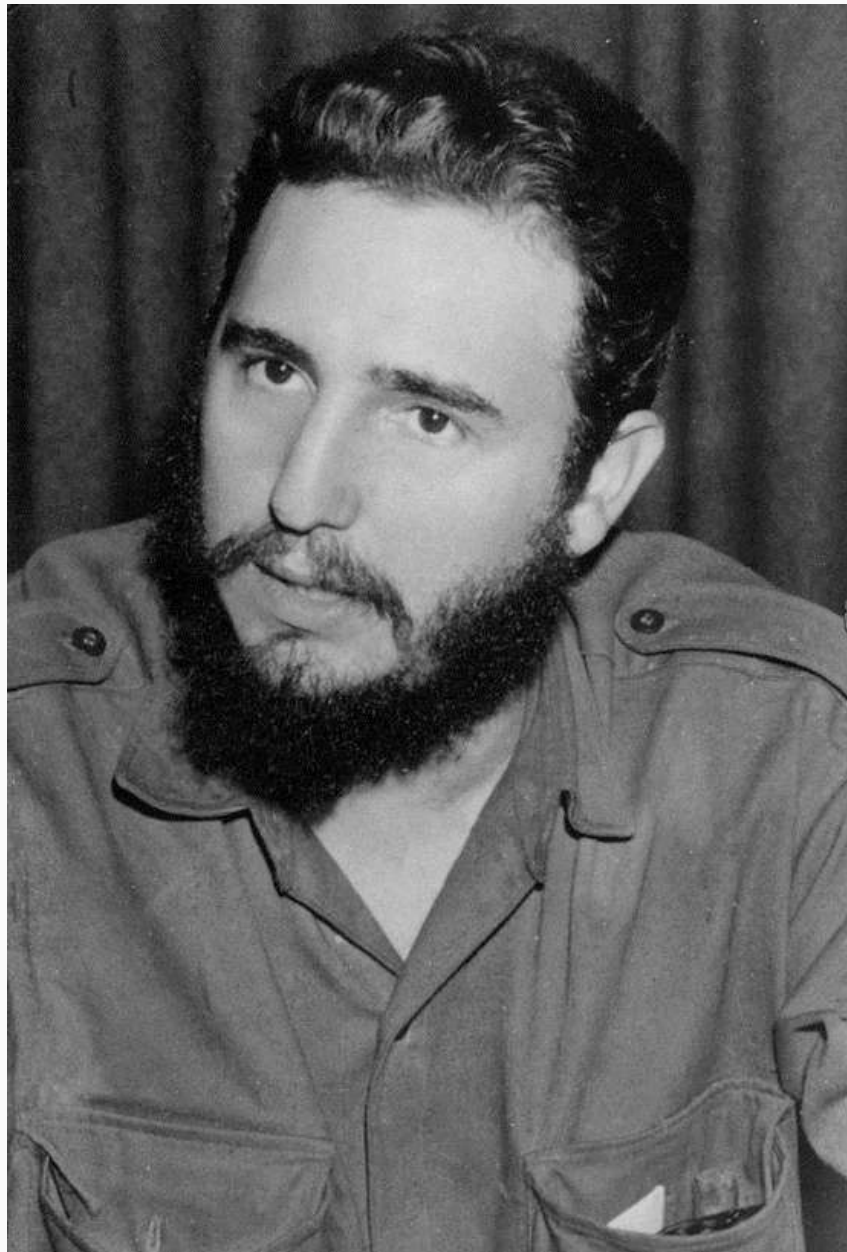


# FIDEL CASTRO

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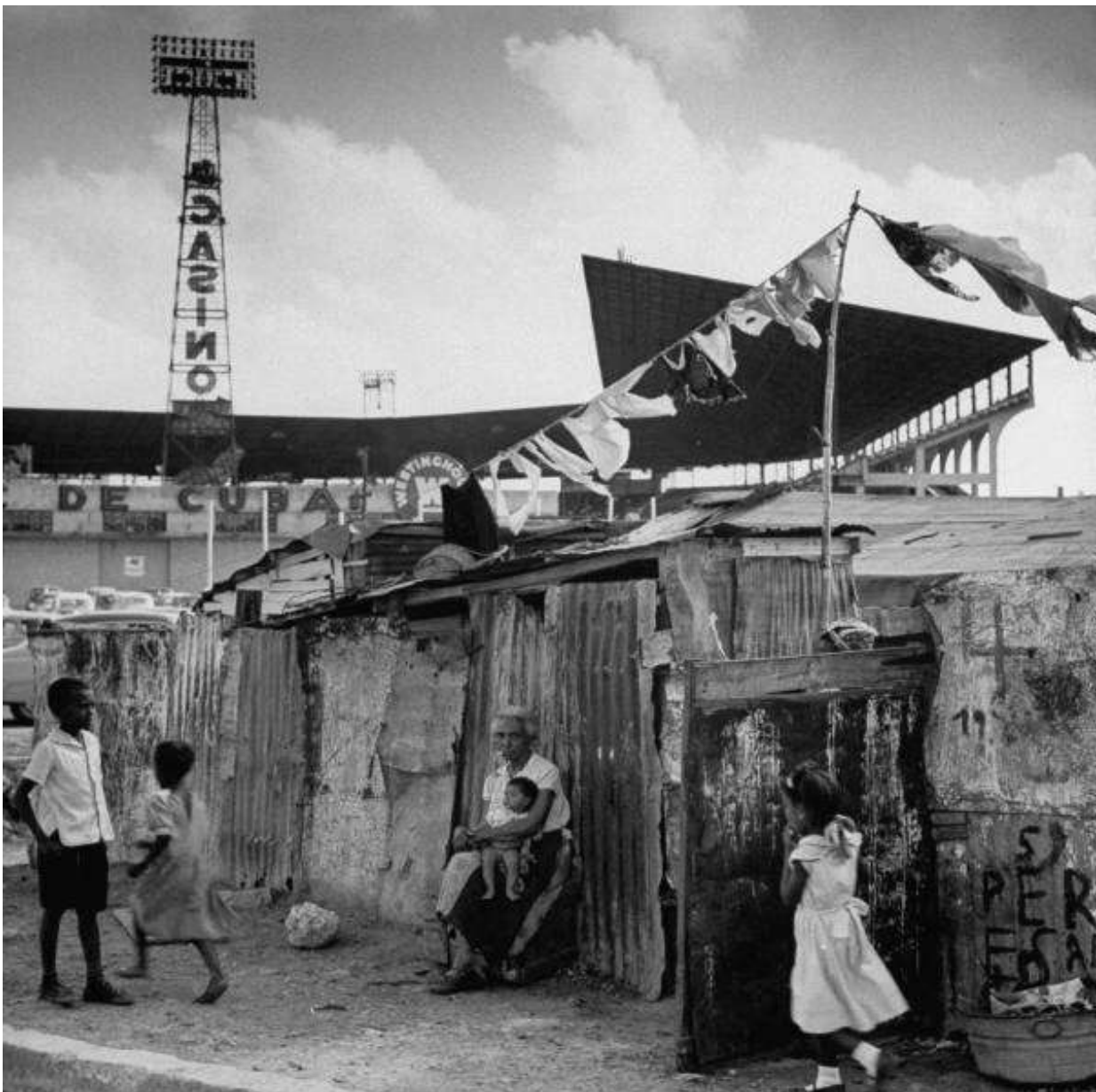
WAS FIDEL CASTRO A GREAT LEADER?

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# He deposed Batista's corrupt regime

**Source 1:** Slum (bohio) dwellings outside Havana baseball stadium, a large casino sign in the background, 1954



# He deposed Batista's corrupt regime

**Source 2:** U.S. President John F. Kennedy in an interview with with the editor of the Socialist newsweekly L'Observateur, 24 October 1963

I believe that there is no country in the world including any and all the countries under colonial domination, where economic colonization, humiliation and exploitation were worse than in Cuba, in part owing to my country's policies during the Batista regime. I approved the proclamation which Fidel Castro made in the Sierra Maestra, when he justifiably called for justice and especially yearned to rid Cuba of corruption. I will even go further: to some extent it is as though Batista was the incarnation of a number of sins on the part of the United States. Now we shall have to pay for those sins. In the matter of the Batista regime, I am in agreement with the first Cuban revolutionaries. That is perfectly clear.

## He ran an oppressive, authoritarian regime

**Source 3:** Extract from an article by Amnesty International 'Six Facts about Censorship in Cuba', 11 March 2016

1. Freedom of expression can land you in jail in Cuba.

Graffiti artist Danilo Maldonado Machado, known as "El Sexto", found this out when he was locked up for most of 2015 for painting the names of Raul and Fidel — the names of the Castro brothers who have been in power since 1959 — on the backs of two live pigs. He had planned to release the animals as part of an artistic performance but, before he could, he was accused of desacato (contempt) and thrown in prison for 10 months. He was never formally charged or brought before a judge.



## He ran an oppressive, authoritarian regime



**Source 4:** A mock Cuban prison cell used to imprison political dissidents. The cell was based on a description by jailed dissident Oscar Elias Biscet

# The US embargo prevented greater economic growth

**Source 5:** Extract from Amnesty International report “Cuba: The US embargo against Cuba: Its impact on economic and social rights”, 2009



## Cuba: The US embargo against Cuba: Its impact on economic and social rights

September 2, 2009, Index Number: AMR 25/007/2009

*the US embargo violates human rights law in two distinct ways. Firstly, “the fact that the United States is the major regional economic power and the main source of new medicines and technologies means that Cuba is subject to deprivations that impinge on its citizens’ human rights.” Secondly, by passing legislation that “tries to force third-party countries into embargoing Cuba as well” – the 1992 Torricelli Act – the US government attempted to turn “a unilateral embargo into a multilateral embargo through coercive measures, the only effect of which will be to deepen further the suffering of the Cuban people and increase the violation of their human rights”.*

# The US embargo prevented greater economic growth

**Source 6:** Political cartoon by Brazilian artist Carlos Latuff about the US embargo of Cuba, 2007



# He destroyed Cuba's economy

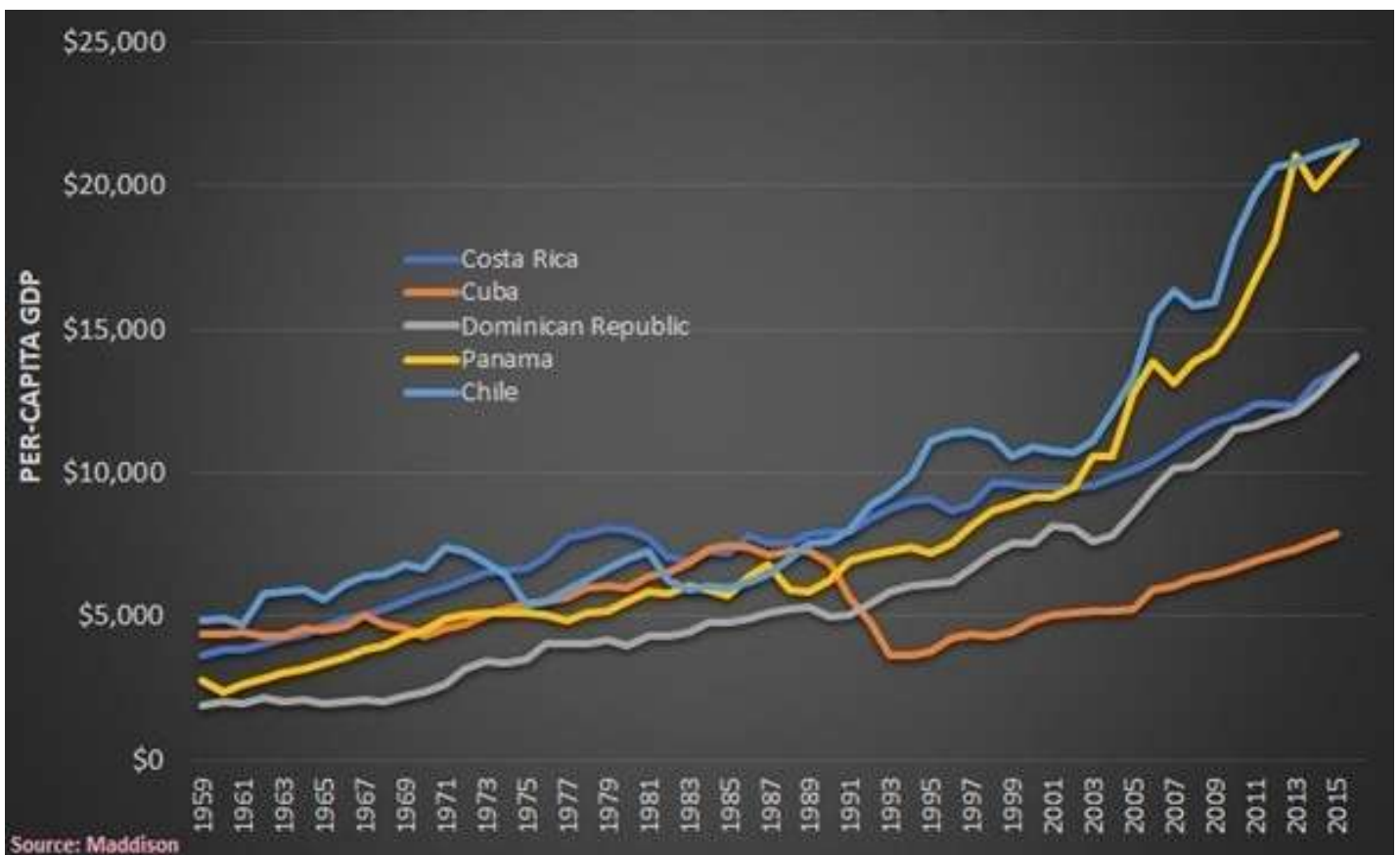
**Source 7:** Crumbling buildings and an old car in modern day Havana





# He destroyed Cuba's economy

**Source 8:** Graph of Cuban GDP from 1959 to 2015 compared to other Latin American countries



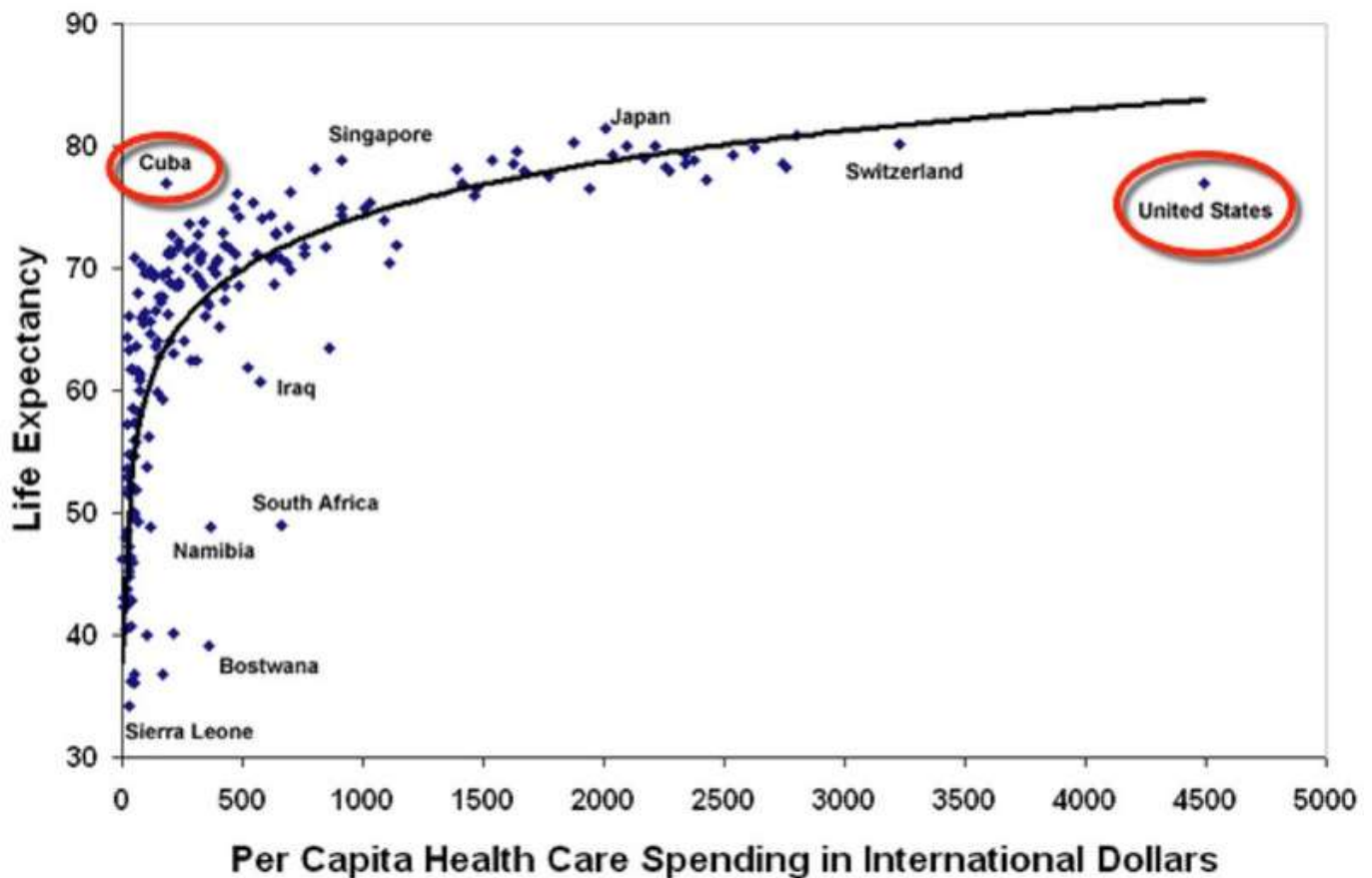
# His government put the needs of ordinary Cubans first

**Source 9:** Extract from 'Fidel: A Biography of Fidel Castro', by P. G. Bourne, 1986

The accomplishments of the Cuban social programs are laudable and impressive. In thirty months, Fidel opened more classrooms than his predecessors had in thirty years...Six hundred miles of rural roads were built in the first six months of the revolution, water and sanitation schemes costing \$300 million were launched in the rural areas, and housing for the peasant population was constructed at a rate of over eight hundred per month. Children's nurseries and day-care centers were put up, as well as institutions for the handicapped and homes for the aged. The old mental hospital in Havana, a monument to inhumanity in the Batista era, was renovated, restaffed, and turned into a model institution equal to any in the world...

# His government put the needs of ordinary Cubans first

**Source 10:** Graph of international life expectancies versus government money spent on healthcare



# His policies drove massive emigration

**Source 11:** Extract from the website of 'Florida Memory', the State Library and Archives of Florida, 2022



Many Cubans feared they would be targeted by the revolutionary government. Thousands of refugees fled the island for the United States. The majority of Cuban refugees ended up in Florida.

By October 1962, nearly 250,000 Cubans had arrived in the United States. Subsequent waves in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s increased the Cuban refugee population in the United States to over one million.

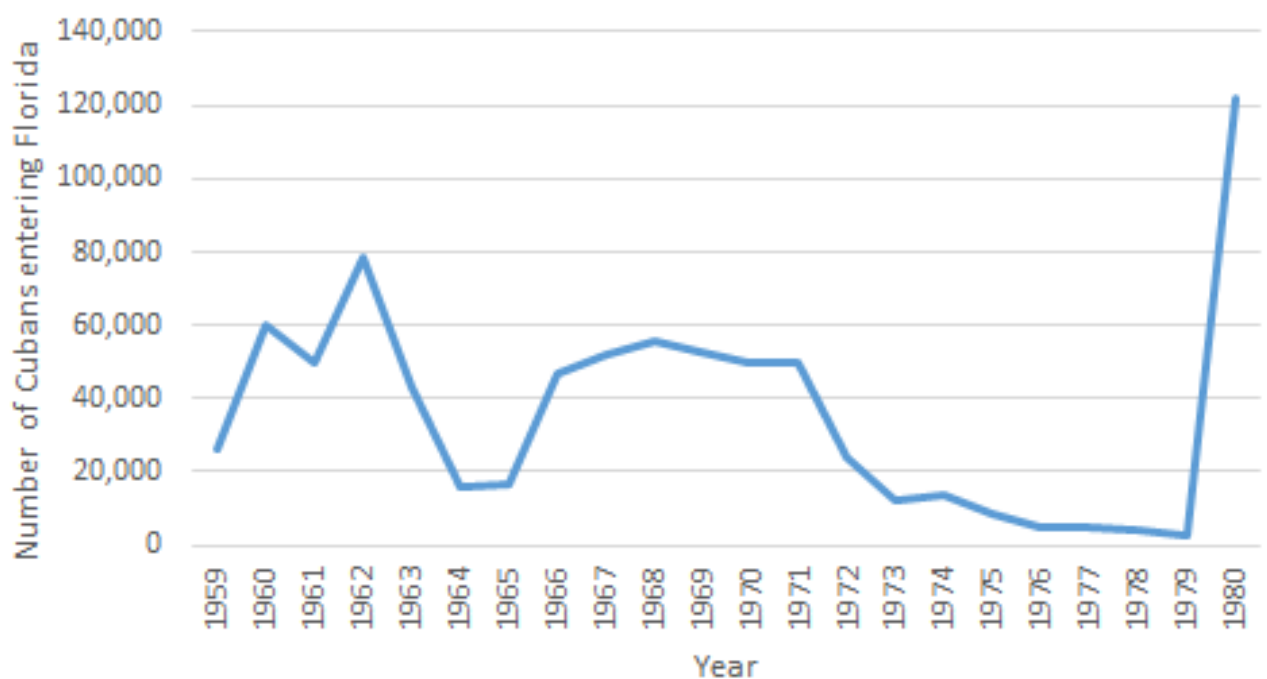
## Cuban Refugee Assistance Program

The Cuban Refugee Assistance Program (CRA) was an unprecedented refugee assistance program brought about by the mass exodus of Cubans from their homeland. The CRA provided health, employment and educational services to Cuban refugees upon their arrival in the United States. The program, approved by President John F. Kennedy in 1961, was administered by the Florida Department of Public Welfare until 1974.



# His policies drove massive emigration

**Source 12:** Graph of the number of Cuban refugees arriving in Florida every year



# Cuba punched above its weight internationally

**Source 13:** Extract from an article titled "How Fidel Castro changed Cuba: a small island at the centre of the world", by Meryn Bain, The Conversation, 26 November 2016

This is the man who led a small band of guerrilla fighters to power in the late 1950s, outlasted nine US presidents and ended up at the centre of the most dangerous moment in the Cold War. He even holds the record for the longest speech at the United Nations. In short, he brought a small Caribbean island to the centre of world politics.

Since January 1959, Cuba has been able to exert a disproportionate amount of influence on the international stage. In the 1960s, after surviving a US-backed attempt to overthrow its fledgling government, Cuba became involved in attempting to spark revolutions throughout the developing world.

In the 1970s the Cuban military was dispatched to fight wars in Africa. Even in the post-Cold War era, Cuban doctors and teachers continued to travel abroad. Now some two million cataract operations have been conducted by Cuban doctors in the developing world, paid for by the government in Havana.

Castro was also at the forefront of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) that emerged in the early 2000s. He was seen as leading the pink tide which swept through Latin America, bringing left-wing governments to power. His defiance in the face of US hegemony was key to their success.

# Cuba punched above its weight internationally

**Source 14:** Statue of Fidel Castro in South Africa, unveiled in 2017



# He brought the world to the brink of nuclear war

**Source 15:** Extract from the article “Castro’s Defining Crisis”, J.L. Anderson, *New Yorker* magazine, 16 October 2012

It turns out that Castro himself was fully prepared for a nuclear war. He placed Cuba on a war footing, and his close confidante, the Argentine revolutionary Ernesto Che Guevara, moved into a cave complex where he was to command Cuba’s western army in the event of an invasion. Castro had been furious when, after a white-knuckle thirteen-day standoff between the Khrushchev government and the Kennedy Administration, he was informed after the fact that Khrushchev had “blinked first” and agreed to remove the Soviet missiles from the island. (Although it was kept quiet at the time, Kennedy had promised, in return, to withdraw a battery of U.S. Jupiter missiles installed in Turkey.) Castro smashed a fist into a mirror, wounding himself, when he first learned of the resolution.

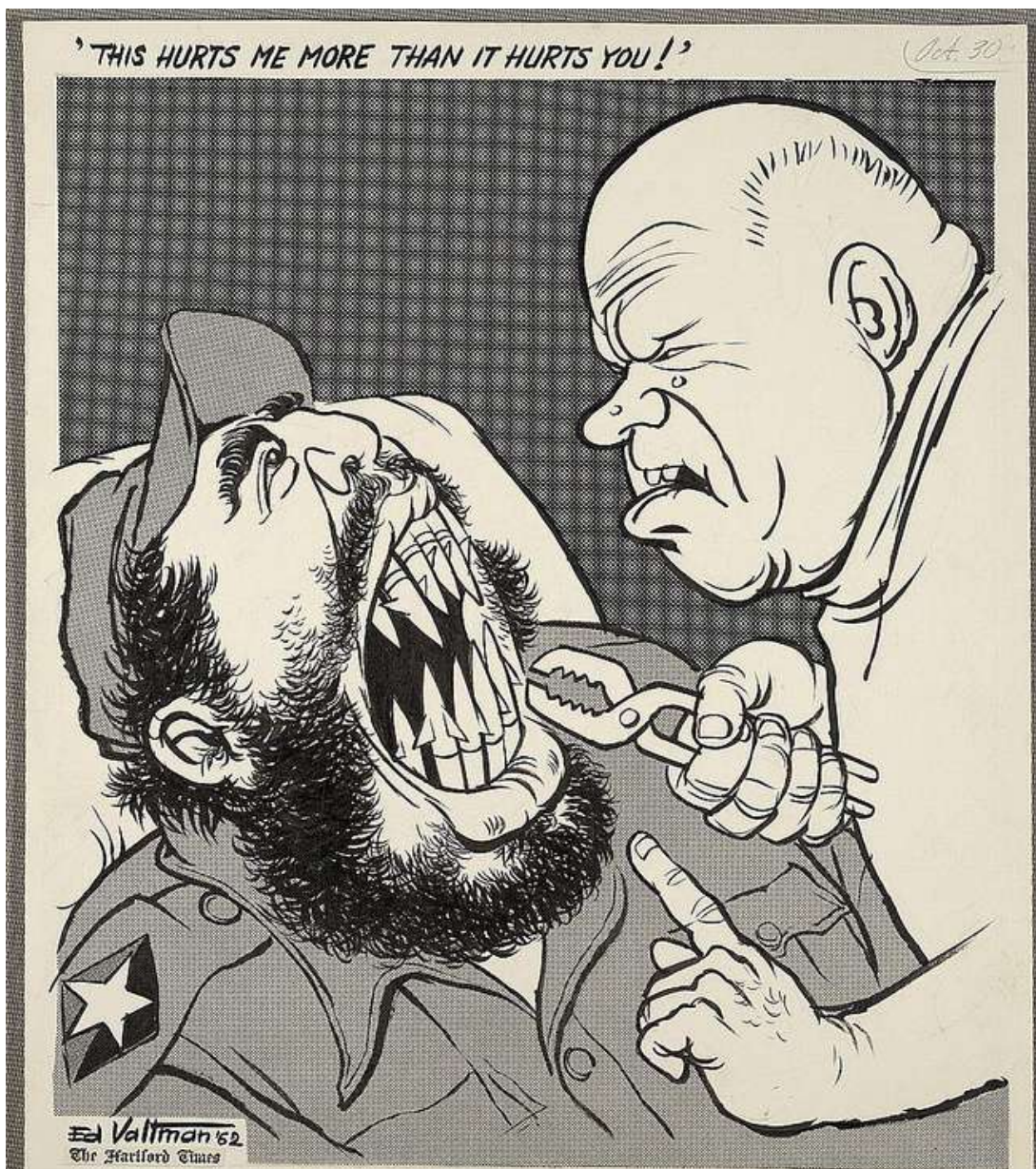
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A few weeks later, Sam Russell, a reporter for the British Marxist paper *Daily Worker*, interviewed Guevara and found him still incensed over the Soviet betrayal. Che told Russell that if the missiles had been under the Cubans’ control, rather than the Russians’, they would have been fired.



# He brought the world to the brink of nuclear war

**Source 16:** Cartoon by Estonian-American cartoonist Edmund S. Valtman, in US newspaper The Hartford Times, 30 October 1962



# He repelled numerous American attempts to depose him

**Source 17:** Extract from an NBC [US television network] news article 'Fidel Castro: The CIA's 7 Most Bizarre Assassination Attempts', published soon after Castro's death, in November 2016



Fidel Castro: The CIA's 7 Most Bizarre Assassination Attempts

Fidel Castro survived no fewer than 634 attempts on his life, according to his former secret service chief.

## 1. The Exploding Cigar

Perhaps the most famous attempt to kill Castro came in 1960 when the CIA poisoned a box of his favorite cigars.

Just a year after Castro seized power, the agency spiked the cigars with a botulinum toxin strong enough to kill anybody who put one in their mouth.

The cigars were delivered to an "an unidentified person" in 1961, according to the subcommittee, but it's unclear what happened to them after that.

Needless to say, they were never chewed by "El Comandante."



# He repelled numerous American attempts to depose him

**Source 18:** Billboard in Cuba that reads “Giron [a beach in the Bay of Pigs] the First Big Defeat of Yankee Imperialism in Latin America”



## He brutally oppressed homosexuals

**Source 19:** Photo of homosexuals in an UMAP (a military labour camp), during a session of hormone therapy, 1967





## He brutally oppressed homosexuals

**Source 20:** Extract from 'Homosexuality, Homophobia, and Revolution: Notes toward an Understanding of the Cuban Lesbian and Gay Male Experience, Part I' by Lourdes Arguelles and B. Ruby Rich, 1984

In 1971, the First National Congress delivered a mixed message to gays and the population at large. On the one hand, the customary denunciations of homosexuals as decadent were gone...On the other hand, declarations from the same congress called for the removal of homosexuals from the field of education, thus continuing the view of homosexuality as a contamination of the body politic. Mayra, a lesbian photographer still living in Cuba, described these years: "You were not totally accepted by the revolution and there were positions you could not get if you were open about [being gay] unless you were in the arts. Still ... there was no persecution unless you were involved in counterrevolutionary activities. Then you were in trouble, and usually it was blamed on the weakness of being a homosexual."