

Confronting Communism in Cuba

Vocabulary Builder
regime—(ruh ZHEEM) *n.*
 particular administration or
 government

In 1959, Cuban revolutionary Fidel Castro succeeded in overthrowing the regime of Fulgencio Batista. Initially, the United States attempted to cultivate good relations with Castro. However, it soon became clear that the Cuban leader was determined to nationalize land held by private U.S. citizens, enforce radical reform measures, and accept Soviet economic and military aid. Thousands of wealthy and middle-class Cubans fled their country, many settling in Miami and southern Florida. Proud of their heritage and deeply anticommunist, they made new lives for themselves and their families in the United States.

Bay of Pigs Invasion After breaking diplomatic relations with Cuba in 1961, the Eisenhower administration authorized the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to plan an invasion of Cuba to overthrow Castro. The CIA recruited Cuban exiles and trained them in Guatemala. But when Eisenhower left office, the invasion plan was still that—an unexecuted, untried plan.

Pressured by members of the CIA and his own aides, Kennedy decided to implement the plan. On April 17, 1961, a CIA-led force of Cuban exiles attacked Cuba in the **Bay of Pigs invasion**. The invasion was badly mismanaged. The poorly equipped forces landed at the site with no protective cover. All but 300 of the 1,400 invaders were killed or captured. Not only did the Bay of Pigs invasion fail, it probably strengthened Castro's position in Cuba. It also turned many Cuban Americans against Kennedy.

Kennedy took personal responsibility for the failed invasion. However, he emphasized that the United States would continue to resist “communist penetration” in the Western Hemisphere.

GIST

HISTORY TALK

What kinds of questions or comments about history did you include in your history talk annotations?

Cause and Effect Turning Points Using the Past Change and Continuity Through Their Eyes

The Bay of Pigs Invasion: The Cold War Comes to Cuba

On January 1, 1959, Fidel Castro **triumphantly** led his revolutionary army into downtown Havana, Cuba. The revolutionary force was able to **oust** the corrupt, U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista. Although Castro at first denied that his **regime** was communist, his government seized and took over many foreign companies – many of them American.

With no desire to be allied to the U.S., Castro aligned himself with the Soviet Union and declared Cuba a communist state. President Eisenhower at the time stated that the United States would not “tolerate the establishment of a regime dominated by international communism in the western hemisphere.” American officials feared that Cuba could become a model for communist revolutions throughout Latin America.

Soon after, many plans were made to disrupt the **fledgling** Cuban regime, of these one called for a **covert** invasion of Cuba itself. The plan was for Cuban **exiles** to be trained and equipped by the **CIA** in a secret location in Latin America. It was to be a military operation in which the U.S. could completely deny any involvement. This invasion was to receive support from U.S. warplanes in order to establish a **beachhead** and form a

provisional government. The U.S. hoped this “provisional” government would receive the help of the Cuban people and then radio the U.S. for support; the American military would then officially join the invasion.

John F. Kennedy inherited this plan from the Eisenhower administration and as a strong anti-communist he agreed to move ahead with the plan. As the invasion began in April of 1961, Kennedy received word from Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev stating that it was widely known that this force was trained and financed by the United States. Khrushchev also informed Kennedy that if he didn't pull back, then the USSR would regard Cuba as an ally and defend it from further attack. As a result, President Kennedy was forced to call off the planned air support to the mission.

Without the air support, the mission failed miserably with 200 of the exiles killed and about 1,200 captured. The Kennedy administration was humiliated and American **prestige** throughout the world was severely damaged as a result. The disastrous attack changed the way the rest of the world looked at President Kennedy and the United States. It also helped lead to another Cold War crisis in Cuba: the Cuban Missile Crisis.

VOCABULARY

triumphantly – in victory

oust – to use force to remove somebody from an office or a position

regime – a system or style of government

fledgling – a young or inexperienced person or thing

covert – secret

exiles – people forced to live in another country for political reasons

CIA – Central Intelligence Agency, the main U.S. spy agency

beachhead – a position established by invading troops on an enemy shore

provisional – temporary

prestige – good reputation