

Bay of Pigs

By Jane Runyon

A revolution took place on the island nation of Cuba in the mid 1950's. The government was replaced by a young Communist leader named Fidel Castro. The American government knew from the beginning of Castro's reign in Cuba that he would be trouble. After all, Cuba was just 90 miles off the coast of Florida. Government leaders feared the possibility that Communism could spread across that small gap to the shores of this country. Although Castro had promised free elections to the Cuban people, he soon decided that that would not be in their "best interest." He became a dictator whose word was law. In the first three years after the revolution, 250,000 Cuban citizens fled their homeland.



President Dwight Eisenhower initiated a study of how to rid Cuba of Communism and Castro at the same time. The Central Intelligence Agency came up with several ways to get rid of Castro. It has been reported that some of the plans were quite bizarre, from exploding cigars to shoes filled with a powder which would make Castro's beard fall out. These ideas were quickly dismissed.

In April of 1960, a group of Cubans who had escaped their homeland began training for an invasion of Cuba. They trained in the Latin American country of Guatemala. They would have to face a force of 200,000 trained Cuban soldiers. This plan had the backing of President Eisenhower, an army general himself.

In November of 1960, a new president was elected. John Kennedy was briefed on what was secretly happening just days after his election. The training continued, but Kennedy was not as supportive of the plans the CIA had developed as Eisenhower had been. In March of 1961, Kennedy rejected a plan that was given a 30% chance of succeeding. Richard Bissell was the author of this plan. He and Allen Dulles, the head of the CIA, put their heads together and came up with another plan. This new plan had the Cuban exiles starting the invasion at the Bay of Pigs in an isolated area of Cuba.

Bissell and Dulles submitted their new plan to Attorney General Robert Kennedy in April of 1961. They convinced him that this new plan had a 67% chance of being successful. They asked the president to supply sixteen B-26 airplanes for air support. They got eight. They were sure that when the invasion came, the president would change his mind and send the other requested aircraft to help out. They even believed that if the invaders ran into trouble, the president would order American troops to finish the job.

On the 18th of April, 1961, 1,400 Cuban exiles invaded at the Bay of Pigs. Within seventy-two hours, all 1,400 had been killed, wounded, or captured. Bissell and Dulles went to the president and asked for more support. The president denied their request. The Bay of Pigs had been a disaster. Bissell and Dulles lost their jobs. Fidel Castro remained in power and is still in power today, over forty years later. The Kennedy administration suffered some bad press, but it was able to place the blame far enough away from itself to survive.

Bay of Pigs

Questions

- _____ 1. Plans for an invasion of Cuba were begun by President John Kennedy.
- A. True
 - B. False

Name _____



Date _____

_____ 2. Who is the leader of Cuba?

- A. Fidel Castro
- B. Allen Dulles
- C. Richard Bissell
- D. John Kennedy

3. Why was the American government concerned about Cuba?

4. From reading this piece, what seems to be the reason the invasion at the Bay of Pigs failed?

_____ 5. Who was the Director of the CIA at this time?

- A. Fidel Castro
- B. Richard Bissell
- C. Allen Dulles
- D. Robert Kennedy

_____ 6. What kind of leadership does Fidel Castro hold in Cuba?

- A. A director
- B. A presidency
- C. A counselor
- D. A dictator

_____ 7. What chance did the creators of the invasion plan say they had of being successful?

- A. 10%
- B. 67%
- C. 100%
- D. 30%

_____ 8. What happened to the men who came up with the Bay of Pigs invasion plan?

- A. They were killed in the invasion.
- B. They were honored for their valor.
- C. They lost their jobs.
- D. They were promoted.

