

A: Bay of Pigs Invasion



Roy Justus, Minneapolis Star Tribune.
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On January 1, 1959, a young Cuban nationalist named Fidel Castro (1926-) drove his guerilla army into Havana and overthrew General Fulgencio Batista (1901-1973), the nation's American-backed president. Almost as soon as he came to power, Castro took steps to reduce American influence on the island. He nationalized American-dominated industries such as sugar and mining, introduced land reform schemes and called on other Latin American governments to do the same. In May 1960, Castro established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and asked for that nation's support in creating a communist society. In response, early in 1960 President Eisenhower authorized the CIA to recruit 1,400 Cuban exiles living in Miami and begin training them to invade Cuba and overthrow Castro.

In January 1961, the U.S. government severed diplomatic relations with Cuba and stepped up its preparations for an invasion. Some State Department and other advisors to the new American president, [John F. Kennedy](#), maintained that Castro posed no real threat to America, but the new president believed that masterminding the Cuban leader's removal would show Russia, China and skeptical Americans that he was serious about winning the [Cold War](#).

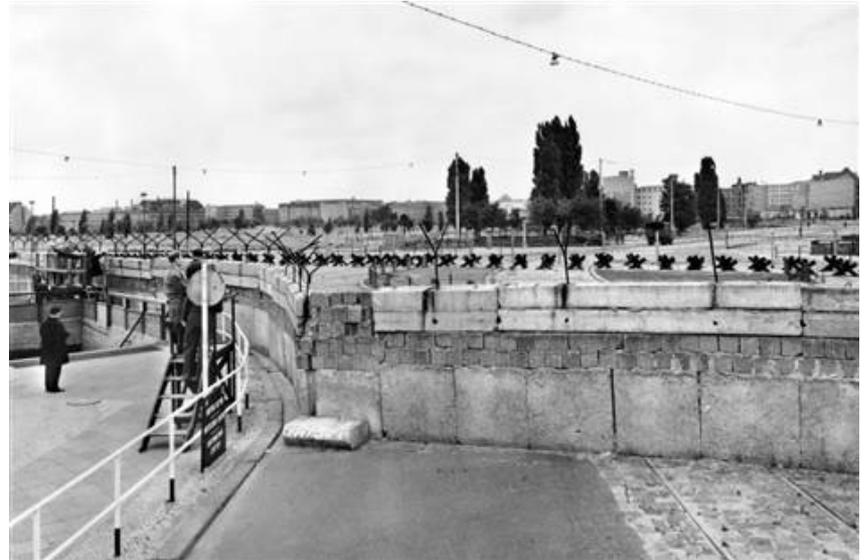
The first part of the plan was to destroy Castro's tiny air force, making it impossible for his military to resist the invaders. However, at the last minute, Kennedy called off air support for the invasion. He feared that too much U.S. involvement in the operation might lead to a wider war. On April 17, the Cuban exile brigade began its invasion at an isolated spot on the island's southern shore known as the Bay of Pigs. Almost immediately, the invasion was a disaster. Before long, Castro's troops had pinned the invaders on the beach, and the exiles surrendered after less than a day of fighting; 114 were killed and over 1,100 were taken prisoner.

The Bay of Pigs invasion was a major embarrassment for the United States. It convinced the Soviet's that American leadership was weak and indecisive. It convinced the Cubans that the United States might invade again in the future and pushed them closer to the Soviets.

B: The Berlin Wall



Western side of the Berlin Wall



Eastern side of the Berlin Wall

On August 13, 1961, the Communist government of East Germany began to build a barbed wire and concrete wall between East and West Berlin. The official purpose of this Berlin Wall was to keep Western “fascists” from entering East Germany and undermining the socialist state, but it primarily served the objective of stemming mass defections from East to West.

As [World War II](#) came to an end in 1945, the Allies agreed to split Germany into four “allied occupation zones”: The eastern part of the country went to the Soviet Union, while the western part went to the United States, Great Britain and France. Even though Berlin was located entirely within the Soviet part of the country, the Yalta and Potsdam agreements split the city into similar sectors. The Soviets took the eastern half, while the other Allies took the western. This four-way occupation of Berlin began in June 1945.

Before the wall was built, Berliners on both sides of the city could move around fairly freely: They crossed the East-West border to work, to shop, to go to the theater and the movies. Trains and subway lines carried passengers back and forth. After the wall was built, it became impossible to get from East to West Berlin except through one of three checkpoints. Except under special circumstances, travelers from East and West Berlin were rarely allowed across the border.

The construction of the Berlin Wall did stop the flood of refugees from East to West, and it did defuse the crisis over Berlin. Over time, East German officials replaced the makeshift wall with one that was sturdier and more difficult to scale. Behind the wall on the East German side was a so-called “Death Strip”: a gauntlet of soft sand (to show footprints), floodlights, vicious dogs, trip-wire machine guns and patrolling soldiers with orders to shoot escapees on sight.

In all, at least 171 people were killed trying to get over, under or around the Berlin Wall. Escape from East Germany was not impossible, however: From 1961 until the wall came down in 1989, more than 5,000 East Germans (including some 600 border guards) managed to cross the border by jumping out of windows adjacent to the wall, climbing over the barbed wire, flying in hot air balloons, crawling through the sewers and driving through unfortified parts of the wall at high speeds.

C: Cuban Missile Crisis



Cuba is an island country that is only 90 miles away from Florida. Cuba became a communist country in 1959 when a leader named Fidel Castro led a successful revolution. Castro immediately turned to the Soviet Union for help in making Cuba a communist nation. He wanted Soviet help to build up Cuba's military and economic strength. After the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, he was also afraid that the United States might try to invade Cuba again and overthrow his government. To support Castro and increase their power in the Western Hemisphere, Soviet leaders decided to place nuclear missiles in Cuba. This was done secretly in late 1962. These nuclear missiles could target many major U.S. cities and destroy them with very little warning. The Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, believed the missiles would put pressure on the United States and prevent any future action against Cuba.

U.S. spy planes discovered the missiles in Cuba in October 1962. Some of U.S. President John F. Kennedy's military advisors wanted the President to order the bombing of the missile sites followed by an invasion of Cuba. This, however, would have provoked a response from the Soviet Union and likely led to an all-out nuclear war. Instead, Kennedy responded to this threat by ordering U.S. Navy ships to surround Cuba. This blockade (or quarantine) would prevent any Soviet ships from reaching Cuba with more missiles or military supplies. He also ordered the U.S. military to prepare for an all-out invasion of Cuba if the Soviets did not remove the missiles. A tense moment came when Soviet ships carrying additional military supplies began approaching the line of U.S. ships blockading Cuba.

At the last minute, the Soviets backed down. Soviet leaders ordered ships headed to Cuba to turn around. They also agreed to negotiate a peaceful settlement with the United States. Khrushchev agreed to remove the missiles from Cuba. In return, the U.S. agreed to remove some of its missiles from Turkey and promised not to invade Cuba. Although the Cuban Missile Crisis was resolved peacefully, it was the closest the U.S. and the Soviet Union came to nuclear war. Miscommunication and misunderstandings between the two nations had almost led to World War III. As a result, a direct phone line, or hotline, was established that allowed direct communication between Washington, D.C. and the Soviet capital of Moscow.

D: Gulf of Tonkin (The Vietnam War)



Cartoon illustrating “domino theory”

Vietnam is a country in Southeast Asia. It became an independent country in 1954. Before this, Vietnam had been controlled by France. However, after independence, Vietnam was split into two countries: North Vietnam and South Vietnam. North Vietnam had a communist government and was led by a man named Ho Chi Minh. South Vietnam had a democratic government and was led by a man named Ngo Dinh Diem. Ho Chi Minh wanted to unite both Vietnams under one communist government. In the 1960s, North Vietnamese communists began attacking South Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh turned to the Soviet Union and Communist China for help in his war against South Vietnam. The Soviets and Chinese provided North Vietnam with military and economic aid. They provided weapons to communist rebels, known as the Vietcong, who were fighting in the South to overthrow the government and establish communism.

The United States did not like the idea of communist influence spreading in Southeast Asia. The U.S. believed in something called the domino theory. The domino theory stated that if one country fell to communism, neighboring countries would soon fall to communism also. The U.S. feared that if South Vietnam fell to communism, other countries in the region would be threatened. As a result, the U.S. provided Ngo Dinh Diem with military and economic assistance. After Diem was killed in 1963, the U.S. began sending troops to help the South Vietnamese fight the Vietcong. In 1964, North Vietnamese gunboats attacked U.S. ships patrolling off the coast of South Vietnam in the Gulf of Tonkin. In response to this attack, U.S. President Lyndon Johnson asked Congress to authorize direct military action against North Vietnam. Over the next five years, millions of U.S. troops were sent to fight in Vietnam.

The war in Vietnam cost almost 60,000 American lives and became very unpopular with the American people. By 1968, peace protests had shaken confidence in America's policy of containment. After nine years of war, the communist rebels still had not been defeated. In 1973, the U.S. began withdrawing our military forces from Vietnam. In 1975, South Vietnam surrendered and all of Vietnam was united under communist rule.

E: Revolution in Chile (Latin America)



We start from different ideological positions. For you to be a Communist or a Socialist is to be totalitarian; for me no.... On the contrary, I think Socialism frees man.

(Salvador Allende)

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Quote from Chilean President Salvador Allende

Totalitarian = a government that seeks total control by suppressing opposition, censoring the press, and arresting or killing opponents.

Chile is a country in South America. Chile has been independent since the 19th century and had a long tradition of democratic government. In 1970, Chile elected a new president named Salvador Allende. Allende turned to communism to help solve some of Chile's problems. He wanted to end foreign control of Chile's industries, give land to the poor, and raise wages for workers. Although a communist, Allende considered himself more of a socialist. He wanted more equality and social justice for the poor people of Chile. He did not favor oppressing the people or taking away their freedoms as had occurred in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and Cuba. The United States government, however, was afraid that Allende was another Fidel Castro and that Chile could become another Cuba. In other words, they feared another communist nation in Latin America that would serve as a base for spreading Soviet influence.

The United States did not like the idea of communist influence spreading to South America. The U.S. feared that the Soviet Union would gain more power in the Western Hemisphere. This would directly threaten the United States. The U.S. gave its support to a Chilean leader named Augusto Pinochet who opposed Allende's election as President and disagreed with his policies. Pinochet was a general in the Chilean army. He was also very anti-communist. Pinochet led a revolt that overthrew Allende in 1973. The American CIA provided secret support to Pinochet during the revolution. Allende was arrested and killed. Pinochet took control of the government and promised to wipe out communism in Chile. He quickly moved to establish a military dictatorship. General Pinochet censored the press and used violence against his opponents. Thousands of Chileans who had supported Allende were arrested, tortured, and killed. Thousands of others who opposed the Pinochet government simply "disappeared". The U.S., however, continued to provide financial and military support to Pinochet because he was anti-communist and supported our policies in Latin America.