

John F. Kennedy vs. the Empire

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Part 2 of 3

Inauguration and Action

Kennedy's Inaugural Address was entirely devoted to reasserting America's rightful place in the world. He immediately began reversing the national surrender that had made the U.S. government under Truman and Eisenhower-Dulles an enforcer of the will of London and its Wall Street annex.

JFK's ambassadors were sent throughout the underdeveloped world, and, for the first time, to every African state. The President told each ambassador, you (*not the CIA*) are in charge of the mission in the country to which you are accredited, and you are not to defer to European imperialists.

On the day he learned of the imperial murder of Lumumba, Feb. 13, 1961, Kennedy issued top secret National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) 16, directing that, contrary to previous policy, U.S. aid to "newly independent areas" would be provided independently of "Western Europe support . . . whenever such action is in the United States' interest."

NSAM 60 (July 14 and 18, 1961) ordered the squeezing of Portugal's fascist Salazar regime into ending its bloody war against rebels in Angola and Mozambique, and JFK began aiding the rebels.

Ghana's President Nkrumah got red-carpet treatment as the first foreign head of state to visit the Kennedy White House, March 8, 1961. He and JFK began a personal correspondence and permanent collaboration.

Nkrumah had lived in the U.S. under Franklin Roosevelt, whose Tennessee Valley Authority inspired his proposed great dam project on the Volta River. Kennedy took up the financing of the project, construction to be supervised by Kennedy's friend Edgar Kaiser of Kaiser Industries. Kaiser had led teams building the Hoover, Bonneville, and Grand Coulee dams. Engineering work on the Volta project was by Italian personnel developed under Enrico Mattei, who had met with Nkrumah five days before Kennedy's inauguration.

The Akosombo Dam on the Volta River created the world's largest artificial lake and provided the electricity to power Ghana's drive to enter the modern world. The project was dedicated in 1966, with a plaque honoring the martyred John F. Kennedy. A week later, Nkrumah was overthrown in a coup planned in London.⁷

Egypt's President Gamal Abdel Nasser was, with Mattei, a sponsor of the Algerian Arab rebels. JFK's election had excited his hopes for a return to American support for Nasser's own secular nationalism, in Egypt's long war against Britain and the British-created Muslim Brotherhood. U.S. aid for Nasser's great dam project on the Nile had been promised by President Eisenhower, and withdrawn by his Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, pushing Egypt toward the Soviets, and leading to the 1956 British-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt in the Suez Crisis.

Nasser and Kennedy immediately began a personal



Senator Kennedy campaigning for President in Mullins, West Virginia, April 1960, inspired faith that Franklin Roosevelt's legacy was alive. Here, he speaks with a mineworker.

correspondence. Later, Kennedy reversed the Truman-Dulles policy and actively took Nasser's side against the British-Saudi royalist axis in the Middle East.

Kennedy had warm personal relations with Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Indonesian President Sukarno, who had led their countries' independence victories over the British and Dutch empires, and who aspired to neutrality between the East and West.

Against the howls of "Cold Warriors," JFK fought for U.S. aid to build India's modern Bokara steel mill. U.S. funding was cancelled when Kennedy was killed; the Soviets then funded it.

JFK sent Attorney General Robert Kennedy to Indonesia in 1962, where he spoke movingly on the central place of anti-imperialism in the modern world; RFK then went on to the Netherlands to demand that the Dutch remove their remaining military from Indonesia's West Irian province on the island of New Guinea. Furious at the Kennedys, the Dutch were forced to pull out.

JFK immediately began organizing aid for Indonesia's industrial development (NSAM 179, Aug. 16, 1962).

The first aid package for Indonesia was approved by the Senate in November 1963, a few days before Kennedy's murder. The U.S. policy was then changed to joint action with the British for chaos in Indonesia and Sukarno's overthrow.

Steel Showdown: Kennedy and the American System

In the Steel Crisis of April 1962, Kennedy successfully warred against the British/Wall Street Morgan banking interest, controller of the U.S. Steel Corporation. Seeking huge new investments in American industry and non-inflationary growth, the President prevailed upon the Steelworkers Union to agree to a new no-wage-increase contract, with the understanding that the companies would not raise steel prices. Just after signing the contract, the U.S.

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Steel chairman Roger Blough came to the White House and handed Kennedy a press release he had just issued, announcing a big price increase. Other steel companies followed suit immediately.

JFK held a no-holds-barred press conference, roasting the unpatriotic corporations for betraying the public interest. Anti-trust suits were pressed; defense contracts were switched to the few companies which had not raised prices; and Kennedy sent an emissary to read the riot act to the Morgan bankers directly.

Edgar Kaiser, then supervising construction of the Nkrumah-Kennedy Akosombo Dam, chaired Kaiser Steel in California—one of the three sizeable companies which worked with JFK and put competitive pressure on Morgan to back off the attack. Morgan had its own war on against Kaiser, spurred by Kaiser's generous treatment of its workers. U.S. Steel had set up operations in Utah to try to shut the "rebel" Kaiser out of Western states' business.

After 72 hours, U.S. Steel was forced to rescind the price increase, all the other companies following along. In this showdown, the Anglo-Wall Street axis was particularly worried about Kennedy's alliance with authentic American industrial interests.

Behind this crisis was the fact that Kennedy's program was causing the greatest economic expansion in modern U.S. history, a halving of idle manufacturing capacity, strong profits, and a record increase in wages.

A key policy was the investment tax credit, giving the steel industry and others tax breaks for investment in new plant and equipment. Yet U.S. Steel opposed this tax break, in line with the strategy of the British and their Wall Street outposts to convert America into a post-industrial dump, and to reduce the world's population. Once Kennedy was dead, and new wars consumed all optimism, the financier apparatus would push the "green agenda" of Malthus and the British imperial system, upon the depressed American population.

This article focuses on Kennedy's direct clashes with the extended British imperial system, to efficiently illuminate the background of his murder.

But the battle against the empire has taken place equally within America, as in foreign policy.

Lincoln's economic advisor Henry C. Carey explained the universal issue in his 1851 *Harmony of Interests*:

"Two systems are before the world. . . . One looks to pauperism, ignorance, depopulation, and barbarism; the other to increasing wealth, comfort, intelligence, combination of action, and civilization. One looks towards universal war; the other towards universal peace. One is the English system; the other . . . the American system, for . . . elevating while equalizing the condition of man throughout the world."

JFK's own preference of this American System may perhaps be summed up in his remarks at a dinner given in his honor by Italian President Antonio Segni:

"We [the U.S.A. and Italy] both believe in the achievement of social justice and in progress for all our people. We both believe in democracy at what Americans call 'the grass roots'—placing the individual ahead of the state, the community ahead of the party, and public interests ahead of private. . . ."

"During the 1930s, when despair and depression opened wide the gates of many nations to [fascism and communism], my own nation adhered to the course of freedom under



Ghana's President Kwame Nkrumah, the first foreign head of state to visit the Kennedy White House, March 8, 1961. They were partners in building the Akosombo Dam to electrify West Africa.

the leadership of Franklin Roosevelt. His administration introduced a higher degree of social, economic, and political reform than America had previously seen—including tax and budget reforms, land and agricultural reforms, political and institutional reforms. Workers were assured of a decent wage—older citizens were assured of a pension—farmers were assured of a fair price. Working men and women were permitted to organize and bargain collectively. Small businessmen, small investors, and small depositors in banks [thanks to the Glass-Steagall law—ed.] were given greater protection against the evils of both corruption and depression. Farms were electrified, rivers were harnessed, cooperatives were encouraged. Justice—social and economic justice as well as legal—became increasingly the right and the opportunity of every man, regardless of his means or station in life."

JFK's policies for new jobs, higher minimum wages, and an industrial renaissance are pure American System. Kennedy's passion-stirring Apollo space program pitted him against the imperial hatred for American leadership in technological progress; his Civil Rights action took on racial oppression—the legacy and echo of empire. We will see below the coherence of these initiatives with his directly anti-imperial objectives.

Strategy for Peace, and a Quick War with Britain

The October 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis arose from Fidel Castro's request for Russian nuclear-armed missiles in Cuba to block any U.S. invasion, and the Russian gamble that placing offensive missiles close to the U.S. might help them overcome their growing strategic disadvantage in the face of Kennedy's economic/science/military buildup and foreign policy.

His special counsel Ted Sorensen wrote a stirring day-by-day account, showing JFK's precise, personal control of every aspect of the showdown, needed to prevent a fiasco like the Bay of Pigs which would this time incinerate the planet.⁸

A personal correspondence which Kennedy and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchov had begun in 1961 was crucial in winning the Soviet stand-down, a retreat accomplished without Russia's humiliation. With public support from the peaceful Cuban outcome, JFK began immediately—within days—to apply his full leadership powers to spring the world

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out of the imperial, Cold War nightmare.

His first target was the festering crisis in Congo.

Kennedy pulled the colonialist Belgian government into public alignment with U.S. insistence on the unity of the independent Congo, and against the backing of its imperial senior partner, Britain, for Katanga's secession.

On Nov. 27, 1962, one month after the Soviet stand-down in Cuba, JFK and Belgian Foreign Minister Paul-Henri Spaak issued a joint statement threatening "severe economic measures" against Katanga unless secession were quickly ended. That same day, with his finger in the British eye, Kennedy arranged that he would meet British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan on Dec. 19.

Two weeks before that scheduled meeting, newspapers reported that President Kennedy had decided to cancel the planned production of the Skybolt air-to-ground nuclear missile. Since a 1960 agreement with Eisenhower-Dulles, the British had been counting on this American weapon to give them their only credible independent nuclear war capability.

Sorensen reported, "The President . . . saw no point to a small independent British deterrent anyway. . . . [Kennedy's decision] posed a major political crisis for Macmillan's already shaky government. . . . In previous years Macmillan . . . had . . . praised the Skybolt agreement as the key to Britain's 'special relationship' with the U.S.'. . . . Latent resentment of Kennedy's refusal to consult more [with the British] on the Cuban missile crisis [now] boiled to the top. . . ."⁹

On the day Kennedy arrived in Nassau, Bahamas, to meet with Macmillan, the United Nations announced the United States decision to rush American arms and military advisors to the UN peacekeeping forces in Congo—to equip them to defeat the British-backed secession.

The President would not budge on Skybolt. He "considered . . . the development of nuclear [weapons] capabilities by more countries, even allies—as a most dangerous development." The Nassau Pact signed Dec. 22 specified that the U.S. would sell Polaris missiles to the British, but they would have to be carried on submarines under NATO, not independent British, command.¹⁰

With the British regime on its heels politically, the U.S. began rushing trucks, armored personnel carriers, and mine-clearing equipment to Congo.

Two weeks later the U.S. government declared, "the United Nations forces in Katanga now occupy most key populated areas and mining centers. . . . We expect Mr. Tshombe to end promptly the Katanga secession by recognizing the U.N.'s full freedom of movement throughout Katanga, [and by] advising all foreign mercenaries to disband and leave the country."¹¹

During the following week, American-equipped UN troops put Katanga leader Moïse Tshombe under house arrest. The Congolese government demanded the withdrawal of the British Consul in Katanga province. Hundreds of Congolese students stormed and sacked the



Signing the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty with the Soviet Union, Oct. 7, 1963. JFK was murdered the following month, as he was taking steps to end the Cold War.

British Embassy, destroying Queen Elizabeth's portrait. The students then marched to the U.S. Embassy and cheered for America.

The British oligarchy's fury over Kennedy's threat to the imperial order, and American "arrogance," was reported to their New York partners. The *New York Times* noted on Jan. 14, that "in London, at least, there is a strongly developed fear that a Congo regime supported by the United Nations would use its position to subvert the present regimes in the Rhodesias, the Portuguese colonies . . . and South Africa."

While Britain's Congo secession leader Tshombe was being arrested, the chief Soviet negotiator on nuclear weapons issues quietly arrived in the United States, on Kennedy's request. The Administration then leaked to the press that the "United States and the Soviet Union are actively and privately exploring new approaches to a nuclear [weapons] test ban agreement that has been eluding their negotiators for years," the *Washington Post* reported Jan. 11, 1963.

Kennedy now pushed this peace initiative with all his powers.

He carefully built a consensus for progress, which would put political muscle behind his efforts—a new Roosevelt coalition.

By June 1963, Kennedy was moving the country into a new era. On two successive days, he asked Americans to examine their own wrong and dangerous attitudes, and announced new measures for a better world.

At American University in Washington, D.C., June 10, JFK asked, "What kind of peace do we seek?" He answered: "Not a Pax Americana enforced on the world by American weapons of war. Not the peace of the grave or the security of the slave. . . . Our problems are man-made—therefore, they can be solved by man. And man

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can be as big as he wants. No problem of human destiny is beyond human beings. Man's reason and spirit have often solved the seemingly unsolvable—and we believe they can do it again. . . .

"Let us re-examine our attitude toward the Soviet Union. It is discouraging to think that their leaders may actually believe what their propagandists write . . . to realize the extent of the gulf between us. But it is also . . . a warning to the American people not to fall into the same trap as the Soviets, not to see only a distorted and desperate view of the other side, not to see . . . communication as nothing more than an exchange of threats.

"No government or social system is so evil that its people must be considered as lacking in virtue. As Americans, we find communism profoundly repugnant as a negation of personal freedom and dignity. But we can still hail the Russian people for their many achievements— in science and space, in economic and industrial growth, in culture and in acts of courage. . . .

"[Our] two countries have . . . [a] mutual abhorrence of war. . . . [W]e have never been at war with each other. And no nation . . . ever suffered more than the Soviet Union suffered in . . . the Second World War. At least 20 million lost their lives. . . . A third of the nation's territory, including nearly two thirds of its industrial base, was turned into a wasteland—a loss equivalent to the devastation of this country east of Chicago.

"Today, should total war ever break out again . . . all we have built, all we have worked for, would be destroyed in the first 24 hours. . . . We must conduct our affairs in such a way that it becomes in the Communists' interest to agree on a genuine peace. . . .

"I am taking this opportunity . . . to announce two

important decisions. . . .

"First: . . . that high-level discussions will shortly begin in Moscow looking toward early agreement on a comprehensive test ban treaty. Our hopes must be tempered with the caution of history—but with our hopes go the hopes of all mankind.

"Second: . . . I now declare that the United States does not propose to conduct nuclear tests in the atmosphere so long as other states do not do so. . . . We will not be the first to resume. . . ."

Kennedy's speech was greeted with enthusiasm by the Soviets, who reprinted it in its entirety for Russian citizens.

The Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty was soon signed by the U.S., U.S.S.R., and Britain (the British did no negotiating, by Kennedy's insistence), and subsequently, by 100 nations.

The day after the Strategy for Peace speech, Kennedy went on television to report enforcement of a court order requiring that Alabama Gov. George Wallace allow the enrollment of two African-American students to the University of Alabama.

He asked his national audience, "If an American, because his skin is dark, cannot eat lunch in a restaurant open to the public, if he cannot send his children to the best public school available, if he cannot vote for the public officials who represent him, . . . then who among us would be content to have the color of his skin changed and stand in his place? Who among us would then be content with the counsels of patience and delay?

"One hundred years of delay have passed since President Lincoln freed the slaves, yet their heirs, their grandsons, are not fully free . . . from the bonds of injustice . . . from social and economic oppression. . . ."

He asked, who are we, and what is America to the human race?

"We preach freedom around the world, and we mean it, and we cherish our freedom here at home; but are we to say to the world, and much more importantly, to each other, that this is a land of the free except for the Negroes; that we have no second-class citizens except Negroes; that we have no class or caste system, no ghettos, no master race except with respect to Negroes? . . ."

"The fires of frustration and discord are burning in every city, North and South, where legal remedies are not at hand. . . . We face, therefore, a moral crisis as a country and as a people. . . .

"Next week I shall ask the Congress of the United States to act, to make a commitment it has not fully made in this century to the proposition that race has no place in American life or law."

His bill was given additional support from Martin Luther King's March on Washington on Aug. 28, which the Administration worked to make a success. Kennedy's bill was passed as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, after he was killed.

To be continued...

Footnotes:

7. "Exiles in London Led Ghana Revolt; Nkrumah Foe Tells of Plot Mapped by Secret Group," *New York Times*, Feb. 25, 1966.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 564-565.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 566-567.

11. "U.S. Statement on Congo," Jan. 4, 1963, *New York Times*, Jan. 5, 1963.



NAWAPA 1964

PUEBLO, COLORADO
AGUST 19, 1964

Released on Thanksgiving 2011, the LPAC-TV documentary "NAWAPA 1964" is the true story of the fight for the North American Water and Power Alliance. Spanning the 1960s and early '70s, it is told through the words of Utah Senator Frank Moss. The 56-minute video, using extensive original film footage and documents, presents the astonishing mobilization for NAWAPA, which came near to being realized, until the assassination of President Kennedy, the Vietnam War, and the 1968 Jacobin reaction, killed it

... until now.

<http://larouchepac.com/nawapa1964>