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**The Cold War in Latin America: Cuba's Agency and its relationship with
the Soviet Union between 1962 - 1969**

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Vámonos Pa'l Monte¹

*Vámonos pa'l monte
Pa'l monte, pa guarachar*

¹ Let's go to the mountain, to the mountain to have fun/ Let's go to the mountain, because I like the mountain more/ Here in the big cities, all you see is congestion/ But there in my mountain, there's space and fascination/ They say depression is slowly approaching/ And if my friend hasn't enjoyed, you will be knocked down by the hesy, hesy

*Vámonos pa'l monte
Que el monte me gusta más
Aquí en las grandes ciudades
Solo se ve congestión
Pero allá en el monte mío
Hay espacio y fascinación
Vámonos pa'l monte
Pa'l monte, pa guarachar
Vámonos pa'l monte
Que el monte me gusta más
Dicen que poquito a poco
Se acerca la depresión
Y no se ha goza' mi amigo
Lo tumba en el vacilón, vacilón*

Abstract

Cuba's relationship with the Soviet Union has been explored from various perspectives, with many studies emphasizing the asymmetrical nature of the alliance, particularly highlighting Cuba's dependence on Soviet economic, military, and scientific assistance.

This dissertation, employing a postcolonial theoretical framework and the theory of postcolonial agency, examines Cuba's agency in its relationship with the Soviet Union during the 1960s, a pivotal decade that marked the outset of the alliance.

Through an interpretivist methodological approach, this study analyzes primary sources, including speeches, articles, and documents from the period, to assess Cuba's agency. The research aims to uncover how Cuba's leadership pursued its own agenda, in opposition to the Soviet Union's policy of peaceful coexistence in Latin America.

During the 1960s, Cuba championed the National Liberation Struggle in Latin America, advocating for guerrilla warfare as a central strategy, which became a cornerstone of its agency. In contrast, the Soviet Union's foreign policy in the region was rooted in the principle of peaceful coexistence, prioritizing diplomatic cooperation with local governments. These conflicting stances led to significant diplomatic tensions throughout the decade, eventually culminating in a period of reconciliation by the decade's end.

Key Words: Cuba, Agency, Soviet Union, National Liberation, Armed Revolution, Peaceful Coexistence

Table of Contents

Introduction	8
Research Puzzle	10
Research Objectives	11
Revision of Literature	11
Dissertation structure	13
CHAPTER I. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY	14
Post-Colonial Concept of Agency	14

Methodology	18
CHAPTER II. UNVEILING THE CONTRADICTIONS: CUBAN AND SOVIET PERSPECTIVES ON THE ARMED REVOLUTION IN LATIN AMERICA	20
2.1. The roots of the Cuban National Liberation and Armed Revolution	21
2.2. The Soviet stand: Advocating for the ‘peaceful coexistence’ in Latin America	26
CHAPTER II. THE EARLY CUBAN-SOVIET ALLIANCE AND THE EMERGING TENSIONS BETWEEN 1963 AND 1964	29
2.1. Historical background: The Missile Crisis of 1962 as a turning point in the Cuba-Soviet friendship	29
2.2 1963: Asserting independence: The beginning of Cuba’s insubordination	39
2.3 1964: Partial relaxation of tensions within the Latin American Left	45
CHAPTER III. RISE AND FALL OF CUBAN RADICALISM BETWEEN 1965 AND 1969	47
3.1 1966: The Tricontinental Conference and the consolidation of Cuba’s Agency	52
3.2 1967 – 1968: The height of Cuba’s defense of Armed Revolution	56
3.3 The erosion of the armed movement in Latin America and Cuba’s retreat.	66
Conclusion	70
References	72

Introduction

In November 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel unveiled a statue of Cuban leader Fidel Castro in Moscow to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the 1962 October Missile Crisis. This event was a commemoration and an opportunity to reinforce the strong ties between Russia and Cuba and emphasize the need for deeper cooperation. The event occurred in a geopolitical context where, following the full-fledged invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Putin’s Russia has sought to find new international partners amid the ongoing diplomatic tensions with the U.S. and the European Union.

This international outlook has led Russia to strengthen its diplomatic and economic presence in the so-called Third World, reinforcing the relations with former Cold War allies. In Latin America, Cuba remains one of Russia's key strategic partners, a role it has held since the Cold War.

However, the Cuban-Russia alliance has experienced fluctuations throughout its history. The 1990s were challenging for both countries. Russia, as the Soviet Union's successor state, confronted a traumatic transition to a market economy, facing also political and social crises, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, Cuba, an isolated socialist state, struggled to survive the collapse of the Soviet Union. During the decade known as the "Special Period", Cuba went through a process of massive migration, rationing and a severe blowback of the economy, given its dependence on the socialist economies. During this period, tensions escalated when Russian President Boris Yeltsin demanded the repayment of Cuba's Soviet-era debt. Cuba, severely affected by economic difficulties, could not repay the debt, further cooling the relations, contrasting with previous periods of solid cooperation.

Looking further back, the 1980s also saw tensions in the Cuban-Soviet alliance. Fidel Castro openly criticized Mikhail Gorbachev's Perestroika and Glasnost policies, which he viewed as steps toward restoring capitalism in the Soviet Union. In response, Castro initiated his own reform process in Cuba, known as the "*Replanteamiento*" (Rethinking), which aimed to secure a degree of autonomy from the Soviet economy while reforming the Cuban socialist state. This divergence led to mutual criticism between the two nations.

In contrast, the 1970s was a period of relative stability in the alliance, chiefly due to Cuba's "*Institutionalisation*", a thorough process of Sovietization of Cuba's state and society. During this decade, Cuba adopted a state-managed economy modeled after the Soviet system, implemented strict cultural censorship, and joined the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON), integrating itself into the Socialist Bloc.

However, the 1960s, the years addressed in this dissertation, were perhaps the most problematic period of the Cuban-Soviet alliance. Despite being the period when the alliance began, it was also characterized by the revolutionary fervor of Cuban leaders who, following the 1959

revolution, pursued a vision of socialism intertwined with ideals of National Liberation Struggle tailored to a Latin American context. This idea of National Liberation Struggle had long been a tradition among Latin American intellectuals since the XIX century and remained at the core of the Latin American left during the XX century. This created a rift with the Soviet Union, which preferred a more compliant and aligned ally with the Soviet agenda in the region.

This decade, more than any other, highlights Cuba's agency in the alliance, demonstrating that from the outset, Cuba has actively sought to prioritize its own interests. Therefore, this dissertation seeks to examine the Cuba-Russia/Soviet Union relationship historically, revealing that the alliance has been far from smooth and unilateral and has been marked by conflicts and tensions across different periods. Understanding this historical context is crucial for comprehending Cuba's current alignment with Russia's geopolitical agenda and the motivations behind it.

Research Puzzle

The 1959 Cuban Revolution opened a new period of the Cold War in Latin America, with Cuba at the center of the political discussion. Under the leadership of Fidel Castro, Cuba was transformed from a US-backed dictatorship to a nationalist-leftist state, boosting its political capital among the Latin American and the international left. The revolution embodied the struggle against imperialism and became a model for developing nations seeking liberation from colonial domination.

Despite the vital economic and military support it received, Cuba's alliance with the Soviet Union significantly affected its political independence, especially after the 1962 Missile Crisis. The crisis, triggered by the deployment of Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba, was resolved

through private negotiations between Khrushchev and Kennedy, leaving Cuba in a precarious position. This event starkly revealed Cuba's reliance and susceptibility to Soviet dominance.

Hence, the research puzzle emerges due to the necessity to assess Cuba's agency in its relationship with the Soviet Union during the decade of the '60s. After a revision of the literature, a sharp emphasis on Cuba's subordination towards the Soviet Union/Russia was identified, neglecting Cuba's autonomy and omitting the analysis of periods in which Cuba had aimed to exert its agency. This dissertation aims to identify to what extent Cuba exerted its agency in its relationship with the Soviet Union between 1963 and 1969, drawing attention to Cuba's defense and promotion of National Liberation Struggle.

More specifically, the research problem is that the National Liberation Struggle was elevated by Cuba to the keystone of its political agenda during the sixties and used as a tool to assert its agency and political independence in the face of the Soviet Union's foreign policy embodied in the policy of Peaceful Coexistence and applied in Latin America. Therefore, the research question put forward for this dissertation is: How did Cuba exert its agency through the promotion and defense of National Liberation Struggle in Latin America between 1963-1969 in opposition to the Soviet Union's policy of peaceful coexistence.

Research Objectives

In light of this, the main research objectives are as follows:

- Identify to what extent Cuba could exert its Agency by promoting the National Liberation Struggle in the socio-political context of Latin America between 1963 and 1969.
- Scrutiny the meaning and role of National Liberation Struggle in Cuban nationalism since the XIX and evolution during Cuba's politics in the 60's.

- Grasp how and why the Armed Revolution became the means Cuba used and promoted in Latin America to achieve National Liberation.
- Assess the historical context in which Peaceful Coexistence emerged in the Soviet Union and how it was placed at the forefront of Soviet foreign policy in Latin America.
- Comprehend how the Armed Revolution evolved in Latin America from 1963 to 1969, commencing from a moment of expansion, and finishing the period in a moment of crisis.

Revision of Literature

Several works have been dedicated to analyzing how the Cuba-Soviet alliance evolved during the sixties, and the Cuban efforts to promote Armed Struggle in Latin America. Likewise, much of these works establish a correlation between the Cuban campaign in favor of the Armed Revolution and its opposition to the Soviet Peaceful Coexistence. For example, works such as: *The Russians Aren't Coming* (1992); *Soviet Presence in Latin America; The USSR and Latin America, Developing Relationship* (1989); *Beyond Superpower Rivalry, The Soviet Union and Latin America* (1970), *The USSR and the Cuban Revolution: Soviet Ideological and Strategic Perspectives* (1977).

Nonetheless, majority of those works present significant limitations such as were written before the end of the Cold War, and although pose an advantage that were produced temporarily nearer to the events, much of them do not offer a thorough scrutiny of the Cuban-Soviet tensions throughout the 1960's, around the Armed Revolution, and did not deepen into the nuances and the analysis of primary sources.

Other works that offered a contemporary insight into the Soviet – Cuban controversy during the 60's are the *The Socialist Camp and World Power* (2017), especially the chapter 16: *Latin American Communism; Cuba: A new History* (2004); *Latin American guerrilla movements:*

origins, evolution, outcomes (2020). However, those analysis falls short to explain the nuances and specifics of how this controversy evolved from 1963 to 1970.

In that sense, Jacques Levesque and Drendel Leboeuf's *The USSR and the Cuban Revolution: Soviet Ideological and Strategic Perspectives* (1978) is a work that offers a more thorough analysis of the controversy. Although focused primarily on the Soviet's leadership point of view and therefore relies on Russian language sources, the book offers a broader dissection of the alliance Cuba-Soviet Union from 1959 until the early 1970s. Thereby being a useful second-hand piece, which was also rather useful for the present dissertation; despite its lack of attention to the Cuban point of view, its heavy reliance on the Russian sources and the Soviet point of view helped overcome the burdens of the access to the sources in the Russian language.

On the other hand, there is abundant literature in Spanish on Cuba's engagement with the National Liberation Struggles in Latin America, with seminal works such as: *Las relaciones cubano-soviéticas 1959 - 1968* (1971); *Revolución en la Revolución* (1967); *La Guerrilla por dentro* (1971); *La Utopía Desarmada* (1993); *Ernesto Guevara, También conocido como el "Che"* (1996), *Una historia inconclusa, izquierdas políticas y sociales* (2009); *Fidel Castro: Mi vida, una autobiografía hablada* (2009); *Cuba y América Latina: Desafíos del legado revolucionario* (2017), *Historia de las guerrillas en América Latina* (2019); *Hacer la revolución. Guerrillas latinoamericanas, de los años sesenta a la caída del Muro* (2019).

Finally, scarce literature explicitly bridges the notion of Cuba's Agency and the Armed Revolution in Latin America. There have been prominent works that have tried to address Cuba's Revolution and Cuba's socialist history from a post-colonial perspective, placing the stress in National Liberation and anti-colonial character of the Cuban Revolution, like Gronbeck-Tedesco, 2008; Foran (2009) and Mahler (2015). However, these works do not place Cuba in its link with the Soviet Union or the ideological disputes within the socialist bloc, overlooking how Cuba's National Liberation struggle was deeply intertwined with the development of the Cold War in Latin America.

Therefore, this dissertation aims to shed light on Cuba's interests during the 1960s, thoroughly exploring the motivations and assessments regarding the pursuit of armed revolution in Latin

America and the challenge to Soviet interests embodied in the Peaceful Coexistence. Likewise, this dissertation aims to contribute to the literature of the Cold War in Latin America from a renewed and updated point of view, enriched with previously uncharted primary sources and a reinterpretation and nuance of old-fashioned secondary literature.

Dissertation structure

The structure of this dissertation will be the following: the first chapter will delve deep into the theoretical framework, the post-colonial approach, precisely Vivianne Jabri's definition of agency, aimed to underscore Cuba's political consciousness as an independent international player and the place it has given to itself in the international order since the Cold War, independently from other players such as the Soviet Union or the United States. After this, an assessment of the methodology and the importance of primary sources in addressing Cuba's agency will be conducted.

The second chapter will analytically address both the Cuban and the Soviet stands regarding the pertinency of the Armed Revolution in Latin America. First exploring historically, the roots of Cuban nationalism and its connection with the modern defense of the Armed Revolution and guerrilla warfare during the 60's, as a way through which Cuba used to exert its Agency. Then, an analysis of the Soviet policy of Peaceful Coexistence and how it was expected to work in the Latin American context to secure Soviet interests in the region.

The third chapter is an empirical analysis that delves deep into the beginning of the Cuban-Soviet alliance in the wake of the revolutionary victory of 1959. It will trace the alliance's path until 1964, focusing on the evolution of this relationship in its early stages. The 1962 Missile Crisis will be highlighted as a pivotal moment that provoked a shift in Cuba's attitude towards the Soviet Union, redirecting its energy towards the 'exportation' of the Armed Revolution as a means to assert its political Agency. In contrast, the Soviet Union maintained a defense of the Peaceful Coexistence policy regarding the Latin American issues and made mild efforts to appease Cuba's stand.

The fourth and final chapter will focus on how Cuba's Agency evolved during the second half of the '60s, from 1965 to 1969-1970. The chapter underscores that from 1965 to early 1968 was

the paramount period of tensions between Cuba's Agency and the Soviet political interests in Latin America, followed by a period of stagnation and decrease of the Guerrilla Warfare in the continent, which rapidly affected Cuba's Agency at the end of the decade. This setback meant a retreat of Cuba's stance in favor of the Armed Revolution and, therefore, placed it in the position of further subordination to the Soviet Union's interests, closing a period of political, ideological and diplomatic tensions.

CHAPTER I. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Post-Colonial Concept of Agency

This chapter explores the concept of agency and its political implications in state relations, specifically focusing on the interactions between the Soviet Union and Cuba through the lens of postcolonial theory. It will begin by defining the postcolonial approach and then proceed to examine how agency is understood within this theoretical framework.

While the search for a definitive meaning of postcolonial remains a current debate among the social sciences, this dissertation will utilize the definition put forward by Epstein and Yates (2014; 2020).

According to Epstein and Yates, modern international relations and modern political institutions do not embody a unified and coherent social order, in which every subject (state) is guided by universal principles and norms, followed equally by all states. Instead, they argue that the international system is fundamentally a construct that reflects the political interests of the hegemonic states. (Epstein and Yates, 2014). These states have sought to maintain their dominance by marginalizing other states and imposing their political, economic and cultural structures, revealing the hierarchical power dynamics between and within states. This hierarchical structure is a direct result of a colonial mindset that persists at the core of international politics, in a period when imperial colonization has ended. (Epstein, 2014)

With this understanding, the postcolonial approach emerges as a powerful tool for the social and political sciences. It not only sheds light on the experiences of the subjugated and subaltern subjects, in this case national states, but also empowers them. Despite achieving formal independence and sovereignty, these states continue to be subjected to the contemporary hierarchical structure of international politics and the interests of the great powers. The postcolonial approach, however, does not imply a direct confrontation with the hegemonic powers. Instead, it fosters the self-consciousness of the subaltern position and a proactive reaction to it. As a result, the postcolonial approach is not merely a description or a revision of the experiences of the subalterns, but a means to '*bring the subaltern back as an agent of its own history*' (Yates, 2020, p. 2).

Restoring subalterns' state experiences and bringing them back as actors of their own histories implies, from a postcolonial perspective, placing the focus on their agency. In that sense, Vivienne Jabri's definition of postcolonial agency is a pivotal theoretical contribution to the study of political relations between states.

According to Jabri and following the line of thought of Yates and Epstein, it's veridic that in the modern international order the subaltern states "*are still faced with a colonial rationality which discursively and materially places them in a globally subordinate position.*" (Jabri, 2012, p.134) Nonetheless, this asymmetrical structure offers at the same time an opportunity for the subaltern postcolonial states to exert their agency.

Agency, for Jabri, is an act of autonomy, a declaration of independence made by the subaltern subject, an exercise of its political right to participate in the direction of its society, marking a counter-hegemonic distance from the structure of domination that persists over it and instead bets on a new order. This distance from the structure of domination goes beyond the categories of *conformity with nor subversion against*, but places at the center of the discussion the principle of self-determination. Therefore, this new order aimed by the subaltern is based on the assertion of its independence and the solidarity with those also seeking self-determination. (Jabri, 2012).

Therefore, Jabri's postcolonial agency concept is aimed at transforming international politics, placing the search for self-determination at the core of the subaltern agenda, and actively seeking to overcome the hierarchical relations between countries. Viewed through Postcolonial

theoretical approach and Jabri's lens of postcolonial agency, the relationship between Cuba and the Soviet Union during the 1960s can be addressed.

The Soviet Union, one of the leading hegemonic superpowers of the post-1945 order, intended to exert its influence to shape Cuban politics through economic and diplomatic means amid its rivalry with the U.S. and in a manner that benefited its geopolitical interests in Latin America. This influence, however, often came at the expense of Cuba's self-determination, highlighting the asymmetrical nature of the relationship.

On the other hand, Cuba, a former Spanish colony constantly besieged by the expansionist agenda of the U.S., turned into a de facto U.S. protectorate during the first half of the XX century, was a country whose self-determination had been historically neglected. Although following 1959, Cuba aligned itself with the Soviet Union and became heavily reliant on Soviet economic aid, at the core of its agenda was the exercise of its self-determination and agency as an autonomous entity.

Cuba sought to assert its independence from the Soviet Union's interests embodied in the "Peaceful Coexistence" through its commitment to the National Liberation Struggle, a foundational element of Cuban nationalism since the late 19th century. As discussed in the first chapter, the evolution of Cuba's National Liberation Struggle can be divided into three distinct periods:

- The first, culminating in 1898, marked the liberation from Spanish colonial rule.
- The second, from 1899 to 1959, represented the struggle against pro-U.S. military governments in Cuba.
- The third, central to this dissertation, occurred between 1959 and 1970, manifesting in guerrilla warfare and its "exportation" to the rest of Latin America.

From the point of view of the 1959 Cuban Revolutionaries, their task as a successful model of National Liberation was to promote it in the rest of Latin America, primarily through the encouragement of guerilla warfare. At the core of this vision, as projected by Cuban leaders like Fidel Castro, was the goal of expelling oligarchic U.S.'s servant governments across Latin America, which were responsible for the region's underdevelopment and lack of independence (Castro, 1962, p.4). Consequently, Cuba's self-determination and exercise of agency, as well as

the survival of its revolutionary government, were intrinsically linked to its ability to support other Latin American countries in achieving their own independence.

Having broken free from colonial oppression, Cuba began to exercise its independence and promoted similar liberation throughout the continent via revolutionary warfare, which became its primary political objective during the 1960s. In Jabri's terms, Cuba's agency was aimed to transcend the postcolonial order and forge a new world (Jabri, 2014, p.385). This Cuban endeavor to assert its agency through the promotion of armed revolution stood in stark contrast to the Soviet Union's agenda of peaceful coexistence in Latin America, which sought to influence the region through diplomatic means to garner support in its rivalry with the United States.

As the Soviet Union's primary ally in the region after 1962, Cuba was expected to function as a subaltern state, aligning with Soviet interests and policies. However, this expectation underscores the postcolonial dynamic of a great power imposing its vision at the expense of the self-determination of a peripheral state.

Thereby, in the light of the theory of postcolonial Agency, this dissertation works with the premise that Cuba, during the decade of the sixties, exerted its Agency by questioning the Soviet Peaceful Coexistence and Peaceful Road to Socialism by promoting the idea of Armed Revolution in Latin America.

Methodology

Since this dissertation aims to address Cuba's agency in its relationship with the Soviet Union during the specific historical period of 1962-1969, the analysis is characterized by an interpretivist approach. As pointed out by several authors, the interpretivist stands out from other approaches, such as positivism, due to its capacity to place the analysis of social phenomena within their specific historical context, meaning a particular time and place. (Della Porta & Keating, 2008) Rather than seeking universal truths or mechanical laws, the interpretivist approach focuses on understanding how meanings are constructed within these

specific contexts, emphasizing that meanings and practices are always shaped by lived experiences, in constant flux. (Kułakowska, 2020)

Furthermore, according to Bevir and Rhodes, one of interpretivists' fundamental assumptions is that "people act on their beliefs and preferences", situating the analysis in the subject's agency (Bevir, Rhodes, 2002, p.4, cited in Kułakowska 2020, p34). Kułakowska adds that focusing on the subject's agency involves grasping their conscious choices and understanding how they are motivated by their beliefs and values, even if restricted or influenced by social structures surrounding them. (Kułakowska, 2020) (Della Porta & Keating, 2008)

From the point of view of the interpretivist researchers, and in consonance with Jabri's postcolonial theoretical framework, the subject's agency can be understood through the analysis of discourses and practices. This approach allows the researcher to interpret the subject's beliefs and values and also self-position within given historical conditions. (Kułakowska, 2020, p.33).

Likewise, the present analysis is guided by a subjective and quantitative selection of sources. Therefore, the inquiry of speeches of the Cuban leaders, official documents and articles will be the keystone of the present dissertation since it allows us to identify and measure the discourses and practices (agency) through which Cuba showed its compromise discursively and materially with the National Liberation Struggle in Latin America. These documents, with their depth and richness, reveal how Cuba participated in creating guerrilla groups and underpinned the ideas of the National Liberation Struggle and the necessity to overcome the Soviet's structure of domination.

These documents also allow us to grasp how the Cuban compromise rapidly became a source of controversy with its Soviet ally, a tension that sometimes escalated into Cuban accusations of Soviet interference and overwhelming influence in Cuba and Latin America.

The primary sources consulted were newspapers, journals, and theoretical magazines from 1962 to 1969 in Spanish, English, and Russian. The translation of the Spanish sources cited and included in the thesis's body was a completely autonomous work by the author. The Cuban primary sources consulted in the Spanish language were:

- The Granma, the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, was created in 1959
- The magazine Cuba Socialista (Socialist Cuba), the official theoretical magazine of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, was created in 1961 after the Cuban leaders subscribed to Marxist-Leninism and is dedicated to discussing History, Politics, and economic theory.
- The magazine Pensamiento Crítico (Critical Thinking), an independent theoretical magazine published by the philosophy department of the University of La Habana between 1967 and 1971

In contrast, despite the need for more proficient knowledge of the Russian language and limited access to Soviet mass media both physically and online, some sources in the Russian language were consulted during the investigation and included in this work. The purpose of consulting these sources was to assess and describe the Soviet Peaceful Coexistence Policy tailored to Latin America during the 60's and to address the Soviet point of view regarding Cuba's exercise of its agency.

The sources in the Russian language were:

- Pravda (Правда), the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, published between 1912 and 1991;
- The Soviet journal Kommunist (Коммунист), the theoretical organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, created in 1924;
- The journal World Economy and International Relations (Мировая экономика и международные отношения), a Soviet publication created in 1957 as the official organ of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations.

To shed more light on the Soviet point of view *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, was also consulted, a publication in English language created in 1949 that aimed to present a direct translation from the Soviet Russian language to an English-speaking public. Additionally, the declassified intelligence documents, reports, and memos from the 1960s available in the virtual archive of the Wilson Center of the University of Columbia were significantly illuminating for this dissertation.

CHAPTER II. UNVEILING THE CONTRADICTIONS: CUBAN AND SOVIET PERSPECTIVES ON THE ARMED REVOLUTION IN LATIN AMERICA

This chapter aims to grasp in depth the contrasting approaches of Cuba and the Soviet Union to revolutionary change in Latin America. Firstly, it will analyze the origins of the National Liberation and Armed Revolution as constitutive elements of Cuba's agency. The second part of the analysis delves deep into how Peaceful Coexistence became the cornerstone of Soviet foreign policy in Latin America and how the Communist Parties of the region became the operators of the Soviet strategy.

2.1. The roots of the Cuban National Liberation and Armed Revolution

According to Fidel Castro, in the 1967 documentary *Louin Du Vietnam*, the Cuban Revolutionary process, which began in 1953, was deeply rooted in two pivotal influences: Cuban Nationalism, embodied in the figure of the Cuban hero José Martí, and the Marxist-Leninist ideology. This fusion of Nationalism and Marxism-Leninism, unique to Cuba, formed the backbone of the Revolution, making it a significant and complex historical event that cannot be understood without considering both of these influences. (Marker, 1967)

To understand the roots of Cuban Nationalism, first, it is necessary to analyze the figure of Jose Martí. Poet, nationalist and independence hero Martí was a XIX Cuban intellectual born in La Habana in 1853, while Cuba was one of the central Caribbean colonies of the Spanish empire

since its colonization in 1511. He was one of the most radical intellectuals in favor of Cuban independence, which led him to create the Cuban Revolutionary Party in 1892. Martí died in 1895 during a battle against Spanish troops and could not witness Cuban independence in 1898.

Nonetheless, Martí's extensive intellectual production on Cuba's independence served as the backbone of Cuban Nationalism, thenceforth, bequeathing a series of books, speeches, and poems on the spirit of the Cuban nation. For Martí, Cuban independence and, therefore, Cuban sovereignty was based on the armed defense of the nation in order to preserve self-determination (Martí, 2005). In that sense, the violent defense of the Cuban interest against colonial invaders was justified. Another essential element in Martí's thought, which Fidel Castro also rescued during and after the 1959 Cuban Revolution, was the danger for Cuba of the U.S. expansionism in Latin America.

Even as Martí fought against the Spanish Empire, he foresaw a potential threat: the U.S. could seize control of Cuba once it gained independence, as implied by the Monroe Doctrine of 1823. This doctrine, proclaimed by President James Monroe, stated that any external intervention in Latin America would be seen as a direct aggression towards the U.S, giving the U.S the right to intervene in any Latin American country to protect its national interest. Martí saw the Monroe Doctrine as the foundation of U.S. nationalism and imperialistic ambitions in the Western hemisphere (Murphy, 2005, p.4).

Many Latin American intellectuals, including Martí, feared that Latin America could come under de facto U.S. political control after the expulsion of European colonialism. Martí argued that if Cuba were to gain independence from Spain, it should also resist the oppression from the north or any other hegemony through violence, as should the rest of Latin American countries (Martí, 2005, p.74).

In 1898, although the U.S helped Cuba to gain its independence from the Spanish Empire, Cuba was military occupied, and remained militarily occupied by the U.S. between 1899 and 1902; then, after 1902, Cuba became a de facto U.S. protectorate through the so-called Platt Amendment redacted in 1901, which allowed the U.S to intervene in Cuban internal affairs when necessary, maintain a military presence in the eastern Guantanamo Naval Bay and control the international relations of Cuba (Gott, 2004, p. 110).

Martí's concerns about U.S. expansionism in Latin America and Cuba after the end of European colonialism became a stark reality. His ideas about Latin American unity, self-determination, and social justice became the foundation of future Cuban nationalists, such as Castro and the Rebel Army in 1959. In the 1950s, Martí's influence grew among young groups that opposed the U.S.-backed military dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista between 1952 and 1959.

Batista had served as president of Cuba previously from 1940 to 1944, and he presented his candidature to the presidential election of 1952, in which, facing an apparent defeat by the liberal Carlos Prías Socarrás, decided in March to lead a military coup, taking total control of the state and closing the democratic system in Cuba, with the approval of the U.S. (Gott, 2004).

Under Batista, the political violence and repression against the opposition ramped up, prompting the radicalization of liberal intellectuals and democracy advocates, among which was Fidel Castro, a recent graduate lawyer with a middle-class background. Castro had been a member of the Orthodox Party since the late 40's, a Cuban nationalist and anti-imperialist party whose Young Platforms were influenced by Marxist ideas (Ramos, 2007, p.83). However, the Marxism of the young members of the Orthodox Party, such as Castro, differed from the Marxist-Leninism doctrine defended by the Popular Socialist Party (PSP), the only political party of Cuba aligned with the Soviet Union since 1925. The Marxism of the Young Orthodox was closer to social-democracy ideas and with the nationalist label, far from the Marxist-Leninist Soviet-styled doctrine.

Batista's 1952 coup banned both the Orthodox Party and the Popular Socialist Party, and in the wake of the coup, demonstrations and protests arose throughout the country. Castro and other members of the Young platform of the banned Orthodox Party took a step closer to radicalization and concluded that to restore the constitutional order, Batista's regime should be ousted through an Armed Struggle. (Ramos, 2007)

Following this premise, Castro recruited and led a group of young militants to attack military Moncada barracks in Eastern Cuba on 26 July 1953 in order to begin a popular insurrection against the dictator. The insurrection ended with all the young attackers in jail, including Castro and his brother Raúl. The 26 July attack marked the beginning of a new political period in Cuba with two events: The leap to fame of Fidel Castro, and the definitive distance between Castro

and his supporters with the remaining structures of the Orthodox Party and the Popular Socialist Party.

According to Castro, recalling the failed attack on Moncada barrack in 1953, he was already a convinced Martían. Thanks to Martí, Castro acquired political awareness in his youth, which showed him the path to the liberation of Cuba from tyranny and imperialism, since in Castro's account, it was well known at that time that Batista's regime was backed by the U.S and the Italo-American and Jews mafias. Therefore, Castro's first political philosophy was José Martí's thought. Regarding his early Marxist readings, Castro stated that as for 1953 he had already read some books by Marx and Lenin, but he and his circle were not "Scientific Marxists" yet, and they would just arrive at the scientific notion of Marxism later on. (Fidel. R. I. Castro, 2009, p. 135-157)

All the conspirators remained in jail until 1955 when they were released thanks to an amnesty granted by the military government. Immediately after being released, the group, led by Castro, went into exile in Mexico before returning in late 1956 to wage another war against Batista's regime, now under the name of the *26 July Movement*.

26 July Movement, founded by Castro in exile, became the main opposition force to Batista's military government, organizing a robust clandestine network in Cuba's main cities, formed mainly by students, workers and rural laborers. When Castro returned to Cuba in the late 56's and resumed the armed struggle in Eastern Cuban mountains with a small guerrilla group known as the Rebel Army, the 26 July Movement organized a destabilization campaign in the urban centers.

Meanwhile, the pro-Soviet Socialist Popular Party (SPP) was against the 26 July Movement and Castro's armed incursions; critics leveled since the 1953 failed attack and repeated during the new military campaign in 1956. In SPP's opinion, Castro and his group were just a nationalist faction of the petit bourgeoisie lacking an actual ideological formation. (Ramos, 2007, p.107-108). This would be SPP's official policy until 1958, when Castro's 26 July Movement had obtained significant military gains and had gained control of half of the island. Only then, for the first time did the SPP endorse the 26 July Movement and Castro's Guerrilla. (Ramos, 2007).

Even though the Rebel army and the 26 July Movement had among its leadership declared communists such as the Argentinian doctor Ernesto "Che" Guevara and Fidel's younger brother, Raúl, the ideology of the rebellion against Batista since 1956 was purely nationalistic-oriented and remained so until 1961. In Fidel Castro's words, as he expressed after the victory, the Cuban victory of 1959 was the continuation of the revolutionary process started by Martí during the XIX against the Spanish Empire. Furthermore, 1959 had demonstrated that a revolution aimed at national liberation was possible, putting into practice what Martí had preached decades before. (Castro, 2009).

Despite the knowledge that the U.S had backed Batista and even provided them with guns during the years of Guerrilla warfare, the new Cuban revolutionary government initially showed no interest in engaging in a conflict with the U.S. This was mainly due to Castro's expressed desire, in 1959, to build a good relationship with the U.S. He saw the potential benefits of establishing fluid communication bridges, given the geographical proximity and economic ties between the two nations. (Gott, 2004)

Albeit, as will be detailed further, in the wake of the tensions leading up to the Missile Crisis of 1962, Cuba's foreign policy focused primarily on confronting U.S. pressure. After 1962, this policy evolved into an uncompromising struggle against '*Yankee Imperialism.*' In this process of radicalizing Cuba's stance towards the U.S., Martí's thoughts kept being the cornerstone of Cuban new political stage, as it had been during the Cuban Revolution, but in this opportunity deepening the belief that the fight for freedom and national liberation needed to be waged throughout all of Latin America against the U.S imperialism.

Cuban nationalism and Martí's thought became the backbone of the Cuban political project during the sixties and were also the drivers of Cuban foreign policy during this period. As for the Marxist-Leninism, although it was adopted by the Cuban rebel government between 1961-1962, it was relegated until the 1970s as the driver of Cuban politics, years when Cuba officially entered into the Socialist Bloc. Moreover, the initial Marxist-Leninist adopted by Cuba diverged significantly from the orthodox Soviet, for instance regarding the economic model.

In that sense was remarkable, the "Great Debate" of 1962-1965, fostered by Ernesto "Che" Guevara who criticized the foundations of the Soviet-planned economy and its application in Cuba. Guevara and his followers confronted the pro-Soviet Cuban communists and the Soviet

technocrats who advocated implementing a Soviet-style economy with a state-design policy, material incentives for outstanding workers and self-management of the enterprises.

In contrast, Guevara, acting as Minister of Industries between 1962 and 1965, deemed the Soviet economy as mistaken since it kept the principles of Lenin's NEP, which in theory was contingent, and therefore had kept some "Capitalist" traces. For Guevara, Cuba was to follow an independent economic policy to achieve a genuine socialist society based on moral incentives, new production relations, encouraging voluntarism and overcoming the law of value. This dispute would be settled until the late 60s when Guevara's model failed with the "Revolutionary Offensive".

From a political perspective, Soviet Marxist-Leninism did not align well with the political realities of the new Cuban government either for a key reason: the Cuban Revolution succeeded without the guidance or leadership of a Communist Party. As it could be seen further in this work, among the Soviets were concerns about the ideological status of the Cuban Revolutionaries, since they were just a nationalistic movement and guerrilla. Furthermore, the only pro-soviet party in Cuba, the Socialist People's Party, mistrusted the Cuban rebels during much of the Revolution.

From the beginning of the Cuban Revolution, which Fidel Castro initiated in 1953, until the late 1960s, Marxist-Leninist ideology was subordinated to the principles of National Liberation and self-determination inherited by Martí. Once achieved in Cuba, National Liberation and Self-determination were seen as necessary to pursue throughout the rest of Latin America. This perspective was central to developing the Cuban Agency in contrast to the Soviet tutelage, according to Fidel Castro and Che Guevara's perspectives. Even after officially embracing Soviet Marxist-Leninist doctrine, the core of Cuban agency remained focused on guerrilla warfare as a means to achieve national liberation across Latin America. They believed that all countries in the region shared a common history and thus had a collective struggle against imperialism. (Castro, 2009)

2.2. The Soviet stand: Advocating for the 'peaceful coexistence' in Latin America

The relationship between Latin America and the Soviet Union was characterized by various fluctuations during the first half of the XX century. There was a period of relative approach during the decades of the 20s and part of the 30s, an approach made throughout the Third International/Comintern, of which the recently founded Latin American Communist parties were part. However, during the 40s, due to the ongoing political conflicts in Europe and the resulting Second World War, Latin America fell to the lowest point in the Soviet Union's foreign affairs agenda, resulting in a stagnation of the relationship. (Ruppretch, 2015).

Following Joseph Stalin's death in 1953, under Nikita Khrushchev's leadership, the Soviet Union sought to overcome its international isolationism, including its distant ties with the so-called Third World, in line with the policy of *Peaceful Coexistence* put forward by Khrushchev during the XX congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956. Peaceful coexistence was a diplomatic policy adopted by Khrushchev aimed to reduce the tensions with the west and amid the nuclear progress of both the U.S and the Soviet Union, in order to avoid a direct conflagration. Instead, what Khrushchev offered was a peaceful coexistence and a peaceful competition between both systems, Capitalism and Socialism, avoiding the mutually assured destruction.

By placing the attention in the economic and ideological spheres, a direct military conflict between the great powers could be avoided. This approach also implied that if the rivalry between the two blocs was going to be played out in the diplomatic sphere, the Third World would be a scenario for both blocs to boost their agendas. Therefore, Khrushchev's peaceful coexistence provoked an academic and renewed diplomatic interest in the Third World. (Ruppretch, 2015).

In the case of Latin America, the renewed Soviet interest differed from those placed in Asia and Africa, due to the Soviet account that Capitalist development in Latin America was relatively different from the rest of the Third World, and its dynamics had been unique. Some Soviet analysts focused on the attempts of urbanization and industrialization carried out during the interwar period by the Latin American countries, which were embodied in the policy *Import Substitution by Industrialization* (ISI). Through this policy, Latin American governments aimed to create self-sufficient economies to avoid dependence on the global production chain. (Hamburg, 1972).

Even so, Latin American countries were never fully economically autonomous, and the projected levels of industrialization were never fully achieved in the post-war period, resuming a deep dependence on the U.S. market after the post war. In light of that, Soviet commentators and specialized soviet scholars in Latin America believed capitalism had rapidly evolved into a 'monopolist' stage based on the exploitation of raw materials with a majoritarian peasant social base instead of a full-fledged industrial capitalism. (Hamburg, 1972, p.8-10).

Based on that analysis, the Soviets deemed that the most urgent burden in Latin America was to consolidate capitalism before encouraging any revolutionary change. In that sense, Communist Parties, the Soviet allies par excellence, should be responsible for mobilizing the peasantry and the emergent proletariat towards National fronts to participate electorally while the economic and political conditions for Socialism matured. Therefore, armed struggle was ruled out as the essential driver for Socialism and accepted just in cases of self-defense against repressive governments, like the case of the Communist Party of Colombia during the 50s.

During the 1957 International Communist Conference, Latin American communists ratified their alignment with Moscow and its interpretation of the socioeconomic conditions in the region through the endorsement of the strategy of the National Fronts and the Peaceful Coexistence path.

However, it is worth mentioning that the Soviets overestimated the actual scope of the communist parties in the region and their capacity to gather the support of the majority of the peasantry and the emergent urban workers. Although the electoral and social base of these parties used to be found among the peasantry, emergent middle-class intellectuals, and students, there was no majoritarian support, given that part of the population was characterized by more conservative-oriented attachments, with a strong emphasis on catholic morals. Hence, Communist Parties, with few exceptions, had been isolated and even persecuted. (Figueroa, 2017)

On the other hand, even among the progressive and leftist segments of the society, the Communist Parties were marginalized and criticized in the post-war period since they were deemed as pro-establishment and politically immobile, more interested in pleasing Moscow than in carrying out the Revolution. In that sense, the 1959 Cuban Revolution opened a breach within the Latin American left and placed at the center of the debate two pivotal issues: the role

of the communist parties and the question of the seizure of power by armed means (Figueroa, 2017, p.388)

The Cuban Revolution offered an alternative to the non-partisan leftists and showed that it was possible to accomplish the Revolution by surpassing the classic Marxist-Leninist development schemes. Thus, the Cuban experience was both a challenge and an opportunity for the Soviet's interests in Latin America. As an opportunity, supporting the Cuban Revolution allowed the Soviets to undermine U.S in its very zone of influence and consequently gather support among other sectors of the left closer to ideas of anti-colonialism and National Liberation

However, the Cuban Revolution became a great challenge for the Soviet interests and its strategy to transform the political life in the region. The fact that the Revolution had been achieved through guerrilla warfare on a Caribbean island, without industrialization and proletariat class, was beyond any Soviet prediction or analysis. Therefore, to find a balance between its support for the Cuban Revolution and its strategy of peaceful coexistence, the Soviets came to the conclusion that the Cuban experience had been a historical exception and could not be replicated in the rest of the region, idea reproduced consequently by the local communist Parties loyal to Moscow. (Castro, 2009)

Overall, the Peaceful Coexistence and the National Fronts remained at the core of the Soviet strategy throughout the sixties, and it did not change after Khrushchev overthrow in 1964. Under the new Brezhnev-Kosygin period, the Peaceful Coexistence remained at the core of the Soviet agenda in Latin America, evolving from the cooperation with the local communist parties, to the commercial engagement with the Latin American governments regardless of their ideology, policy adopted during the XXIII 1966 congress, and aimed to deepen into the Peaceful Coexistence policy. That would be the line of the Soviet during the rest of decade, entering in open confrontation with the Cuban line of the Armed Revolution.

CHAPTER II. THE EARLY CUBAN-SOVIET ALLIANCE AND THE EMERGING TENSIONS BETWEEN 1963 AND 1964

The aim of this chapter is to delve deeply into the Cuban-Soviet relations in the period following the 1962 missile crisis, specifically the years 1963 and 1964. This was a period when the first frictions around the Armed Revolution began to emerge, as Cuba sought to assert its agency independent from the Soviet interests. To this end, the chapter will first analyze how the Cuban-Soviet alliance evolved from 1959 up to the Missile Crisis in 1962, in order to understand how the Missile Crisis marked a turning point in the relationship between the two countries. Subsequently, it will examine the initial Cuban efforts to promote the Armed Revolution in 1963 and 1964 in Latin America and the Soviet reaction, leading to a partial agreement between both parties at the end of 1964.

2.1. Historical background: The Missile Crisis of 1962 as a turning point in the Cuba-Soviet friendship

The Cuban Revolution of 1959 marked a watershed in the history of Latin America. It was the first moment in the region's history that a Guerrilla successfully seized the state of power. Its main leaders, Fidel Castro, Raúl Castro, Ernesto 'Che' Guevara and Camilo Cienfuegos envisioned the victory of the Rebel Army as a possibility for Cuba to erect a new society based on Sovereignty, Economic Independence, Democracy and Social Justice after the oppressions suffered under the military regime of Fulgencio Batista. In that sense, Cuba looked to set up equal-based relations with the countries of the world, including the United States, who had backed the Batista regime.

The first measure the rebel government undertook during the first year was launching an Agrarian Reform called the "Revolution's Basic Law", whose backbone was the expropriation of landholdings greater than 401 hectares in size, predominantly affecting U.S. companies and private owners. This policy underpinned the suspicions of Eisenhower's administration around the potential communist nature of the new Cuban government. It also increased the fears of a possible spreading guerrilla movement all over the continent, trying to replicate the Cuban experience. (Cederlöf, 2023)

Meanwhile, in the other part of the world, the Soviet Union did not pay much attention to the events that occurred in January 1959, and in its opinion, the Cuban was not a communist-styled revolution; instead, it was framed as a "nationalist and a petty-bourgeois transformation" in the Soviet press (Levesque, 1978). Nonetheless, the unfolding hostilities between Cuba and the United States attracted further Soviet attention to the region and in August 1959, for the first time, the Soviet Union offered economic aid to Cuba and offered to buy Cuban sugar for a remarkable amount. (Gott, 2004,p.185)

In early 1960, Fidel Castro planned to visit the U.S. and meet with President Eisenhower to discuss the reforms his government was carrying out in Cuba, but he was refused by Eisenhower signaling the U.S negative attitude towards Cuba's new government.

Immediately afterward, a special Soviet envoy, Anastasias Mikoyan, was sent by Khrushchev to become acquainted with the new government's politics and ideology. Likewise, the commercial exchange continued to deepen with the signing of the first bilateral agreement between Cuba and the Soviet Union in February 1960, which stipulated the exportation of Cuban sugar in exchange for Soviet oil. Also, Cuba began the acquisition of Soviet weapons through socialist Poland and Czechoslovakia, and in May, both countries officially resumed their diplomatic relationship, broken during Batista times in 1952.

In response to the mounting Cuba-Soviet commercial transfers between June and July 1960, which Washington perceived suspiciously, the U.S. curtailed the importation quota of Cuban sugar. Besides, oil exportation to Cuba was disrupted altogether, leaving the island entirely reliant on oil from the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, the most aggressive measure adopted by the Eisenhower administration was prohibiting the Texas Oil Company, Shell, and Esso from processing Soviet oil in their Cuban refineries. (Cederlöf, 2023)

The "Oil Blockade" imposed by the U.S. prompted an aggressive reaction from the Cuban government, who, besides the ongoing non-compensated expropriation of land, nationalized banks, sugar mills, and all U.S.-owned refineries (Cederlöf, 2023, p.19). With the tensions reaching a no-return point, Nikita Khrushchev and Fidel Castro met for the first time in New York in September 1960 during the annual United Nations General Assembly sessions. During

this meeting, for the first time, both sides proclaimed the outset of an enduring alliance in favor of the oppressed, the victims of colonialism, and the liberation struggle. However, the ideological status of Cuba's new government remained ambiguous in the absence of a public declaration as a communist or socialist state. When Khrushchev was asked if he considered Fidel Castro a communist, he answered: "*I do not know if Fidel is communist, but I am Fidelist*" (Clissold, 1970, p. 259)

It is worth noting that the Organization of American States (OAS), had convened the VII Convention of the American Foreign Ministers in September 1960. The conclusions drawn during the convention denounced the dangers of the Sino-Soviet interference in American affairs and the intention to break the continent's peace, security, and unity, indirectly mentioning the Cuban exchange with the Soviets. As a reaction, Fidel Castro delivered a public speech that will be known as *La Primera Declaración de La Habana* (The first declaration of La Habana) in the Revolution Square in La Habana. Castro emphatically rejected the allegations made during the convention, chiefly the statement of the perilous Sino-Soviet clout in the continent. Moreover, Castro claimed that Cuba, as a sovereign state, would continue to keep diplomatic ties with any country. (Clissold, 1970, p. 258)

Between October and December 1960, the Eisenhower administration resolved to impose a broader economic blockade on the Cuban economy to destabilize the government and lay the foundations for a regime change. In January 1961, one of the first foreign policies adopted by the newly appointed government of John F. Kennedy was the breaking off of diplomatic relations with Cuba. This decision was motivated by several of the factors above, including the mounting Soviet influence, the loss of U.S. business interests in Cuba, and the desire to undermine the legitimacy of the Cuban government.

During 1961, was also organized the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations (IRO) and organ aimed to unify the actions of the main political organizations of Cuba, being Castro's 26 July Movement and the pro-soviet Socialist Popular Party the majoritarian political forces.

As for 1961, it meant a turning point for the Cuban Revolution and the history of the Cold War in Latin America. The Kennedy administration could no longer endure the presence of a hostile

government and potential military ally of the Soviets less than 90 miles from its borders. Among the measures discussed to sort out the situation, the military invasion seemed the most desirable from the CIA's perspective, a possibility discussed since Eisenhower's administration. (George, 2013, p.20). Thus, the U.S. adopted a plan to invade Cuba with political exiles reconverted into paramilitary groups. Hundreds of Cubans were recruited and trained in Guatemala, Panama, Puerto Rico, and Florida.

The plan was that initially, U.S. aviation would destroy some military airports in the eastern region of Matanzas to deactivate the air defenses of the Cuban Revolutionary Army, and that would facilitate the disembarkation of men in the Bahía de Cochinos (Bay of Pigs). Then, the land troops would divide Cuban Revolutionary Forces to take control of the eastern part of the country and then advance over La Habana. The invasion was launched on April 15, 1961, with the first bombardments of three Militar airports in Matanzas by eight U.S. A-26 invaders. The next day, April 16, roughly 1.500 men disembarked in the Bay of Pigs.

The invaders, poorly trained, could only gain a little territory thanks to the quick counteroffensive of the Cuban Revolutionary forces and the superiority of their heavy artillery and the Cuban tanks. Also, the U.S Air Force did not provide enough support to cover the troops' advance in the outset of the disembarkation. Fidel Castro went from la Habana to the Bay of Pigs to command the counteroffensive, and three days later, the invader forces were utterly defeated, consolidating his leadership and the international fame of the revolution.

Although immediately after the failure of the invasion the U.S denied any involvement, months later it would be acknowledged by Kennedy, turning the Bay of Pigs invasion into a major setback for the foreign policy of the new administration and accelerated the radicalization of the Cuban government, pushing it further towards the Soviet fence. On April 16, one day after the onset of the invasion, Fidel Castro gave a long and recalcitrant speech during the funeral ceremony of the victims of the initial bombardments. In that speech, Castro, for the first time, proclaimed publicly the socialist character of the Revolution.

Eso es lo que no pueden perdonarnos, que estamos ahí, y que hayamos hecho una revolución socialista en las narices de los Estados Unidos. Y que vamos a defender la revolución con armas.

That is what they cannot forgive us, that we are there, under their nose, and that we have made a Socialist Revolution under the very noses of the United States! And that we will defend that Socialist Revolution with guns! (Clissold, 1970, p.263)

Is it also remarkable that during the speech the people gathered listening to Castro, started shouting “¡Fidel, Jruschov, estamos con los dos!” (Fidel, Khrushchev, we are with you both).

With a sense of urgency, Kennedy's administration, in the wake of the fiasco suffered in the Bay of Pigs, insisted on economic and political measures to topple the Cuban government, ruling out any other direct military conflagration. Thereby, the CIA designed and implemented from the second half of 1961 the "Operation Mongoose" or "Cuban Project," a secret campaign of sabotage including attacks on civilians, destruction of infrastructure, energy plants, transport facilities, psychological warfare, and intelligence recollection. According to declassified documents, the CIA's priority was to create an unstable environment inside Cuba and incite an open revolt against Castro's government. Ironically, Kennedy's administration and the CIA had set up October 1962 as the date when revolts to oust Castro would begin. (Husain, 2005).

After the 1961 failed invasion and the continuous efforts of the United States to overthrow Castro's government, the alliance of the Cuba-Soviet Union grew at an incredible pace, increasing the economic and military cooperation. Castro's declaration in April of Cuba as a socialist country, may have positively impacted the Soviet opinion about Cuba. Nonetheless, it would be Fidel Castro's declaration of December 1961 which ended up consolidating the alliance between both countries. In a television broadcast, Castro proclaimed that he was a Marxist-Leninist and that he would remain so until the last day of his life. (Gott, 2004, p.197)

Whether Castro's intention to declare his allegiance to the Marxist-Leninist ideology was a pragmatic arrangement to gain protection from the Soviets amid the fears of a new invasion or

an overthrow by the U.S is irrelevant to this analysis. The truth is that the Soviet Union, with its legitimacy questioned in the middle of the dispute with Mao's China, could not allow itself to refrain from helping any self-proclaimed communist regime, wherever it could be.

Moscow's support, however, did not come without reserves from the Soviets. Castro's rejection of Marxist ideology during his years in the guerrilla warfare, the ideological ambiguity of the revolution, whether it was a peasants uprising, a nationalist revolution, or a truly socialist revolution, and the very absence of a communist party in Cuba raised hesitations among a faction of the soviet leadership (Lévesque and Leboeuf, 1978) (Gott, 2004, p. 198-200). Nonetheless, the majoritarian faction, led by Khrushchev and Mikoyan, the Soviet ambassador at La Habana, concluded that Soviet prestige would be damaged in favor of China and the Third World countries if Cuba did not receive support. (Gott, 2004).

With the sabotage "Operation Mongoose" already marching in early 1962, the U.S put additional pressure on Cuba by hardened the economic embargo, imposing sanctions on the exportation of medicine and food to the island. Likewise, in February that year Cuba was expelled by majority from the Organization of American States (OAS). According to the delegates of 14 countries, gathered in Punta del Este, Uruguay, the new Marxist-Leninist ideology of the Cuban government was deemed incompatible with the democratic principles of the inter-American system of nations. (Ramírez, 1971)

As a response, Castro delivered the famous speech *Segunda Declaración de La Habana* (Second Declaration of La Habana) in February, one month after the expulsion of Cuba from the OAS. Castro energetically condemned the "Yankee Imperialism" and blamed the U.S for Cuba's expulsion from the OAS, also emphasizing that Cuba would continue to thrive for the revolution and the liberation of Latin American people.

With the security and stability of the Cuban regime compromised by the U.S pressure, discussion within the Soviet leadership unfolded, most precisely about how the Soviet Union should act in support of Cuba's revolutionary government. The solution which the Soviet Central Committee came up with was the establishment of military facilities in Cuban soil, including the station of long-range nuclear missiles. The decision was ratified through the

"Soviet-Cuban Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Defense Treaty," signed in June 1962, which also included deploying roughly 42,000 Russian soldiers in Cuba. (Gott, 2004, p.198)

The decision to deploy Nuclear Missiles in Cuba was openly justified from the point of view of the Soviets. It was a strategic move, first and foremost, to ensure Cuban security and deter the U.S. from carrying out another military incursion against Castro's government. Secondly, it was a direct response to the recent deployment of long-range "Jupiter" missiles by the U.S. in Turkey and Italy, which were capable of reaching Moscow. By positioning nuclear missiles in Cuba, the Soviets could not only effectively counterattack a nuclear blast but also threaten the U.S. from its very zone of influence.

Although Castro had agreed with the strategy, years later, in his autobiography, he revealed that he and the rest of the Cuban leadership were initially not entirely convinced about the idea of Soviet missiles being placed in Cuba. (Castro, 2009) They were primarily concerned about the potential risks to Cuba's security and the damage to its international image by enabling the deployment of foreign military bases into Cuban sovereign state (Gott, 2004, p.200-202). Despite their preference for a less aggressive military agreement, the Cubans ultimately decided to follow the Soviet lead, driven by the increasing fears of an imminent invasion or a coup from within.

The first units of Soviet personnel and weapons arrived in August 1962, and the first arrangements to build up military facilities were made. Progressively, Soviet troops, engineers, and scientists arrived in Cuba. The last deliveries to come were the nuclear warheads in early October. By the end of August, intelligence reports yielded information about unusual movements of Soviet personnel on Cuban soil. U.S. reconnaissance flights discovered that missiles surface-to-air had been placed at different points of the island. The U.S. Army and the intelligence services started to consider the surface-to-air missiles were stationed possibly to protect tactical missiles carrying warheads and pointing to the U.S. East Coast.

In September, lacking final confirmation of ballistic missiles in Cuba, but with the corroboration of the increasing Soviet military activity in Cuba, Kennedy's administration requested Congress the mobilization of 150,000 reservists to conduct military exercises in the

Caribbean. Likewise, U.S. troops in the occupied Cuban region of Guantanamo were mobilized for military exercises, which raised suspicion among the Cuban government that the U.S. was aware of the situation. (Gott, 2004)

By the end of September, Congress approved a resolution to authorize the president to take any action to prevent the establishment of military power in Cuba. (Gott, 2004, p.200-203) Nonetheless, the confirmation of medium-range ballistic missiles being placed in Cuba came on October 16, when the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (EXCOMM) communicated with Kennedy the findings of new reconnaissance flights.

Immediately after confirming the presence of the arsenal in Cuba, the EXCOMM came up with several potential strategies to respond, among which were a full military invasion of Cuba, air strikes of the Soviet military facilities, diplomatic communication with the Soviets, and a naval blockade of the island. In the first stance, Kennedy feared that if the U.S. invaded Cuba, the Soviets not only would use the tactical missiles but also would try to take control of Western Berlin in the divided Germany. Therefore, Kennedy opted for the naval blockade to guarantee no further deployment of nuclear weapons in Cuba.

On October 22, President Kennedy, through a televised address to the nation, announced that the Soviet Union had deployed nuclear weapons in Cuba and stated that any attack coming from Cuba against the Western hemisphere would be considered an attack by the Soviet Union itself, requiring an equal response from the United States. Two days later, on October 24, the naval blockade by the U.S. naval army began. In response, the Soviet troops and the Cuban army were put on high alert.

For several days, the U.S. and the Soviet Union maintained open communication channels, but the situation remained highly volatile. A small miscalculation could have easily led to a nuclear conflagration, with the entire world on edge. The Kennedy administration made it clear to the Soviets that they were deeply discontent with the deployment of nuclear missiles in Cuba and the highly sensitive situation in which both countries found themselves.

On October 25, Khrushchev, during a meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, stated that the dismantlement of the missiles would be possible only if the U.S. guaranteed not to invade Cuba. Although the withdrawal of the missiles could humiliate the Soviets, all the members of the presidium endorsed Khrushchev's stance to avoid a nuclear confrontation. (Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Presidium Protocol No. 61, 1962).

The next day, on October 26, Khrushchev sent a message to Kennedy, explaining to him that the missiles were deployed in Cuba to prevent another invasion. Khrushchev told Kennedy that he would be willing to withdraw the missiles if the U.S. guaranteed not to invade Cuba in exchange for the withdrawal of U.S. missiles from Turkey. (Gott, 2004, p.202). Kennedy and his advisors agreed with the Soviet terms and guaranteed Khrushchev that the U.S. would not invade Cuba. In return, the only condition was that the UN verified the withdrawal of the Soviets from Cuba, a condition accepted by the Soviets without Cuban approval or even knowledge of the secret exchange between Khrushchev and Kennedy.

Since the beginning of the crisis, with the imposition of the naval blockade, Cuba's stance was of the utmost belligerence. In a letter sent to Khrushchev on October 26, Castro addressed the situation suggesting two possible movements by the U.S: an air attack over certain objectives or the invasion. The invasion, deemed as "less probable though entirely possible," would enable Cuba, "in an act of the most legitimate self-defense" to make use of the missiles and attack the U.S, eliminating forever the danger that country represented for Cuba and humanity. (Castro, 2009, p.278-279).

On October 28, after the deal to withdraw the missiles from Cuba was sealed, Khrushchev replied to Castro that the U.S. had responded positively to the request not to invade Cuba again and had also offered securities to the Soviet Union in that sense. Khrushchev expressed his understanding of Cuba's indignation with the constant aggressive U.S. actions against the island but advised Castro to be comprehensive of the negotiations. Khrushchev highlighted that the Soviet Union would do everything to ensure "the possibilities for the peaceful construction of the Socialist society in Cuba" (Castro, 2009, p. 279).

Castro replied to Khrushchev the same day, making clear that on principle, he was totally opposed to any inspection of Cuban territory and that Cuba would not renounce its sovereign prerogative, referring to the UN verification mission. However, Castro, also conscious of Cuba's impotence to maneuver, agreed to the removal of the missiles, while expressing his discontent with the decision. (Castro, 2009, p.279)

From Castro's perspective, the Cuban interests were not given due consideration by the Soviets during the negotiation of the missiles. He felt that the Soviets had their own interests in mind, as evidenced for example in the Soviet lack of attention to the U.S. Guantanamo Naval Base on Cuban soil or the illegal regular spy-plane reconnaissance flights over Cuba. Castro's frustration was further compounded by the fact that Cuba had not initially requested nuclear missiles on its territory, and yet the Soviets did not seek its permission to withdraw them. (Gott, 2004, p. 207)

Effectively, the Soviets had prioritized their interests to the detriment of the Cuban ones, and as a result of the settlement reached with the U.S., the Soviets had to revisit their interests, which kept privileging Cuba. Khrushchev was rapidly forced to acknowledge that the only outcome of the crisis could have been mutual nuclear extermination. Therefore, Soviet interest should be redirected to deepen the peaceful coexistence and compete in the economic and diplomatic spheres with the U.S. That policy could have worked if Cuba, the Soviet closest ally in the region, had to be aligned to the same principles and cooperate shoulder to shoulder with the Latin American Communist Parties to achieve a Peaceful Road to socialism.

Nonetheless, the crisis's outcome bolstered Cuba's defensive attitude towards the Soviet Union. Castro would underscore later the profound impact of the Cuban Missile Crisis on Cuban-Soviet relations: *“Out of principle, they should have consulted with us ... All of that offended us a great deal. We took it as an affront. Our relations with the Soviet deteriorated. For years, all this had an influence on Cuban-Soviet relations”* (Gott, 2004, p.278)

The Missile Crisis allowed Castro to draw upon two crucial conclusions: Firstly, Cuba's government had been isolated diplomatically and politically within Latin America for had

adopted the Marxist-Leninist ideology, with no support from any other government to make front to the U.S. campaign of undermining and destabilization.

Secondly and foremost, the outcome of the Missile Crisis had blatantly harmed Cuba's Agency and political autonomy. Cuba's lack of participation in the conversations between the Soviets and the U.S. undermined Cuba's legitimacy. Even though the Soviet Union had become the most important ally of Cuba, their interests were on opposite paths. While the Soviet Union leadership did not want to disturb the balance of power between the two great powers and, therefore, avoid a direct conflagration with the United States, Cuba was interested in asserting its role as a U.S. regional opponent and, therefore, building regional legitimacy.

As a result, the Cuban leadership, led by Fidel Castro, saw the need for Cuba to assert its own agency and distance itself from the Soviet Union agenda. Cubans believed the best way to do this was to spread the National Liberation Revolution throughout Latin America, exerting their agency and opposing the Soviet Union without cutting the economic ties.

2.2 1963: Asserting independence: The beginning of Cuba's insubordination

In the aftermath of the Missile Crisis, the credibility of the Soviet Union and Khrushchev suffered a considerable decrease within the Socialist Camp, fostering Chinese critics and accelerating the split between both. While Khrushchev insisted on peaceful coexistence, in Mao's opinion, how Khrushchev dealt with the U.S. to withdraw the Missiles from Cuba confirmed the Soviet's "revisionism" and lack of revolutionary spirit. The wavering policy of peaceful coexistence and the refusal to attack the U.S. with nuclear missiles was a betrayal of the Marxist-Leninist doctrine. (Khrushchev, 1965, p.495-525) (Luthi, 2008p.227).

Whereas the Sino-Soviet split unfolded in the post-Missile Crisis period, it could be seen how the idea of "exporting" the revolution began to gain momentum within the Cuban government, with a clear intention to replicate the Cuban guerrilla warfare model in Latin America, bypassing any cooperation with the pro-soviet communist parties. In that context, an array of

articles appeared in 1963 on the pages of the official magazine of the Cuban revolutionary government, *Cuba Socialista*, discussing how the political and economic crisis in Latin American countries such as Argentina, Venezuela, Guatemala, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Nicaragua could be a starting point for radicalization and lead to a stage of possible revolutionary upheavals².

It is unclear if the Soviets knew about the escalating Cuban discussion around the revolutionary possibilities in Latin America. However, it was true that Cuba had become a serious ally not only because it was a socialist state but because it was an important asset to hinder the U.S interests, so that was essential to bring Cuba closer again to the Soviet wing and to dissipate Cuba's mistrust and misgivings. Thus, in May 1963, Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev received Fidel Castro in his first official visit to the Soviet Union. During his trip, Castro visited fifteen cities and addressed a massive rally in the Red Square.

As a result of the visit, a joint communication was issued by both countries. The document appeared in number III of the journal *Cuba Socialista*. The document intended to ratify the alliance between both countries and their mutual compromise with the "Leninist policy of Peaceful Coexistence," and the de-escalation of international tensions. Other aspects addressed were the autonomy of every country to decide which path to follow for the revolution and the role of the Communist Party as the people's vanguard. ("Declaración Conjunta Soviético-Cubana," 1963) (Ramírez, 1971).

Albeit, the most striking detail of the document was the mention of the Cuban Revolution and how Cubans had conquered their National Liberation. Cuba's experience was framed as a model for revolutionaries worldwide, but especially for the people of Latin America. This acknowledgment underscored the global significance of Cuba's leadership and its potential to inspire liberation movements across the world.

² (See for example the articles: Tendencias de la lucha actual en Guatemala (January), Nuevas medidas fascistas contra el movimiento popular en Argentina, (March), La "Democracia Representativa" en Nicaragua y Paraguay (April), El auge de las luchas de los trabajadores uruguayos (May)).

“... (Cuba) has an historical relevance for the National Liberation Struggle of the Latin American peoples and points out correctly the course of the events. The Republic of Cuba and the Soviet Union express their unconditional support and solidarity with the people that fight for their freedom, and for the consolidation of their economic and political independence, and for the liquidation of the severe consequences of Colonialism.”

(“Declaración Conjunta Soviético-Cubana,” 1963).

According to Ramírez's analysis, by including this idea in the joint declaration, the Soviets implicitly recognised that Cuba's National Liberation struggle in 1959 succeeded thanks to the exercise of violence and that the Cuban socialist government was possible thanks to guerrilla warfare. Possibly, the Soviets conceded the inclusion of this idea in the document to appease the tensions and were probably unaware of the force the idea of promoting armed revolution in Latin America was taking within Cuba, but what looks clear is that for Cubans, it meant a way to exercise a distance from the Soviets, a exercise its self-determination, in Jabri's words.

In that sense, the document, a non-committal communique, showed not a reconciliation, but instead, it presented two fundamentally incompatible viewpoints that started to grow: the advocacy for peaceful coexistence and the endorsement of Cuban-style guerrilla warfare for national liberation. (Ramírez, 1971).

With the discussion surrounding the possibilities of Armed Revolution in Latin America marching on in Cuba, the publication of *Guerilla Warfare, A Method*, in September 1963, published by Ernesto "Che" Guevara in *Cuba Socialista* became a milestone in Cuba's agency. Guevara had been one of the leading figures of the Cuban Revolution, a theorist of the Cuban revolutionary process, minister of industries of Cuba since 1961 and the bluntest advocate of the armed revolution in Latin America.

Since the success of the Cuban Revolution, Guevara was convinced that freedom and the end of capitalist exploitation would be achievable only through the *Foco Theory*, a reduced guerrilla unit that would succeed thanks to limited but contingent military victories and with the progressive support from the civilian population. Ideals that Guevara had been working on

since his first books, *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War* (1960) and *On Guerrilla Warfare* (1961), aimed to perfect his *Foco Theory* of irregular warfare. (Gott, 2004, p.216)

However, in *Guerrilla Warfare, a Method*, Guevara placed the focus exclusively in Latin America. He argued that a violent revolution in Latin America was inevitable due to extreme poverty, the inadequacy of the democratic model, and the inefficiency of legal methods. Guevara also criticized the leading parties of Marxism-Leninism for their misguided belief in a possible alliance with the bourgeoisie. He further contended that these parties often overlooked the ultimate goal of every true communist, which is the seizure of power. This article, in essence, was a manifesto and a critique of the Communist Parties, advocating for the replacement of the Revolutionary vanguard by the guerrilla structure. (Guevara, 1963)

With the publication of the article, Che Guevara placed himself as one of the leading advocates of Cuba's agency by stating that Cuba's role in guiding the continental revolution in Latin America towards National independence from neo-colonialism and promoting the *Foco Theory* and the implantation of guerrilla units, contradicting the policy of democratic fronts and peaceful socialism implicitly. It is also interesting that Guevara, in later years between 1965 and 1966, suggested that the Soviet Union imposed some neo-colonial influences on Cuba, emphasizing the necessity of Cuba's independence (Guevara, 1966) .

On the other hand, with Guevara's publication and the articles and declarations that appeared in *Cuba Socialista*, the Soviet noticed the rhetoric growing within Cuba and expressed skepticism towards Cuba's ideas through indirect and mild critiques rather than public confrontation. This approach underscored Moscow's priority to avoid discord with Cuba.

However, the Sino-Soviet dispute marked a turning point, as the imperative to prevent further fragmentation within the Socialist bloc took precedence. Cuba's support for the armed revolution, potentially perceived as an emerging insubordination, threatened Soviet efforts to uphold its legitimacy within the Socialist camp.

Therefore, Moscow's first reactions to Cuban remarks also emerged in 1963. For instance, in November, the Soviet publication *Kommunist* featured an article titled Куба и революция в

Латинской Америке (Cuba and the Revolution in Latin America), authored by E. Rodriguez, a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uruguay. In this article, the author explicitly voiced his opposition to the concept of armed revolution in Latin America and denounced the Cuban efforts to propagate it. (Rodriguez, 1963)

More encompassing, however, were two documents authored by Soviet functionaries. The first one is an incomplete, secret document redacted by the Soviet Embassy in La Habana in December 1963. The document was a sharp critique of Guevara's *Guerrilla Warfare, A Method*, describing it as "ultrarevolutionary bordering on adventurism" and also questioning Guevara's comprehension of Marxist-Leninist positions. Likewise, the document highlighted Guevara's oversight of the revolutionary situation within each Latinoamerican country and his groundless criticism towards the Communist Parties. (Soviet Embassy Memo, 1963, p.1-4).

The second document was an article from December 1963, written by S.S Mikhailov, director of the Latin American Institute of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, titled Кубинская революция и национально-освободительное движение в Латинской Америке (The Cuban Revolution and the National Liberation Movement in Latin America). The article was included in a collective work that celebrated the five years of the Cuban Revolution. (Lévesque and Leboeuf,1978). Mikhailov underscored that revolution in Latin America would be possible through a peaceful road, thanks to the only vanguard: the Communist Party. He goes on to say that armed revolution was an "Ultra-leftist" approach, and that Cuban exceptionalism could not be transposed to other Latin American countries. (Михайлов С.С., 1963)

Both articles are remarkable pieces of information since they draw upon the Soviet misgivings towards Guevara and, to some extent, the Cuban experimental combination between the Armed Revolution and Marxism-Leninism. Also, it hints at the Soviet preoccupation with what seemed to be the beginning of a split between the Communist Parties and Revolutionary Cuba. This split directly affected Soviet interest in forming National Fronts led by communists to build Socialism peacefully. It was clear that Cuba was going on a path different from peaceful coexistence and that it had found in the armed revolution a way to express itself and express its opinion about the Soviets and Latin American outlook.

It is worth noting that by 1963, several guerrilla groups had already sprung up in numerous Latin American countries, both directly and indirectly, inspired by the Cuban experience. In Central America, there were noticeable small-scale armed incursions by emerging groups in the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and Panama. In South America, the likes of Ecuador, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, and Argentina witnessed the emergence of guerrilla groups. From these experiences, the Cubans were particularly intrigued by the Venezuelan *Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional* (FALN), recognizing it as the group with the most well-organized structure and significant support from the urban civil population. (Levesque and Leboeuf, 1978)

As 1963 came to a close, the general landscape was marked by a fragmented left in Latin America, with broad divisions between the emergent groups that practiced the Armed Struggle and those who adhered to the Moscow-aligned communist parties, striking deeply in the idea of a united communist movement as was the Soviet interest. For the most radicalized factions, Cuba's 1959 success was evidence of the feasibility of the armed revolution, and it was also convinced that social transformation was unattainable through democratic means. With this backdrop, Cuba and Soviet interests began to clash, with Cuba attached to the purpose of keeping insisting on its agency and independence through the armed revolution, regardless of the rising Soviet concerns.

2.3 1964: Partial relaxation of tensions within the Latin American Left

During 1964, Cuba's endorsement to the Armed Revolution grew stronger due to two crucial political events in Latin America: the coup d'état in Brazil against the left-wing president João Goulart in April and the defeat of the Socialists Party in the Chilean presidential election in September. With the change in the correlation of forces on the continent, it seemed to Cuba that the armed struggle became a historical necessity and that it had to follow its own path away from the conciliatory policies of the communist parties oriented by the Soviets. Therefore, guerrilla groups emerged in Colombia, Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay, materially assisted by Cuba's government. (Ramírez, 1971, p.79).

With the Soviet Union already engaged in the discussion of the armed revolution, an article appeared in *Kommunist*, in July 1964, authored by Mostovec and M. Kudachin, heads of the Latin American Section of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. In the article, called Освободительное движение в Латинской Америке (The Liberation Movement in Latin America), the authors, without mentioning Cuba, explicitly rejected the Armed Revolution as a feasible solution for the Latin American issues. The authors outlined that the guerrilla formula could just trigger a violent reaction from the right-wing and the army, harming the unification of the progressive sector in one National Front. (Мостовое, Кудачин, 1964, p. 126)

This article is particularly engaging since it revealed how the Soviets perceived that Cuba's mounting support for the Armed Revolution could threaten their interests in Latin America. While Cuba found that the promotion of the Armed Revolution was a manner to prove its independence from the Soviet Union and assert its agency, the Soviets were also facing an ideological confrontation with China. Therefore, the Soviets could not afford the emergence of an additional opponent within the Socialist Bloc and instead reassured more decisively of its strength and the strength of its leadership in facing China's criticism and Cuba's agenda.

In that sense, at the peak of the Chinese-Soviet rivalry, Khrushchev was ousted from his position as leader of the Soviet Union by the Central Committee of the Communist Party. With the Soviet legitimacy deeply harmed after the missile crisis and constantly contested by China, Khrushchev leadership had proven ineffective on international affairs, although his economic mismanagement was also determinant in his destitution. The new leaders, Leonid Brezhnev and Alexei Kosygin, made concerted efforts to ease the tensions with China and diplomatically regain the leadership within the socialist camp. Regarding the policy of peaceful coexistence, Brezhnev kept it as the core of the Soviet policy towards the west, even deepened during the 1970's and evolving to the known *Détente*. (Luthi, 2008)

Hence, under the new appointed Brezhnev, the Soviet Union sought to ease the tensions with Cuba surrounding their differing approaches to revolution in Latin America, and in November 1964, was organized in La Habana a trilateral meeting between the Latin American Communist Parties, the Cuban government and the Soviet side. The aim of the conference was to talk about

the Cuban opposition to the Peaceful Coexistence and its defense of the Armed Revolution, which had led it to openly criticize the Communist Parties and for extension the Soviet Union.

According to an unclassified document published by the Wilson Center, the secretary of the Communist Party of Argentina, Victorio Cadovilla, in private conversations with the Soviet ambassador A. I. Alekseyev, during the closed-door preparations for the conference, the Cubans, mainly Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, sharply criticized the Soviet's self-served interests during the Missile Crisis and expressed their hostility towards the Peaceful Coexistence. (Cadovilla, 1964)

However, Castro, apparently pressured by the communist delegates, recognized that thanks to the Soviet Union, the Cuban Revolution had survived. Likewise, the Cuban leaders acknowledged that "*the successful development of a revolutionary movement in Latin America is impossible without the participation of Communist parties.*" meaning that they were willing to reach an agreement with the Communist Parties and the Soviets. (Cadovilla, 1964)

As documented in a publication in Pravda in January 1965, the conference's outcome outlined a consensus between Cuba, and the Communist Parties, with the Soviet Union acting as a guarantor. Notably, all the parties agreed to respect "*all the means of struggle.*" While the Communist parties agreed to support the ongoing armed revolutions in Venezuela, Colombia, Honduras, Guatemala, Paraguay, and Haiti, Cuba agreed to respect the agenda of the Communist Parties in the rest of the continent. ("ЕДИНСТВО-ЗАЛОГ УСПЕХОВ В НАШЕЙ БОРЬБЕ. Коммюнике о Совещании Представителей Коммунистические Партии Латинской Америки," 1965, pp. 3) ("Comunicado de La Conferencia de Los Partidos Comunistas de América Latina," 1965, p.140-142)

Although the conference's outcome was presented as a negotiation between the Cubans and the Latin American communist parties, with the Soviets as guarantors, the conference was, in reality, a negotiation between Cuba and the Soviet Union since the communist parties were following Soviet leadership. The outcome, on the other hand, was a success for both parties since every part could yield a benefit; Cuba, from its side, did not renounce to promote the Armed Revolution and, therefore, had not ceded its Agency; it had to concentrate its support

on the six countries mentioned above. On the other hand, by endorsing its support of the formula of "using all forms of struggle, peaceful and non peaceful", the Soviets showed Cuba their willingness to make concessions and appeased Castro's belligerency. (Mikhailov. S. Shegovsky. A., 1965, p. 23-24).

Virtually, this agreement was thought to be a starting point for the relaxation of tensions between Cuba and the Soviet Union regarding the revolutionary movements in Latin America, tensions that up to 1964 had maintained a moderate level. However, tensions from 1965 to 1969 reached a higher level of confrontation, mainly due to Cuba's unwavering compromise with its self determination.

CHAPTER III. RISE AND FALL OF CUBAN RADICALISM BETWEEN 1965 AND 1969

The year 1965 inaugurated a new phase in the Cuban-Soviet alliance, with the radicalization of the Cuban agency and its promotion of the Armed Revolution in Latin America. From 1965 onward, the agreement between Cuba and the Latin American Communist Parties rapidly crumbled. Although the economic and military spheres of cooperation remained unalterable between Cuba and the Soviet Union, changes in the international sphere and within Latin America posed challenges to reaching a shared understanding of regional issues, leading the relationship into an unstable compromise before reaching a period of entire rapprochement in 1969. (Lévesque,1978).

In April 1965, the United States army carried out a military intervention in the Caribbean Island of the Dominican Republic, fearing that the so-called "Constitutionalist government," an alliance of liberal and non-communist forces that had ousted the military dictatorship to restore parliamentary democracy, could turn the country into a "Second Cuba." In Fidel Castro's view, the intervention confirmed that the United States was unwilling to respect the sovereignty of any nation in Latin America, and therefore Marti's thought was still valid. (Castro, 2009)

On May 1 1965, during a public commemoration of the International Day of the Work, and some days after the beginning of the U.S intervention in the Dominican Republic, Castro contested:

“There is one strategy in the face of interventionist and aggressive policy, and there is the strategy of fostering the Revolution everywhere and on all fronts! To counter the intervention, the revolutionary offensive on all fronts, the momentum of the Revolution on all fronts!” (F. Castro, 1965, pp.22)

The next day, on May 2, U.S president Lyndon B. Johnson, in a public address to evaluate the progress of the military intervention in Dominican Republic, declared the outset of the *Johnson Doctrine* by stating:

“The American nations cannot, must not and will not permit the establishment of another communist government in the Western hemisphere This was the unanimous view of all the American nations when, in January 1962, they declared, and I quote: “The principles of communism are incompatible with the principles of the inter-American system.” (Johnson, 1965, p.7)

The Johnson Doctrine was the proclamation of a new U.S. foreign agenda for Latin America, and it meant the inauguration of a new Latin American Cold War period. Basically, it was aimed to counter the influence of Cuba and the Soviet Union in the region. With the proclamation of the *Johnson Doctrine* and the ongoing delicate situation in the Dominican Republic, Cuba grasped that even the legal and democratic struggle was futile for the Communists in the region. In less than six months after the Communist Conference in La Habana, Cuba had abandoned the compromise of limiting support to the Armed Revolution only in six countries. Instead, it resumed its effort to encourage the formation of armed movements, but this time more emphatically.

Furthermore, the renewed conviction on the armed revolutionary path that came in response to the *Johnson Doctrine* was embodied in what some authors have labeled as "Castroism," which is no other than the incarnation of Che Guevara's ideas of the small guerrilla Units (Focos) and

the guerilla as the Revolution's vanguard, now converted into an official Cuban policy. (Mesa-Lago, 1970)

Whereas the weak agreement between Cuba and the Soviets in late 1964 was broken, Cuba's increasing support for the Armed Revolution in Latin America and its increasing Agency against Soviet interests sparked an active debate among the international Socialist movement in 1965, vis-a-vis the violent means as a suitable mechanism within the Marxist theory. For instance, the 1965 August issue of the theoretical journal *World Marxist Review* was dedicated to this matter. The Guatemalan communist José Manuel Fortuny, confronting articles of Latin American communists opposed to Cuba, argued that the Cuban Revolution had broken the previous Marxist tradition and had opened a new theoretical path with its Armed Revolution. (Fortuny, 1965)

Fortuny went on to say that with the Cuban Revolution, Latin Americans no longer had to import ossified schemes nor mechanical replicas of the Soviet Doctrine. This article is particularly engaging since it embodies the idea that the Armed Revolution was the path through which Latin Americans and Cubans could exert their self-consciousness and agency. He states: "*Cuba destroyed the schemata, schemata hitherto regarded as inviolable truths. Cuba teaches us to think by ourselves*" (Fortuny, 1965, p. 32).

For his part, during his subsequent public appearances that year, Castro underscored Cuba's unwavering commitment to the Latin American Revolution in light of the U.S. aggression against the Dominican Republic. For instance, during a public address in the Cuban city of Santa Clara in July 1965, published in *Cuba Socialista*, Castro emphasized that despite Cuba's consistent pursuit of peace, the prevailing circumstances demanded a different approach.

"We (Cubans) do not say to the Latin American people, "Wait, do not make any revolution because that would be too risky for us," No! We urge the Latin American revolutionaries to follow our example, and we will happily assume the risks. We have shown the Latin American people the possibility of the Revolution; the threats, the dangers, the risks we do not care about it." (F. Castro, 1965, p.16)

Che Guevara, for his part, likely the most faithful Cuban leader on the Guerrilla formula, and most convinced of the necessity for Cuba to exert its own Agency in the struggle for National Liberation, criticized the Soviet Union during the Afro-Asian Conference in Algeria, celebrated during the first months of 1965.

Guevara gave a speech speaking out about the uneven commercial exchange between the “underdeveloped countries and the imperialist forces”. His remarks suggest that he was indirectly criticizing the Soviet Union, mainly because Guevara asserted there was no such thing as 'Mutually Beneficial' economic trade between developed countries, producers of industrial machinery, and underdeveloped countries' exporters of raw materials. Among the developed countries, according to Guevara, were the Socialist countries; therefore, they were immorally complicit with imperialist exploitation. (Guevara, 1965).

Notably, Guevara was not just a vocal critic of the Soviet's Peaceful Road to Socialism but as the Cuban minister of industries from 1962-1965, was a vociferous opponent of the Soviet political economy based on Lenin's NEP. He was against the implementation of a Soviet style planification for an agrarian economy like Cuba. Guevara had concluded that the Soviet economy was still guided by market economy principles, leading him to engage in theoretical debates with Soviet and pro-soviet Cuban economists. Instead, he advocated for a more Maoist-styled economic policy, supporting the complete collectivization of property, self-financing of factories, and the gradual eradication of money and material incentives. (Mesa-Lago, 1970).

In Guevara's mind, the struggle for national liberation, carried out by means of political weapons and arms, was entrenched with the struggle against backwardness and poverty. Neither the economic nor the political Soviet policies for both issues were suitable for Cuba. Guevara's opinion reminded those of China amid the ideological tensions, depicting the Soviet Union as an industrialized and neocolonialist country participating in the exploitation of the Third World. (Lévesque and Leboeuf, 1978). However, Guevara, like Castro, never showed determinant interest in aligning with China's side in the Sino-Soviet split, and furthermore after 1965 the relations between China and Cuba fell to its lowest point when China interrupted the shipments of rice to the island. (Lévesque and Leboeuf, 1978)

After his declarations in the 1965 conference in Algeria, Guevara disappeared from the public eye after his return to Cuba without publicly renouncing his position as Industries Minister, raising concerns among the Cuban government about his whereabouts. On October 3, 1965, through a televised address, Fidel Castro informed the Cuban nation the official creation of the Communist Party of Cuba and the creation of the party's official organ, *Granma*. Then, Castro proceeded to announce that Che Guevara had left Cuba in April towards an unknown destiny to pursue his internationalist and revolutionary vocation. (Fidel. R. I. Castro, 2009, p.296-297)

The creation of the Communist Party, oriented by Marxist-Leninism, might have been perceived as a concession to the Soviet Union, as the Soviets had pressured Cuba's revolutionaries to consolidate their power internally through the creation of a centralized Communist Party and to be considered part of the Socialist Bloc. It could also be understood as an indication that Cuba had chosen the Soviet Union in the middle of its dispute with China by embracing the Marxist-Leninist ideology as Cuba's official doctrine.

Nonetheless, the creation of the Cuban Communist Party did not mean a give up of Cuba's agency. In September 1965, Castro delivered a broadcasted speech called "*Criteria of our Revolution*" underlying Cuba's ideological autonomy. Cuba, he went on to say, would create a Socialist State based on its interpretation of the Marxist tradition without importing existing models of other socialist countries. Cuba had the disposition to think about Marxism differently, relying on its history and practical life. (F. Castro, 1965). This was in obvious connection not only with the readiness to defend the armed struggle but also with reaffirming its ideological independence from the Soviets. Thus, although Marxism-Leninism was the backbone of the new Cuban communist party, the Soviet interpretation was different.

On the other hand, Che Guevara's departure to Congo to organize a guerrilla has a deep effect on the Cuban-Soviet relationship, perceived as something positive by the Soviets, since Guevara was one of the strongest advocates of Cuba's agency, and therefore the Soviet could expect a relief in the tensions with Cuba. However, according to Levesque, what Guevara's departure meant in reality was a rejection of the Soviet influence in Cuba. (Lévesque and Leboeuf, 1978, p.120-122).

Effectively, Castro supported Guevara's line of defense of Cuba's agency and therefore radicalized his faith in the Latin American Revolution marking a further distance with the Communist Parties and by extension with the Soviet Union. This made difficult a relaxation of the tensions, since from the Soviet perspective, the Armed Revolution in many Latin American countries, had shown signals of exhaustion. (Ramirez, 1970)

3.1 1966: The Tricontinental Conference and the consolidation of Cuba's Agency

The year 1966 began with the Tricontinental Conference in La Habana. The Tricontinental reunited the political leaders of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, which marked a milestone in the Cuban process of exercising its agency outside the Soviet sphere of influence. Firstly, it allowed Cuba to consolidate its prestige internationally among the bloc of non-alienated countries of the Third World, disputing Soviet self-perception as the leader of the World revolutionaries. However, the most critical aspect of the conference is that it allowed Cuba to put at the center of the political discussion elements such as National Liberation, self-determination and Armed Revolution, all constitutive elements of its agency, as Castro acknowledged in his speech at the conference. (F. Castro, 1966c).

Although the discussion around National Liberation and non-alignment had been gaining momentum since the Bandung Conference in 1955, the Tricontinental meant a step beyond. It was the first time the third-world continents coordinated and collectively understood the armed revolution as the pivotal element for national liberation. (Barcia, 2009).

With the National Liberation and the armed struggle at the core, the Vietnam War was also addressed during the conference, with a unanimous denounce of the countries against the "U.S imperial aggression" perpetrated against Vietnam. Furthermore, Che Guevara, whose 1965 Guerrilla campaign in Congo had failed and was in Bolivia organizing the creation of a new guerrilla group, sent a message to the conference that was widely reproduced. Through it, Guevara urged the Latin American people to "*create the world's second or third Vietnam*",

connecting Vietnamese guerrilla experience with Cuba's leadership. (Barcia, 2009, pp.215) (Ernesto "Che" Guevara, 1968)

Fidel Castro wrapped up the points exposed during the conference in a final speech, stressing the necessity of solidarity with the Revolutionaries elsewhere, without necessarily requiring them to be Marxist-Leninist, and remarking on the exemplary heroism of Latin American revolutionaries because they had leaped from the rhetoric and the ideology to the materialization of thought, insofar they had taken up the arms. (F. Castro, 1966c)

As a result of the conference, also two special committees were set up: the Organisation of Solidarity of the People of Asia, Africa, and Latin America (OSPAAAL) and the regional committee for Latin America, Organización Latinoamericana de Solidaridad (Latin American Solidarity Organisation (OLAS) based in La Habana. The OLAS's essential task would be coordinating the relations between the Latin American National Liberation and guerrilla groups. ("Comunicado Sobre La Creación de La Organización Latinoamericana de Solidaridad," 1966, pp.202). However, as it will be analyzed further, its first congress was not organized until late 1967.

Taking Jabri's theoretical point of view, what Cuba had done during the Tricontinental was, discursively and practically, to transform the limitations imposed on it internationally and from Soviet influence (Jabri, 2014, p. 387). To the extent that Cuba claimed decolonization, it was questioning the Western liberal framework, and to the extent that it claimed that decolonization would be possible through the "Armed Revolution," it was also questioning the hierarchical normativity within the Socialist Bloc. Therefore, Cuba's bet was double counter hegemonic. (Jabri, 2014, p.386).

On the other hand, from the Soviet point of view, the Tricontinental and the resulting Cuban leadership was in fact a threat to its leadership in the Third World and Latin America. Although the Soviet Union endorsed the anti-imperialist character of the conference, it did not endorse the declarations in favor of Armed Revolution.

Moreover, the Soviet Union, aware that Cuba's radicalization jeopardized the position of the pro-soviet Communist Parties and the Soviet agenda in Latin America, re-framed their commitment to peaceful coexistence during the XXIII Congress of the CPSU, held in Moscow from March to April 1966. Even though the Congress documents highlighted the Soviet support to the National Liberation Movement, the stress laid in the unwavering pursuit of peaceful coexistence among states with different social systems was remarkably more tackled during the congress. This "peace-loving policy" had notably succeeded, leading to peaceful and mutually beneficial relationships with most capitalist countries, according to the Soviets. (23rd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 1966)

Accordingly, the Soviets redefined the diplomatic approach towards Latin America. As first measure, the Soviets agreed to carry out a "Commercial and Diplomatic" offensive as part of their Peaceful agenda in Latin American countries. This offensive aimed to increase Soviet influence in Latin America beyond the Communist Parties, by directly engaging with Latin American states, regardless of their political ideologies, including Communists, liberals and even Military dictatorships. (Ramírez, 1971) (Kridl, Valkenier, 1989).

Ironically, the Cuban greeting message to the CPSU's XXIII Congress, dedicated less space to greeting the congress outcome, and instead reaffirmed the Cuban unwavering compromise adopted during the Tricontinental in favor of the revolution and the national liberation movements. This position was underscored by the Cuban envoy to Moscow Armando Hart, as appeared in *Cuba Socialista*:

"Cuba made it clear that on the Latin American continent, the question of power for the working class and the victory of the socialist revolution depend to a large extent on subjective factors, on the decision of the vanguard, on the will to win or to die". (Hart, 1966, p.42)

Cuba's fierce defense of the Armed of the Revolution would continue for the rest of 1966, with a continue contestation of the XXIII Soviet Congress. Furthermore, Fidel Castro, in a speech delivered in May 1966 , threw two radical statements that may could been interpreted as indirect claims against the Soviet Union. On the one hand, Castro argued that *"a country may believe it is building communism, when in fact it is building capitalism"* (F. Castro, 1966b, p. 14),

resembling in a great extent Che Guevara's criticism of the Soviet-planned economy. Secondly, Castro pointed out that Cuba, a Socialist state that did not believe in blind laws and static formulas, had arrived at its own notion of Marxism-Leninism, a fresh interpretation far from the dogma of the old actors. (F. Castro, 1966b)

Undoubtedly, Castro regarded Cuba as a unique modernizing force within the Socialist Bloc. Cubans had critically scrutinized the Soviet Union's role without aligning with other Socialist opponents of the Soviets, such as China and Yugoslavia. Castro and his supporters, in a thought-provoking critique, argued that the Cuban Revolution demonstrated the feasibility of initiating a revolutionary process without a traditional Party structure, asserting that the people would naturally determine their vanguard; in Cuba's case, the guerrilla fighters who came to power. (F. Castro, 1966c, p.22-27)

Consequently, in the wake of the imperialist offensive over Latin America, the people of the continent had no other option but to replicate the Cuban experience and choose the Guerilla as the vanguard over the Party, because the Peaceful Policy the communist championed had blatantly failed, as was argued by the Cuban Communist Armando Hart in the No.57 of *Cuba Socialista* in 1966(Hart, 1966a, pp.6-10). This, of course, not only added to the controversy with the Soviet Union but also with the Latin American communist parties.

Fidel Castro had emphasized that the dispute with these parties had been settled for some time (during the 1964 agreement). However, for the old-vanguard communists, Cuba would be nothing more than a heretic because it did not adhere to any church of any kind, regardless of whether it was a Marxist-Leninist one. The heresy, according to Castro, came fundamentally from the fact that Cuba had taken up arms and had broken with the old doctrines of an international sect -Led by the Soviet Union-. (F. Castro, 1966b, p.99-103). In return, some Communists accused Cubans of being petit bourgeois and leftist adventurers. They were just a danger to the unity of the communist movement by trying to replicate their experience in countries with different historical conditions. (Ramírez, 1971)

In conclusion, the events of 1966, highlighted by both the Tricontinental Conference and the XXIII Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, signified a period of significant

transformation in the foreign policy stances of Cuba and the Soviet Union. The Tricontinental Conference allowed Cuba to assert itself as a leading force in the Third World, championing the cause of armed revolution in Latin America and reinforcing its agency. Meanwhile, the XXIII Congress outlined the Soviet Union's defensive posture against Cuba's quest for independence through revolutionary means and underscored the Soviet commitment to the doctrine of Peaceful Coexistence.

Looking ahead, the subsequent section will explore how, between 1967 and 1968, Cuba's quest for agency reached its highest point, endangering its ties with the Soviet Union and leading to a political crisis between both countries.

3.2 1967 – 1968: The height of Cuba's defense of Armed Revolution

From 1966 to 1967, following the directives laid out at the XXIII Congress, the Soviet Union launched a commercial and diplomatic offensive to strengthen ties with Latin American countries. This approach included offering substantial economic credits to various governments, such as Argentina (\$15 million), Brazil (\$100 million), and Chile (\$57\$ million), along with enhancing diplomatic relations with nations like Colombia, Costa Rica, and Uruguay. (Ramírez, 1971, p.110). This strategic shift aimed to reset Soviet - Latin American relations and maintained the line of peaceful cooperation between the two blocs by engaging in pragmatic, formal trade and diplomatic relationships with Latin American governments, regardless of their political ideologies.

However, this new Soviet pragmatism clashed directly with Cuba's agenda of promoting guerrilla warfare and revolutionary movements known as the Guerrilla Focos. As analyzed earlier, once consolidated leadership after the Tricontinental and therefore with a significant margin to exert its agency, Cuba launched a political "counteroffensive" aimed to counter the Soviet commercial engagement, but most importantly to mark a decisive distance with the Soviet Union and its diplomatic and peaceful agenda. It is difficult to argue if Cuba sought to

break the ties entirely with the Soviets, but it is clear that the actions undertaken by Cuba during 1967 and 1968 sought to restrain the alliance, at the point that the commercial exchange between both, up to that point unaltered, suffered a setback, which speaks of the extent to which went to Cuba to exert its agency.

To fully comprehend the extent of Cuba's counteroffensive and its assertion of agency from 1967 to August 1968, it is imperative to delve into several critical events. These events, which include the establishment of the theoretical magazine *Pensamiento Crítico* (Critical Thinking), the publication of *Revolution in the Revolution* by Régis Debray, the convening of the Latin American Solidarity Organization (Organización Latinoamericana de Solidaridad - OLAS), and the "Microfaction controversy", are key to understanding Cuba's strategic efforts. They collectively illustrate Cuba's strategic efforts to consolidate the revolutionary war in Latin America and establish its position as a leader within the Latin American left.

To begin with, in 1967 Cuba initiated the year 1967 with the creation of the theoretical magazine *Pensamiento Crítico* (Critical Thinking). Although the magazine was created by the faculty of philosophy at the University of La Habana, its creation was authorized by Fidel Castro and the Communist Party of Cuba. According to Fernando Martínez Heredia, professor of philosophy at the University of La Habana and founder of the magazine, it did not mean to be an official organ of the Cuban state nor replace an official organ such as *Cuba Socialista*. Instead *Pensamiento Crítico* meant to be an organ through which the young segments and the intelligentsia could express their contribution to the theoretical framework of Cuban Socialism. Likewise, the magazine was born in the wake of the ideological controversies within the Socialist Bloc, one of which was the controversy between Cuba and the Soviet Union around the Armed Revolution. (Kohan, 2018)

According to Martínez, the magazine aimed to confront the ideological dogmatism propounded by the Soviet Union from a "Heterodox" point of view, questioning the soviet interpretation of Dialectical Materialism. Furthermore, the aim was to defend Cuba's political project and ideology as a differentiated socialist country based on the principles of Self-Determination, Revolution, National Liberation and the thought of Latin American thinkers such as José Martí or Juan Carlos Mariátegui.

"(Dogmatism), it was futile to make front the problems of Latin American capitalist countries and to face the organization of the revolution. It was also useless before the problem of the socialist revolution of liberation. Moreover, dogmatism was quite different from Marxism, founded by Marx. We Cubans needed a thought capable of allowing us to think our circumstances, one that could allow us to think an alternative to capitalism" (Kohan, 2018, p.1232)

It is also noteworthy that the editorial line of *Pensamiento Crítico* was marked by a rich intellectual diversity, publishing pieces by or about intellectuals forbidden in the Soviet Union, such as Perry Anderson, Jean-Paul Sartre, György Lukács, Paul Ricoeur, Eric Hobsbawm, Henry Lefevre, Louis Althusser and Ernest Mandel, among others. This diverse range of intellectuals contributed significantly to the distinctiveness of Cuba's Socialism and its separation from the Soviet Union. (Kohan, 2018)

Thus, *Pensamiento Crítico* served as the platform through which socialist Cuba, from 1967 until the end of the decade, could cement a theoretical body of thought. This body of thought was instrumental in defining Cuba's unique approach to Marxism-Leninism with a Latin Americanist influence (Armed revolution), making it a pivotal milestone in Cuba's endeavor to assert its Agency.

Another milestone of Cuba's agency in 1967 without doubt was the celebration of the OLAS Conference. As detailed in the preceding section, the 1966 Tricontinental Conference was pivotal in Cuba's assertion of its Agency. This event granted Cuba international legitimacy among Third World countries and allowed it to champion the Armed Revolution, thereby overshadowing the Soviet strategy in Latin America.

The majority of the Latin American delegation to the Tricontinental Conference, who were members of Guerrilla groups, was tasked with reorganizing the Latin American left around Cuba, promoting the Armed Revolution, and relegating the old communist parties. This led to the creation of the *Organización Latinoamericana de Solidaridad – OLAS* (Latin American Organization for Solidarity). However, its foundational Congress, and the only one, was held a

year later, in August 1967, in La Habana. The Congress was guided by a famous statement by Che Guevara that embodied the voluntarism of the guerrilla advocates: "*The duty of every revolutionary is to make the revolution*". (Calvo, 2018, p.160)

The foundational Congress of the OLAS was predominantly an opportunity for Castro's Cuba to reassert the Cuban leadership among the Latin American left to the detriment of the old Communist Parties and the Soviet line of "Peaceful Road to Socialism". Castro, as well as other guerrilla leaders, criticized the reformist spirit of the Communist parties and denied the accusations of Cuban interventionism in the internal affairs of each country. For Cuba, the majority of Communist parties were nothing but factions of the petit bourgeoisie, allied with the oligarchies to destroy the guerrillas. On the contrary, according to Castro, the guerrilla is bound to be the nucleus of the revolutionary movement in Latin America. (Castro, 1968, p. 116, 120-121).

On the other hand, the Congress highlighted that Peaceful Coexistence has not yielded any victory in the region so far. Therefore, the disjunctive between obeying the Party and the Revolution was overcome. In that sense, Cubans were the moral beacon of the honest revolutionaries of the region and the world. (Collazo, 1968). In that sense, Castro was very critical of the "peaceful transition".

"There are those who believe that a peaceful transition is possible in some countries of this continent. We cannot understand what kind of peaceful transition is the agreement with imperialism, because in order to achieve victory by peaceful means – if in practice such a thing were possible- considering that the mechanisms of the bourgeoisie, the oligarchies and imperialism control all the means for peaceful struggle. Any persons in Latin America who asserts that they will come to power peacefully are deceiving the masses" (Castro, 1967, p.4)

Nonetheless, the most remarkable moment of the conference was the criticism delivered by Fidel Castro against the Soviet Union. After the Tricontinental, Castro's prestige among the communist international movement had grown and accumulated enough political capital, and the OLAS was also an opportunity to defy the Soviet Union and its new diplomatic approach in Latin America.

Once again, through the pages of *Granma*, Castro was straightforward in his attacks towards the Soviet Union, and the money the Soviets were flowing into dictatorships and right-wing governments such as the Brazilian, Chilean, Argentinian and Colombian ones. For Castro, it was outrageous that the Soviets were financially supporting governments that were engaging in the fight against the Guerrilla groups in those countries, and there was no ideological excuse to justify the economic support to the detriment of the guerrilla groups. In theory, those money lendings to the Latin American Oligarchies were counterrevolutionaries in practice (Castro, 1968, p. 130-131).

The result of the OLAS conference would be the organization of three working commissions and a permanent committee and the adoption of a resolution with twenty points in order to achieve the revolution in all the continent, which underlined several points: The revolutionary armed struggle as the fundamental line of the revolution in Latin America; the strengthening with the revolutionaries of Africa and Asia, and the proclamation of Cuba as the vanguard of the revolution and national liberation in Latin America. All these points were highly reproduced in Cuba's main newspaper *Granma*. ("OLAS Conference Adopts General Declaration, Sets up Executive Committee," 1967, p.7)

On the other hand, the OLAS conference was barely mentioned or commented on in the Soviet press. However, unsurprisingly the pages of *Pravda* were open to the members of the Latin American Communist Parties as a platform to condemn all the Cuban efforts to promote the Armed Revolution, and in contrast defending the Soviet leadership and the Soviet policy of democratic fronts.³

While in La Habana, the OLAS conference was held, the book *Revolution in the Revolution* was published by Regis Debray in France. This publication would become a milestone in the history of Guerrilla warfare in Latin America, gathering the conclusions drawn in the OLAS conference and becoming a turning point in Cuba's advocacy for the armed Revolution.

³ See for example the article *Заря человечества* (The dawn of humanity) written by Rodolfo Guioli, Secretary of the Communist of Argentina.

Regis Debray, a French philosopher and disciple of French Marxist Louis Althusser, attracted by the Cuban revolutionary government and its heterodox notion of Marxist, traveled to Cuba to initially become a professor at the University of La Habana before joining in 1966 the guerrilla group Che Guevara was organizing in Bolivia. Debray was captured in April 1967 in Bolivia, and the book was published while he was in jail.

Revolution in the Revolution was essentially the theoretical consolidation of the Cuban doctrines on Guerrilla warfare, based mainly on the doctrines put forward by Che Guevara and Fidel Castro since the victory of the Revolution in 1959. At first, Debray conducted a historical analysis of the National Liberation Movement in Latin America since the early XX century. According to Debray, the armed struggle in the continent had suffered a process of evolution and transformation, from initial phases of Self-defense violence, passing through a phase of Armed propaganda to conclude in a Guerrilla theoretically mature enough - Che's Foco- to aspire to the seizure of the state power. (Debray, 1967, p 19-59)

For Debray, the Guerrilla was an independent organ from the Party, replacing it as the vanguard of the Revolution and overcoming the policy of Peaceful Coexistence. Debray also emphasized the role of the peasants as the guerrilla base in opposition to the traditional masses' struggle of the Communist Party. Throughout the text, Cuba's experience is portrayed as the embodiment of Guerrilla Warfare, which shows the possibility of success of the Armed Revolution in Latin America. Furthermore, in Debray's point of view, Cuba was a leader of the socialist bloc in its own right since it pursued its political desires and built a renovated interpretation of Marxist-Leninism without following any imposed doctrine. (Debray, 1967, p.120-125)

According to Roberto Lamberg, *Revolution in the Revolution* was Cuba's most critical military manual since Guevara's *Guerrilla Warfare*. The book was elevated as an official propaganda piece by Fidel Castro in 1967, given that it reunited all the Cuban doctrine of National Liberation Struggle. (Lamberg, 1968, p. 280). In Castro's opinion, Debray's book essentially materialized the Cuban struggle for the Armed Revolution in Latin America into a theoretical piece, which is, consequently, the highest point of Cuba's Agency.

Despite that the publication of *Revolution in the Revolution* ramped up Cuban prestige within the Latin American and the international leftist movement, Che Guevara was captured and executed in Bolivia in October 1967, yielding significant consequences for the Armed Revolution in Latin America in the following years, as will be analyzed in the final section.

Apart from the events above: the creation of Pensamiento Crítico, the OLAS conference and *Revolution in the Revolution*; the episode known as the *Microfaction Affair* would end up escalating the tensions with the Soviet Union, between later 1967 and early 1968.

The *Microfaction Affair* was born from a report redacted by Raúl Castro, Fidel's brother, who, acting as minister of the Cuban armed forces, sent a report to the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party in February 1968 detailing the presence of a dissident faction within the Cuban Communist Party. The presence of dissidence in the Communist Party of Cuba was directly intertwined with the Cuban-Soviet controversy that had commenced after the Missile Crisis and deepened following 1965.

As analyzed before, the foundation of the Communist Party of Cuba in 1965 marked a milestone in Cuba's revolutionary process. It made the Communist Party the foremost political organization in Cuba, bringing together the leftist organizations that took part in the 1959 Revolution victory, such as the Pro-Soviet Socialist Popular Party, the Revolutionary Directory March 13, and Castro's July 26 Movement.

However, instead of being a palpable unification of the Cuban left around a shared interpretation of Marx and Lenin's ideas, the Party's creation in 1965 meant the consolidation of Castro and his supporter's power within Cuban politics. From the outset, the factions of the former July 26 Movement retained control over the Central Committee and the principal organs of control of the Party. Castro, along with his brother Raúl and other former members of the July 26 Movement, imposed the principles of Armed Revolution and Proletariat Internationalism as the guiding principles of the Party, laying out a confrontation with the "Orthodox", the pro-soviet socialist of the former Socialist Popular Party. (Ramos, 2007)

From the point of view of the "Orthodox," with Anibal Escalante as their leader, the Castro brothers and Che Guevara were misleading with their adventurous thesis of "Exporting the Revolution" instead of aligning with the Soviet Union and the official Marxist-Leninist doctrine. There were neither objective or subjective conditions in Latin America for the Armed struggle, reproducing the point of view of the old communist parties of the region. The "Orthodox" believed that the compromise with the Marxist-Leninist ideals should be materialized, and the new Party must fully embrace the Centralized Democracy, State-planned economy, and the Soviet peaceful road to socialism.

Ideological tensions between the July 26 members and Orthodox escalated to the point that in October 1967, Castro's faction launched an internal purge to vote off the "Orthodox", or the "Microfaction", as was named by Raúl Castro in his February 1968 report. According to Castro's report, since 1966, following the creation of the Communist Party, the Orthodox were backed by Soviet diplomats and Soviet agents in their efforts to undermine Castro's legitimacy and even contemplated organizing a coup against Fidel Castro and the pro-guerrilla faction, with the help of Soviet, German and Czech representatives. (R. Castro, 1968, p. 40-64)

Consequently, following the publication of the report, revolutionary trials were carried out against 43 members of the Orthodox Microfaction being Anibal Escalante the most "exemplifier", condemned to 16 years in jail for counterrevolutionary activities.

Although the report did not point directly to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union or its Central Committee, one section of Castro's report highlighted contacts between the Orthodox and unspecified Soviet citizens about the dissatisfaction with the Cuban Communist leadership. However, the contacts did not yield any results. Furthermore, Castro pointed out that among the priorities of the Microfaction was to work in favor of the Soviet's interests in Latin America by disavowing the official Cuban policy of armed Revolution. (Castro, 1968)

The *Microfaction Affair* enabled Cuba to accuse the Soviet Union of interventionism in its internal affairs, something unthinkable in the early sixties when the alliance started and Cuba's was limited by its isolationism and dependence on Soviet aid. Although Cuba was still

dependent on Soviet aid, in 1967, after a series of maneuvers, Cuba exercised its agency at a broader level to directly criticize the Soviet Union for interventionism.

In contrast, it seems that the Soviets decided to belittle the *Microfaction Affair* publicly, which was barely mentioned in Pravda, without mentioning the apparent Soviet participation in the complot. (Pravda, 1968, p.4). Nonetheless, all the movements made by Cuba in 1967, the OLAS conference, publication of *Revolution in the Revolution*, and the *Microfaction affair*, yielded a reaction within the main Soviet circle of power, leading Alekséi Kosyguin, the second most important leader of the Soviet Union after Brezhnev, to go to Cuba to discuss the ongoing conflictive situation between both countries.

According to a declassified report by the Mexican ambassador to Cuba, Kosyguin's visits to Cuba were unexpected and aimed at holding a private meeting with Fidel Castro. Kosyguin expressed the Soviet disapproval of Cuba's promotion of the Armed Revolution in Latin America and warned that the Cuban-Soviet alliance might suffer seriously, mainly because it was affecting Soviet commercial interests with the region's governments. ("Report from the Mexican Embassy in Havana, July 4 1967," 1967, p.1-2).

Kosygin's visit speaks about Soviet's perceptions of Cuba's autonomy agenda, perceiving that Cuba's autonomy was harmful to the Soviet Union and the unity of the Socialist Bloc. As Levesque points out, as part of the new Soviet diplomatic approach in Latin America, laid out in the XXIII congress, the Soviet Union was also engaged in a propaganda campaign to show the progress of commerce with the Latin American governments, aimed to dismiss the Cuban critics and to underlying that the Soviets were not interested in suppress the Revolution, but to respect each country's rights to trade freely with any country, as was pointed out by a Soviet diplomat in Pravda (Мазин, 1967, p.4).

Nonetheless, Kosyguin's visit to Cuba was not the only measure the Soviets took to counteract Cuba's agency, but was used as a warning, threatening Cuba of reduced the flow Soviet aid, and due to Cuba's efforts in 1967 did not diminished, for the first time since the beginning of the alliance with Cuba, the Soviet resolved to curtail the oil shipments towards Cuba in the first

half of 1968. In 1967 Cuba had requested an increase of eight per cent of Soviet oil shipments. However, the Soviet's shipments barely reached two per cent (Lamberg, 1970, p.124).

The Soviet oil was essential for fulfilling the goals of the *Revolutionary Offensive*, an economic policy designed by Cuban economists in 1967 to nationalize the remaining private property and prepare the terrain for a harvest of 10 million sugar tons in 1970. The Revolutionary Offensive aimed to consolidate Cuba's industrial capacity and make it more economically self-sufficient.

The Revolutionary Offensive was another significant step aimed at strengthening Cuba's agency since it was an economic policy grounded in Che Guevara's economic strategies that, as was mentioned, were starkly opposed to the Soviet planification. Furthermore, some scholars have labeled the Revolutionary Offensive as a kind of Cuban Great Leap Forward. (Mesa-Lago, 1970, p. 31-32).

Insofar the cut in the oil shipments to Cuba aimed to affect Cuba's *Revolutionary Offensive*, it was also a means to blackmail Cuba for its rebelliousness and self-determination, as recognized by Fidel Castro, who considered the Soviet actions outrageous and unfair, but at the same time leading him to recognize the heavy reliance on Soviet oil. (F. Castro, 1968b, p.163)

The period between 1967 and the first half of 1968, the period in which Cuba could exert its agency most broadly thanks to the impulse of guerrilla warfare in Latin America, ended with the relationship with the Soviet Union worsening altogether, including now the economic sphere, with the expectation of a escalation of tensions during the second half of 1968.

3.3 The erosion of the armed movement in Latin America and Cuba's retreat.

The period that unfolded after the first half of 1968, during the peak of Cuba's agency and its political controversy with the Soviet Union, paradoxically coincided with the decline of the Armed Revolution in Latin America, directly affecting Cuba. The year 1968, a pivotal moment in history, marked a turning point, as guerrilla groups in various Latin American countries (Perú, Colombia, Venezuela, Guatemala, Argentina, Ecuador) faced significant military setbacks (Gott, 2004, p.233).

As Kruijt asserts, the visible retreat of the guerilla movement in Latin America from 1968 was not a coincidence. It resulted from a series of factors, including the military unpreparedness of various Latin American fighters and the role of the U.S's counterinsurgent campaign, orchestrated since 1963 after the Missile Crisis. The US, through its financial and military support to national armies, police detachments, and paramilitary groups, including the CIA, was determinant to prevent the formation of a new Cuba in the western hemisphere, or as Che Guevara had proclaimed "*the formation of one, two and three Vietnams*" (Kruijt, 2020, p.20)

Additionally, to the setbacks suffered in the military field, the death of Che Guevara in Bolivia in October 1967 was a profound blow for the Armed movement in Latin America. Guevara's death and his own symbolic figure had become controversial within the Latin American left, as has been analyzed before, since he was one of the most steadfast advocates of the guerrilla as the vanguard of the Revolution in contrast with the Party. His death and the failure of Bolivia's campaign overshadowed his figure, consequently, his theoretical production on guerrilla warfare was called into question, marking a significant shift in the landscape of the Armed Revolution. (Kruijt, 2020)

Being Guevara one of the most important advocates of Cuba autonomy and agency, and his conviction in Cuba's leadership for the National liberation in Latin America, his death caused the closure of a revolutionary period in Latin America. As for Cuba, his death had also a deep impact, triggering for the first time an internal debate surrounding Cuba's backup of the Armed Revolution thus far, thereby taking into consideration aspects such as the material capacity of Cuba to keep supporting the guerrillas in the continent, or the real chances of the armed revolution to succeed. (Ramírez, 1971, p.123). Fidel Castro himself, years later in his autobiography, acknowledged that Cuba had to step back from the support to the Armed Revolutionaries in the late sixties due to the subjective conditions for the revolution had changed in the continent. (Fidel. R. I. Castro, 2009, p.296).

On the other hand, the Soviets, fully aware of the blowback of the Guerrilla movement in Latin America in 1968, sought to take leverage of the situation, emphasizing that the Armed Revolution had failed once for all. In that regard, the new director of the Latin American Institute of the Soviet Academy of Science, V.Volsky, commented about the shift in Latin American politics in an article in Pravda, translated by *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, called "*The new stage of the people's struggle*". Volsky puts forward that though successful, the Cuban experience was exceptional and could not be replicated in the rest of the continent; thereby, the National Liberation movements had not thrived in the lack of objective conditions for the Revolution. In light of that situation, the remaining possibility for those movements was to overcome the "idealism" and re approach to the Communist Parties, the real vanguard of the proletariat. (Volsky, 1968, p.19-20).

Publicly, Cuba insisted on its unwavering support of the Revolution in an attempt to maintain the degree of agency gained during 1966-1968. However, Castro and the rest of the Cuban leaders seem to have focused their energy on preparing the Cuban economy for the ten-million-tons harvest projected for 1970, showing a subtle but perceptible change in Cuba's rhetoric. (Mesa-Lago, 1970).

However, the breaking point for Cuba's Agency came in August 1968, with the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Following the invasion, Fidel Castro appeared on Cuban television and surprisingly supported the "*Soviet efforts to avoid the restoration of capitalism in Czechoslovakia*" (González, 1972, p.20). Cuban endorsement of Soviet actions in Prague, without doubt, was a breaking point in Cuba's exercise of its agency, and it could be only understood in light of the setbacks suffered by the Latin American guerillas.

The Soviet invasion of Prague came at a moment in which, despite the significant influence and autonomy gained by Cuba since the Missile Crisis, and particularly after 1966, the Revolution in Latin America had not yielded any significant result and was at a critical point, affecting Cuba's project for the agency. Cuban leadership deemed that despite its critics towards

the Soviet Union, the political outlook in Latin America did seem very favorable for Cuba's interests, apart from the economic pressure the Soviets had exercised with the oil shipments. In that sense, according to Cuban American scholars Carmelo Mesa-Lago and Edward González, it offered Cuba an invaluable opportunity to regain the favor of the Soviet Union, contrasting with its earlier critics towards the Soviet foreign policy in Latin America. (Mesa-Lago, 1970, 32) (González, 1970, p.21).

Although rhetorically, Cuba kept supporting the Latin American Revolution, after the Prague invasion, from August 1968 onwards, Cuba's support of the armed Revolution started to lose its radicalism and wane progressively, affecting Cuba's agency over the Soviet influence. For example, during the international communist conference of 1969 in Moscow, Cuban representative Carlos Rafael Rodríguez underscored that Cuba remained engaged with the ideas of the National Liberation Movements while at the same time recognizing that the aim was the peaceful coexistence and, most importantly, that "*...Cuba will always unyieldingly be at the side of the Soviet Union.*" (Rodríguez, 1969, p.6).

Furthermore, between 1962 and 1968, Cuba provided wide and steady material and political support to various guerrilla groups throughout Latin America. In 1969, Cuba's support was reduced to some remaining guerillas in Colombia, Venezuela, and Guatemala, while the guerrillas had almost disappeared in the rest of Latin America. (Levesque and Leboeuf, 1978)

On the other hand, the Soviets seemed aware of a decline in revolutionary activity in 1968, as described in Volsky's article analyzed before. In 1969, another article authored by A.Popov in *Мировая экономика и международные отношения*, called *некоторые аспекты революционного опыта кубы* (*Some aspects of the Revolutionary experience of Cuba*), appeared and suggested that for the Soviet Union, the dispute around the Armed Revolution was settled. The author, like various Soviet commentators before, underscored that the historical conditions in which the Cuban Revolution succeeded were unique and could not be replicated in any other part of Latin America, as the lack of political and military gains had shown. Additionally, the author suggested that Cuba's endeavors to promote the Revolution were over. (Попов.А, 1969)

Cuba's agency greatly suffered because it was deeply intertwined with the possibilities of spreading and success of the Revolution and National Liberation in Latin America. Although it is true that Cuba did not abandon its intentions to exert its agency after the failure of the

armed Revolution, it instead shifted its focus to achieving the *Revolutionary offensive* and the 10 million tons of sugarcane. After 1968, that became Cuba's number one priority, as Fidel Castro highlighted in Granma.

"The question of a sugar harvest of 10 million tons has become something more than an economic goal; it is something that has been converted into a point of honor for this revolution" (F. Castro, 1968c, p.1)

The fulfillment of the 10 million tons of sugarcane was the last effort made by Cuba to prove that its socialism was different and based on a unique revolutionary experience, away from the Soviet experience. Since 1968, all the productive capacity of Cuba and the economy had been focused on preparing the 10 million tons, which would have been an opportunity to prove the effectiveness of Cuba's political economy inherited from Che Guevara's ideas of moral incentives and economic voluntarism. However, the Revolutionary Offensive could not be achieved, and in 1970, Cuba produced 7 million tons of sugarcane, a significant amount considering the lack of industrial capacity and the preparation time for production since 1968.

Despite Castro's publicity efforts to present the harvest of 7 million tons of sugar as a victory, Cuba's economy was almost destroyed due to the tremendous effort put into the Revolutionary offensive. This resulted in a more profound dependence on Soviet commerce and Soviets in comparison with the early sixties. (Goldenberg, 1970). The failure of the economic policy and the failure of the Armed Revolution in Latin America led Cuba to reapproach the Soviet Union, limiting Cuba's agency towards the end of the decade.

Furthermore, Cuba gave way to exercising its agency and adopted the Soviet diplomatic approach towards the Latin American region. In that sense, Cuba in 1970, sought to enhance State-Level relations with the Latin American governments, approaching, for instance, the newly elected socialist government of Salvador Allende in Chile and, more surprisingly, sought to improve relations with the nationalist and anti-American military government in Perú. (González, 1972).

At the beginning of the 1970s decade, Cuba pursued a path of complete alignment with Moscow, starting a process of Sovietization, known in Cuba as *"Institutionalization"*, aim to replicate all the structures of the state in the manner of the Soviet model, reducing to the lowest point Cuba's agency and capacity to be an autonomous political force.

As part of the "Institutionalization", Cuba transformed the Communist Party and adopted Leninist centralism; implemented a centralized state-planned economy; and created institutions such as the Consejo Nacional de Cuba (CNC) (Cuba's National Committee) to censor and control the intellectual and cultural production and leading for instance to the closure of the journal *Pensamiento Crítico* in 1971, a journal that as analyzed before, was founded in 1967 in the faculty of Philosophy of the University of La Habana, aimed essentially at defending Cuba's ideological autonomy and to denounce the Soviet orthodoxy. Furthermore, the Cuban institutionalization process allowed Cuba to become a member of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) in 1972, giving it access to commerce with the rest of the socialist countries and entering officially into the Socialist Bloc. (Kirk, Clayfield, Story, 2018)

All these transformations starkly contrast with the beginning of the decade and the aftermath of the Missile Crisis and the decision of Cuba to pursue its agency independently from the Soviet tutelage. This agency depended on the spread and success of the Armed Revolution and the principles of National Liberation in Latin America. Cuban leaders believed that by promoting the principles that had made Cuba's Revolution possible, it was possible for the survival of the Cuban socialist state and to stay away from any foreign imposition. However, with the failure of the Revolution and the Latin American guerrillas, Cuba reapproached the Soviet sphere of influence to the detriment of its agency.

Conclusion

Following the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, Cuba emerged as the epitome of revolution in Latin America, demonstrating that National Liberation Struggle and Martí's ideas of liberation could be achieved through guerrilla warfare. From that point forward, Cuban leaders such as Fidel Castro, Raúl Castro, and Che Guevara championed the objectives of spreading revolution throughout Latin America while preserving Cuba's political independence and self-determination.

These two ideals—National Liberation and Self-Determination—became the core of Cuba's agency during the 1960s. After the 1962 Missile Crisis, Cuba intensified its efforts to promote armed revolution across Latin America, a strategy that continued until 1969. During this period,

Cuba successfully established and supported various guerrilla movements identified with Cuba's leadership and revolutionary success. However, this strategy clashed with the Soviet Union's regional interests.

Despite forming an alliance in the early 1960s, the Soviet Union's goal of influencing the Latin American left, along with its broader economic and diplomatic interests, were frequently undermined by Cuba's independent actions. As analyzed, the Soviet Union expected a more compliant ally, but the Cuban-Soviet relationship became increasingly strained, particularly during 1966-1968, when Cuba's assertive promotion of National Liberation led to significant diplomatic tensions.

Cuba's success in championing National Liberation elevated it to a leadership position among Third World countries and anti-colonial movements, further challenging Soviet authority. Meanwhile, Fidel Castro and other Cuban revolutionaries frequently criticized the Soviet Union's policy of peaceful coexistence with Latin American governments. It became evident that the two nations were on divergent paths, leading to more frequent public accusations.

Nonetheless, on the most aligid moment of tensions between Cuba and the Soviets, the National Liberation struggle staled in Latin America due to various reasons, including the success of the U.S.-backed Latin American governments against the guerrillas and the very death of Che Guevara in Bolivia, a severe reputational and moral blow. As the guerrilla movements across Latin America suffered setbacks, so too did Cuba's margin to exercise its agency in opposition to the Soviet strategy of peaceful coexistence. This led to a gradual shift in Cuba's stance, culminating in a closer alignment with the Soviet interests by the end of the decade.

Whereas Cuba had been able to assert its agency between 1963 and 1967, by 1968-1969, its agency had diminished, leading to a definitive alignment with the Soviet Union. This alignment set the conditions for the 1970s, a period marked by the full-fledged Sovietization of Cuba, known as the *Institutionalization*.

As argued in this dissertation, the Soviet Union sought to maintain leverage in Latin America amidst its rivalry with the U.S. Therefore, Cuba, a declared enemy of the U.S and a socialist government, was tolerated by the Soviets, who deemed it a valuable ally of its promotion of armed revolution.

Moreover, amid the ideological disputes within the socialist bloc between the Soviet Union and China, the Soviets opted for a diplomatic approach to manage their differences with Cuba; this strategy ultimately proved beneficial for the Soviets, as Cuba, despite the exercise of its agency, stood by the side of the Soviet Union against China.

As for Cuba's decision to align with the Soviet Union at the end of the 60's, it was a pragmatic decision made by Fidel Castro and the Cuban communists, aimed at ensuring the survival of the Cuban socialist state. This alignment came at the expense of Cuba's own agency, as it increasingly relied on Soviet aid and trade with socialist countries to preserve its economy and political stability. Nonetheless, Cuba has become an exemplary case of a small country that, amid a hostile international environment, has been able to exert its agency through periods of retreat and periods with more favorable conditions

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