The 1960s - **KENNEDY’S PRESIDENCY**

**I. Election of 1960**

A. Nominees

1. **Republicans nominated Vice President Richard M. Nixon**
   a. One of most active vice presidents in U.S. history
   b. Traveled throughout the world as a "troubleshooter" in various capacities.

2. **Democrats nominated Senator John F. Kennedy**
   a. Lyndon B. Johnson, Senate majority leader, was Kennedy’s running mate
   b. Acceptance speech: Kennedy called upon American people for sacrifices to achieve their potential greatness -- **The New Frontier**

B. Campaign

1. Kennedy’s Catholicism became an issue until he told a group of Protestant ministers that he accepted separation of church and state and Catholic leaders would not unduly influence him.

2. Debates
   a. First time debates shown on national television; determined fate of the election
   b. First debate most important (3 more followed)
      i. Those listening on the radio gave the edge to Nixon.
      ii. Those watching TV gave the edge to Kennedy

3. Kennedy earned the support of African Americans when he arranged to have Martin Luther King released from a Georgia jail (for having been involved in a protest)

C. Result

1. **Kennedy defeated Nixon by slightly over 100,000 popular votes; 303-219 in electoral votes** -- Closest election in U.S. history; difference less than 1/10 of 1%

2. Only Catholic president in U.S. history; youngest to be elected at age 43.

D. Inaugural speech: "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."

**II. Kennedy’s domestic policy**

A. Legislative failures: JFK unable to get much through Congress due to resistance from Republicans and conservative Southern Democrats.

1. Congress blocked plans for an income tax cut, federal aid to education, urban renewal, medical care the aged, and creation of Dept. of Urban Affairs

2. Lyndon Johnson would later get these measures passed after JFK was assassinated.

B. Minimum wage raised from $1 to $1.25 an hour and extended to 3 million more workers.

C. Area Redevelopment Act of 1961: provided $400 million in loans to "distressed areas."

D. Housing Act of 1961: Provided nearly $5 billion over four years for preservation of open urban spaces, development of mass transit, and the construction of middle class housing.

E. Steel Prices: 1961, Kennedy "jawboned" the steel industry into overturning a price increase after having encouraged labor to lower its wage demands.

F. Space Race

1. **Kennedy promoted $24 billion project to land an American on the moon.** -- In early 1960s, US was behind the USSR in space technology

2. Critics charged money could be better spent elsewhere.

3. 1969, **Apollo 11 mission transported two American astronauts successfully to the moon:** Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin

G. The Kennedys continued their crusade against organized crime -- **Robert Kennedy** (RFK) was JFK’s attorney general
III. JFK and Civil Rights

A. Did nothing during his first two years.
   1. Tried to avoid losing either white or black southern vote.
   2. Most civil rights initiatives were merely symbolic
   3. RFK’s attempts at enfranchisement in the South was largely unsuccessful
      a. Only small percentage of blacks able to register due to literacy tests, poll taxes, white primaries, and grandfather clauses.
      b. White segregationists wreaked terror on Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC – "snick"); church bombings; assaults on blacks
   4. While Kennedy was initially able to satisfy both sides of the issue, the rise of civil rights militants forced his hand.

B. Civil Rights Militants
   1. May 1961, Freedom Riders organized by CORE (Congress of Racial Equality)
      a. Rode interstate buses to verify segregation wasn’t happening.
      b. In Alabama, Freedom Riders were arrested by police, state troopers, and National Guard; some were severely beaten.
      c. More Freedom Riders kept coming all summer.
      d. RFK petitioned Interstate Commerce Commission to issue a ruling against segregation of interstate facilities; sent 400 marshals to protect freedom riders.
      e. ICC made the announcement on Sept. 22, 1961; CORE victorious.
   2. Sept. 1962, JFK had to send the U.S. Army to enforce a court order to enroll James Meredith in the University of Mississippi
      -- Kennedy was losing control of the segregation issue.
   3. Showdown in Birmingham, Alabama
      a. 1963, Birmingham closed parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, and golf courses to avoid desegregation.
      b. Martin Luther King, Jr. chose Birmingham because it was the toughest challenge and a victory would break segregation throughout the South.
      c. MLK and supporters arrested on Good Friday for marching without a permit and spent 2 weeks in jail.
      d. After his release, King began using black school children in the demonstrations:
         i. Police commissioner Eugene "Bull" Connor used cattle prods and ordered police dogs on demonstrators and used fire hoses on children as world watched in horror. → influence of TV
         ii. Public pressure mounted for civil rights legislation.
      e. Local business leaders gave in and agreed to desegregate the big department stores. -- King called off the demonstrations.
      f. Shortly after, King’s motel bombed (as was his brother’s home)
         i. Riots erupted.
         ii. President Kennedy decided to side with King.
   4. Kennedy actively pursues civil rights
      a. June 1963, JFK federalized Alabama National Guard to enforce a court order requiring the admission of two blacks—James Hood and Vivian Malone--to the University of Alabama.
      -- Governor George Wallace symbolically stood in the doorway protesting that states’ rights were being crushed (earlier had said in his inaugural speech: "segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever.")

"We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. We must come to see... that justice too long delayed is justice denied."

-- Martin Luther King, Letter from a Birmingham Jail, 1963
b. That night, Medgar Evers, NAACP director in Mississippi, was assassinated
   -- Seen as retaliation for University of Alabama incident

c. In response, JFK announced he would send Congress a civil rights bill to
   Congress which would crush segregation, outlaw discrimination in elections, and
   give the justice department authority to enforce school integration.

    d. **March on Washington**, August 28, 1963 (led by King)
       i. Largest protest in nation’s history thus far; 200,000
          -- Organized in part by A. Philip Randolph (who had started March on
          Washington Movement during WWII)
       ii. Protesters demanded support for Kennedy’s civil rights bill and for better and
           more jobs.
       iii. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his "I have a dream" speech
       iv. By the time JFK was assassinated, his civil rights bill was moving toward
           passage in the House.

IV. **Kennedy and the Cold War**
   A. "**Flexible Response**": Kennedy developed conventional military strategies to deal
      with difficult challenges around the world.
      2. During presidential election of 1960, Kennedy had criticized Eisenhower for allowing
         a "missile gap" that favored the Soviets.
             -- When JFK became president, he learned that the gap was actually in favor of the
             US; yet he continued the largest peace-time military buildup in history.
      3. Kennedy ordered build-up of conventional armed forces to fight localized wars in
         the Third World (less-developed regions).
         a. Replaced Eisenhower’s heavy reliance on nuclear weapons.
         b. Set up **Green Berets** (elite commando force)
         c. Built up nuclear arsenal for 2nd strike capability.

   B. **Bay of Pigs**
      1. Early 1860, Eisenhower authorized CIA to organize, train, and arm in Central
         America a brigade of 1,400 Cuban exiles for an invasion of Cuba to overthrow Fidel
         Castro.
            a. Invaders would presumably trigger a popular uprising in Cuba
            b. JFK continued the plan
      2. In April 1961, **Bay of Pigs invasion failed miserably**
         a. Kennedy had decided against direct US intervention as he did not want to spark
            an international diplomatic crisis.
         b. 1,189 men were captured, 400 killed, only 14 exiles rescued
      3. Kennedy publicly took full responsibility on national TV for the ill-conceived mission.
         -- Privately Kennedy blamed the CIA for faulty information
      4. **Significance**: brought USSR and Cuba closer together in planning for defense of a
         future U.S. invasion.

   C. Operation Mongoose
      1. CIA-backed plan to overthrow and assassinate Fidel Castro
      2. Ultimately failed and abandoned after Cuban Missile Crisis.

   D. **Peace Corps** – one of Kennedy’s most popular programs
      1. Established in 1961, sent young volunteers (doctors, lawyers and engineers) to
         third world countries for locally sponsored projects to improve economic stagnation,
         poor health and education.
      2. Alternative to military containment of communism.
      3. By 1966, 15,000 volunteers served in 46 countries.
E. Alliance for Progress
2. Primary goal was to help Latin American countries to close the gap between rich and poor thus quieting communist sympathies.
3. Result: Little positive impact on Latin America’s social problems.

F. Berlin Wall, 1961
2. Khrushchev delivered new ultimatum on Berlin; saw U.S. weakness in Bay of Pigs
   a. USSR would give Berlin to East Germany, stripping western access to Berlin.
   b. Kennedy: US would not abandon West Berlin
3. USSR announced increase in defense; Kennedy asked for a $3.2 billion increase.
4. August, 1961: East Germans built wall separating West Berlin from the rest of Berlin and East Germany almost overnight.
   -- Purpose: Stem the flow of 100,000 people leaving East Berlin
5. Kennedy called up 1,500 US reserves to reinforce West German garrisons.
   -- Speech in Berlin: "Ich bin ein Berliner" ("I am a Berliner" – well, that’s what he meant to say)
6. Tensions eased as the refugee problem was solved -- Air and land routes to West Berlin were kept open.
7. Wall remained until November, 1989

G. Cuban Missile Crisis (October 1962)
1. Khrushchev began placing nuclear weapons in Cuba, just 90+ miles off Florida coast in October 1962.
   a. Soviets intended to use weapons to force U.S. into backing down on Berlin, Cuba, and other troubled areas.
   b. Only Pacific Northwest was out of range of Soviet missiles.
2. Oct. 14, U.S. aerial photographs revealed Russians were secretly and speedily installing nuclear missiles.
   a. Warning of missile attack would shrink from 30 to 2 minutes
   b. U.S. unaware that tactical nuclear missiles were also in Cuba.
      -- Designed to destroy invading armies.
   c. Soviets also had nuclear cruise missiles to destroy U.S. Navy
3. October 22, JFK ordered a naval "quarantine" of Cuba and demanded immediate removal of Soviet missiles from Cuba.
   a. Kennedy also stated any attack by Cuba on US or any other Latin American country would result in a full retaliatory response on the Soviet Union.
      -- Organization of American States gave Kennedy full support.
   b. Kennedy rejected "surgical" bombing strikes against missile sites since no guarantee that all missiles would be hit.
   c. Also rejected a U.S. invasion of Cuba (many in cabinet & military favored this)
      i. Unbeknownst to Kennedy, Soviet tactical nuclear weapons in Cuba could have destroyed invading American army.
      ii. Had US invaded, WW III would most likely have begun.
   d. Kennedy announcement on national TV; Americans shocked
   e. All US forces put on full alert.
4. For a week, world watched as the Soviet ship carrying missiles steamed toward Cuba.
   a. Any U.S. attack would trigger war between the US and USSR
   b. Oct 24, 16 Soviet ships stopped before reaching the blockade
5. October 26, Khrushchev agreed to remove missiles if U.S. removed its missiles from Turkey and vowed not to attack Cuba.
a. This agreement publicly favored Kennedy as the U.S. quietly pulled its Turkish missiles out 6 months later.
b. Agreement can be seen as a victory for Khrushchev: he saved Cuba and got U.S. missiles removed from Turkey.

H. New spirit of cooperation
1. Kennedy and Khrushchev realized they had come dangerously close to nuclear war and now worked to prevent a future war.
2. **Nuclear Test Ban Treaty** (July, 1963)
   a. Banned the atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons
      -- Khrushchev refused on-site inspections.
   b. Signed by all major powers except France and China.
   c. **JFK considered the treaty his greatest achievement**
3. **Hot-line installed with 24-hour access between Moscow and Washington.**

V. **Assassination of JFK**
A. **November 22, 1963**, Kennedy assassinated in Dallas while on a southern tour to drum up support for his policies
   -- Vice President **Lyndon Johnson** became president
B. **Lee Harvey Oswald**, the *alleged* assassin arrested shortly thereafter
   -- Oswald killed a few days later by Jack Ruby, a Mafia member
C. **Warren Commission**, ordered by Johnson, report stated that Oswald was the lone assassin.
   -- "Magic bullet theory" stated that one single bullet went through Kennedy’s back, out his neck, and inflicted several wounds to Texas Governor Connolly.
D. A congressional investigation in the 1970s opened the door to the possibility of a second gunman; this would mean a conspiracy
   ■ Conspiracy theorists questioned the magic bullet, Oswald’s alleged connections with Moscow, and mysteries surrounding Kennedy’s autopsy.