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The Soviet Attitude to Political and Social Change in Central America, 1979–90

**Case-Studies on Nicaragua, El Salvador
and Guatemala**

Danuta Paszyn

in association with
SCHOOL OF SLAVONIC AND EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES
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To my mother and my late father

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Preface

During the 1980s Central America was considered to be one of the 'hottest' spots in the global superpower confrontation. The left-wing Sandinista government that came to power in Nicaragua, in July 1979, was seen by the Reagan administration as becoming yet another Soviet satellite in the Western hemisphere. The fight of the Salvadoran and Guatemalan guerrillas against their repressive regimes was portrayed as being instigated by the USSR and sustained by their extensive supplies of weaponry. These views had given rise to much controversy among scholars.

This study endeavours to demonstrate Moscow's aims in the area by looking at ideological and strategic factors that influenced Soviet foreign policy. The major part of the work consists of case studies. These are preceded by a chapter on the historical background of Soviet interests and contacts with the area. This approach would give the reader a better understanding of Moscow's intention in the region. The chapters on Nicaragua present a detailed account of Soviet political and economic links with the eleven-year rule of the Sandinista government, which is analysed in the context of both parties' relations with the United States. This is followed by an examination of the USSR's contacts with the Salvadoran and Guatemalan revolutionaries.

This study argues that Soviet policy towards the area reflected the decline of Marxist-Leninist ideology as a basis of Moscow's foreign policy formulation, in favour of pragmatism.

Restrictions on access to primary material made frequently it necessary to resort to the complexities of Kremlinology. While many will disagree with my analysis, it is only through continuing debate of this kind that we shall ever unravel what really happened in the critical years of East-West relations.

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Valuable as was the help of all those I have named, however, I take full responsibility for the opinions expressed and for any errors that might have occurred.

Finally, I am indebted to the librarians of the London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London, the British Library, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, Institute of Latin American Studies, Latin American Bureau, and the Royal Institute of International Affairs at Chatham House for access to their unique collections.