

But the US perception of a Cuba being a communist threat against US domination in the region was not solved with this. **The trade embargo was not lifted.**

Did the Americans have any reason to fear Castro? Castro, with the support of the USSR, wanted to inspire other countries in **Latin America** to turn to communism. He had ideological reason for this but it would also end Cuba's isolation in the region. There were revolutionary groups in Latin America receiving both training and weapons from Cuba. The most well known is Castro's friend and ex-minister Che Guevara. Both **Che Guevara** and Castro hoped to inspire '**many Vietnams**', a small nation fighting a non-conventional war against the Americans, but now in Latin America. In 1965, Che left Cuba to support a revolutionary group in Bolivia but was captured and shot in 1967. The attempts to spread the revolution in Latin America didn't succeed but these Cuban-inspired attempts worried the US.

The US trade embargo made Castro more or less totally dependent on Soviet aid. Consequently he was loyal to the USSR and supported the Warsaw Pact's invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Castro was also an internationalist and the decolonisation process in Africa gave him an opportunity to show this commitment. In 1974, there was a revolution in Portugal. The year after, Portuguese colonies were granted independence, i.e., Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and Angola. In **Angola** a bitter civil war started between the MPLA, FNLA and UNITA. These organisations were backed by several foreign states and MPLA was backed by the USSR. The FNLA was backed by the US, i.e., decolonisation became a part of the Cold War. To Castro, the decolonisation and a struggle for national liberation from foreign control, was a 'known experience'. Cuba intervened militarily and sent **17,000 Cuban troops** who were shipped by the Russians to support the MPLA in the civil war in Angola. The MPLA seized power in Angola and signed a friendship treaty with the USSR in 1976. Mozambique did the same the following year. In 1977, Castro again sent about **17,000 combat troops** to another conflict in Africa: the Ethiopian government wanted to expel Somalia from the Ogaden region. **Ethiopia** soon became a pro-Russian state.

Castro's involvement in the decolonisation process and his support for world revolution kept the conflict with the US alive. No possible détente with the US was in sight. But by supporting her Soviet ally in further globalisation of the Cold War in the Third World, Cuba would strengthen her bonds with the Russians upon whose support the **Cuban economy was so dependent.**

Castro was deeply involved in questions about a 'New economic order' in the 1970s. The Non-Aligned Movement became a tool for Castro's dedication to this question. It was problematic to the organisation that a close ally to the USSR was so active. Cuba was the only Latin-American country to join the organisation and served as its chair from 1979 to 1982.

In **1979**, a revolution broke out in Nicaragua in Central America. The Sandinistas, a coalition of Marxists, other radicals, and liberals, overthrew Anastasio Somoza after a guerrilla war. Somoza was considered as a corrupt leader even by President Carter in the US and close to a human disaster. There was much international support for the new regime which received substantial aid from many countries in Western Europe but soon also 2,500 advisors from Cuba. The aim of the new regime was to create a mixed economy and social and economic justice. The Carter administration also gave some aid in the beginning. With the advent of Reagan as President in January 1981, the situation changed and the US started to support the Contras, a right-wing group fighting the regime in Nicaragua. In 1983, the US invaded the small Caribbean island of **Grenada**, to overthrow a left-wing regime. Reagan claimed that the regime was turning the island into a '**Soviet-Cuban colony**'. There were both Cuban and North Korean advisers in Grenada who were overwhelmed by the Americans. When the Grenada invasion took place, the regime in Nicaragua urged the regime in Havana to recall its advisers in Nicaragua. It was believed that the Cuban presence might trigger a US invasion of Nicaragua; hence, the few Cubans had a major impact.

The developments in Nicaragua and Grenada are important events from a Cold War perspective. But Cuban activities in these two conflicts were of **minor importance**. The very fact that attention was paid to Cuba in these conflicts shows the importance of Cuba in Cold War relations.