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The Myth of Kennedy in Italy From Fanfani to Renzi

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Introduction

What if Kennedy had lived? Yes, that's right, what if John Fitzgerald Kennedy hadn't died on that November morning? What if the bullet had missed him? What if Lee Harvey Oswald had coughed the cold that morning missed the bus or simply didn't hear his alarm ringing, woke up late and decided to hit the gym instead? The car would have rolled down the street; people would have kept on smiling as their handsome President and his elegant First Lady passed by. Security men would have slept well that night and Vice-President Lyndon B. Johnson would certainly have not sworn to become the- non-elected- 36th President of the United States of America on the 21st of November, 1963. He would have probably run for a second mandate in the office and who knows what would have happened if he won. A joy for all the Americas - regardless of the Vietnam crisis- and its overseas Allies or a tremendous disgrace for everyone? He was part of the "New Generation" of Americans and that was clearly seen nationwide during the television debate against the Republican candidate Richard M. Nixon. It was the first time that a candidate running for president spoke directly to the cameras and managed to really capture the audiences. The good looking young man in his blue suit and shirt made Nikon, wearing a classical gray suit, seemed part of the studio furniture.

He was born in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1917 and was the second of nine children and descended from a Catholic Irish family, his grandfathers have been successful in both business and politics. Grandson of the Boston mayor John Francis Fitzgerald and son of the appointed United States Ambassador to England, John F. Kennedy had very few options in life; to remain the young offspring of a wealthy family, to work for his father's office or to become the Kennedy whose name would be written in the history books. He chose the last option. He was raised in a wealthy loving family. Attended great institutions from Choate boarding school for young boys to Ivy League institutions such as Harvard and Princeton and the prestigious London School of Economics. Despite all his health problems as a child and a young adult with special regard to the rupture of a disk in his spine he enrolled in the US Navy and took part in World War II. He was made Lieutenant and was sent to the South Pacific as the commander of patrol torpedo boat. Came back home as a Hero having saved the life of one of the crew members and leading the rest of them to a safe island in the Pacific Ocean after their boat was sunk by a Japanese warship that killed two of his men. The figure of a young Hero was well seen by the Nation and that helped a lot his political career. He was first elected in the Congress in Massachusetts and later in 1952 was elected to the U.S. Senate.

At the age of 36 the young Senator married a writer of the Washington Times-Herald the 24 year-old Jacqueline Bouvier. Mrs. Kennedy would be one of the most admired First Ladies. On the morning of November 8th 1960 – at the age of only 43- John F. Kennedy became the youngest President of the United States of America. He was sworn in as the 35th President on January 20,1961. His Inaugural Address was to be remembered for the years to come. He not only spoke to the American citizens, to old friends and new allies, to enemies and all emerging countries. He was the leader on the “New Frontier” he embodied hopes, dreams and expectations of an enduring Era of Peace the world was asking for. He achieved several political successes but also failure. The Vietnam War and the failed Vienna summit are on top of the list. His success on the other hand have managed to make his popularity grow. The Cuba Missiles Crisis that brought the world close to a nuclear war with the Soviets. Kennedy was the man that had stopped Khrushchev. The Berlin Wall speech with the memorable words *Ich bin ein Berliner* and all his other overseas trips have created a myth. But this “myth” was it only real at home or also people of other nation believed it? He leaves the world on November 22nd 1963 after being shot in Dallas, Texas. He had served in office for a little more than 1000 days. He had the power and the qualities to do a lot more. No one know it he would have done good to the nation and other countries. He had influenced other countries, other politicians and does he still influence politicians around the world today? Where does his myth come from? Why is he one of the most famous presidents around the world. Lets pick a random European nation, Italy for example. Did Italians like Kennedy? Did Italian politicians liked Kennedy, were they influenced by him? This are all questions we would like to try and answer during our thesis.

Chapter One: John Fitzgerald Kennedy: The Man

1.1. Youth years

*“If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich”.*¹
**(Inaugural Address of President John F. Kennedy Washington, D.C. January 20, 1961
Harvard Law School)**

On May 29, 1917 in Brookline, Massachusetts a baby boy was born. He was named John Fitzgerald Kennedy in honor of his mother’s father John Francis Fitzgerald who at that time happened to be the Boston Mayor known by the people as Honey Fitz. People could say that John was born in a normal numerous family being the second of nine children. The word “normal” did not really appeal to the Kennedys and that had been well realized by the Boston community years before John was born. His great-grandparents had come from Ireland and despite many hardships had very well managed to provide for their families. His grandfathers were able to do even better, they both became prominent politicians. Easy to say that politics runs in the family. Thanks to the hard work of the family, the Kennedys, had all they needed and more and that *more* would be the turning point to a dynasty that America will never forget.

Little John or Jack as family and friends used to call him had a hard time growing up as a baby due to several childhood diseases he had to face. He was not a very healthy boy, he had measles, whooping cough, chicken pox. At the age of almost three he had become sick with the scarlet fever, a very contagious and potentially life-threatening disease. His parents were terrified that little Jack would die. Thanks to good care, love and about a month in the hospital Jack recovered *«in fact his family used to joke about the risk a mosquito took in biting him- with some of his blood the mosquito was almost sure to die!»*²

Jack would never be very health in fact in the future he will have to undergo several operations. Nevertheless this would not be a real obstacle to his for the goals John would achieve. As the second son of nine children John had a safe sense of competition with was encouraged by Joseph Sr. especially among the boys, in fact, he was the only one that could represent a real threat to his

¹ www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Research-Aids/Ready-Reference/JFK-Quotations/Inaugural-Address.aspx

² www.jfklibrary.org/JFK/Life-of-John-F-Kennedy.aspx

older brother Joe's dominant position in the family. With his five sisters Rosemary, Kathleen, Eunice, Patricia, Jean and his three brothers Joe, Robert and Teddy John was growing up in a comfortable and safe environment.

The young Kennedys would spend their summer holidays in their home in Hyannis Port on Cape Cod where they would play several different sport, go sailing –activity that John would become very fond of- race on their bicycles and sometimes also get somehow injured when the competition went too far. If we look back at those days we can see that Jack would usually get the worst almost every time. That makes hard to imagine that Jack would one day sit in the Oval Office.

Jack was very popular among all his friends at home and at the Choate boarding school for adolescent boys in Connecticut. Despite some health issues Jack was always very active he played tennis, golf and football. His Head Master did realize a lot of potential in the young boy even though he did not work as hard as he could aside of his favorite subjects English and history. No one had yet imagined that in the years to come John rapidly work his way to the top. His father sent him a letter and gave him a warm but very clear father to son talks about his future.

«Now Jack," his father wrote in a letter one day, "I don't want to give the impression that I am a nagger, for goodness knows I think that is the worse thing any parent can be, and I also feel that you know if I didn't really feel you had the goods I would be most charitable in my attitude toward your failings. After long experience in sizing up people I definitely know you have the goods and you can go a long way...It is very difficult to make up fundamentals that you have neglected when you were very young, and that is why I am urging you to do the best you can. I am not expecting too much, and I will not be disappointed if you don't turn out to be a real genius, but I think you can be a really worthwhile citizen with good judgment and understanding».³

Mr. Kennedy believed that Jack had all the goods to go along way, he would not be disappointed if he didn't but did not really see a good reason for him not to achieve a quite high position in life. After graduating from Choate he entered Harvard in 1936 ad his older brother had done. One day while playing football as his brother did he suffered the rupture a disk in his spine. He would never really recover form that accident that will bother him for the rest of his life and almost kept him from joining the US Navy.

It is bizarre how life turned out since it was his older brother Joe who had announced to everyone that he would be the first Catholic to become President on the United States, but, life had another plan for Joe. Jack seemed less ambitious. He worked hard but his grades remained those of an average student. Even so he graduated with honors from Harvard, studied briefly at Princeton,

³ www.jfklibrary.org/JFK/Life-of-John-F-Kennedy.aspx?p=2 31/01/2015

Stanford and at the London School of Economics. Coming from Ivy League schools and prestigious institutions did not make him feel superior to anyone, he would always treat others with respect, were they housemaids, taxi drivers or Senators.

In 1937 Mr. Kennedy was appointed United States Ambassador to England and took all the family with him aside from Joe and Jack who were studying at college. Those were the years of the Roosevelt administration were America was coming out of the Great Depression. It was the year of the end of the Second New Deal, Roosevelt's second re-election – he would be the only President to be elected for four terms in office- the time in which America was taking care of its inner affairs. The difficult economical situation of Wall Street and the London Stock Exchange made clear that the interests of the two global powers for a moment did not collide. The economical fracture led to a particular political fracture that would be taken care of with great results in the years to come. United States have not only decided not to get involved in Europe's political situation but also not to care of their economical situation. This was decided until Europe would reorder her house.⁴

Joseph P. Kennedy was Ambassador in London at the time the world and especially the old continent was facing several political issues. It was because of his father's job that John became very interested in world affairs and European politics. He received letters from his dad, who informed of the situation in Europe. Whatever he wrote could not take away the fear that everyone had that all that tension would soon blow up into a full-scale war. With Hitler to the power in Germany, Mussolini that ruled in Italy, Communism rising in Russia and the inner European countries left on their own it was only a matter of time.

On September 1, 1939 Germany invaded Poland and War world II began. Jack graduated from Harvard months later the war had began in June 1940. There he was with the future in his hands ready to open another chapter of his life.

⁴ Di Nolfo E. *Dagli Imperi Militari Agli Imperi Tecnologici. La Politica Internazionale dal XX Secolo ad Oggi*. Editori Laterna. Bari, 2008. pp. 85-86

1.2. Another American goes to War

On September 1941 another young American joined the US Navy. On November 1940 F.D. Roosevelt had been elected for the third time in a row – the only case in the American presidency- as U.S. President. His policy of isolation from Europe until she took care of her internal affairs had ended. He openly helped Britain economically in her lonely fight against Nazi Germany. On March 1941 the Lend-Lease policy had passed, Roosevelt signed the formally titled “An Act to Further Promote the Defense of the United States”. The Lend-Lease policy was a program under which the United States supplied food, oil and war material under favorable conditions. The US administration was helping Britain and those countries that were fighting Germany – and its Italian ally Mussolini- materially but not yet physically. The army was well prepared and equipped, but Roosevelt had not yet seen a real threat to his homeland. The American soil had never been attacked and no-one saw a real possibility for it to happen.

As we said before, on September 1941, a young American with the name of John Fitzgerald Kennedy joined the US Navy. Due to the several health problems he had had Jack was not supposed to be accepted to serve in the Navy. His father had to pull strings so ensure his boy would be accepted. Captain Alan Goodrich Kirk was head of the Office of Naval Intelligence, he had been a naval attaché in London before the war had started when Joseph Kennedy served as Ambassador to the Court of St. James. Mr. Kennedy persuaded Captain Kirk to allow a private Boston doctor certify his son’s good health. John was enjoying life in the capital as a young intelligence officer. It was only on December, four months later that John had joined the Navy that the unexpected happened. The United States had for the first time been attacked. On the morning of the 7th of December 1941 the Japanese attacked the US Navy anchored at Pear Harbor, Hawaii. From that moment on America too had entered War World II. After having completed PT training Kennedy arrived on Tulagi – at the southern end of the Solomon Islands- on the 14th of April, 1943. Two weeks later he took command of a PT-109 patrol torpedo boat. On the night of August 2, 1943 Lieutenant Kennedy and his crew of twelve men were patrolling the waters looking for enemy ships to sink. Their mission was stop Japanese ships from delivering supplies to their soldiers. Suddenly a Japanese destroyer the *Amarigi* a 2,000 ton ship four times longer than the PT-109 emerged from the darkness⁵.

The ship was travelling at full speed heading straight at them and there was nothing Lt. Kennedy could do. The *Amarigi* rammed the PT-109 cutting it in half and killing two of Kennedy’s men. All

⁵ www.historynet.com/john-f-kennedy

the other crew member managed to jump off the boat except for Patrick McMahon who had had terrible burns on his face and hands and was ready to give up. Even though Kennedy had hit his back on the cockpit and injured it again he managed to save McMahon and pulled him where the rest of the survivors had gathered on a floating piece of the boat. Kennedy led his men to a small island several miles away from the attack area. Despite his injuries, Kennedy how had been on the Harvard swimming team, managed to tow McMahon ashore. Lieutenant John swam back and forth around the island looking for help, he never gave up and his courage earned him his men's loyalty for life. On August 8, six days later two native islanders found them and went for help, carrying with them a message that Kennedy had carved into a piece of coconut shell. As Theodore C. Sorensen would write:

«As a constant reminder of that blush brush with death, he kept on his desk preserved in plastic the coconut shell on which he had scratched his message of rescue from that far-off Pacific island.»⁶

The PT crew will be rescued the next day. Kennedy came back home as a survivor and a war *Hero*. When returning home Jack was awarded the Navy and the Marine Corps Medal for his leadership and courage.

Unfortunately his elder brother Joe was not so lucky, he died a year later when his plane blow up in Europe. The war was finally coming to an end, and it was time for Jack to choose what kind of work he wanted to do. It is know that Jack had considered becoming a teacher or a writer. This second career would probably have given him great satisfaction, in fact he would receive the Pulitzer Prize for history in 1957 with his *Profiles in Courage* which he dedicated to his wife Jacqueline . Many quotations can be extracted for this book but this is certainly one of those that well represents the spirit of the future president:

«Without belittling the courage with which men have died, we should not forget those acts of courage with which men have lived⁷».

⁶ Theodore C. Sorensen. *Kennedy*. Harper & Row, Publishers, Incorporated. New York, NY, 1965 p. 18

⁷ www.jfklibrary.org/Events-and-Awards/Profile-in-Courage-Award/About-the-Book.aspx

1.3. Entering Politics

Joseph Kennedy set down with his son Jack and had a long talk about his future. Joseph had always had great hopes for all his children and after the death of Joe his eldest son he was focusing his expectations on Jack. Mr. Kennedy convinced Jack that he should run for Congress in Massachusetts' eleventh congressional district. One night after he had returned to the States, Jack met up for drinks in a New York night club with writer John Hersey. Hersey proposed doing a story of Jack survivor to the PT-109 crash on *Life* magazine. Joseph Kennedy loved the idea since he hoped his son would be assigned the Medal of Honor. *Life* magazine turned down Hersey's literary experiment- probably because its narrative touch was too long- but the *New Yorker* published a shorter version. This shorter version focused exclusively on Jack and reached millions of people. This helped him quite a lot to get elected for Congress in 1946. He served three terms in the House of Representative and in 1952 was elected to the U.S. Senate.

As John revealed to his Special Counsel Theodore C. Sorensen, who worked for him for eleven years : « his entry was neither involuntary nor illogical. “ Everything seemed to point to it in 1946”⁸». John was more interested in international affairs than the domestic ones even so he did well in the three terms – six years in total- he served in the House. In 1952 he was elected Senator and soon afterwards married 24-year old Jacqueline Lee Bouvier. His wife would be an important figure during his Presidency. She would not only be an icon of style and elegance for young ladies and women around the nation, but her charm would bewitch important political figures when they saw her. John was becoming a popular politician and both in Congress and the Senate he was seen far more as a national figure than a local one. In 1956 he was almost pecked to run for Vice president but he decided that he would directly run for President in the next election. His run up for the Presidency was probably the closest one Americans had ever seen. He won the election against the former Vice President, republican candidate Richard M. Nixon.

Nevertheless he had to convince not only the nation but first of all he had to convince the Democratic Party that he was not a good candidate but “the candidate” to be supported for the race to the White House. The most formal statement of his political credo was pronounced by him when he addressed in 1690, the Liberal Party of New York:

⁸ Theodore C. Sorensen. *Kennedy*. Harper & Row, Publishers, Incorporated. New York, NY, 1965 pp. 15

« I believe in human dignity as the source of national purpose, in human liberty as the source of national action, in the human heart as the source of national compassion and in the human mind as the source of our invention and ideas... Liberalism...faith in man's ability...reason and judgment...is our best and only hope in the world today.⁹»

He descended from an Irish Catholic family – issue which he would have to deal with- was thought by his mother Rose to respect religion and attend Mass every Sunday. Still he did not believe that all virtue resided in the Catholic Church – at his death Pope Paul VI that he met on his only trip to Rome would refer to him as a “ man of great wisdom” in his condolence speech- and he also did not believe that all non-Catholics would go to hell. He didn't feel superior because of his religion but simply accepted it as part of his life. He would be very clear in expressing the fact that he was for the separation of church and state. He was once asked by a priest:

«Senator Kennedy, do you not believe that all law comes from God? ...“I'm a Catholic, so of course I believe it – but that has nothing to do with international law”.»¹⁰

With his election to the Senate he had proven everyone his worth in the career he had chosen. His responsibilities of a freshman Democratic Senator under a Republican Congress of the Eisenhower administration were neither a real weight nor an excitement. Even if he could enjoy in relax the limited number of days he had off his inner part of statesman was coming out. The world and Washington occupied more and more of his time. The year that went by from 1952 to 1960 were well spent. He became Senator, Presidential Candidate, Presidential nominee and President-elect .

Jacks' financial independence due to his family wealth made it possible for him to achieve in an easier and faster way a political success. Some had said to Joseph Kennedy has paid for his son's votes. That was never really proven nor it seem to really interest the electors. John was young, handsome, a war hero, had a good education, and smiled like a Hollywood star but most of all the was part of that “New Generation” that wanted to change not jus America but the world.

The Kennedy vs. Nixon TV debate showed the hole nation what the young candidate was all about. It was the first time that a candidate running for President spoke directly to the cameras and managed to really capture the audiences. The handsome young Democrat candidate in his blue suit and shirt made Nikon, wearing a classical gray suit, seemed part of the studio furniture. While running for “The White House” his younger brother Bobby and Ted showed both political instincts and great campaign manager qualities. In September of 1957 a *Saturday Evening Post* article ended with the following words: Fervent admirers of Kennedy...confidently look forward to the day when Jack will be in the White House, Bobby will serve in the Cabinet as Attorney General and Teddy

⁹ Theodore C. Sorensen. *Kennedy*. Harper & Row, Publishers, Incorporated. New York, NY, 1965 p. 22

¹⁰ Theodore C. Sorensen. *Kennedy*. Harper & Row, Publishers, Incorporated. New York, NY, 1965 p. 20

will be the Senator from Massachusetts. The *Saturday Evening Post* did not know that those last sentences of the article will become reality years later when the three brothers gave life to what was called the “Camelot Era”.

Jacqueline Kennedy was an intelligent lovable woman. She was well educated, spoke several languages which would come in handy when she accompanied her husband on his official trips around the globe. She reluctantly accepted the fact that politics kept her husband away so much. She slowly accepted the rigors of campaigning and all that handshaking. We can say that she was not a natural politician nonetheless she was exquisitely beautiful, highly intelligent and irresistibly charming and that intensified the crowd interest in John whenever she travel with him.

1.4. The year 1960 the time is now

No forty-three year old Senator nor a Catholic had ever been elected as the United States President and that was why his party was unlikely to pick him as the Democratic candidate for the Presidency. Maybe eight to ten or even twelve year could have removed the age issue and perhaps softened the religious handicap. Jack knew that no one was going to hand him the nomination so he would have to get it from himself. Many thought and told him it was too soon, including his mother Rose. The time had come. 1960 it was the right moment, John was sure. The task was hard he not only had to convince the elector to vote for him but he first had to convince the Democratic party that he was not just the candidate to vote for the nominee but the only candidate who could win against the Republican candidate Vice President R. Nixon. He was considered too young, with no real experience of how to run a hole nation. Most of the Democrats thought he had wrong religion, the wrong age, the wrong job and the wrong home state to be elected President. In other words he was a losing bet. His age and his little experience were used against him but his Catholic religion was an issue that he had to face several times. Kennedy as well as other Democrats had to be careful to gain the Catholics and not lose the anti-Catholics. His views of separation of State and Church were well know. Winning the primaries was a hard task he knew that Democrats wanted a President not a principle. If a Catholic could not be nominated and if he was could not be elected President then there was no reason for any Democrat to support his nomination.¹¹ Kennedy recalled in his speeches that all political candidates should respect the I Amendment:

¹¹ Theodore C. Sorensen. *Kennedy*. Harper & Row, Publishers, Incorporated. New York, NY, 1965 pp. 126

« Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.¹²»

So far the “White House” was for Protestants only. The Religious issue would be part of his nominee for President and his campaign for the Presidency. On September 12, 1960 he addressed the Great Huston Ministerial Association with an impressive speech on his Catholic religion:

«[...] the hungry children I saw in West Virginia, the old people who cannot pay their doctor bills, the families forced to give up their farms[...] These are the real issues which should decide this campaign[...] But because I am a Catholic, and no Catholic has ever been elected President, the real issues in this campaign have been obscured--perhaps deliberately, in some quarters less responsible than this. So it is apparently necessary for me to state once again--not what kind of church I believe in, for that should be important only to me--but what kind of America I believe in[...] I believe in an America that is officially neither Catholic, Protestant nor Jewish--where no public official either requests or accepts instructions on public policy from the Pope, the National Council of Churches or any other ecclesiastical source--where no religious body seeks to impose its will directly or indirectly upon the general populace or the public acts of its officials--and where religious liberty is so indivisible that an act against one church is treated as an act against all[...] Finally, I believe in an America where religious intolerance will someday end--where all men and all churches are treated as equal--where every man has the same right to attend or not attend the church of his choice--where there is no Catholic vote, no anti-Catholic vote, no bloc voting of any kind--and where Catholics, Protestants and Jews, at both the lay and pastoral level, will refrain from those attitudes of disdain and division which have so often marred their works in the past, and promote instead the American ideal of brotherhood[...] But let me stress again that these are my views--for contrary to common newspaper usage, I am not the Catholic candidate for President. I am the Democratic Party's candidate for President who happens also to be a Catholic. I do not speak for my church on public matters--and the church does not speak for me[...] If I should lose on the real issues, I shall return to my seat in the Senate, satisfied that I had tried my best and was fairly judged. But if this election is decided on the basis that 40 million Americans lost their chance of being President on the day they were baptized, then it is the whole nation that will be the loser, in the eyes of Catholics and non-Catholics around the world, in the eyes of history, and in the eyes of our own people.

But if, on the other hand, I should win the election, then I shall devote every effort of mind and spirit to fulfilling the oath of the Presidency--practically identical, I might add, to the oath I have taken for 14 years in the Congress. For without reservation, I can "solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution [. . .] so help me God. »¹³

To young, inexperienced, from the wrong home state and with the wrong religion to be not only nominated for the Presidency but to be elected President. He did everything he had to do in the right way. He won the primaries of the Democratic party against all odds and later won the race for the “White House” against the Republican candidate Richard. Nixon. On the twenty-four hour that

¹² www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill_of_rights_transcript.html 06/02/2015

¹³ www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/ALL6YEBJMEKYGMcntnSCvg.aspx 06/02/2015

went for the November 8th to the morning of November 9th 1960 John Fitzgerald Kennedy became the youngest President-elect of the United States of America.

Chapter Two : The Presidency

2.1. The need of creating a myth

On the morning of January 20th 1961 John Fitzgerald Kennedy pronounced his first speech to the nation as the 34th President of the United States of America. These the first words to the nation and the world of the youngest President ever of the United States. A speech that lasted about sixteen minutes calling out not only to the “New Generation” of Americans but to the world as well. There is probably no way to summarize the words of JFK in his Inaugural Address so it seems appropriate to write down this one speech in full:

«Vice President Johnson, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chief Justice, President Eisenhower, Vice President Nixon, President Truman, Reverend Clergy, fellow citizens:

We observe today not a victory of party but a celebration of freedom--symbolizing an end as well as a beginning--signifying renewal as well as change.

The world is very different now. For man 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--the belief that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state but from the hand of God. We dare not forget today that we are the heirs of that first revolution. Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a *new generation of Americans*--born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage--and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world.

Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty.

This much we pledge--and more.

To those old allies whose cultural and spiritual origins we share, we pledge the loyalty of faithful friends. United there is little we cannot do in a host of cooperative ventures. Divided there is little we can do--for we dare not meet a powerful challenge at odds and split asunder.

To those new states whom we welcome to the ranks of the free, we pledge our word that one form of colonial control shall not have passed away merely to be replaced by a far more iron tyranny. We shall not always expect to find them supporting our view. But we shall always hope to find them strongly supporting their own freedom--and to remember that, in the past, those who foolishly sought power by riding the back of the tiger ended up inside.

To those people in the huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves, for whatever period is required--not because the communists may be doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right. If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.

To our sister republics south of our border, we offer a special pledge--to convert our good words into good deeds--in a new alliance for progress--to assist free men and free governments in casting off the chains of poverty. But this peaceful revolution of hope cannot become the prey of hostile powers. Let all our neighbors know that we shall join with them to oppose aggression or subversion anywhere in the Americas. And let every other power know that this Hemisphere intends to remain the master of its own house.

To that world assembly of sovereign states, the United Nations, our last best hope in an age where the instruments of war have far outpaced the instruments of peace, we renew our pledge of support--to prevent it from becoming merely a forum for invective--to strengthen its shield of the new and the weak--and to enlarge the area in which its writ may run. Finally, to those nations who would make themselves our adversary, we offer not a pledge but a request: that both sides begin a new the quest for peace, before the dark powers of destruction unleashed by science engulf all humanity in planned or accidental self-destruction.

We dare not tempt them with weakness. For only when our arms are sufficient beyond doubt can we be certain beyond doubt that they will never be employed. But neither can two great and powerful groups of nations take comfort from our present course--both sides overburdened by the cost of modern weapons, both rightly alarmed by the steady spread of the deadly atom, yet both racing to alter that uncertain balance of terror that stays the hand of mankind's final war. So let us begin a new--remembering on both sides that civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is always subject to proof. *Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate.*

Let both sides explore what problems unite us instead of belaboring those problems which divide us. Let both sides, for the first time, formulate serious and precise proposals for the inspection and control of arms--and bring the absolute power to destroy other nations under the absolute control of all nations. Let both sides seek to invoke the wonders of science instead of its terrors. *Together let us explore the stars, conquer the deserts, eradicate disease, tap the ocean depths and encourage the arts and commerce.*

Let both sides unite to heed in all corners of the earth the command of Isaiah--to "undo the heavy burdens . . . (and) let the oppressed go free."

And if a beachhead of cooperation may push back the jungle of suspicion, let both sides join in creating a new endeavor, not a new balance of power, but a new world of law, where the strong are just and the weak secure and the peace preserved.

All this will not be finished in the first one hundred days. Nor will it be finished in the first one thousand days, nor in the life of this Administration, nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet. But let us begin. In your hands, my fellow citizens, more than mine, will rest the final success or failure of our course. Since this country was founded, each generation of Americans has been summoned to give testimony to its national loyalty. The graves of young Americans who answered the call to service surround the globe.

Now the trumpet summons us again--not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need--not as a call to battle, though embattled we are-- but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation"--a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself.

Can we forge against these enemies a grand and global alliance, North and South, East and West, that can assure a more fruitful life for all mankind? Will you join in that historic effort?

In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility--I welcome it. I do not believe that any of us would exchange places with any other people or any other generation. The energy, the faith, the devotion which we bring to this endeavor will light our country and all who serve it--and the glow from that fire can truly light the world. And so, my fellow Americans: *ask not what your country can do for you--ask what you can do for your country. My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.* Finally, *whether you are citizens of America or citizens of the world,* ask of us here the same high standards of strength and sacrifice which we ask of you. With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God's work must truly be our own.¹⁴ »

The above written words can be defined as a compact summary of Kennedy's hopes and resolves for the future. His pledges to America's friends and allies whether they were old or new. His request to the Communists or other adversaries to seek peace and not war. To his fellow citizens to bear with him the burdens of freedom by making them ask themselves "what they can do for their country". All of these imperatives were contained in phrases too brief to be summarized and too important to be omitted. They were addressed to the people of that time but had a meaning for all people of all times¹⁵. Today, after history has let its sign a particular sentence JFK pronounced in his speech might seem prophetic:

«[...]All this will not be finished in the first one hundred days. Nor will it be finished in the first one thousand days, nor in the life of this Administration, nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet. But let us begin.¹⁶».

John F. Kennedy remained in office for a bit more than 1000 days and was not able to truly see the good or bad results of his administration. Nonetheless, today politicians, historians, professors, journalist, scholars, Americans and non-Americans end up using the word "myth" both in a positive or negative way when they talk about Kennedy. The President and his administration may or may not have decided to create a myth around Kennedy's figure but many Americans and non-Americans saw in him the possibility of a fresh new start. He was young, seemed to be in good health –despite his health problems- embodied all the hopes of the "new generation". He was the figure that responded to the demands not only of a country but as well to those of other nations who hoped that their governors would follow his example. JFK was not a figure of the past, he was part of the American present and intended to be part of its future as well. His figure seemed to have come at the right time of history, it was the moment when people needed to look forward, needed to be encouraged, to feel that someone would protect them but at the same time needed to be given

¹⁴ www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/BqXIEM9F4024ntFI7SVAjA.aspx 14/02/2015

¹⁵ Theodore C. Sorensen. *Kennedy*. Harper & Row, Publishers, Incorporated. New York, NY, 1965 p. 245

¹⁶ www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/BqXIEM9F4024ntFI7SVAjA.aspx 14/02/2015

responsibilities. He was the President of TV debates as well as TV live addresses to the nation. The use he made of TV as a way of mass communication was a total innovation. Like this the President not only managed to enter in the houses of the Americans with his voice but as well as with his face. His speeches were made for audience comprehension and comfort. They were no longer that twenty or thirty minutes. They had short clauses and short words. It was not important how the text appeared to the eye but how it sounded to the ear. They did not always follow a particular linguistic style but one Kennedy started speaking an electric charge between the speaker and the audiences created a vitality that was hard to explain. Communist was geographically far away but its ideology managed to scare many Americans especially when news and report of what was happening in Europe came along. Kennedy tried to establish a firm hand of dialogue with the Communist leaders. To show no fear at home nor abroad. America has always been the land of freedom and Kennedy was determined to fight for it home and abroad if necessary. The expectations of the youths to expand their capacities in new fields were taken in great consideration and the sentence « *Together let us explore the stars*¹⁷ ...», sounded as a clear invite to bring America's capabilities and influence beyond the stratosphere.

Before we go over to examine what Kennedy has achieved or hasn't in his short term in office a brief call to the image of Kennedy as a myth made up by his charming wife is necessary. Jacqueline Kennedy on an interview to Life Magazine after her husband's death would refer to the time they spent in the White House as "*Camelot*". Jackie's analogy was the 1960 Lerner and Loewe musical "Camelot", which presents the kingdom ruled by King Arthur as a place built on lofty principles, more idyllic than Eden. The plot, however, focuses on the forces out to destroy Camelot. Mrs. Kennedy meant the comparison to be positive even if not all historians agree on that interpretation. The problem with creating a myth around a person is that, no matter how much is known, it distorts the truth and will evolve over time.

« But the conflation of "Camelot and the Kennedys" persists, and not only does it not really suit, it also does a disservice to the real understanding and assessment of the Kennedy Administration. It's natural to adulate and lionize a vibrant leader violently cut down, but it's the thin end of the wedge. Once a mythology has taken hold, it becomes difficult to isolate the true history – even if it's actually more compelling and fascinating than the lore. Mythology is common to nations' stories of self, but America, perhaps by virtue of the recentness of its founding, is particularly prone to it, continually intertwining myth with the current body politic. It's still difficult for history students to sift out the truth of the founding fathers because the mythology is so pernicious, creating an inaccurate view of both history and modern

¹⁷ www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/BqXIEM9F4024ntFI7SVAjA.aspx

government. For years, "Camelot" as a memento mori was a lens that made viewing the life and times of Kennedy and the nation more difficult and less satisfying, except for those who love fairy tales¹⁸.

May the term “Camelot Era” of Kennedy’s administration be accepted or not to be true it seems very hard to negate a close analogy to a kingdom of their own when the Kennedy brothers all occupied high political positions; Robert F. Kennedy was Attorney General, Edward F. Kennedy was a Senator a last but of course not least John F. Kennedy was President of the United States.

2.1. Domestic Policy

Kennedy chose wisely his Cabinet members. Not for their cultural background, their political party, religion or from which state they came from but by the nature of responsibilities and competence with which they did their jobs at that time brought six out of ten high executives very close to the President. Vice President Johnson, Attorney General R. Kennedy, Secretary of Treasury Dillon, Secretary of State Rusk, Secretary of Defense McNamara and Secretary of Labor Goldberg together with the Secretaries of Agriculture, Commerce, Interior, Postmaster General and Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare to be the Kennedy Team of his administration.

JFK’s had campaigned on the slogan of “getting America moving again”. Kennedy was a Democrat and had ideas of liberalism. He was a supporter of social services, therefore believed in the active role of government in the society and that this role could improve the quality of life and help people achieve larger goals. As a Democrat he gave great importance to equality and social responsibility and was generally in favor of progressive taxes and that means having high income individuals to pay taxes at a higher rate. The social rights question was hard to approach. Those were the years of Martin Luther King Jr. and racial discrimination. Kennedy would do his best to approach such a delicate issue at least verbally. Even so the Civil Right Act was passed in 1964 after his death. His administration increased public spending in social programs as well as space programs that Kennedy believed to be necessary in a society that wanted to move forward.

Many say that the Kennedy’s administration had been more concerned on foreign policy than domestic affairs. As far as it came down to what was happen at home Kennedy had to face several economical and social problem and at the same time he had to maintain the promise to reach that “New Frontier” that he had called out to all Americans. Recovery from the 1958 recession had been very difficult and unemployment remained quite high ,around 6.8%, right after he took office and

¹⁸ www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/nov/21/jfk-jackie-kennedy-camelot-myth

will narrow down to around 6% in the year of his death. He had promised founding for education, medical care for the elder, government intervention to help recession, economic aid to rural regions and to try and end racial discrimination an issue that he did not live long enough to see it end. Once in office he began his program. His domestic program would sometimes suffer from not being a priority as Kennedy's foreign policy was. Kennedy needed to encourage the growth of the economy so he started a period of loosing monetary policy to keep interest rates low. Economy turned around and Kennedy's administration could benefit of a GDP of 5,5% instead of the 2,2% of the Eisenhower administration. Unemployment had gone down and the industrial product had rose around 15%. Let us recall a short paragraph published in the *Legislative Summary* of the 87th Congress and First Session of the 88th Congress (1964):

«In his first State of the Union message on January 30, 1961, the late President emphasized that "the American economy is in trouble" and immediately followed up with his message of February 2 outlining his program for economic recovery and growth. In response to this message, on March 22, the Congress sent to the President a bill extending jobless pay benefits an additional 13 weeks. We immediately followed this with a bill making dependent children, whose parents were unemployed, eligible for the same aid given to children deprived of support by reason of death, desertion, or disability. On April 26 the late President received the depressed areas bill authorizing \$394 million in loans and grants for areas beset by chronic unemployment, and the Senate this year authorized an additional \$455.5 million for the Area Redevelopment Administration. We improved social security retirement and survivor benefits by about \$800 million a year. And by May 3 of 1961, Congress sent down to the White House a bill raising the minimum wage for 23.9 million workers from \$1 an hour to \$1.25, and extended coverage for the first time since 1938 to an estimated 3.6 million additional workers.»¹⁹

The economy was growing nevertheless his relationship with the business community was not easy. The most difficult and direct challenger by a powerful private interest group to the Kennedy's effort to fight inflation came from the steel industry. His dispute in 1961 with U.S. Steel president Roger Blough will be the first of several disputes concerning steel prices applied by Blought and his friends. Secretary of Labor Goldberg had earlier expressed to the President – how had formerly been a counselor to the Steelworkers Union- his concerns on the effects that steel price rise would have on his balance of payment and anti-inflation efforts. Steel was one of the country's largest industry. Its price was directly or indirectly related to many other goods. Robert Kennedy came

¹⁹ www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Research-Aids/Ready-Reference/Legislative-Summary-Main-Page/Mansfield-Statement.aspx

involved as well and was quite sure that the steel executives had illegally come together to fix the steel price. Kennedy managed to have the price increase of steel cancelled but unfortunately U.S. Steel also announced that its new plants would be built abroad.

As it comes down to the issue of civil right that was one of the most delicate problems Kennedy had to face. The long gone President Abraham Lincoln, a Republican, had fought and won the fight against racial discrimination of his period. The Missouri Compromise, The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, the 13 emendement to the Constitution:

«Section 1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.
Section 2. Congress shall have power to enforce these article by appropriate legislation²⁰.»

These were all ancestors to the future Civil Rights Act of 1964. Civil rights were a problem especially in the deep south as well as for some with men conservative Democrats in the Congress. The Supreme Court of the united States had declared that racial segregation in schools, buses restaurant, theaters etc. was unconstitutional. Many southern states didn't care less of what the Supreme Court had said. Kennedy had verbally supported civil rights and racial integration during his campaign. He phoned King's wife Coretta Scott King while he was in prison²¹. Robert Kennedy called the Governor of Georgia and managed to have King released from prison and this brought some black support to his brother's candidacy. In 1962, Kennedy had to face the enrollment in the Mississippi University of James Meredith who had not been allowed to enter the campus. Attorney General had to send 400 federal Marshalls and the President was forced to send 3,000 troops after the situation on the campus had turned violent. After that event Kennedy signed the Executive Order 11063²² with prohibited racial discrimination in federal supported housing or relative facilities. Kennedy also had to face Governor of Alabama Wallance when the doors of his University were closed to two African American students, Viviane Malone and James Wood. The Civil rights issue would always be delicate for Kennedy even so he managed to propose a Civil Rights Act that did not pass until 1964 after his death.

Kennedy also took care of civil liberties – aside of extended clearance liberties FBI's director J. Edgar Hoover took for himself and his team- immigration having a policy that shifted from northern and western European counties to those of Latin America and Asia. The emphasis was given to the reunification of families and not on the selection of immigrants related to the country of origin.

²⁰ www.ushistory.org/documents/amendments.htm#amend13

²¹ www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coretta_Scott_King

²² www.portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/FHLaws/EXO11063

Space policy was important for Kennedy not only because it meant an important accomplishment for his administration but because he believed that it would give the country tremendous prestige. The race the Eisenhower administration had started with the Apollo Program was very well appreciated by Kennedy. Vice President Johnson was appointed to the U.S. Space Council and strongly worked for the creation of NASA. It was the Soviet Union who had unexpectedly won the first race to space conquest. On October 4, 1957 the Soviets sent to orbit the first artificial satellite the “*Sputnik*” later followed by the American satellite the “*Explorer*” sent to orbit on January 1958. Once again the Soviets managed to send the first man to space, *Yuri Gagarin*, on the 12th of April 1961 on board of the space shuttle *Vostok*²³. Kennedy had taken office a couple of months before this happened. In his Inaugural Address Kennedy had invited the Soviets to join forces- that probably meant also resources- so explore together new galaxies. The Soviets declined his invite and showed very well that they didn’t need help to conquer the space. Kennedy feared that America would be left out from this competition therefore he announced the goal of landing a man on the Moon before anyone else did. The words he pronounced in his speech at the Rice University on September 12, 1962 read as follow:

« If this capsule history of our progress teaches us anything, it is that man, in his quest for knowledge and progress, is determined and cannot be deterred. The exploration of space will go ahead, whether we join in it or not, and it is one of the great adventures of all time, and no nation which expects to be the leader of other nations can expect to stay behind in the race for space.²⁴»

Kennedy never got the chance to see the first American man to land on the Moon but his efforts to promote the Apollo program -with a cost that would almost reach \$40 billion- would permit the U.S. to land the *Apollo 11* on the moon but land the first man on the moon as well on July 21st, 1969.

2.3. Foreign policy

It is hard to deny that Kennedy’s approach to foreign affairs was very different from his approach to domestic problems. He played a major role in world politics of the 60s. He was the leader of the country all other nations looked to including the Soviet Union whether it was for a balance of power, a forced coexistence or a necessary dialogue. Kennedy had come to office when the “*cold war*” term that had been invented by Walter Lippman – a well affirmed journalist and academic of

²³ Sabbatucci G. Vidotto V. *Storia Contemporanea, Il Novecento*. Editori Laterna, Bari 2007. p. 277

²⁴ www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/MkATdOcdU06X5uNHbmqm1Q.aspx

international relations- in 1947, had already started.²⁵ He couldn't end it, he just had to face it. He had more freedom of movement concerning his foreign affairs on the contrary of his domestic policy that was closely watched by Congress and public opinion. The world was changing, new and stronger power had emerged. Communism had become stronger and its influence was rapidly spreading. World War II had ended less than twenty years ago and Europe was still recovering. Latin-American countries were developing. Asian countries were looking for strong allies, while "Third World" countries demanded freedom from colonization. Kennedy's diplomatic policy will face several of this issues, some would be of vital importance for America some others would be a second choice of action. Even though he would face most of these situations, his greatest accomplishments of foreign policy would be towards the Soviet Union. As Secretary of State Dean Rusk had predicted in this *Prospects for America*(1958) this period would be a decade of challenge. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. pointed out the Kennedy administration had very high ideological beliefs. It was assumed that America had the power and obligation to lead other countries towards adopting American-style – let us add a hopefully "where possible"- institutions and values particularly on gradual reforms and free markets. This thoughts that American had an obligation towards the world have always liked past and present U.S. Presidents. This ideology was part of the essence of Kennedy's Inaugural Address. The confidence JFK and his administration had in achieving extraordinary results can be seen in how they labeled their programs. The "New Frontier" at home, the "Grand Design" for Europe, the "Alliance of Progress" for Latin America and the "New Africa Policy"²⁶ .

These programs proposed so much that they were bound to disappoint especially because it seemed as if no one had taken into account that other nations might not prove so malleable as it was hoped. Kennedy will face several delicate political issues right from the start of his administration. In June 1961 Kennedy met Khrushchev at the Vienna Summit dedicated to the "*Berlin Question*". at the end of World War II Germany had been divided into four areas of occupation , the American, the French, the English and the Soviet one. Berlin, the Capital, was in the Soviet's Union occupation area nevertheless it had been divided into four areas. It was clear that there was no chance of an agreement with the Soviets so the Americans and the English unified their multinational areas of influence. At the beginning of 1947 they gave life to a monetary reform with the introduction of the new Deutsche Mark , liberalizing the economy and giving it a new life

²⁵ Di Nolfo E. *Dagli Imperi Militari Agli Imperi Tecnologici. La Politica Internazionale dal XX Secolo ad Oggi.* Editori Laterna. Bari, 2008. p. 215

²⁶ Frank Costigliola. *US foreign policy from Kennedy to Johnson* in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Volume II.* Edited by Melvyn P. Leffler & Odd Arne Westad. University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom, 2010. pp 114-116

thanks to the aids of the Marshall Plan. This meant the rebirth of a strong German state supported by Western powers. Stalin replied with the Block of Berlin. That mean no physical aid could arrive to the city at least not by land. Americans replied with a giant air bridge sending aids to the city. Soviets pulled back and in 1949 the three areas of influence under the control of the Western powers were united and gave life to the Federal Republic of Germany with Bonn as its capital and in the East zone, the Soviets, gave life to the Democratic Republic of Germany that had its capital in Pankow a subborg of Berlin. At this point the division of Europe into two opposites block of influence was set.²⁷ Kennedy had inherited the complicate situation of Berlin. As the Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov noted several years before:

«What happens to Berlin, happens to Germany; what happens to Germany, happens to Europe.»²⁸

At the Vienna Summit on the summer 1961, Kennedy and Khrushchev met to discuss the matter regarding the ultimatum the Soviet leader had given three years before to the Western powers to withdraw their forces out of West Berlin within six months time. That ultimatum was not respected and that had led to the Berlin Crisis. The presence of the Americans in West Berlin was off course not accepted by the Soviet leader and its Communist forces. Their ideologies were too far apart, the United States heralded the economic success and political freedom of West Berlin as a symbol of the success of the capitalist system, and it was deeply committed to its security. It was the most important symbol of the American therefore the Presidents promise that Europe would not be left alone, that every nation who seeked freedom would be helped. The divided city highlighted the sharp contrast between the communist and capitalist systems, and the freedom of movement between the sectors had resulted in a mass exodus from the eastern side to the western side. Former President Eisenhower had establish a somehow good dialogue with the Soviet leader during the Camp David talks but he did not intend to withdraw from Berlin and Kennedy as well had never thought of it for a minute. During their John F. Kennedy and Nikita discussed several matters such as their competing interests in Laos and de question of disarmament, let as not forget that both countries were Nuclear Powers. Although they agreed to further discussions on Laos, they found no solution to the Berlin problem. Khrushchev gave once again gave the United States six months to withdraw from Berlin. Kennedy responded by activating 150,000 in preparation for a potential conflict over the future of the city. Khrushchev prepared to take his own form of action. The meeting turned out to be a failure. On the morning of August 13, 1961, Berliners awoke to discover that on the orders of East German leader Walter Ulbricht , a barbed wire fence had gone up overnight separating West and East Berlin and preventing movement between the two sides. The

²⁷ Sabbatucci G. Vidotto V. *Storia Contemporanea, Il Novecento*. Editori Laterna, Bari 2007. pp. 211-213

²⁸ www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/BERLIN_A/PAGE_1.HTM

barbed wire soon turned into *The Berlin Wall* would prevent the West from having further influence on the East, stop the flow of migrants out of the communist sector, and ultimately become the most iconic image of the Cold War in Europe. From that moment on almost every International development was interpreted by Kennedy's administration in terms of Cold War. The Berlin Wall remained in place until November 9, 1989, when the border between East and West Berlin was reopened and the wall itself was finally dismantled and that signed the end of the Cold War. Kennedy's foreign policy towards Berlin will continue growing in the years to come as well as his competitive dialogue with the government of Moscow.

The Bay of Pigs failed invasion of Cuba in 1961 showed once again that Kennedy's foreign policy was closely linked to contain and control – were possible- any kind of Soviet influence and action around the globe . The prior administration had prepared a plan to overthrow the Fidel Castro regime in Cuba who was closely linked to the Communist government of Moscow. The CIA had prepared a plan in which they had trained and funded a force of exiled counter-revolutionary Cubans -serving as the armed wing of the Democratic Revolutionary Front- to assassinate Castro and get control of the government. Kennedy came to know this operation one he was in office. Although he was reluctant at the beginning he later authorized the plan. The attack went wrong almost from the start. Components of Brigade 2506 landed at the Bay of Pigs on April 17, 1961 and were defeated within 2 days by Cuban armed forces. It was a big disgrace for Kennedy's administration and it led the Soviets to easily offer not only economical and military assistance but also the installation of Soviet nuclear missile installations.²⁹

As we said before Kennedy had in mind the “Alliance of Progress” for Latin America. He had probably exaggerated the promises and the dangers of Latin America. In March 1961 he announced on TV a signature initiative for the Alliance of Progress that in essence was a Marshall Plan for Latin America. The United States pledged \$20 billion – in public and private US capital- and called upon the Latin American governments to provide \$80 billion in investment funds for their economies. It was the biggest U.S. aid program toward the developing world up to that point—and called for substantial reform of Latin American institutions.³⁰ The Alliance was meant for capitalist economic growth, funding social reforms to help the poorest Latin Americans, to promote democracy and to strength ties between the United States and its neighbors. The Alliance did not achieve all its goals. According to one study, only 2 percent of economic growth in 1960s Latin

²⁹ Sabbatucci G. Vidotto V. *Storia Contemporanea, Il Novecento*. Editori Laterna, Bari 2007. p 291

³⁰ Frank Costigliola. *US foreign policy from Kennedy to Johnson* in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Volume II*. Edited by Melvyn P. Leffler & Odd Arne Westad. University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom, 2010. p 121

America directly benefited the poor. The Peace Corps established in 1961, proved over time to be an important foreign policymaking institution. By sending intelligent, hard-working, and idealistic young Americans to do economic and social development work in the areas of greatest need in the Third World, the Peace Corps provided a means by which young Americans could not only learn about the world, but promote positive change.

Kennedy's policy towards US coexistence with Communism also reflected in behavior towards Southeast Asia. The first part of the decolonization process had seen France as a major actor and had the US as an audience. It was only later in March 1961, that Kennedy changed his policy from supporting a "free" Laos to a "neutral" Laos, indicating privately that Vietnam, and not Laos, should be deemed America's tripwire for anti-communism's spread in the area. Vietnam became the most grievous instance of Kennedy's tendency to overvalue both danger and opportunities. Kennedy decided to support the South Vietnamese Catholic leader Ngo Dinh Diem and by the end of 1961 sent 2,000 military troops who ended up to a number 30,000 soldiers to the region during his presidency.³¹ Kennedy had suffered embarrassment with the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion, the tumbled Vienna summit of 1961 and the erection of the Berlin Wall that he believed he simply had to win on some Cold War battlefield. Unfortunately history has shown us that his initiative turned out to be a total failure and allow us to say a senseless loss of young America lives. He not only lost the fight but never lived to see America lose a battle war for the first time.

To recall all of JFK's foreign policy achievements or failures longer paragraphs and chapters should be written in this essay. But we have deliberately chosen to recall some of the most significant ones.

2.4. Kennedy vs. Khrushchev : Cuba Missile Crisis

It is true that we have chosen to analyze only some of Kennedy's efforts of foreign policy but it seems unreasonable not to give at least some attention to the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962. It was one of the most direct and dangerous confrontations between the two blocks during the Cold War and it was the moment when the two superpowers came the closest to not just a war but to a nuclear war. On October 14th 1962, a CIA U-2 spy plane had taken photographs of several sites in the island showing medium-range and intermediate range ballistic nuclear Soviet missiles. US military consultants saw the missiles offensive in nature and posed an extremely close nuclear

³¹ Theodore C. Sorensen. Kennedy. Harper & Row, Publishers, Incorporated. New York, NY, 1965. p. 655

threat³². This situation posed a serious dilemma for Kennedy. Did U.S. had to attack the sites and invade Cuba and risk a nuclear war? Was it better to sit and see what Moscow's next move was? Or was the instauration of a dialogue with the Kremlin a good middle course tactic?

The Cuba Missiles Crisis started on October 16th 1962 and lasted for thirteen days leaving the world suspended between a future catastrophe or a hopefully enduring peace. Kennedy needed to prove he was able to take care of the matter especially the Vienna summit. After a confront with his closest advisors to consider different options of action Kennedy on October 22nd 1962 ordered a naval "quarantine" line around Cuba. On the same day he dispatched a message to Khrushchev declaring that the United States will not permit offensive weapons to be delivered to Cuba and demanded that all missile bases completed or under construction were dismantled. All weapons had to be returned to the Soviet Union. This was the first of direct and indirect communications between the White House and the Kremlin. Later the same day and announced his decision on TV with the following speech:

«Good evening my fellow citizens: This Government, as promised, has maintained the closest surveillance of the Soviet Military buildup on the island of Cuba. Within the past week, unmistakable evidence has established the fact that a series of offensive missile sites is now in preparation on that imprisoned island. The purpose of these bases can be none other than to provide a nuclear strike capability against the Western Hemisphere. ...My fellow citizens: let no one doubt that this is a difficult and dangerous effort on which we have set out. No one can see precisely what course it will take or what costs or casualties will be incurred. Many months of sacrifice and self-discipline lie ahead--months in which our patience and our will will be tested--months in which many threats and denunciations will keep us aware of our dangers. But the greatest danger of all would be to do nothing.

The path we have chosen for the present is full of hazards, as all paths are--but it is the one most consistent with our character and courage as a nation and our commitments around the world. The cost of freedom is always high--and Americans have always paid it. And one path we shall never choose, and that is the path of surrender or submission. Our goal is not the victory of might, but the vindication of right--not peace at the expense of freedom, but both peace and freedom, here in this hemisphere, and, we hope, around the world. God willing, that goal will be achieved..³³»

No one knew if Khrushchev would respond to the naval blockade and U.S. demands. But the leaders of both superpowers recognized the devastating possibility of a nuclear war. On October 24th Khrushchev responded to Kennedy's message saying that the "quarantine" that he said was actually a "blockade" was an act of aggression and the all Soviet ships heading to Cuba would be ordered to proceed. The tension was high, some ships had turned back, other had been stopped by the U.S. Navy but contained no weapons and were allowed to proceed. On October 26, told his advisors that he wanted to insist on giving the diplomatic channel a little more time. The afternoon

³² Sabbatucci G. Vidotto V. *Storia Contemporanea, Il Novecento*. Editori Laterna, Bari 2007. p. 291

³³ <http://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/sUVMCh-sB0mLfrBcaHaSg.aspx> 19/02/2015

if that same day a ABC correspondent John Scali reported to the White House that he had been approached by a Soviet agent suggesting that an agreement could be reached in which the Soviets would remove their missiles from Cuba if the United States promised not to invade the island. While White House staff scrambled to assess the validity of this “back channel” offer, Khrushchev sent Kennedy a long private telegraph in the middle of the night Moscow time. He reached out to Kennedy in personal and emotional terms, evoking the horrors of war and implied a deal. If Kennedy stopped the blockade and didn’t attack Cuba “ this immediately change everything”. Khrushchev’s proposal arrived through an unorthodox channel Scali had revealed that and embassy contact had urgently inquired him if Washington might agree not to invade Cuba if the Soviets under the UN scrutiny.³⁴ After a moment of reluctance the U.S. government took the message to be authentic and hope that a resolution was just a matter of time. The next day on October 27 another message from Khrushchev was sent and this time it also asked for the removal of U.S. Jupiter missiles from Turkey. Unfortunately the same on the same day U.S. U-2 jet was shot down over Cuba. The administration was preparing an attack on Cuba within days. That night Kennedy and his counselor decide to take a risky move and to ignore Khrushchev’s second letter and accept the proposal of the first one. Meanwhile Attorney General Robert Kennedy had secretly met with Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin and indicated that the United States had already planned to remove the Jupiter missiles from Turkey, it was only a matter of time. This could not be part of any public resolution of the missile crisis. The morning after, October 28th the Soviet leader in a public address said that the soviet missiles would be disarmed and removed from Cuba.

The crisis had ended but both superpowers agreed that they needed to put their efforts to prevent it from happening again. They established a direct telephone link between the White House and the Kremlin, it became known as the “Hotline.” Second, having approached the brink of nuclear conflict, both superpowers began to reconsider the nuclear arms race and took the first steps in agreeing to a nuclear Test Ban Treaty that was later signed on July 25, 1963.³⁵

The crisis was for sure unique in number of ways it went through calculations and miscalculations as well as direct and secret communications and miscommunications between the two sides. It was played out on the bases of fear of a nuclear war. In the end the humanity of both leaders prevailed and that keep the world from a terrifying catastrophe. The crisis improved the Image of America around the world a Kennedy was the man that had stood up to stop the Soviets.

³⁴ James G. Hershberg. *The Cuban missiles crisis in The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Volume II.* Edited by Melvyn P. Leffler& Odd Arne Westad. University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom, 2010. pp. 77-78

³⁵ www.jfklibrary.org/JFK/JFK-in-History/Cuban-Missile-Crisis.aspx

Chapter Three : From America to Europe from Europe to Rome

3.1. Ich bin ein Berliner and Arrivederci Mr. President

During his year as President, Kennedy, had made sixteen official visits to nations around the world. This number today might to be considered a significant number but what matters the most was not how many visits Kennedy had made to his allies but the meaning of such meetings. His trips were well planned, they were made to visit the right country at the right moment to show Americas closeness. When travelling abroad Kennedy was not only kindly welcomed by the leaders of other nations but most of all he was warmly greeted by the people of those nations. Some nations had never seen him before, they have heard his voice on the radio, saw his face on newspapers and TV. Seeing a young man President of such a powerful nations didn't seem true. European citizens saw in Kennedy something they didn't see in their politicians. Most of them were old, tired and tied to old traditions. Kennedy had the freshness of that "New Generation". He changed the way a politician communicated with the people. During the Kennedy vs Nixon TV debate he opened the doors of a hole new area of communication with the public. He spoke directly to the cameras - instead of looking at Nixon- that gave the audiences at home the impression he was speaking to each one of them. He pronounced words such as liberty, freedom, equality, commitment, sacrifice, peace, and most of all the did not address such words only to American citizens but to "the citizens of the world". His personality -aside of his political achievements- his way of acting, his beliefs seemed to respond to what people needed after a period of terror, instability and doubtful future. All of this made Kennedys figure very popular among European citizens especially in those nations that have always been America's friends but also in those nations that felt the necessity on a change in their old beliefs and political institutions.

His last European trip in the summer of 1963 was a great success. His success during the Cuba Crisis had gave him a very positive image on the eyes of Europeans. During his trip that lasted from June 25th to July 2nd he visited Germany, Federal Republic of Bonn, Cologne, Frankfurt, Wiesbaden and met with Chancellor Adenauer and other official. On June 26, he visited West Berlin where he delivered the famous speech "*Ich bin ein Berliner*". Speech that was defined by many as a the symbolic speech of that trip, his last trip. Visited Ireland - the land of his ancestors and the United Kingdom. The last destination of his trip was Italy where he visited Rome and

Naples, met with President Segni and NATO officials. Last but of course not least especially for a Catholic he had audience with pope Paul VI before going back to America.³⁶

His trip to West Berlin allowed Italy to welcome a President at the crest of his European popularity. Its seems to us more than good judgment to propose to the reader one of Kennedy's most celebrated speeches. The speech in the Berlin Rudolph Wilde Platz.

«I am proud to come to this city as the guest of your distinguished Mayor, who has symbolized throughout the world the fighting spirit of West Berlin. And I am proud to visit the Federal Republic with your distinguished Chancellor who for so many years has committed Germany to democracy and freedom and progress, and to come here in the company of my fellow American, General Clay, who has been in this city during its great moments of crisis and will come again if ever needed.

Two thousand years ago the proudest boast was "civis Romanus sum." Today, in the world of freedom, the proudest boast is "*Ich bin ein Berliner.*"

I appreciate my interpreter translating my German!

There are many people in the world who really don't understand, or say they don't, what is the great issue between the free world and the Communist world. Let them come to Berlin. There are some who say that communism is the wave of the future. Let them come to Berlin. And there are some who say in Europe and elsewhere we can work with the Communists. Let them come to Berlin. And there are even a few who say that it is true that communism is an evil system, but it permits us to make economic progress. Lass' sie nach Berlin kommen. Let them come to Berlin.

Freedom has many difficulties and democracy is not perfect, but we have never had to put a wall up to keep our people in, to prevent them from leaving us. I want to say, on behalf of my countrymen, who live many miles away on the other side of the Atlantic, who are far distant from you, that they take the greatest pride that they have been able to share with you, even from a distance, the story of the last 18 years. I know of no town, no city, that has been besieged for 18 years that still lives with the vitality and the force, and the hope and the determination of the city of West Berlin. While the wall is the most obvious and vivid demonstration of the failures of the Communist system, for all the world to see, we take no satisfaction in it, for it is, as your Mayor has said, an offense not only against history but an offense against humanity, separating families, dividing husbands and wives and brothers and sisters, and dividing a people who wish to be joined together.

What is true of this city is true of Germany--real, lasting peace in Europe can never be assured as long as one German out of four is denied the elementary right of free men, and that is to make a free choice. In 18 years of peace and good faith, this generation of Germans has earned the right to be free, including the right to unite their families and their nation in lasting peace, with good will to all people. You live in a defended island of freedom, but your life is part of the main. So let me ask you as I close, to lift your eyes beyond the dangers of today, to the hopes of tomorrow, beyond the freedom merely of this city of Berlin, or your country of Germany, to the advance of freedom everywhere, beyond the wall to the day of peace with justice, beyond yourselves and ourselves to all mankind.

Freedom is indivisible, and when one man is enslaved, all are not free. When all are free, then we can look forward to that day when this city will be joined as one and this country and this great Continent of Europe in a peaceful and hopeful globe. When that day finally comes, as it will, the people of West Berlin can take sober satisfaction in the fact that they were in the front lines for almost two decades.

³⁶ www.history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels/president/kennedy-john-f

All free men, wherever they may live, are citizens of Berlin, and, therefore, as a free man, I take pride in the words "*Ich bin ein Berliner.*"³⁷

His trip to Berlin was a true success and this created high expectations on the other European countries he was about to visit. We went to Ireland the land of his ancestors and visited the United Kingdom but what drags our attention more than any other country during his trip is Italy. Italy has been a quite untypical country during both world wars. Participated in the wars allied with the opposite side and ending changing sides both times and pardon as a joke of words allaying with the alleys. Rome was the last stop of Kennedy's journey. Italy was a new emerging economy with an important strategic position in the Mediterranean, it was in fact considerate the aircraft carrier of the south.

Kennedy arrived in Fiumicino airport on the morning of July 1st 1963 and was greeted by the President of the Republic Antonio Segni and the Italian Prime Minister Giovanni Leone. As it was scheduled in the program Kennedy gave a brief speech and pronounced words that gave a feeling closeness to the Italian country:

« I come Mr. President on this ancient country, but I come on the most modern business and that is hoe United States and Italy can continue in the important and changing years of the 60s' to maintain the intimate friendship, intimate association, intimate alliance which has marked our affairs in the last fifteen years. Through NATO we are allies through necessity we are joined together. Thorough friendship we find that union to be most harmonious. It is our task I think Mr. President to make sure in the interests of both of our countries that that association strong in the future as it's been in the past. We regard that of the first importance to my country».³⁸

As the historians Massimo Teodori and Gianni Bisiach have pointed out John F. Kennedy arrived in Italy at the peak of his popularity. The figure of this overseas myth had finally landed on Italian soil. People could hear his words and see him in person. Unlike Italian politicians Kennedy's myth went beyond reality. The presence of his charming wife Jacqueline Kennedy by his side help the popularity of his image. His image was seen by the people as the answer to the hope they had of a lasting "Era of Peace". Kennedy visited not just Rome and Naples but most of all he visited a country where a young democracy was at its turning point, where new political scenarios were possible and the big alley had to decide to "support them or not". The Kennedy that had come down to Italy was definitely more opened to the dialogue with the communist political party and the socialist. The political situation of Italy was o great concern for both the former administration and Kennedys' administration.

³⁷ www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/oEX2uqSQGEGIdTYgd_JL_Q.aspx

³⁸ www.raistoria.rai.it/articoli/arrivederci-mr-president/23367/default.aspx

JFK's trip was brief by it left a sign in the minds and hearts of the Italian people. His visit was short but not certainly not meaningless. In his speech of "goodbye" the city of Naples and indirectly to all the Italians he pronounced the following word:

« [...] Express my warmest thanks to you [...] Sorry to go and happy to come back [...] ».³⁹

Nobody knew off course his wish would never be realized and therefore Italians answered back saying:

« [...] *Arrivederci Mr. President* ».⁴⁰

3.2. Italy's Political 60s'

Kennedy had met with several Italian politicians and one of those that was playing an important role in in the 60s' was indeed Amintore Fanfani. Secretary of the "Democrazia Cristiana" which we will call DC in - from 1954-59 and from 1973-75 – and several times Prime Minister including during the years of the Kennedy administration. He opened the season to what could be called an "opening to the right" of the Kennedy's administration. Fanfani's first meeting with Kennedy took place in Washington in June 1961, at that time Fanfani was facing a particular political situation at home. The meeting was planned so that Fanfani didn't feel excluded since Kennedy didn't pay him a visit during his trip to Europe that just a couple of days before where he met with De Gaulle in Paris and Khrushchev in Vienna. Schlesinger – special assistant to the President- thought that the occasion could be used to put down to practice what had emerged in several discussions in Washington regarding the Italian political situation. Rumors of eventually offering support to an opening to the center-right in the Italian political scenario were going on. Durand CIA officer, Robert Amory and Schlesinger had been keeping a close eye on the Italian situation and came to the conclusion that there was a necessity to help the autonomist movement reach its independence from the PCI. In the memorandum prepared by Durand the problem of taking advantage for the Kennedy administration to materially help the leader of the PSI to get out of its critical financial situation and encourage him to move toward the road of collaboration with the DC. Even if the PCI was closely linked to the Soviets it conserved its freedom of political movement. Nenni, leader of the PSI, was under attack of the PCI as well as from the members of his political party. It seemed

³⁹ www.raistoria.rai.it/articoli/arrivederci-mr-president/23367/default.aspx

⁴⁰ www.raistoria.rai.it/articoli/arrivederci-mr-president/23367/default.aspx

that the Soviet embassy controlled at least one key figure inside the PSI that played as jolly between the two sides. Therefore with such a situation it was clear that the U.S. had to support at least morally – in a direct or indirect way- the leaders, in that case Nenni, who tried to pull away from a direct PCI or Soviet influence.⁴¹ Kennedy never denied at least moral closeness to all those countries or institutions who tried to unhook themselves from the communist influence. Durand did not off course ask his President to be so direct when speaking to Fanfani but, to let him understand that the United States would like to assist Italian politicians in the construction of solid democratic alternative to the present unstable political situation. Not everyone in Washington agreed on such kind of eventual proposal. William Tyler deputy assistant secretary for Western Europe Affairs and William Knight Italian Desk Officer were strongly against the idea Schlesinger and his friends had. They thought that such an opening to the right was too soon and too risky. Department of State prepared *briefing papers* for Kennedy's meeting with Fanfani where there was no reference of an opening to the right. Schlesinger on the other hand wrote a memorandum of his own for the President. His intent was to underline all those arguments regarding a “political opening to the right” - that had been voluntarily- that were missing in the briefing papers. He was convinced that a coalition between the government and the PSI would help to isolate the PCI. Schlesinger was convinced that if Nenni and the socialist were stolen from the influence of the PCI it would have been a tremendous shock for the communists to obtain something in Italy.

During their meeting Fanfani and Kennedy spoke about several different matters, such as the Berlin question, the Atlantic Alliance and the European integration between states. With regard to the political situation it seemed that Kennedy asked Fanfani some questions about the situation of the PCI, Nenni and the Socialist and the probable consequences of an opening to the right in the Italian Parliament. It is known that Kennedy and Fanfani had private talks but no official records of their conversations were kept. It is hard to assume what Kennedy might have said or suggested to Fanfani but it is hard to think that the Italian leader was somehow not touched by the American president's views. Discussing such delicate matters and confronting- or even asking a suggestion- with a younger leader of such a powerful country meant that Fanfani had in great consideration for Kennedy. Had this feeling emerged out of curiosity of how a young man managed to win the elections over the experienced former Vice President Richard Nixon or was it the beliefs and hopes he had expressed not only to the American citizens but to the citizens of the world or because he embodied the hopes and seemed capable to fulfill the necessities of the people that watched him?

⁴¹ Nuti L. *Gli Stati Uniti e l'apertura a sinistra. Importanza e limiti della presenza americana in Italia*. Editori Laterna. Bari, 1999. pp.358-361

One or the other doesn't really matter the fact is that not only Fanfani had looked at Kennedy but later on also other Italian politicians seemed to have been touched by his influence.

It seems historically correct to mention for a couple of lines Pietro Nenni's, leader of the PSI, admiration for Kennedy. During his political career Nenni had first been allied with the communist party of Togliatti and later broke up with them becoming the Secretary of the PSI for fourteen years 1949-1963. He would be an important figure in the Italian political scenario. When Kennedy visited Italy in 1963 he had a intense dialogue with the PSI Secretary. Arthur Schlesinger jr. also got the chance to speak to Nenni and in his own words he said that Nenni :

« [...] had showed him a total understanding of the problems Kennedy had found to try and change the political point of view that came from the old administration . He also expressed his genuine admiration for the young American President. I will always remember Nenni as a fascinating old man, sincere in his discussions and delicate in his manners, a true Italian patriot».⁴²

When one thinks about Kennedy one doesn't only think about the protocol that surrounded him, but also to the real meaning of his political legacy. Let us think about the lucky image of the New Frontier; Frontier that it was clear with his visit to Europe in the summer of 1963 looked East, beyond the Berlin Wall, to enlarge the NATO alliance, to isolate European Communists – PCI as well- and most of all to strengthen America's popularity against Soviet influence.

Italy was undergoing a very delicate political situation. The “breakup” between the PSI and the PCI. A DC with Fanfani and Moro that seemed stronger and able to talk and guide the country alone and other times it was clear that weather she liked it or not had to open the door to dialogues.

Aldo Moro was important player on the field of Italian politics. He was born in a town near Lecce, south of Italy in 1916. He has been Secretary of the “Democrazia Cristiana” and five times Prime Minister during his political career. During Kennedy's trip to Italy in July 1963, Moro was Italy's Prime Minister. He had managed after a not easy negotiation to form his first government with the coalition of the DC, PSI, PSDI and PRI. He felt that this was the way to give stability to the country and this gave life to what Italians called “ *governo di centro-sinistra*”.⁴³ Moro was a true Catholic and his faith in God was shown in the political file he followed. His faith unlike for Kennedy – the only Roman Catholic President so far- had never been a handicap during his political career. There no real true record of Kennedy' or Moro's appreciation for one another but at the same time there are no record affirming the contrary. Both of them believed that the Communist had not to be allowed freedom of movement. Kennedy was the leader of a more powerful nation both

⁴² www.criticasociale.net/files/62_

⁴³ Sabbatucci G. Vidotto V. *Storia Contemporanea, Il Novecento*. Editori Laterna, Bari 2007. p. 335

economically and military. He was for the principle of “flexible response” toward those that were not America’s friends”. Moro on the other had come up the formula of “*strategia dell’attenzione*”.⁴⁴ It is easy to understand the both of them were very concerned and determined to contain and control the communist problem, at home for Moro, abroad in his area of influence for Kennedy. We believe it is interesting to propose to the reader a few sentences, in original language, of Moro’s speech to the congress on the DC in 1973:

« Per quanto si sia turbati, bisogna guardare al nucleo essenziale di verità, al modo di essere della nostra società, che preannuncia soprattutto una nuova persona più ricca di vita e più consapevole dei propri diritti. Governare significa fare tante singole cose importanti ed attese, ma nel profondo vuol dire promuovere una nuova condizione umana. »⁴⁵

(Aldo Moro, Relazione al XII Congresso della Democrazia Cristiana, Roma, 9 giugno 1973)

By reading this words it is hard not to realize that also Moro was – directly or indirectly- calling out to the conscience of Italian citizens. To the society. To a new human conscience and awareness of human capabilities. Here are similar words at least in meaning that Kennedy pronounced in his Inaugural Address *ask not what your country can do for you--ask what you can do for your country*. It is bizarre how destiny has united this two politicians. Both of them died not because of a car accident, health problems or simply because they were too old. No, both of them were killed! It was Years later after Kennedy’s death on the autumn of 1977 as records report, Aldo Moro was walking outside the classroom of political science at the Sapienza University in Rome. It was a hard moment for the educational institutions, tension was high but students really loved Moro. One of the asked “ Professor, that will we do when you will be President of the Republic”? Moro rarely talked about himself but that day he let some very significant sentences slip out of his mouth:

« Do you really think that I don’t know I’ll end up like Kennedy? »⁴⁶

⁴⁴ P. Mammarella, P. Cacace *La politica estera dell’Italia, dallo Stato unitario ai giorni nostri*. Editori Laterna. Bari, 2006. pp.228-230

⁴⁵ www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aldo_Moro

⁴⁶ www.lastampa.it/2009/05/28/blogs/diritto-di-cronaca/moro-io-come-kennedy-XI0gNTxIGCXylr9EZKrYhL/pagina.html

3.3. Modern Italian Politicians

Italy's political history has been full and its still full of important political actors that have left the sign in the Italian government. Were they from the left, right, Communist of the PCI, Socialist of the PSI, were they from DC, from the Fascist party or independents their names are still remembered today. De Gasperi, Fanfani, Aldo Moro or Turati, Nenni, Bettino Craxi or today's most modern ones such as Berlusconi, Veltroni and present Prime Minister Matteo Renzi all tried and are trying to do something for their country. They might have achieved important alliances, reforms or goals but the positive or negative opinion always remains a personal matter according to our ideologies, beliefs, expectations the time we live in.

There are three interesting politicians of the last twenty years that have been compared to, admired or simply used some of his slogans and famous sentences for their speeches. Their names are Silvio Berlusconi, Walter Veltroni and Matteo Renzi.

Walter Veltroni has been Secretary of the "Partito Democratico" also known as PD from 2007 to 2009, a minister and Vice President of the council under the Prodi I administration in 1996-1998. Was also the mayor of Rome from 2001 to 2008. Veltroni although coming from the far away PCI who had evolved to PDS in 1991, in DS in 1998 and later in today's PD was a strong admirer of the Kennedy's. Of course he hadn't met Kennedy but the influence of this young American President have reached him over the years. He felt close to Robert Kennedy's idea, John's brother, and wrote a book about him titled "*Il sogno spezzato. Le idee di Robert Kennedy*". He liked the way the Kennedy brother communicated with the people, the speech, the live broadcasted TV messages to the nation, their youth and beliefs. In interviews Veltroni gave during the 80s' and 90's we often recalled the "New Frontier", exalted the American right. His the way he dressed was very similar to Kennedy. Button down shirts, Lotus shoes young looking but at the same time classical.⁴⁷ His book received several comments. It has been said that; a man that was described by his own words. Passionate, full of dreams. Many have felt that the second offspring of the Kennedy's had left before his time was due. I have understood that the torch of hope President Kennedy had lightened was not dead. The torch still burns, this is our gift, we have the possibility to light up tomorrow's future. For me this is the life that is worth living.

Veltroni's non-allies have of course criticized his view. They said that there are leaders that are guided by faith while others choose a myth as their guide. Walter Veltroni has the myth of the other America, the good one, the one that opposed herself to the imperialist and arrogant one. Most of all

⁴⁷ www.cinquantamila.corriere.it/storyTellerThread.php?threadId=VELTRONI+Walter

Veltroni is the master of the worship of the Kennedys, in particularly of Robert also called Bob. The Kennedys, John is the man of the “New Frontier” and the Moon landing. Bob (RFK) is the man of the civil rights and social justice. It is all true but everything echoes more through history because of their tragic deaths, one in Dallas in 1963 and the other one in Los Angeles 1968. One of the greatest secrets to Kennedy’s myth relies in the fact that nobody knows what he will have achieved if didn’t die. Undying glory or total failure?

Important expert of the political world such as Noam Chomsky have written book such as “Rethinking Camelot” a clear attack to JFK and Vietnam. The journalist Seymour Hersh wrote “The dark side of Camelot” the other side of the story to the Kennedy’s presidency characterized by failures, scandals and abuses of power. Hersh believed that Kennedy was everything but a good fellow. His several “secret” love affairs, his ambiguous “friends” some have said he has close to the mafia. Kennedy didn’t not always receive a portrait of a Saint nevertheless several politician around the world still use his sentences today.

Silvio Berlusconi, better know as “*Il Cavaliere*” has dominated the Italian political scenario for the last twenty year. He has been Prime Minister for a total of 3340 days – Kennedy lasted a little more than 1000 days- during four different legislatures. He is the highest exponent of the political party of Forza Italia that later became Il Popolo della Libertà. Someone in his entourage has compared his to Kennedy on the 50th anniversary of JFK’s death. The director of “Il Giornale” Alessandro Sallusti wrote an article comparing Berlusconi to Kennedy regarding the motivations of the sentence to the “Ruby Scandal”. We believe that the translation of Sallusti’s into another language from its original will make the words he used lose their power, they would be meaningless. we have therefore decided to propose them to the reader in their original language:

«La coincidenza mediatica Kennedy-Berlusconi cade a proposito. Perché i due hanno più di un punto in comune. Entrambi ricchi, molto ricchi, hanno usato la loro ricchezza per farsi largo in politica. Entrambi, alla loro discesa in campo, si sono imposti a sorpresa su rivali favoriti. Entrambi hanno regalato un sogno al loro Paese senza riuscire a realizzarlo (nel caso di Kennedy per sopravvenuto omicidio, in quello di Berlusconi perché siamo in Italia). Tutti e due hanno cambiato profondamente e in modo irreversibile il costume della politica. E, non ultimo, entrambi avevano una passione irrefrenabile per le belle donne.»⁴⁸

Sallusti also quotes a story published on the Corriere della Sera newspaper:

«Dicono che la sua vita sia stata costellata da una sequenza ininterrotta di incontri occasionali con giovani donne di ogni ceto sociale. Tutte bellissime, tutte innamorate. Erano stagiste della Casa Bianca, attrici, cantanti, prostitute, signore del jet set, giornaliste, segretarie, amanti di boss della mafia... Arrivavano di notte alla Casa Bianca

⁴⁸ www.ilgiornale.it/news/interni/969695.html

nascoste dentro il bagagliaio di un'auto e il presidente le intratteneva nel suo ufficio. Queste consegne a domicilio venivano rispedite al mittente nel giro di pochi minuti...». ⁴⁹

There has also been a journalist -on Kennedy's 50th anniversary of his death- "madly in love" with Berlusconi's administration that has even tried to compare both of them from an even closer point of view. We will briefly point out these true or false similarities in the two men. Both of them had huge economical possibilities. Joseph P. Kennedy, John's father, had already planned his son's political career and had aspirations for the Presidency. Berlusconi was more oriented to become first a business man and later a politician. As it comes to women Kennedy had a lovely wife Jacqueline Kennedy but rumors after his death say that the President was unfaithful to his marriage. Berlusconi has married several times and gossips say he has had several love affairs. Both of them have had some political failure. One of Kennedy's biggest errors it considered to be the Vietnam War. Berlusconi on the other had had promised the Italian electors that he would lower the taxes, help unemployment and invest in public services and much more. He failed to maintain most of these promises according to a good part of Italian citizens. Kennedy had a charisma and a passion that can't be explained. He managed to conquer the crowds every time he spoke. Berlusconi's charisma is still a matter of discussion. Kennedy was killed in Dallas on November 22nd 1963. Berlusconi hasn't suffered any real threat to his life aside of having a souvenir been thrown on his face. Kennedy never arrived at the end of his Presidential mandate so nobody know what he would have achieved. Berlusconi ended his career as Prime minister in 2011 and we don't know what he would have achieved if he had continued his job. ⁵⁰

Today's Italian political scenario sees a new captain at the head of its government, the young PD candidate Matteo Renzi. Matteo, pardon us Mr. President, was born in Florence in 1975. His works in the family business taking care of the marketing sector. Marries Agnese in 1999 and start to get involved in politics. He is regional coordinator of the "Margherita fiorentina". In 2004 becomes president of the province of Florence and finally in June of 2009 become the mayor of Florence just as John Kennedy's grandfather. Florence is breathing again. Renzi won't stop in Florence as Kennedy didn't stop in the Senate. After announcing his candidacy to the PD primaries in September 2012 he starts travelling the country with his camper just as Kennedy trying to win over the votes of the old and new legacy. He wins the primaries with 67,7% of votes in favor and by surprise becomes on February 22nd 2014 Italy's youngest "Presidente del Consiglio dei Ministri". ⁵¹

⁴⁹ www.ilgiornale.it/news/interni/969695.html

⁵⁰ www.miglioverde.eu/j-f-kennedy-e-silvio-berlusconi-i-due-incompiuti-a-confronto

⁵¹ www.matteorenzi.it/chi-sono/

Renzi is the new young leader who asks for change in an political system he defines as too old for this century. He want change in his in political party, old leader are sent home to give space to Renzi's new team of young politicians. He is dynamic, is concerned that the world is changing and new political scenarios especially in the EU are opening. The does a good use of media – as Kennedy did- when talking to the public. He takes part in almost every TV talk show he is invited to, it doesn't matter if he would be attacked or not dialogue, confrontation and cooperation are part of his favorite words. His words are simple and his sentences are made for everyone to understand. Some have already called him the “Italian Kennedy”. Kathleen Kennedy Robert's daughter and John's niece said that Renzi had been very helpful and very close to his family giving a hand in opening the RFK Training Institute in Florence, in the ex walls of the Murate prison. She pronounced a very significant sentence coming from a Kennedy :

« My father Robert Kennedy believed in youth and Matteo Renzi fully embodies that he believed in. Everyone outside Italy is looking at him. As far as I am concerned, just wait and see». ⁵²

Renzi quotes Kennedy several times in his speeches. For example at the Pse congress, Renzi recalls the words of JFK regarding the challenge of reaching the Moon. *It is an ambitious goal we want to convince the extraordinary energies of the American citizens. For us – says Renzi – Europe is something similar, our moon is not the the space, but we want a Europe not tied to its bourocracy, but a placxe with a soul.*⁵³

Young, experienced or not Renzi is today's Italian “Presidente del Consiglio”. Some people might like him other probably not. His is moving forward with his political program. So far in Europe it seems as he has maintained or obtained – that depends on personal judgment- a good position for Italy. Does it really matter if he is or is not the Italian Kennedy? His supporter will probably love to call him that while his “enemies” think he can even pronounced the letters JFK in a correct English. The fact is that Renzi is still alive, still young and still head of the Italian government. Probably only time will tell if Renzi is really influenced by Kennedy's “myth” and deserves to be called the Italian Kennedy or not.

⁵² www.unita.it/politica/strong-kathleen-kennedy-renzi-aspettate-e-vedrete-strong-1.556594

⁵³ www.liberoquotidiano.it/news/politica/11559163/Pse--Renzi-cita-Kennedy-.html

Conclusion

During our thesis we have gathered and analyzed several different facts regarding Kennedy's life, victories, failures, actions, choices and eventual influences he was had around the world. He was young, some say even too young to be president. Even so his time in office wasn't countless. His "New Frontier", the promises he made other countries around the world that America will not leave them alone in their fight for freedom or democracy. His encouragement to his fellow citizens not sit and wait for someone to come along and do something for their future but to stand up and ask "your selves what you can do for your country" had been inspiring words for that era. We were the other "Cold War Warrior" opposing himself to Khrushchev and the Soviets. He had won the Cuba Missiles Crisis achieving a popularity that went beyond America. The myth of the "Camelot Era" had certainly helped his popularity grow. Kennedy was open to dialogue but at the same time had United States interests on top of his agenda. His domestic policy didn't really draw that special attention to European countries as his off course foreign policy did. Determined to defend Germany, keep his antique alliance with the English, help the European countries recover- and maintain the American influence- after a long period of war and contain the Communist were his main concerns.

His last trip to Europe, in the summer of 1963, as we have seen was very important not just because it helped his popularity but because it called upon European politicians to decide if they needed and wanted United States help and alliance. His trip to Italy was short but significant. The population loved him and off course he was warmly greeted by Segni, Leone and others such as Fanfani, Nenni and Aldo Moro. These three politicians of the 60's in particular seemed to have been influenced by Kennedy or at least it seems to us that they have welcomed his political views, understood them and some of them even prized him as Schlesinger had reported. Modern Italian politicians such as Berlusconi have been compared to him. Others like Walter Veltroni have totally embraced his views especially those of his brother Robert. The youngest one of our modern politicians Matteo Renzi even quotes him in his speeches. They have a similar social background, they are at least one of the younger. They believe that change and giving the chance to the people to do something for the country is necessary to get the nation moving again. Relations between USA and Italy slowly grew stronger and more stable.

Kennedy's "myth" with his dark and shining sides will probably never disappear. If we ask ten people if they know who JFK or Kennedy is eight out of ten will answer "Oh yes, the American President, the one that got killed, he is a Myth, I know how he is. They might not know what he did or did not do, but it's that mystery around his death, the fact that he got killed at the peak of his

popularity, that attracts so many scholars, academics and common people to try and understand that were the reasons that made Kennedy such an everlasting symbol. At the end of our research we have understood that he had influenced public opinion, touched the hearts and minds of many people. He confronted and gave direct or indirect suggestions to other political leaders on how to handle delicate political situations. He has influenced people of all ages, races and counties in some many areas that it is hard to count. But what matters the most is that we don't seem to have found the real answer to the secret of his success. But do we really need to know why he was so successful? Do we really want to reveal that secret? What if we find out it something ordinary. Something that it not special to us. That he was an ordinary man.

Heroes or Myths are what they are because they live off the imagination of the people. If people stop believing in heroes then that person becomes ordinary and slowly gets forgotten. It turns out that our century needs has the necessity to believe in "myths". May they be Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, Mohamed Ali, Princess Diana, Saint John Paul II or John Fitzgerald Kennedy there is nothing one can say or do take away that image of hope and optimism people need in their lives. This necessity is what gives life to change. This necessity is that keeps "myth" alive.

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