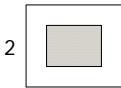


# JFK:

## The Assassination in Context



### I. JFK and the Popular Imagination

- ◆ The JFK assassination seen as one of history's greatest and best-remembered events.
- ◆ JFK as first celebrity president, last beloved president, inspiring intense feelings all over world.
- ◆ Postwar popular culture & the origins of JFK's lasting appeal
  - Youth
    - ❖ WWII veteran, hero of PT109
    - ❖ Young, idealized family man
  - President as "sex symbol"
  - Media celebrity: Won first TV debates .
  - Camelot: Kennedys as royal family in era of American empire, associated .
- ◆ Kennedy's political image: challenged voters and youth to service and sacrifice
  - *Profiles in Courage*
  - 1960 Campaign: New Frontier, "Getting this country moving again."
  - Best-loved Kennedy programs: Peace Corps, moon program.

- JFK's image as a liberal crusader: civil rights.
- Contrast with conservatives & failures who followed him as president

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## II. The Myth of St. Jack, Liberal Martyr

- ◆ Conspiracy theories as stories with characters, plot, motivation. Role of liberal myth in JFK theories.
  - A part of 1960s culture: "Abraham, Martin, and John"; "He Was A Friend Of Mine"
- ◆ C.t. of Oliver Stone & others:
  - JFK tried to end the Cold War, stop Vietnam. He threatened the "military-industrial complex" & was murdered for it by the CIA, FBI, military, munitions industry, Cuban exiles, oil men, Mafia, and/or LBJ.
- ◆ Reasons to doubt the liberal martyr myth
  - Background as conservative Boston Irish Catholic Democrat
  - JFK's southern support, poor civil rights record.
  - JFK as Cold Warrior
    - ❖ Before presidency: Friend of McCarthy, campaigned as stronger anticommunist than Nixon in 1960, Inaugural Address
    - ❖ During presidency: Bay of Pigs, firing of Allen Dulles, assassination attempts against Castro in cooperation with Mafia.
    - ❖ Was the JFK killing "blowback"?
  - JFK and Vietnam: destabilization of Laos, NSAM 263, CBS interview, overthrow of Diem, NSAM 273.
- ◆ Argument that was JFK moving to end the Cold War:
  - American University speech, June 1963
  - Limited Test Ban Treaty took effect October 1963.



### **III. The Assassination**

- ◆ Pre-campaign trip to Dallas, TX, where JFK was not universally popular.
- ◆ Motorcade route through Dealey Plaza.
- ◆ Background of the Zapruder Film.
- ◆ Lee Oswald, Young Communist, and not without reason.
- ◆ Kennedy's death: Restored versions of the Zapruder film, chief evidence in all JFK c.t.'s.