

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

12 January 1979

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Soviet and Cuban Reaction to Chinese Activities
in Latin America

Soviet Reaction

The Soviets have several foreign policy objectives in Latin America: to increase their political and economic influence while eroding that of the US; and to open up the area as a new market for Soviet military hardware.

[] 25X1

The USSR's longstanding efforts to increase its influence in Latin America have recently enjoyed some modest success. The Soviets have used aid and trade as their main instruments for establishing ties with Latin American countries, such as power generator sales to Brazil and hydroelectric turbine sales to Argentina, Uruguay and Columbia. Equipment sales under the aid agreements are financed on concessionary terms. The USSR has also posted some 500 civilian technicians throughout Latin America. Trade is still small and the USSR continues to face a deficit in its trade with most Latin American states. Moscow has sent numerous trade delegations to encourage additional purchases, and, encouraged by the decrease in US arms shipments to the region, has offered military equipment to the Latin Americans but only Peru has become a customer.

[] 25X1

* This memorandum was prepared by the Latin American, Soviet, and East Asia-Pacific Divisions of the Office of Regional and Political Analysis in response to a request from the National Security Council.

25X1

25X1

25X1

RPM 79-10021

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

3
9
To achieve even such limited gains, the Soviets abandoned their earlier stress on relations with local Communist parties and radical anti-government groups and now focus on state-to-state relations. [] 25X1

If the Soviets perceive that the Chinese are using the Latin American Communist parties to further their interests the Soviets may attempt to strengthen their own party-to-party ties either through their embassy officers or through the Cubans. [] 25X1

The USSR will probably attempt to counter Chinese diplomatic activity in Latin America with an increase in its own activities, perhaps by offering more economic aid and stepping up its offers of military equipment. [] 25X1

The Soviets will also use every occasion to wage propaganda attacks against Chinese involvement in Latin America. Soviet media have already denounced Peking's interest in the area as "activating its expansionist policy." [] 25X1

Cuban Reaction

Cuban friction with China dates from the mid-1960s when Chinese diplomats in Havana ignoring the Castro regime's expressed sensitivities, persisted in their efforts to propagandize and radicalize the Cuban armed forces. A trade deal that went sour apparently because of a misunderstanding rather than ill will finally exhausted Cuban patience and Fidel Castro brought the matter into the public eye in early 1966 with a bitter speech denouncing Chinese "perfidy." Much of the Castro regime's animosity, therefore, stems from contentious bilateral issues and Castro's personal antipathy rather than from any Soviet pressure on Havana to take sides in the Sino-Soviet polemic. [] 25X1

Following the nadir in Cuban-Soviet relations in 1967, the Castro regime, which up to then had been straddling the Sino-Soviet fence in hopes of maximizing its foreign policy options, finally surrendered its China card as a means of ingratiating itself in Moscow and getting relations with the Soviets back on track. Thus, from 1968 on, Havana's ties with Peking deteriorated as relations with Moscow improved. [] 25X1

There was a brief respite in the downward spiral in the early 70s when both sides muted their criticism and the Chinese filled a long vacant ambassadorial post in Havana, but Havana showed its perversity by sending to Peking an ambassador who had been an official of long-standing in the pre-Castro, pro-Moscow communist party of Cuba. Friction surfaced again in 1975 when Cuban and Chinese policy clashed in Africa and since then the Cuban leadership has reserved some of its most vitriolic diatribes for the Chinese. Ironically, the Cuban military establishment, once the target of Chinese blandishments, has spearheaded Cuba's attacks on Peking and at times has even been out ahead of the party in this respect. 25X1

The most recent Cuban broadsides against Peking were loosed by Fidel and Raul Castro on 1 and 2 January, respectively. The Cubans seem particularly incensed that the Chinese have been able to accomplish what the Castro regime has been trying unsuccessfully to achieve for some time, full diplomatic relations with Washington and access to US markets and technology. While Havana continues to trade with the Chinese -- albeit at a very modest level -- the antipathy of the Cuban leadership toward Peking is so deepseated as to preclude any significant improvement in government or party relations in the foreseeable future. Secondly, the Cubans are keenly aware of Peking's inability to replace Moscow as Cuba's prime benefactor and, thus, economic reality joins political and ideological factors in determining a policy of continued hostility toward the Chinese. 25X1

Havana no doubt views Chinese initiatives in Latin America as an unwarranted invasion of Cuba's rightful sphere of influence and uses propaganda as well as diplomatic and unofficial channels to offset them. While the Cubans' influence is not so great as to cause the exclusion of the Chinese, it almost certainly has a negative impact on whatever the Chinese are trying to accomplish. Havana takes great pains, for example, to underscore Peking's ties to the universally suspect Pinochet regime in Chile, and the sending of a high ranking Chinese emissary to the area is sufficient to provoke a disparaging propaganda blast in knee jerk fashion. In virtually every country of the hemisphere

where they compete outside government circles, the Cubans have the decided advantage for ethnic reasons and because the local groups they support invariably have a broader base and greater acceptance than do those supported by Peking. [] 25X1

3
0
Havana has had serious qualms about many facets of Chinese policy -- Peking's unwillingness to provide substantial economic aid in the 1960s; its failure to enter the war in Vietnam as it had done in Korea; its role in the current China-Vietnam-Kampuchea clashes -- but perhaps China's greatest sin, in Cuban eyes, was its warming toward the US, Cuba's most implacable ideological foe. The Cubans see a conspiracy to confound Cuban foreign policy initiatives around the world and are especially concerned that this "alliance" may undermine the Castro regime's efforts to make a success of the Nonaligned Summit to be held in Havana in September. [] 25X1

Continued Chinese Economic and Diplomatic Activity

Although there have been no high level official visits between China and Latin American governments since early November 1978, Peking has continued to demonstrate its interest in forging closer ties with several Latin American nations. Most of the recent activity has been economic, exemplified by continued Chinese interest in purchasing grain from Argentina, and the signing of several commodity purchase agreements with Brazil, including a two year extension of last year's oil for iron agreement. [] 25X1

0
The normalization of Sino-US relations may provide new opportunities for China to expand its diplomatic relations in the region if other non-recognizing governments follow Washington's example. So far Columbia appears the most likely to do so. The last country in the region to establish diplomatic relations with Peking was Barbados, in May 1977. [] 25X1

SECRET

Informal Draft

File 23
Soviet
UnitNotes on Soviet Exchanges with Latin America
An Overview

Latin America offers unexploited economic and political opportunities. Until the 1970's Moscow was not in a particularly good position to capitalize on these opportunities. It had other priorities, and its presence in Latin America was not strong. Now, in the 1980's, the USSR is better established than at any previous time to expand its interests in this hemisphere. It has wider contacts, it has something to offer in the economic field, and it is not as suspect politically as in the past.

Moscow puts a premium on maintaining good state-to-state relations with all major Latin American countries. It is in this framework that it views opportunities in the exchange field. The Soviets have relations with all South American countries except Paraguay and Chile; in Central America and the Caribbean, however, not counting Mexico and Cuba, they are only beginning to show a wider presence. They do not yet have relations with Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Panama; nor with Haiti and the Dominican Republic. And their policies for this region are somewhat different from that for South America: they leave a lot of the initiative to Cuba, and they are not as hesitant about backing insurgencies as they have been in the rest of the area.

Another factor is that for years in the past Latin American governments were wary of ties with the Soviets because of their involvement with local communist parties. Now, in many states the Soviets are advocating communist party participation in the legal national process rather than armed revolution. The effect is to give greater prominence than before to state interests as opposed to party ties. They try to give the impression that revolutionary situations such as those in Nicaragua and El Salvador are entirely indigenous and that Moscow is only a moral supporter of them, while at the same time they give material assistance either directly or through surrogates. This dual track policy leaves them a freer hand to develop ties in the cultural and educational fields.

The Soviets prefer to work within a legal framework and pursue formal exchange agreements with countries where their presence justifies broader contacts. They have such agreements with nine countries including all the major countries except Brazil and Chile. They recently concluded a series of agreements with Nicaragua and Grenada which will enable them to expand their ties there.

Binational institutes for the study of the Russian language and culture exist in most capital cities. And in the field of student exchange, perhaps the most active and influential exchange area, they conduct exchanges not only under the formal agreements but under direct university-to-university agreements as well, and in some instances where they do not have diplomatic relations through communist party sponsorship.

Tk

SECRET

State Department review completed

SECRET

- 2 -

The Soviets view their educational exchange activities with all noncommunist third world countries as a way of extending their influence at a relatively low cost. According to CIA data, they have probably spend about a billion dollars on this effort the past 20-25 years whereas their military assistance programs to LDCs over roughly the same period has come to around 47 billion. Like their military programs, the training of foreign students reflects Soviet regional priorities. About one-third of the 70,000 academic students trained since the Soviet programs started in the mid-to-late 1950s have come from Sub-Sahara Africa; another third from the Middle East; and nearly 20 percent from South Asia. Only a modest 10 percent are from Latin America, and the rest from East Asia.

As of the end of 1979, some 30,000 foreign students were receiving training in the USSR, nearly 3,000 of whom came from Latin America -- or roughly 10 percent. Compare this with the 1965 figures: a total of some 10,000, of which nearly 1,000 were from Latin America -- also around 10 percent. Sub-Sahara claimed about 24 percent of the total in 1979, and 21 percent in 1965. A rate of growth modestly higher, but actual figures much higher.

No clear pattern of Soviet country targets emerges from the Soviet training programs. But the programs do reflect to some extent how the Soviets take advantage of opportunities. They operate programs in some countries where they do not have diplomatic relations -- for example the Dominican Republic, Panama, Guatemala, and El Salvador. Student numbers frequently have no relationship to the proportion of the country's population: some 360 students from Costa Rica in 1979 for a population of 2.1 million but only 35 students from Brazil for a population of around 120 million. Apparently the Soviets believe that in some of the smaller countries returning students can make an impact in propagating Soviet political views or just in encouraging academic and cultural contacts.

Just to give a few more examples of student numbers as a reflection of the state of Soviet relations with a country, there are now about 600 Peruvian students studying in the Soviet Union, the numbers having dramatically risen in the late 1960s-early 1970s with the political swing to the left. By keeping a low profile politically in Peru, the Soviets hope to maintain this program under the present government.

are

Colombia and Ecuador also ~~have~~ important Soviet targets, with some 500 and 300 students respectively in the Soviet Union in 1979.

Panama and Honduras each have over 100 students there and in Nicaragua we can expect a sizeable growth in not only the student exchange program but a wide variety of other programs such as the media.

Chile is a good example of how an extensive cultural exchange program rapidly folded with the demise of Moscow's political fortunes there in 1973.

SECRET

SECRET

- 3 -

Interestingly, Mexico, which has maintained diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union longer than any other country in Latin America, has good economic and rather good political relations with the Soviets, has ~~never~~ never been a strong participant in the student exchange field, although many Soviet artists, sports and other groups have toured Mexico over the years. The Soviets probably are the ones who take the initiative in these programs; the Mexicans are fully aware of what is happening and control the relationship closely.

Moscow's primary interest in Argentina and Brazil is economic. They have rather high hopes in this field right now as a result of these countries' nonparticipation in the US grain embargo after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Moscow has had a cultural exchange agreement with Argentina since 1974, but it does not have one with Brazil and has never been able to make any headway in this field with the Brazilians. Student exchanges are small. The Soviets have, however, staged industrial exhibits in Brazil and Brazil in the Soviet Union.

The Soviets are always on the lookout for opportunities. For example, they offered to underwrite expenses of Olympic Games participants of several of the smaller countries last summer as an inducement to get them to undermine the US boycott of the games.

Where do the Latin American students go and what kind of training do they get? Patrice Lumumba Friendship University, established by the Soviets in the early 1960s for the express purpose of training third world students, is the institution where a majority of the foreign students are trained, although a number of other Soviet institutions of higher learning are also involved. A visiting US professor last year got the impression that Lumumba, once considered a second-rate university, has improved both academically and in terms of the product it turns out, and that its reputation in the Soviet Union is now much higher than when it first started operating. The rector of the university claimed that a degree from Lumumba is now considered equal to that of any other Soviet university participating in bilateral cultural agreements. The University has direct agreements with 16 foreign universities including institutions in Ecuador and Colombia. Graduates successfully have later passed exams in Western institutions; and alumni are accorded recognition when they return home not so much in the political sphere but in the academic life of their countries. Many professors, deans, and rectors in these countries are Lumumba graduates, but this is probably more the case in Sub-Saharan Africa than in Latin America.

SECRET

SECRET

- 4 -

We do not have a really good means of measuring actual impacts once the students return home. CIA assess the Soviet educational programs as having contributed to promoting relations with individual countries by adding to the ranks of professional and skilled workers, but few are thought to have changed their political persuasions after their four to six years in the Soviet Union and some have actually become intensely anti-communist. Only a handful have attained cabinet rank in their governments, mostly because they are outnumbered by better trained Western-educated professionals. The Soviets themselves clearly believe the effort worthwhile based on the resources they devote to it.

One final observation. These programs are mostly one way. Very few Soviet students go to Latin America. But more Soviet writers, artists, and scholars are making visits as Aeroflot, the Soviet state airline, expands its links into this region enabling Soviet citizens to travel more widely with minimum expenditures of hard currency. They also now have a corps of specialists in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, not just communist party people, who are well trained and with area expertise. And the Soviet Latin American Institute is now on a par with other similar Soviet foreign policy study establishments.

So prospects for a continued, steady expansion of cultural ties, including student training, can be expected, ~~ma~~ within the framework of legitimate state relations.

INR/SEE:IKulski 22488 10/14/80

SECRET