the revolutionaries was another discouraging factor for the Soviet policy towards the region. Hence the reticence. Further, for various reasons, the Soviet economic relations with South and Central American countries could not be greatly developed. Thus the Soviet Union failed to develop any big economic stake in the region.

By late 1980s, 'new thinking' in Soviet foreign policy under Gorbachev finally turned the Soviet Union from global activism to domestic reality. Pragmatism in Soviet attitude led her to shift from 'ideological front to economic realism'. As a result, the revolutionaries of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras felt compelled to adopt themselves to global and regional changes. Costa Rica, however, remained largely unaffected by revolutionary movements rather the country became the shelter for all kinds of refugees. By 1991, the Sandinistas also became a loyal opposition. In El Salvador peace appeared in late 1991, but many obstacles
remained. The revolutionaries, however, learned and adopted to the changing times. They became reformers and elected members of the El Salvadoran Assembly.