

little to change Cuba's fundamental economic problems: its dependence upon sugar, and the lack of national manufacturing industries.

Two other major events were influential in defining Cuban-U.S. relations: the missile crisis of October 1962, and the tightening of the trade embargo. The missile crisis, of course, caused the whole world to focus on U.S.-Cuba-Soviet Union relations, for it was feared that a nuclear war might result. President John F. Kennedy demanded removal of the missiles that the Soviets had placed in Cuba. Initially, the response was *nyet*, increasing the fear that global nuclear war was about to begin. Finally, after several tense days, Premier Nikita Khrushchev of the Soviet Union agreed to remove the missiles in Cuba, with the understanding that the U.S. would not invade the island.

Though Khrushchev did not consult Castro, who is said to have been furious about the agreement to withdraw the missiles, agreement did provide the revolutionary regime with a U.S. commitment not to invade, providing a greater sense of security. At the same time, it made clear that Cuba was in a dangerous situation in which the U.S. continued its hostile policy while the Soviet Union could not be relied upon to support Cuba in a crisis. Hostile U.S. actions included Operation Mongoose (elaborate plans to foment and support internal revolts), attempts to assassinate Castro, surreptitious support of militant exile groups such as Alpha 66, and acts of sabotage against economic targets.

The second significant event was the decision on July 8, 1963, by the Kennedy administration,

to tighten the trade embargo and make travel to Cuba illegal for most U.S. citizens under terms of the Trading with the Enemy Act of 1917. Antagonism and isolation, with only occasional formal contacts, now defined the relationship between the two neighbors. Despite periodic apparent thaws in the relationship this antagonism continues to the present.

Events on the island following the victorious entry of the revolutionary forces into Havana affected the everyday lives of most Cubans. The initial joy of the triumph over the cruel dictatorship of Batista was succeeded with the desire to see that those who had committed atrocities, murder, and torture received their just rewards. Persons alleged to be war criminals were tried in the first days of the victory by a court composed of several members of the rebel army, a counselor, and occasionally, a respectable local citizen. Those found guilty of murder or torture were immediately executed. By January 10, when a normal judicial process was put into effect, about one hundred police and other officials had been executed. Justice was meted out swiftly. Daily newspaper accounts of the discovery of decomposed bodies did not provide an atmosphere for moderation. While not all who were found guilty were executed, by January 20 about two hundred former Batista officials were executed for torture and murder. Concern was expressed by the U.S. and other nations that judicial proceedings often were unfair, but the Cuban populace felt that after so much suffering from an illegal and unjust regime, justice was overdue.