

Khrushchev and kennedy



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Contents

When asked to name 5 presidents off the top of their head prior to the 21st century, most of the American population would probably name John F. Kennedy as one of them. It appears that long after his assassination nearly 55 years ago, the reputation of the Kennedy administration is still dubbed as one of America's greats.

Perhaps this has a great deal to do with his family's popularity in the public eye and not the actual proceedings of his administration. Although John F. Kennedy is revered as being one of the most beloved presidents in American History, the blatant reality of his term in office is that of a counterproductive and increasingly immature presidency as shown from his foreign relations and internal command of the military during the hottest part of the cold war. The result of this brash presidency is one that had left a lasting impression on foreign and global relations for decades to come.

Before the dubbing of his power in office, Kennedy illustrated great intelligence on the subject of domestic allocation of funds (O'Brien). As part of the most recent wave of economists at the time, Kennedy was soon to enact his new domestic plan for public funding and tax cuts. In this, John F. Kennedy was able to decrease the unemployment rate by over 3% and reduce taxes for the common man. This was not the only progress he made; Kennedy also prompted the development of urban refurbishing projects, modern health care systems, and the promotion of the American arts. These domestic reforms, however, do not encompass the entirety of Kennedy's term, rather they act as a lovely kind of fluff for the American people in order

to cover up his international diplomatic shortcomings (Schlesinger). This being supposed, conflict between the United States and Russia during the cold war was unlikely to come to an end anytime soon specifically because of key interactions between Kennedy and Khrushchev.

Perhaps one of the most decisive interactions Kennedy had with the Soviet Union was, in part, the Vienna Summit, whereupon the Kennedy and Khrushchev discussed the happenings of the Berlin Crisis. The Berlin Crisis was a culmination of conflicts that began in 1948 between Soviet and Allied military blockade forces occupying the East and West blocs of Berlin after World War II. This engagement escalated greatly in the years of '60 to '61 when Soviet forces pushed further for the removal of the Allied militia. However, given the poverty rate and risk for yet another uprising in Berlin after World War two, Allies repudiated the situation until there were no other options. When British, French, and American militaries refused to quell the conflict, the Berlin Crisis ensued, and the Vienna Summit was arranged to meet the demands of both sides (Carmichael).

Prior to the Vienna Summit Khrushchev attempted on multiple occasions to meet with Kennedy. On February 22nd, 1961 he addressed Kennedy as such: " I hope it will be possible, before too long, for us to meet personally for an informal exchange of views" (Kempe). Khrushchev believed greatly that the affair of the Berlin Crisis and other foreign affairs could be settled quite easily if only Kennedy would speak to Khrushchev (Ashton). This meeting was entirely a failure: the poor negotiating diplomacy of the United States resulted in the building of the Berlin Wall (Kempe). Yet at this time in May of 1961, Kennedy addressed the funding of NASA as an " urgent national

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need". By partaking in frivolous proxy campaigns rather than taking on Khrushchev directly, as recommended of his advisors, Kennedy attempted to divert the attention of the Soviets. In this, astonishing technological achievements were made at the expense of world peace with the series of competitive maneuvers by both Soviet and Non-Soviet forces called "The Space Race" ("Space Program"). However, this urgent need proved a flump, as in April of the same year, the Soviet Union had already launched the very first man in space during the Vostok Program which lasted from 1960-1963, resulting in the first woman in space in 64 and the first space walk in 65. Thus illustrating Americas lag in aerospace technology behind the USSR more publically than ever (Hall and Shayler).

Rather than meet openly with Khrushchev, Kennedy diverted tactics away from USSR. Given the recent Laos affair in February, Kennedy pulled focus towards the newly emerging Third world countries ("Laos"). This tactic could also be seen in the Bay of Pigs incident on April 17th of the same year. In the Bay of Pigs Defeat, the US experienced a failed invasion of yet another Second world country, costing the United States government 54 million dollars and the embarrassing defeat of our own invasion from a Soviet-allied nation ("The Bay of Pigs"). To put that in perspective, the average gallon of milk at the time cost \$0.47 whereas it now exceeds \$3.11, putting those measly 54 million dollars now at an estimated 445 million given an 8.27 inflation increase from 1961 to 2018 ("National Retail Report-Dairy"). This incident not only negatively impacted external affairs, but also ignited a huge controversy involving the CIA when their ties to the Mafia were revealed. In the 1975 publication by the Church Committee in Senate, the

CIA had insured a “ monopoly on gaming, prostitution, and drugs” for the Mafia, thus shifting the American popular opinion on their own country and the overall morality standard that Britain and France held of the US (Church Committee).

Rather than learning from his mistakes in Laos and Cuba, Kennedy launched another set of forces to quell the “ Soviet uprisings” in South East Asia in 1962. Through a series of events involving the 194th Armored Brigade and the second drafting of American men in the last 10 years - the Vietnam War began. Extending long after Kennedy’s era, the Vietnam Wars informal declaration initiated the brutally savage and utterly futile 13-year involvement of American forces against the Viet Cong (Wilson). The Vietnam War was so brutal that forty years later when the U. S. Department of Veteran Affairs conducted the first National Longitudinal Study on the impacts of PTSD, 11% of the male and 9% of female populations still experienced PTSD. Of those who still experienced PTSD from the Vietnam War in 1987, they had double the risk for death unrelated to suicide than those who did not still carry PTSD. This is only one of the effects of Vietnam on the American soldiers and does not enter into the impact that violently opposed public opinions of the war, and the soldiers, had on the unity of the United States population. Further, consideration also needs to be afforded regarding the tremendous emotional, mental, and economic toll that the war took on the already poverty-stricken civilians of Southern and Northern Vietnam (US Department of Veterans Affairs).

On the contrary, instead of the diversions serving effectively to distract Khrushchev, Kennedy’s entertainment of such proxy wars only angered the

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USSR further. Kennedy's actions then resulted in the Berlin Crisis of 1961 which prompted for the building the Berlin Wall. This wall did not just serve as a barrier between Soviet and Non-Soviet, but also a negotiating barrier between world superpowers that would solidify the relationship of Russia and the U. S. for years to come (Ashton). The "Iron Curtain", as it were, set up the diplomatic wall between Russia, the United States, and even Cuba in the Missile Crisis of 1962. Rising closer and closer to mutual annihilation, the Cuban Missile Crisis breached a point that would scar worldviews for the next 55 years.

Robert Kennedy, John F. Kennedy's brother, insisted that the President "did not want a military conflict" and felt as though he had done "everything possible to avoid a military engagement with Cuba and with the Soviet Union" (Robert F. Kennedy). However, RFK's public position on the matter is far from the report Dobrynin, the Russian ambassador in Washington, gave to Khrushchev. In Dobrynin's rather detailed report of his unofficial meeting with RFK, the string of events in the Cuban missile crisis seemingly had gotten so out of control that Kennedy was apprehensive about whether or not "the military would overthrow him and seize power" (Crankshaw). This, of course, was not a surprise as the aforementioned Jupiter Missiles already stationed in Turkey and Italy had undergone some extreme developments since 1957 (Hershberg). While the initial "OK" was given by Kennedy, plenty of military happenings were out of Kennedy's hands in a time that required boundless attention to detail regarding military involvement. The extremity of the situation was especially highlighted after the fiasco that was the Crisis of Berlin and the attempted overthrow of Cuba with the Bay of Pigs Invasion

(or lack thereof). The nearing doomsday, nevertheless, did not stop the Joint Chiefs of Staff from pushing for a more aggressive response to the missiles in San Cristobal, Cuba; military command was illustrating yet again how little input was needed from the president to control the balance of the American and Russian futures ("The Cuban Missile Crisis, October 1962"). It was in those final moments that Kennedy gave the final say. Kennedy chose to mend the wrongs he had made in the past 13 days. This decision would label America as the "peacemaker" of the event, thus undermining the blatant candor: America was the aggressor.

The entire year of '63 had been filled with triumphs and tragedies in American civil rights. Kennedy and his close relations acted as a forefront of this in pushing for Civil Rights Act which was enacted in '64 and the Equal Pay Act against gender discrimination. It is significant to note as well that Kennedy was not actually the one to carry through with these acts, rather, his predecessor Lyndon B. Johnson did - without any credit of course (LBJ). In spite of all of the failures of '61 and '62, Kennedy served his last year on a high note for minorities across America, making him one of the most popular public figures in American popular culture. So, on November 22nd, 1964, when John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas the American people immortalized Kennedy's administration in the 20th century - rivaling only Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan (A Nation in Upheaval, 1954-1975). Four days later, the United States people had very little to be grateful for that Thanksgiving, and so instead they made Kennedy a martyr.

Despite the many shortcomings in the first two years of his presidency, John F. Kennedy is still seen as one of the most beloved presidents in United

Stated History. In swooning the American people with lavishing reforms, the vile impacts of war, invasion, and political intimidation were all but washed away. Modern society took a more optimistic view of his candidacy, seeking the brighter side of a very dark era in place of the harsh reality of the United States past. Indeed, his reforms set a precedent in American civil rights and public funding, but it cannot be refuted that the mistakes of the Kennedy administration resulted in an even worse precedent of cold foreign policy for the days nearing closer to the end of the Soviet Union. Thus, history has donned a sweeter coat in defense of Kennedys short term as president. After all, no one can steal from a dead man, not even his reputation.