

John F. Kennedy vs. the Empire

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Part 1 of 3

This Nov. 22 is the 50th anniversary of President John F. Kennedy's murder, a crime from which our country has never recovered.

Investigators normally consider who benefitted from a crime, and what changed as a result of that crime.

In this case, we must first understand who Kennedy was, and what he fought for; who we were as a nation, and where we were headed when he was shot. Knowing that will make plain who killed him and why. It will help guide us to what we must now change for our survival.

Kennedy's Nationalism

When Kennedy returned from his celebrated World War II Naval service and plunged into politics, he aimed to set the world back on the path of his late Commander-in-Chief, Franklin Roosevelt, and to bury imperialism.

In his first political speech, to the American Legion post in Boston, Nov. 18, 1945, in anticipation of a run for Congress, he explained Winston Churchill's recent electoral defeat by contrasting the outlook of Churchill's party with that of Franklin Roosevelt.

Churchill's Conservative Party had governed England "during the years of the depression when poverty stalked the Midlands and the coal fields of Wales, and thousands and thousands lived off the meager pittance of the dole. Where Roosevelt made his political reputation by his treatment of the depression, the Conservative Party lost theirs."

And the English voters had been jolted by that contrast when soldiers from Roosevelt's America were stationed there in wartime: "England traditionally has been a country with tremendous contrasts between the very rich and the very poor. That arch Tory, Benjamin Disraeli, . . . once stated that England was divided into two nations—the rich and the poor. . . With the . . . coming of the American troops with their high pay, with their stories of cars, refrigerators, and radios for all, a new spirit— a new restlessness—and a fresh desire for the better things of life had become strong in Britain."

But Kennedy warned that even if the Labour Party were in power, "Britain stands today as Britain has always stood—for the empire."

In that speech, Kennedy spoke also of the heroic Michael Collins, leader of the 1922 Irish armed revolt against Britain: "This young man, who was killed in his early thirties, looms as large today in Ireland as when he died."

In the view of the post-World War II Irish leaders, "everything that Ireland has ever gotten from England has been only at the end of a long and bitter struggle. . . . All



President Kennedy at Rice University, Sept. 12, 1962:

"We choose to go to the Moon in this decade. . . . And as we set sail we ask God's blessing on the most hazardous and dangerous and greatest adventure on which man has ever embarked."

have been in British and Irish prisons and many of them have wounds which still ache when the cold rains come in from the west." Kennedy named "the fundamental problem behind all Irish politics—the problem of ending the partition, which divides the twenty-six counties of the south, which form Eire, and the six counties of the north known as Ulster which are attached directly to Great Britain. That this partition must be ended . . . all Irishmen agree."

John Kennedy's own family had been shaped over many generations in Ireland's bitter conflict with the British.

Descended from Ireland's 11th-Century High King Brian Boru, the Kennedys had been stripped of their lands and made tenant farmers. Several family members were casualties in the 1798 Irish uprising. County Wexford, the Kennedy ancestral home, was that insurrection's center, and briefly held out as its own Wexford Republic.

The 1847-48 "Great Famine" was known to the Irish as deliberate

genocide under British Prime Minister John Russell, who stationed half of the British Army in Ireland to oversee the export of masses of food, and to keep the captive population quiet. Hunger, disease, and emigration in slave-like ships cut the population from 9 million to 2 1/2 million. The devastation forced JFK's great-grandfather Patrick Kennedy to emigrate, and led to his death in Boston of hardship-induced disease.

British mass murder was burned into the minds of the Kennedy family, and all the Irish. Kennedy cousins who had fought with the Irish Republican Army were among those with whom President Kennedy met on his 1963 visit to Ireland as U.S. President.

JFK was named for his maternal grandfather, the revered Boston Mayor and Congressman John F. Fitzgerald. "Honey Fitz" strongly supported Ireland's struggle and published a weekly newspaper called *The Republic*. John's Boston-born paternal grandfather, P.J. Kennedy, became the political boss in an Irish-American ward.

John embraced this Irish heritage. But his father, Joseph P. Kennedy, partnered with British and Wall Street financiers, pushed and shoved his way up into immense wealth, and finally thrust himself alongside the highest ranks of the British imperial oligarchy. John's political career would be based on passionately held views opposite to the reactionary ideas for which his father became infamous. And yet in that close-knit family, Joe Kennedy would later put his money and connections behind all of his son's electoral efforts.

Papa Joe supported Franklin Roosevelt for President, and on Jan. 7, 1938, FDR nominated him to be Ambassador

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to Britain. Three days later, Roosevelt began a secret correspondence with the British, warning them they risked arousing in America "a feeling of disgust" by the "corrupt bargain" they were making in backing the fascist regimes of Mussolini and Hitler. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain termed FDR's proposals "preposterous." Joe Kennedy was confirmed by the Senate in the midst of this frosty exchange, which is now available from the British archives.¹

A year later, after the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia, the President sent an ultimatum to the British government threatening that the U.S. would cut off aid to Britain if the Empire continued to sponsor Hitler's takeover of Europe.²

But Ambassador Kennedy attached himself worshipfully to the hyper-aristocratic Foreign Minister Lord Halifax, to the royal family, and the whole set of Britain's fascist strategists. He moved with John and his other eight children into the English neo-gothic castle, Wall Hall, owned by pro-fascist Wall Street banker J.P. Morgan, Jr. Morgan's servants took care of the Kennedy family.

The outraged Roosevelt told his aide James Farley in 1939, "Joe has been taken in by the British government people and the royal family. He's more British than Walter Hines Page [American Ambassador to Britain in World War I] was. The trouble with the British is that they have for several hundred years been controlled by the upper classes. The upper classes control all trade and commerce; therefore the policy of the British government relates entirely to the protection of this class."³



Union Jacks indicate British regiments enforcing the export of food from starving Ireland in 1848. White crosses mark mass graves. JFK's greatgrandfather was driven to emigrate.

Empire and Cold War

After President Roosevelt's death, Winston Churchill and his American followers—notably the bipartisan clique of Democrats Dean Acheson and Averell Harriman, and the Republican brothers John Foster Dulles and Allen Dulles—wielded the apparatus of the Truman government to wrench American policy away from Roosevelt's pro-nationalist, anti-imperial peace policy. British double agents, led by Kim Philby, meanwhile fed Russian paranoia with anti-American scare stories.

Churchill's Cold War policy confronted a fearful U.S.A. with Soviet Russia's aggressive moves on its periphery. America's 1776-bred sympathy for the sovereign rights of colonial subjects was thus trumped by the contrived need to ally with London and the other European financier imperialists in the name of fighting Communism.

While viewing Soviet Communism realistically as a distortion of history and human nature, John Kennedy understood his father's tragic blunder, and knew the British Empire and Wall Street were continuing the fascist policy that Roosevelt had fought against. He attacked both the Truman Democrats and the Dulles Republicans for blocking America's support for the aspirations of the world's poor. This betrayal of Roosevelt was handing the vulnerable nations to the Communists posing as anti-imperialists, and threatening nuclear-war annihilation.

Kennedy toured Asia and the Middle East in 1951 as a Congressman and Senate hopeful, accompanied by his younger brother Robert. In his radio report-back to the nation, we can see the intellectual fire and the sure grasp of history he would show a decade later in the Presidency:

"... It [the post-war colonial world] is an area in which poverty and sickness and disease are rampant, ... injustice and inequality are old and ingrained, ... the fires of nationalism ... are now ablaze. ... [F]or 100 years and more [it] has been the source of empire for Western Europe—for England and France and Holland. ...

"A Middle East Command operating without the cooperation and support of the Middle East countries ... would intensify every anti-western force now active in that area, [and] from a military standpoint would be doomed to failure. The very sands of the desert would rise to oppose the imposition of outside control on the destinies of these proud peoples. ...

"The true enemy of the Arab world is poverty and want. ...

"Our intervention in behalf of England's oil investments in Iran, directed more at the preservation of interests outside Iran than at Iran's own development. ... [O]ur failure to deal effectively after three years with the terrible human tragedy of the more than 700,000 Arab refugees [Palestinians], these are things that have failed to sit well with Arab desires and make empty the promises of the Voice of America. ...

"In Indo-China [Vietnam] we have allied ourselves to the desperate effort of a French regime to hang onto the remnants of empire. ... To check the southern drive of Communism makes sense, but not only through reliance on force of arms. ...

"[One] finds too many of our representatives toadying to the shorter aims of other Western nations, ... too often aligning themselves too definitely with the haves and regarding

the actions of the have-nots as not merely an effort to cure injustice, but as something sinister and subversive.

"The East of today is no longer the East of Palmerston and Disraeli and Cromer. . . . We want . . . allies in ideas, in resources, even in arms, but if we would have allies, we must first of all gather to ourselves friends."⁴

Senator Kennedy's *Profiles in Courage* was his declaration of independence from the London-Wall Street power axis and his defiance of dangerously deluded public opinion. The 1955 book is built around its first chapter on John Quincy Adams, which begins: "The young senator from Massachusetts stirred restlessly. . . ."

He depicts Adams coming under attack from the wealthy Anglophiles and Boston public opinion. The Catholic Kennedy celebrates Adams the Puritan, who "believed that man was made in the image of God," had "lofty courage," and "never . . . flinched before human antagonist . . . exile, torture, or death. . . ."

"An American nationalist, . . . he could not yield his devotion to the national interest for the narrowly partisan, parochial and pro-British outlook which dominated New England's first political party. . . . He denied the duty of elected representatives 'to be palsied by the will of their constituents. . . . [T]he magistrate is the servant not of his own desires, not even of the people, but of his God."

Speaking on St. Patrick's Day, 1956, in Chicago, Kennedy gently asked Irish-Americans to help reverse the betrayal of America's revolutionary heritage; and to broaden the Irish national resentment of wrongs in favor of the *universal* task of ending the imperial system.

In Kennedy's most famous pre-Presidential speech, entitled "Imperialism the Enemy of Freedom," in the Senate July 2, 1957, he demanded that the U.S. side with Algerian Arab rebels against French imperialism. Attacking the Dulles policy, he likened the North African situation to Vietnam, into which we had "poured money and material . . . in a hopeless attempt to save for the French a land that did not want to be saved, in a war in which the enemy was both everywhere and nowhere at the same time. . . . We accepted for years the predictions that victory was just around the corner. . . ."

Senator Kennedy worked out that speech in close cooperation with the Algerian rebel leadership. It thrilled the Arab world, and heartened all those who hoped for an American return to the outlook last seen with Franklin Roosevelt. It put Kennedy into a crucial tandem relationship to the Italian industrialist Enrico Mattei, an antiimperial strategist of petroleum and nuclear energy, who was helping to fund the Algerian revolt.

The speech was denounced by the Anglophile establishment of his own Democratic Party.

Although Kennedy attacked French imperial policy, that policy began to change. After Charles de Gaulle became the President of France in 1959, he recognized the futility of the overseas colonial wars, and worked toward granting Algeria independence. De Gaulle began to withdraw France from its imperial alliance with the British.

Kennedy now focused increasingly on the whole of Africa: on Black Africans' fight for independence and an escape from centuries of European-enforced backwardness and poverty. He sought and won the chairmanship of the Africa Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee.

In His Own Words

I saw an area in which . . . poverty and sickness and disease are rampant . . . injustice and inequality are old and ingrained, and the fires of nationalism . . . are now ablaze [after being] for 100 years and more . . . the source of empire for Western Europe—for England and France and Holland. . . . The East of today is no longer the East of Palmerston and Disraeli. . . .

Congressman Kennedy, 1951, report back from Asia-Mideast tour

. . . [M]an holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life. And yet the same revolutionary beliefs for which our forebears fought are still at issue around the globe. . . .

President Kennedy, 1961 Inaugural Address

Today we may have reached a pause in the Cold War. . . . And if we fail to make the most of this moment and this momentum, . . . then the indictment of posterity will rightly point its finger at us all. [Let us] stretch this pause into a period of cooperation. . . .

President Kennedy, Sept. 20, 1963 speech to the UN General Assembly after securing a treaty banning atmospheric tests of nuclear weapons.

And in His Enemy's Words. . .

We . . . have witnessed three . . . attempts at world domination, first by Hitler, then by Stalin . . . and now by President Kennedy.

Letter to the London Daily Telegraph, Jan. 9, 1963, as the U.S. won a proxy shooting war against the British empire in the Congo.

To the Presidency

In his role as the unique anti-imperial U.S. political leader, the outside world knew him better than did most Americans when he began his run for the Presidency.

During that 1959-60 campaign he met with Guinea's nationalist President Sékou Touré, and became his close confidant.

Most importantly, Kennedy opened channels of communication with Ghana's President Kwame Nkrumah, the father of African nationalism. Candidate JFK met with Ghana's Minister of Economy and with Ghana's UN representative.

Nkrumah had led Ghana in the first successful Black African anti-colonial revolt, against British rule, in 1957; Touré had followed in breaking Guinea from France in 1958.

Kennedy attacked the post-Roosevelt U.S. policy for demonizing Nkrumah and Touré as Cold War neutrals, and thus driving them towards the Soviet bloc.

Africa was politically red hot: During the 1960 U.S. Presidential campaign season, 13 Black African countries won their independence from France; Britain recognized Nigeria and Somalia as independent.

Belgium gave the Republic of Congo nominal independence, but British finance and intelligence organized an armed secession attempt in Congo's Katanga province, site of the vast Belgian/British copper and uranium mining company Union Minière, with white mercenaries coming in from neighboring Northern Rhodesia.

Nkrumah shared two urgent concerns with Kennedy: imperial intrigues against Congo's new Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, Nkrumah's political follower; and his plan to build a great dam to industrialize Ghana, and electrify all of West

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Africa.

Presidential candidate Kennedy used Africa to challenge the “Anglo-American” world order, which had been established over the dead body of President Roosevelt.

He told Stanford University students in 1960, “Call it nationalism, call it anti-colonialism, . . . Africa is going through a revolution. . . Africans want a higher standard of living. Seventy-five percent of the population now lives by subsistence agriculture. They want an opportunity to manage and benefit directly from the resources in, on, and under their land. . . The African peoples believe that the science, technology, and education available in the modern world can overcome their struggle for existence, . . . that their poverty, squalor, ignorance, and disease can be conquered. . . [The] balance of power is shifting . . . into the hands of the two-thirds of the world’s people who want to share what the one-third has already taken for granted. . . .”

The Kennedy election platform called for a sharp increase in America’s industrial, scientific, and military power, a negotiated peace with the Soviet Union, and the uplifting of mankind out of poverty and war.

When Kennedy won the 1960 race, as President-elect he sent representatives to Africa to announce America’s return to national sovereignty—for ourselves and others. The Kennedy team reported African crowds everywhere were chanting “Kennedy! Kennedy! Kennedy!”

During the Presidential campaign, and into the early days of his administration, Kennedy’s enemies acted to corner and destroy him.

- Long before the inauguration, CIA Director Allen Dulles cooked up a militarily insane invasion of Cuba by a force of 1,400 exiles from Fidel Castro’s Communist regime. This plan was sprung on the new President as blackmail: Kennedy was told if he did not sign on to the invasion, the exile forces would be disbanded within the U.S. and, disappointed and enraged, would deploy themselves politically against him. Dulles agreed to Kennedy’s condition that no U.S. armed forces would participate, but lied to the exiles that their landings would have military backing.

- With the connivance of Dulles and British Secret Service station Daphne Park in Congo, Prime Minister Lumumba was covertly assassinated. The crime was carried out only three days before Kennedy’s Jan. 20, 1961 inauguration, with the knowledge that Kennedy, as President, would not allow it.

- Contrary to JFK’s well-known Algerian independence policy, the Dulles-led CIA collaborated with French fascists resisting de Gaulle’s peace with the Arab rebels.

- Before and after the election, London-led gold withdrawals and speculation threatening the dollar brought pressure on Kennedy’s plans for sovereign national economic development, and forced his hand in choosing his Cabinet: It was “the decisive influence on his choice of [international banker C. Douglas Dillon for] Secretary of the Treasury. . . . [Kennedy] also had some evidence to back his suspicions that the gloomy rumors which triggered the gold withdrawals of 1960 had been deliberately spread by American bankers to embarrass him politically. . . .”⁵

Once in office, Dillon informed Kennedy that his budget programs must be curtailed to allay foreign bankers’ doubts about the dollar.

When Lumumba’s murder became known to Kennedy and the world in mid-February, the U.S. and Kennedy were blamed for it.



French President Charles de Gaulle came to agree with Kennedy that the imperial war against Algerian Arabs was a blunder. British/Dulles-sponsored hit squads repeatedly tried to kill de Gaulle. The two Presidents are shown here in Paris, June 2, 1961.

The invasion at Cuba’s Bay of Pigs April 17-19, was a terrible fiasco and embarrassment to the new President.

The Algiers Putsch of April 21-26, the French fascist generals’ failed coup d’état attempt against President de Gaulle, came a week after an Allen Dulles representative in Madrid had assured the general that the U.S. would recognize their new government, if they overthrew de Gaulle to stop Algerian Arab independence.

British intelligence and the Dulles faction were now jointly managing an apparatus of assassins and insurrectionists throughout Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean.

By the end of April, Kennedy made it known that this situation was intolerable, that the CIA was disloyal, and constituted “a reactionary state-within-a-state.”⁶ Kennedy soon fired Allen Dulles, along with CIA deputy directors Richard Bissell, a Harriman protégé; and Charles Cabell, brother of the mayor of Dallas.

Over the next two years, the Organisation de l’armée secrète (OAS) based in Algiers and Madrid, murdered Kennedy’s Italian ally, the industrialist Enrico Mattei, and made several brazen, headline-grabbing attempts to assassinate President de Gaulle.

To be continued...

Footnotes:

1. British National Archives
2. Drew Pearson, Robert S. Allen, “Washington Merry-Go Round,” syndicated column, April 15, 1939. The authenticity of Pearson’s column about FDR’s warning is easily confirmed from many sources. The British were full partners in Hitler’s war machine and looting. Roosevelt’s demand that this Anglo-Nazi onslaught be called off helped force a British commitment to Poland, and a September 1939 war declaration against Germany—but the British didn’t mean it, and launched no significant offensives. Hitler turned his army westward on May 10, 1940, aiming at France and Britain; on that day Chamberlain resigned and was replaced by Winston Churchill.
3. James A. Farley, *Jim Farley’s Story: The Roosevelt Years* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1948), p. 199.
4. JFK Library
5. Theodore Sorensen, *Kennedy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp.405-407.
6. Thomas F. Brady, “Paris Rumors on C.I.A.,” *New York Times*, May 2, 1961.