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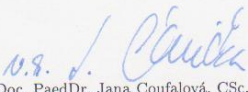
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ABSTRACT

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The topic of this undergraduate thesis is JFK – American Icon. It deals with John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the person of the 35th President of the United States of America, who was assassinated in Dallas on November 22, 1963. Thesis provides a brief description of his life, political career and legacy which he left. This thesis is divided into three chapters, where each chapter contains several parts. First chapter deals with Kennedy's family background, his father Joseph Kennedy and his brother Joseph Kennedy Jr. It continues with JFK's education, war experience, Pre – Presidency period. The first chapter finishes with his wife, Jacqueline. Second chapter deals with Kennedy's policy. Better said, how he became a President and describes the most known events which happened during his presidency. In the final chapter of this thesis, Kennedy's legacy and influence is discussed. In the conclusion of this thesis are summarized the facts, why can be Kennedy considered as an icon.

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INTRODUCTION

”If more politicians knew poetry, and more poets knew politics, I am convinced the world would be a little better place in which to live.”

(Kennedy)

The word icon is described in dictionaries in many ways and therefore we are able to find many definitions. It can be described as a written or printed sign that represents some concrete group of people or ideas. It can also be an object in psychology. Other definition describes icon as a typical symbol or object that represents some concrete kind of a group or a thing. According to *Merriam Webster* dictionary, the origin of the word is connected with a Greek word *eikōn*. In contemporary English it can be understood as a noun image or as a verb to resemble. Word icon is nowadays used in many branches. Icons can be seen in churches as symbols of saints. Especially young generation has the word icon connected with computers. There it serves as a shortcut on a desktop. But for most people this word is understood as an idol or example; an appropriate example which can serve as a model for behaving, education or any kind of activity. Icons fulfil their function throughout the entire centuries and they are also important in contemporary times. If we try to describe the term icon from today’s point of view, we will probably choose some person from public life. It can be a singer, an actor or a politician. In this way, John Fitzgerald Kennedy is an American icon of the 1960’s. Kennedy is mainly known for his shortly lasting presidency terminated by assassination. On the other hand, there have recently appeared facts concerning his love affairs or health problems. With these pieces of information also swarmed speculations, if he really was a good president or if he was only a person, who was addicted to medicaments and sex. One way or another, Kennedy enrolled not only to the United States history. He will stay one of the most important parts of the world politics. His importance is supported by the use of an abbreviation JFK. Not every popular person is known enough to obtain an abbreviation of its name. Kennedy joined a group of artists like Edgar Allan Poe known as EAP, Thomas Stearns Elliot known as TSE or William Butler Yeats known as WBY. In short, the acronym JFK is connected with the name of the 35th President of the United States of America by almost everyone all around the world. He was and still is one of the presidents, who are remembered not only for their political career, which in fact did not last long in Kennedy’s case, because his life was finished prematurely. When Kennedy was assassinated in 1963,

he was only 46 years old. For many people of his nation it was shocking and also the end of optimism. A hopeful future was suddenly interrupted. Kennedy did not represent only political change. He represented youthful change and also comprised change in lives of ordinary nationals. In comparison with his opponents Kennedy was relatively young. And probably thanks to this he intimated change. The youngest adept who ran for a president came from an influential family and could alter many facts in American politics. Thanks to his environment, Kennedy did not need any financial help in his campaign. He was not tied up with pledges to benefactors because the Presidential campaign was financed mostly by his father's resources.

When speaking about JFK, we can analyse him from many points of view. Kennedy was not only a President and son of a powerful father. He was not only a son, whose career and future was predestined. He served as a soldier during the World War II. He was a father of four children. He was a husband, although not always faithful. But for many people all around the world, he was and still is an icon; an icon, that showed and provided a new way of life. But the perception of icons changed through the times. Kennedy was a symbol for betterment after the World War II. He was an icon who averted a destructive nuclear war; an icon who served not only for a political life, but also for lives of ordinary people. He had friends in Hollywood and his dress sense was often compared to James Bond. Kennedy was all of these things and more. From today's point of view Kennedy was not particularly extraordinary. He was a parvenu's son who used benefits given to him. He was travelling across Europe, where he gained many experiences. He used his father's money during the 1960 Presidential campaign. Kennedy was young, full of healthy insolence and full of vigour to change the current America. Simply said, Kennedy knew how to impress. With his family's help he reached the White House and completely changed its life. He utilized the opportunities he was given. The biggest paradox about Kennedy's person is that he became more famous after his death than during life. We cannot dare to claim that Kennedy was not known. On the other hand, the sensation he had emerged in death is one of the biggest in the world. Politicians and presidents are mainly known for activities they did. Kennedy's governance was unforgettable. Decisions made by him during almost three years of presidency represented principal milestones in American history. Just to remind: The Bay of Pigs Invasion, Cuban Crisis or the Space Programme. Kennedy had a desire to change the United States. Because Kennedy was assassinated, we are not able to say, if was his intention accomplished. According to the surveys of Hazel Gaudet Erskine, his popularity was falling, so the re-

election was not so obvious. Due to Kennedy's tempting person, there exist a wide range of books discussing his life. He is described not only from a political point of view, but also from a private viewpoint. His love affairs and health became the subject of discussions in many ways. Continual interest in Kennedy's person demonstrates that he really was an important person in the United States history and can be considered as real icon. This interest also engaged my attention and that is why I decided to examine Kennedy's person. This thesis shows perspectives, from which Kennedy can be considered as an icon. It also describes how his person was made an icon.

LIFE

When speaking about John Fitzgerald Kennedy's life we do not have to be afraid of using the word fascinating. Although his life did not last long, concretely 46 years, the acts done by him cannot be counted on one hand. His rich family environment ensured him a much easier life than most had. Because of his father's funds and connections, he had significant advantage in politics. This chapter serves as an introduction to Kennedy's life. It provides a brief summary of youth and beginnings in politics. It helps to understand his personality and introduces the backgrounds of his family.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy was born on May 29, 1917 in Brooklin, Massachusetts to Joseph Patrick Kennedy, Sr. and Rose Elizabeth Fitzgerald. After his brother, Joseph Patrick Jr., John Kennedy was the second eldest of eight children in Kennedy's family ("New York Times"). Kennedy's family is often compared to a European Aristocracy that America never had, or to a mafia family, of which America has many. The father of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Joseph Patrick, was considered to be its head. It is also known that all events in their family were happening according to his volition. Joseph Patrick was born in Boston at the end of the 19th century. He worked as a banker, gradually got to the stock market and later got a job in a shipbuilding company. There he met Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the 32nd President of the United States ("American Experience") ("White House"). Due to his influential position in Hollywood, where he established a film company and was one of the first people investing to this industry, he continued with gaining the contacts on powerful worthies ("American Experience"). Czechoslovakian writer Stanislav Budín stated in his book *Dynastie Kennedyů*, that in 1932, Joseph penetrated into the politics due to Presidential candidate Franklin Delano Roosevelt. After some time spent in high politics' positions, he was offered the position of the US ambassador in Great Britain between the years 1938–1940. From the book *Kennedyové*, written by another Czechoslovakian writer Jindřich Volek, we can see that Joseph Kennedy's opinion about the British position in the war was clear. He believed that Britain wanted to involve the United States in the war. This fact was unacceptable for Kennedy. Due to his opinions, he outraged more people in the United States than ever before. Joseph Kennedy still believed that Britain would not enter the war, but he was wrong. Budín mentions Joseph's words stated to Roosevelt about the British position, where he spoke about the end of the world, regardless of who would win. Thanks to his diverse conviction about Britain's position in war and expectancy of Germany's triumph, Kennedy resigned from his position.

One of the best known authors, who are interested in John Fitzgerald Kennedy's life, is an American emeritus professor at the University of California, Robert Dallek ("All American Speakers"). According to his book, *Unfinished Life*, we can see that Joseph reoriented his attention mainly to his sons whose future was predetermined by him. Dallek states:

[Joe] stressed to his children the importance of winning at any cost and the pleasures of coming in first. As his own heroes were not poets or artists but men of action, he took it for granted that his children too wanted public success. . . were fruits of *his* experience and *his* dreams, not necessarily theirs (Dallek 36).

Joseph Kennedy Sr. had big ambitions with his sons. The biggest attention was dedicated to the two eldest sons – Joseph Jr. and John. The most important part in his plans comprised Joseph Jr. He was the one who should have become the first Kennedy in the White House. Already from his childhood Joseph Patrick Jr. was stronger than his younger brother John and he did not suffer from so many diseases as John Kennedy. When Joseph Jr. was 26 years old, he voluntarily joined the army. After three years, in August 1944, Joseph Jr. enrolled for a highly dangerous operation, where his aeroplane exploded ("John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum"). Notwithstanding, Joseph Jr. knew the peril that existed. That is demonstrated by his words said to a friend before the flight: "If I don't come back, tell my dad . . . that I love him very much" (Dallek 106). For Joseph Patrick Sr. was a death of his first born son big tragedy. His son, who was to become a President, was dead. All his plans about future were lost. This event intensified Joseph Kennedy's Sr. consolidated opinion about Americans interventions and his attention was mainly paid to his second son, John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

Youth

In a life of every highly placed person, not only in politics, education is important. It is taken as a train ticket which can make a big part of work instead of the person. Already in the Kennedy's era, good school meant better name and reputation. Kennedy was not an exception. He knew very well that the degrees he got could improve his chance for success. At first, his education was in his parents' hands. Later John Kennedy decided where he wanted to study and went his way. He attended only schools which had more than good reputation in the United States history. Another of the authors, who are

interested in Kennedy, is British writer living in Washington D.C. According to his book, *J.F.K. Neklidné Mládi*, we are able to easily follow Kennedy's education. After the primary education in schools of high reputation, Kennedy applied for an admission to the Harvard University and was admitted. As was written above, Kennedy's father was appointed to be the US ambassador in Great Britain. John Fitzgerald Kennedy utilized this state of affairs and between the years 1938 and 1939 Kennedy, with his brother Joseph Jr., spent some time in Europe (Hamilton 179, 189-198). This experience brought him particularly positive experiences. He met many important and influential people who caught his attention. This time greatly helped him not only with his studies, but he personally discovered the world of high politics. Perhaps he could find there, that politics is the right place for his personality and it is the right place where he could apply his abilities. Kennedy also gained many experiences which helped him in finishing with his studies, where he focused on the international policy. His final work on the Harvard University, named *Why England Slept*, dealt with British incorrect decisions during the World War II. According to Kennedy's words in the very first page, this thesis "served as an answer to Winston Churchill's work *While England Slept*" ("John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum"). The thesis achieved relatively big success, which supports a fact, that the work was later published also as a book ("American Experience"). Kennedy's literal talent was supported when Kennedy wrote a book named *Profiles in Courage*. Although there were many speculations about Kennedy's authorship, this book was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for biography in 1957 ("John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum").

Already during university studies Kennedy became a kind of an icon. One would expect that it was thanks to his study grades. But he was not a sample student. It was publicly known that Kennedy was a philanderer. Women always occupied an important place in his life. But what if he did not have these escapades and later mistresses? Would it influence him somehow? This question is relatively hard. John Kennedy was not an instance of a faithful man or husband; women always fulfilled an important role. They served as a drug for him. When an addicted does not get its drug, he/she is not able to work. Of course, comparison like this can be understood as an extreme one, but in Kennedy's case can be used as apt one. It can also be taken as daring to compare the United States President to an addicted person, but Kennedy was a sort of addicted person. His sex addiction is a publicly known fact. He was an attractive man and his most known mistress Marilyn Monroe spoke at all. His appearance helped him during his Presidential

campaign. But from the point of view of a common person, he could and still can be understood in this way, i.e. a womanizer icon.

Each icon should go straight to its aim, step by step. Becoming a President was not uttered, but known truth for John Kennedy. And as a future President he should know how to fight for his country. He should know the military environment. Therefore, in spite of his health problems, he entered the Navy in the autumn 1941. He seconded to his older brother Joseph Jr. At the start Kennedy worked in an office, where he collected war reports. However, this activity became boring for him during the time (Volek 44-45). Owing to this, he transferred to Midshipman's School in Chicago in July 1942. He wanted to become a PT commander and in spite of his health problems and another factors, with his father's help and influence, he finally succeeded. At the beginning John Kennedy was not so active. His time came in June 1943. Kennedy's patrol torpedo boat, known as PT 109, went to a combat zone in New Georgia and on the 1st August it was sunk by the Japanese ("American Experience"). After several days of surviving on an island called Olanokanai, he and his crew were rescued (Hamilton 359-360). Kennedy's message written into a husk of a coconut during the survival, said: "NAURO ISLAND...COMMANDER...NATIVE KNOWS POS'IT...HE CAN PILOT...11 ALIVE...NEED SMALL BOAT...KENNEDY" ("White House Museum"). These words became a feature of this accident. JFK used this husk of the coconut as a paperweight on his desk in the Oval Office ("White House Museum"). Kennedy was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal ("John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum"). Until these days there have persisted opinions that the shoot was mainly thanks to Kennedy's imprudence. Naturally, thanks to his father's contacts and John's future, it was never officially declared. This event had immediately occurred in the newspapers and it served as a really good image which could be used in his favour in the future. We can only speculate, if this moment could influence Kennedy's decision-making during the Bay of Pigs Invasion or the Missile Cuban Crisis. But thanks to this incident he knew the feeling of being sunk and hopelessness very well. He knew how to communicate with families of dead soldiers. And, of course, a President, who nearly lost his life for his native country is a man in the right place. We can say that the naval experience during the war obviously contributed to his future success. Kennedy was not the only President from the 20th century, who had an active experience from the army. At random: George H. W. Bush Ronald Reagan, Lyndon B. Johnson or Gerald Ford. These all had experience with the army or a war and thanks to this they could be considered as good candidates for a

President. Of course, there is not a clear connection between Kennedy's and their career. On the other hand, an army experience can be taken as a sign of future success. An American, who served for his country, at that at war, was an optimal candidate for their president.



John Fitzgerald Kennedy during the World War II.
("John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum")

Pre-Presidency Period

Kennedy's germ of an icon slowly started to be developed. His brother was not alive, so there was not any reason not to enter the politics. That time came in 1946 ("Encyclopædia Britannica"). When John Fitzgerald started his political career, his father stood in the background of all actions around campaigns. He used lots of money and power to get his son where he wanted to (Hamilton 429). Owing to father's resources, Kennedy gained a really big benefit. There were no promises to benefactors and that fact could be taken as a considerable advantage for his political career. The endeavour of Kennedy's team was rewarded and in 1946 JFK became a congressman ("John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum"). He knew that if he wanted to become a President, staying in the Congress was not sufficient. After six years spent as a congressman, Kennedy decided to make another step – to the Senate. Kennedy's victory over Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. in 1952 provided this young man with another move in his career – to the Senate (Volek 77). He succeeded for the state Massachusetts and became a Senator. Kennedy spent eight years in the Upper House, in other words, one and a half term. For the first time Kennedy was elected in 1952 and then in 1958. During the first six years his

person became very famous and popular and that fact helped to his re-election in 1958 (Dallek 225).

If an icon wants to be successful, it should have its opinion. John Fitzgerald Kennedy demonstrated his volition and during his mandate he did not stay aside. He supported the social reforms and also an improvement of conditions for workers and minorities (Heidekin and Mauch 411). Kennedy slowly, but certainly started to ascend in political career step by step. The fact about the Soviet Union and its satellite Sputnik¹, which broke through to space in 1957, which was earlier than Americans, made him indignant. He knew that the West had to make a big exertion to draw the Soviet level (Heidekin and Mauch 411). He stated his words publicly and the American nation wanted to hear it. Americans always wanted to be the best. They are brought up in the background, where they have to struggle for a better future. If they want something, they have to fight for it. Kennedy indicated that he would struggle not only for his better future, but also for a better future of the whole nation. Another author, who was interested in Kennedy's person, was Theodore C. Sorensen, who was Kennedy's counsel and speechwriter (Weiner, Zeleny and Berger). According to his book named *Kennedy*, we can see that one of the first big opportunities came in 1956. Kennedy volunteered his person as a candidate for a Vice President of the Democratic party. Kennedy's father had a different opinion and was certainly true. Young Kennedy was not chosen by the convention of delegates as a suitable candidate. Instead of him, Democratic Senator Estes Kefauver was selected. According to Sorensen, one of the biggest reasons why Kennedy was not elected was his Catholic religious belief, which was not very popular in the first half of the 20th century. Even though Kennedy did not become the first, he convinced himself that he would run in the next presidential elections in 1960 (Sorensen).

If we summarize Kennedy's pre-presidency time, we can describe it as a relatively successful. Although he did not want to come to politics, in the beginnings he obeyed his father's demand. John Kennedy said: "Wanted" isn't the right word. He demanded it" ("American Experience"). At the beginning, there was a young man. But he was not anybody. He was Boston's mayor Fitzgerald's grandson. He was Kennedy, son of an influential father. John Kennedy started his political career in Boston, where names Kennedy and Fitzgerald meant power, fame and money. As a young catholic he had a big

¹ Sputnik was the world's first artificial satellite. That launch ushered in new political, military, technological, and scientific developments (Garber).

chance to succeed in this city. He experienced the war. There was not any reason why not enter the politics. During his mandates he did not go wrong. He brought an attention on his person mainly in a positive way. He did not insult anybody during his speeches. He managed to push himself through. Although he came from a wealthy family and many people could envy him and they definitely did, he kept his name. The use of the influence, money and contacts from his father were also reproached to him. On the other hand, why not use them? John utilized opportunity which was most advantageous. In contemporary politics, without money and contacts it is very difficult to assert. Politicians are associated with corruption and advancing interests despite of their point. Kennedy's behaviour during his campaigns just indicated the direction of the future politics. In comparison with today's campaigns, where affronts and indecent behaviour are common practise, Kennedy's behaviour was polite and honest. He started the modern politics and showed the direction in which it would take place. From this point of view, Kennedy can be considered to be an American icon.

Jacqueline

A considerable part of JFK's life was influenced by his wife, Jacqueline Lee Bouvier Kennedy, later known as Jacqueline Lee Bouvier Kennedy Onassis. She was not only his wife and a mother of his children. She was also a kind of an icon. Her feeling for fashion affected the whole United States. Together, they comprised a perfect couple, although, particularly in the beginnings, only outwardly. As any other man from a wealthy family, also Kennedy had to choose his wife very properly. Jacqueline represented an ideal choice. Her father was a thriving stockbroker. Therefore, his family did not suffer from poverty. She also had appropriate manners and her appearance was without any imperfection. The connection of these two attractive young people was very promising only the best results ("John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum"). This part of thesis describes person of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy and her influence on John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

Due to her job as the Inquiring Camera Girl for the Washington Times-Herald newspaper, she met her future husband (John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum). Although their relationship was not initially ideal, they finally got married (Klein 56). John and Jacqueline had their wedding on September 12, 1953 at St. Mary's Church in Newport (Posener 18). Their wedding became one of the most important events of the year ("John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum"). In that time, Kennedy

already was an icon in politics. He comprised small, but a significant politician. He was a successfully elected Senator. The wedding could serve as another piece of his perfectly created image. A married Senator, who wanted to run up for the Presidency, was a good candidate. We cannot assert that their wedding was a political manoeuvre, but it definitely contributed to Kennedy's image as an icon.



John and Jacqueline Kennedy are cutting their wedding cake
(Frissell)

The role of the First Lady suited her perfectly and she also became a kind of an icon. According to her excellent style and manner Jacqueline was highly representative. Although she did not want to become a kind of sensation, she did. She was not the type of the First Lady who stays aside. Even though she comprised a perfect complement, she always retained her style and dignity. She became a perfect example for many American women and later for women all over the world. She was an exemplary wife and mother. Of course, as the First Lady, she had to be. On the other hand, Kennedy had many affairs before their marriage and he did not stop even during their life. She stayed at her husband's side at any occasion. She supported him during his Presidential campaign and helped him with speeches. She selected the appropriate quotations and suggested him how to speak and gesticulate. Thanks to Jacqueline's perfect sense for fashion, Kennedy started to wear different style which exuded his strength and vitality. After her advice he started to wear perfectly fitting suits, white shirts and neckties (Klein 163). From that moment Kennedy looked better and more serious. He stopped the era of hats and an essential accessory comprised the sun glasses. Their shape called "Wayfarer" was typical for Kennedy ("Ray

Ban"). He started to serve as an example of a well dressed man for the whole generation. Regarding to sun glasses, also in contemporary times Jacqueline serves as a symbol. She served as a model for the American company Ray Ban, which produces glasses, which has a collection called "Jackie Ohh" ("Ray Ban").

The year 1960 meant important changes for whole Kennedy's clan. The long-time dream of his father could become true and the icon could be finally born. The first Kennedy could step over a sill of the White House. Kennedy started his Presidential campaign which included travelling around the whole United States. Jacqueline provided interviews to radios or spoke at election assemblies ("John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum"). She perfectly handled her role of a Presidential candidate's wife. With Jacqueline's help Kennedy was a perfect example of an American man. Kennedy won the Presidential election on November 8, 1960. He became the youngest elected President ever and Jacqueline was the third youngest First Lady in the United States history ("The White House"). In the matrimonial life of these two icons the children could not be missing. One of the most typical photographs is that one, where small John Fitzgerald Kennedy Jr. is playing under his father's table in his Oval Office. This picture helped a lot to Kennedy's image. Kennedy and Jacqueline had four children, as of this worthy two were alive. Arabella Kennedy, Caroline Bouvier Kennedy, John Fitzgerald Kennedy Jr., Patrick Bouvier Kennedy. Jacqueline gave birth to their first child named Arabella in 1956, however it was stillborn. This era was one of the worst periods of their marriage which almost got to a divorce. That was why Kennedy's father Joseph concluded with Jacqueline an agreement about remaining in marriage. Jacqueline agreed under certain conditions, e.g. family dinner once a week, else house or fiduciary fund which Jacqueline could use after children's birth (Klein 158-159). Their second child was born in November 1957 in New York and her name was Caroline Bouvier Kennedy. After three weeks of Kennedy's Presidential election, Jacqueline gave birth to their son John Fitzgerald Jr. who was also known as "John-John". Their fourth child Patrick Bouvier was born prematurely three months before Kennedy's assassination and died three days after his birth ("The White House").

Although Jacqueline's influence does not have to be seen at the first sight, her person was very important in Kennedy's life. She helped him in the course of his convalescences and was a significant part of his presidential election campaign. She constituted one of the fashion icons, even though she did not wish to be one. She started the era of women, who wore a trouser suit instead of a skirt suit. She also helped John with

improving his image. The biggest paradox of their marriage is a fact, that they became closer in the last months of JFK's life. It could help the fact about death of their son Patrick or it could also be the lesser number of Kennedy's affairs. Even in a contemporary period, this married couple is considered to be one of the best looking Presidential pairs ever. However, life with John Fitzgerald Kennedy was not definitely easy. His constant infidelities and health problems belonged to their daily routine. Jacqueline could not leave, because she would wreck her husband's career. If she did so, how would people look at a President, from whom his wife fled? It definitely would not make a good image. A person, on top of that an American President, whose life is publicly interpreted, could not afford that kind of a scandal. Particularly in the then times a published affair was something inconceivable. A President represents the most important and respected person in the United States of America. He should be the paragon of an ideal and capable man. This issue Kennedy kept and with Jacqueline constituted a perfect example of a modern American family. That fact contributed to their images of icons.



President John F. Kennedy and John F. Kennedy Jr. in the Oval Office
(Tretick)

To summarize this chapter we should go through the main points again. One of the most important parts of Kennedy's life was constituted by his father. He transferred his own desires and aims to his children. Joseph Sr. also used all opportunities, from money to

contacts, mafia included, for his son's support and this endeavour was successful. His son became a world-wide known politician. He became an example and an icon for the whole generation. On the other hand, if Joseph's means would not be so influential, then emerge a real question how would Kennedy come out. It is probable that he would at least try to get to the politics. Maybe, he would gradually work his way up. But it is really difficult to estimate, if JFK would get to the White House. Kennedy was ambitious, diligent and full of ideals. His youth and aspiration worked as a driving power. We know that appearance and image can help a lot. Kennedy also knew it and during the whole life utilized it for his benefit. A considerable part of his life was played by Jacqueline. Very important fact was that she was popular with her nation, which is supported by the example below taken from Erskine's survey. She supplemented his elaborated image and thanks to her his name persists until now.

<i>What are your impressions of Jacqueline Kennedy?</i>				
	<i>Favorable</i>	<i>Unfavorable</i>	<i>Mixed</i>	<i>No Opinion</i>
1961: July 21				
By sex:				
Men	59%	13%	6%	22%
Women	72	10	6	12
By age:				
21-29 years	72	11	7	10
30-49 years	64	11	7	18
50 years and over	64	12	5	19
By political affiliation:				
Republicans	58	18	9	15
Democrats	73	7	4	16
Independents	60	13	6	21

(Erskine 342)

PRESIDENCY

"I have a nice home, the office is close by, and the pay is good"

(Kennedy)

After his brother's death John was the most important son of the Kennedy's family. Opinions about his political career and presidency slightly differ. One group states, that Kennedy entered the politics in order to oblige his father. That meant to deputize for his brother's place. Different opinion was held by Theodore C. Sorensen. In his book *Kennedy* he says: "...he entered the political arena – not to take *Joe's* place, as is often alleged, but as an expression of his own ideals and interests in an arena thereby opened to him" (Sorensen 30). Although John Kennedy had his own desire to enter the politics, he later said: "I never would have run for office if Joe had lived" (Sorensen 31). Sorensen continues: "But Joe had died, a seat was open, and Jack Kennedy knew he wanted to be a participant, not an observant" (Sorensen 16). And so he did. Kennedy became the youngest President of the USA, the first Catholic President in the USA and the first President who was born in the 20th century. His Presidential period lasted almost three years, concretely from January 20, 1961 to November 22, 1963 ("White House"). The way to the top was typical. It started with a first-rate election and continued to the House of Representatives and Congress. His person represented a change from a calm and peaceful government of the 1950's to a forthcoming dynamic period of the 1960's. One of Kennedy's strong qualities was his young self – assertion. In his inaugural speech in January 20, 1961, he stated: "Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate" (Kennedy). According to the quote at the beginning of this chapter, we can see that he was slightly ironical, but at the same time he was able to manage a demanding situation.

Kennedy's policy can be characterized as an attempt for a change and an array of new opportunities for the whole American society. Many people, not only in the United States, considered and still consider Kennedy as a good President. That supports a *CNN Poll Opinion Research* which was held in January 2011, which results are mentioned in the conclusion. Consequently should become a question why? Why just Kennedy? Can he really be considered as a good President? After all, during Kennedy's presidency almost broke the World War III. His arguments with Khrushchev² became a part of those days. On

² Nikita Khrushchev was a leader of the Soviet Union from 1955 until 1964 ("BBC - History").

the other hand, he managed to achieve the Nuclear Test-Ban treaty³ or calm a situation about national minorities. Many people reproach Kennedy's decision-making to his youth, or maybe better said, to his youthful imprudence. In my opinion, the phrase youthful imprudence is not a very good formulation. Of course, Kennedy was young. He did not know the common life in a flat on the suburb. He never experienced the lack of money. But if he knew all those facts, would he manage to run for a President and become him? Would he manage everything without his father's help? Due to the expansion of mass media in the 1960's, journalists were more and more engaged by a public person. Kennedy also became a kind of a star. Just thanks to his youth and courage to change the issues. In spite of his health problems, which he had from early childhood, Kennedy was capable of managing the United States. Naturally there exist numbers of speculations, if the medicaments he took could somehow affect his reason. This question is answered in the conclusion of this thesis. Kennedy experienced many events which were not always pleasant during his presidency. In this chapter are emphasized important and known events that happened during his administration between the years 1961-1963.

Presidential Elections

The Presidential elections which took place in 1960 were important from many points of view. These elections were the first, in which mediums were used – television and radio. Owing to this fact, the two Presidential candidates during their debates became a part of many American families. Another fact was that if Kennedy had won the elections, as he had, he would have become the youngest President in the United States history. Convictions about this topic differed. From one point of view, his youth could serve as a heart of problems. On the other hand, it was exactly his youth which brought the chance for change. The last but not least fact was that Kennedy was a Catholic, although Americans are in a large part Protestants. Finally, everything was in favour of Kennedy, who finally won.

³ Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty was signed in Moscow on August 5, 1963 by the United States, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom. It banned nuclear-weapons tests in the atmosphere, outer space and underwater but permitted underground testing and required no control posts, no on-site inspection, and no international supervisory body ("Encyclopædia Britannica Online")

Senator Kennedy was picked up by the Democrats at first to go. His Republican opponent was, at those times, 47 years old Vice-President Richard Nixon⁴ (Volek). According to polls, the more known candidate Nixon had better chances. Sorensen quotes: “He was considered the more experienced; and that Kennedy was known primarily as a wealthy, inexperienced, youthful Catholic” (Sorensen 226). On the other hand, Kennedy was not hackneyed. It should be noted, that in comparison with Nixon, Kennedy was fresher. An important issue of the 1960 Presidential election was that the presidential candidates had overall four debates for the first time in a history. These debates were either televised or broadcast on the radio. Each had a different course, different presenter but the same number of panelists. Kennedy gained as much as it was possible. His younger face adapted with make – up was much better than Nixon’s appearance. In the first debate, Nixon was recovering from the flu and did not let the make-up artists to put a make - up on his face. His suit, which was not very well chosen, did not contribute to a better look. That was why he looked old and tired. Whereas Kennedy used the possibility of looking better and it was worth it. We can claim that image contributed to his final win very much.⁵

Kennedy’s Presidential election programme called *The New Frontier* was later rightfully associated with Kennedy’s policy. He wanted to limit the reduction of taxes, improve the social insurance or moderate the racial problems. The desire, that Kennedy exuded, demonstrated his words:

The New Frontier of which I speak, is not a set of promises - it is a set of challenges. It sums up not what I intend to offer the American people, but what I intend to ask of them. . . . Can a nation organized and governed such as ours endure? That is the real question. Have we the nerve and the will? (Dallek 276).

One of Kennedy’s main argument against Nixon was, that Republicans would lead the country to conservatism and that America will stagnate just thanks to this attitude (Budín 106). Kennedy’s New Frontier had entirely a contrary purpose – pay attention to youth, workmen, minorities and surpass the Soviet Union in a space research. Simply said,

⁴ Richard M. Nixon was the 37th President of the USA between the years 1969-1974. During the 1960’s elections, he was a Vice-President of Dwight D. Eisenhower ("The White House").

⁵ Kennedy wore a dark suit, wore make-up (though he already looked tan), and was coached on how to sit (legs crossed) and what to do when he wasn't speaking (look at Nixon) ("CNN Time All Politics").

Kennedy wanted to establish a state, which would serve as a perfect example in all regards for the other states and give back its decent name and reputation.

Kennedy's triumph was not as much significant as was probably expected. He won with a very small predominance of votes. The margin was 303 to 219. Their variance was better seen in percents, where Kennedy obtained 49.7% and Nixon 49.5% ("Kennesaw State University"). His narrow victory over Nixon could and still can be attributed to his team of co-workers, led by his brother Robert, perfect style with cultivated behaviour and also to ethnic minorities, included Afro Americans, who voted for him. Likewise owing to Lyndon Johnson, Kennedy obtained a significant number of votes in southern states. He knew how to make a good impression to his electors, e.g. when Martin Luther King was arrested, Kennedy telephoned Luther's wife and promised that he would make everything to discharge her husband. Thus Martin Luther King was released the following day (Budín 107).

If we summarize Kennedy's ideas and aims during the Presidential elections, we can see that his attitude to campaign was suitably selected. He emphasized the main problems of then times and also gave a relatively considerable hope for better future. The Americans saw a new generation full of ambition and volition to change the existing facts in Kennedy. The generation, who had the experience with the war and did not want to go through it again. Thanks to his father, John did not owe any money for his Presidential campaign and therefore was not connected to any other politician. He built his own team with people he knew very well, for instance Attorney General⁶ was his younger brother Robert (Heidekin and Mauch 413-414). Considering then times, Joseph Kennedy's behaviour during his son's campaigns was nothing extraordinary. The utilization of money, influence and acquaintances is ordinary practice in many branches, politics not removed. Joseph only started common machinations without which we cannot imagine contemporary politics.

Cuban Missile Crisis & The Bay of Pigs Invasion

If we heard these two phrases, the most of us will associate them with JFK's name. The Cuban Missile Crisis and the Bay of Pigs Invasion could be considered as one of the most significant events during his presidency. Each had its own importance. During the Bay of Pigs Invasion, a big number of people were arrested. Also the Cuban Crisis meant a

⁶ Attorney General is a head of the Department of Justice ("Encyclopædia Britannica").

test of courage. Then was the world just a few moments from a big disaster. But Kennedy finally solved these troubles and America proved its power.

In political circles Kennedy was known mainly for his focus on foreign policy. Already during Eisenhower's⁷ cabinet there were trained special groups of Cuban's refugees who did not agree with the communism on Cuba and they wanted to succeed during the planned invasion on Cuba in the Bay of Pigs in April 1961. Whole training was financed by Americans, but Kennedy wanted to make a conjecture that whole action is a case of Cuban's emigrants and not of American government. CIA supposed, that most of the Cubans were not satisfied with the situation on Cuba and that they would join the insurgents. However, this did not happen. The invasion lasted only three days and the result of the invasion was not successful. Its aim about overthrowing Castro's regime was not accomplished (Budín 117-119). Number of the insurgents against the Cuban regime was risible in comparison with the Cuban military. The insurgents, who did not manage to escape, were imprisoned. Kennedy's people, who were led by Eleanor Roosevelt⁸, had to negotiate with Castro about ransom for discharging the imprisoned warriors. Finally, the agreement dealt with delivery of medicine in great amount of money ("Encyclopædia Britannica"). The whole action signified a substantial defeat from Fidel Castro's Cuba and strengthening the Soviet Union and communism for the United States of America. The main criticism, of course, was aimed at President Kennedy, who blamed himself. In that time, Kennedy, who was in his office only three months, did a considerably poor move in commencement his office. Substantial support that aided to Kennedy was rendered by Nixon and Eisenhower and this support highly helped to improve Kennedy's image which was slightly damaged after the Invasion. The Bay of Pigs invasion was the mere commencement of difficult moments during Kennedy's presidency in the United States history.

Another significant problem for the United States represented the Soviet Union with its Prime Minister Nikita S. Khrushchev. Strengthening influence of communism, mainly in Eastern Europe, and American defeat on Cuba played for Khrushchev. As a proof of his power, he had done the wall detaching the Western and Eastern Berlin. Relation between Kennedy and Khrushchev were not ideal. Their divergences started in

⁷ Dwight D. Eisenhower was Kennedy's predecessor in the Presidential office during the years 1953-1961 ("White House").

⁸ Eleanor Roosevelt was a United Nations diplomat and humanitarian and wife of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who was the 32nd President of the United States ("Encyclopædia Britannica").

Vienna in June 1961, where both, i.e. Kennedy and Khrushchev, had negotiations about the Peace Treaty which Soviet Union wanted to sign with Germany, both Western and Eastern (Sorensen 699, 706). Kennedy did not agree with the peace convention and another point of strife was nuclear weapons. Both Khrushchev and Kennedy knew that each country had nuclear-armed submarine, short and medium ranges and also intercontinental missiles (Dallek 412). Khrushchev averred, that Soviet Union would not continue in nuclear testing if United States did not continue either. However, Kennedy felt concerns about Khrushchev statements and in July 1962 they were affirmed. Cuban's delegation visited Moscow to discuss a co-operation between the Soviet Union and Cuba. The deal involved building the missile base by the Soviet Union which will be able to defend Cuba against the attack (Budín 155).

On October 14, 1962 there was a regular inspecting flight over the Cuba with the U-2⁹. During this flight, 928 photographs were taken. These photographs showed the weapons that could imperil the safety of the United States. Kennedy suspected the existence of weapons, but until the existence of incriminating photographs he could not affirm it officially. After seeing the photographs, Kennedy immediately started to act. He convened a group of thirteen men from the American department of safeness and called this group was called "Ex Comm" (Dallek 546). After several talks, two plans were propounded to Kennedy. One was an air attack and the second was a blockade, which was finally chosen. Forthcoming days meant a very strenuous litmus test¹⁰ for America and mainly for Kennedy with his team. On October 22, 1962 Kennedy had a seventeen minute long speech about emerged situation on television. Its result was that Kennedy officially announced the blockade to his nation. The blockade firstly included import of weapons and if that would not help, the blockade should also include food or medicaments (Budín 160 - 161). An important fact was, that the missiles which were installed on Cuba, were dangerous not merely for America, but also for cities in Western Europe. In case of an attack, the United States of America were ready to fight back against the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union propounded, that the weapons located on Cuba had only a defensive function and they were not planned for the attack on the United States. Communication between Kennedy and Khrushchev increasingly escalated. Khrushchev posed a proposal about the withdrawal the missiles, if the United States withdrew their

⁹ U – 2 was a spying aircraft used for taking the photographs (Volek).

¹⁰ Litmus test is critical indication of future success or failure (Free Dictionary by Farlex).

missiles from Turkey. Although Kennedy ignored any mention of Turkey in the proposal and insisted on his concern, i.e. withdraw the missiles and stop entire works about missile basis, he finally withdrew them. On Sunday, October 28, 1962 the Soviet Union agreed about the withdrawing the missiles and acknowledged the capitulation. Kennedy decided that the termination of blockade will come when the Soviets accomplish the agreement about withdrawing. Official statement about the termination of blockade Kennedy delivered on November 20, 1962 (Sorensen 623).

The two weeks lasted Cuban Crisis meant a very hard litmus test not only for John Fitzgerald Kennedy, but also for the government and the whole nation. Only couples of minute separated the world from a huge destruction. Although Kennedy poured the oil into the fire one year before, his volition to persist on his opinion, not to believe to his advisors and also not to initiate the air attacks on Cuba may be considered as a highly considered step. In comparison with the Bay of Pigs invasion, where the Cubans had evident predominance, here the United States had a better position. Kennedy's actions earned international appreciations and his position in eyes of his nation had consolidated. Also in contemporary age his decision is regarded as highly considered and thanks to him a potential inception of the destructing world war was repulsed.

Peace Corps

Another important point in Kennedy's policy was a programme called Peace Corps. This organisation could be taken as a part of his New Frontier programme. Equally, as in the New Frontier, also Peace Corps should serve as a chance. It was not only a chance for the Americans, who wanted to help around the whole world. But it was also a chance for people, who were helped by the Americans. In the 1960, when Kennedy was still a senator and had a lecture on the University of Michigan, he asked the students a question:

How many of you who are going to be doctors, are willing to spend your days in Ghana? Technicians or engineers, how many of you are willing to work in the Foreign Service and spend your lives travelling around the world? On your willingness to do that, not merely to serve one year or two years in the service, but on your willingness to contribute part of your life to this country, I think will depend the answer whether a free society can compete. I think it can! And I think Americans are willing to contribute.

But the effort must be far greater than we have ever made in the past ("Peace Corps").

Kennedy truly wanted a change. And this was a real opportunity how to achieve it. Peace Corps were established in 1961 ("Peace Corps") and as it can be seen from the citation above, the main idea, which led to establishing, was to help and support the foreign countries in many branches like health, trade or education. These days this group still works and it functions on the principles of volunteerism. The volunteers, who partook in this programme, could obtain precious experiences. They should stay in the country for two years and also become a part of the setting where they worked. They also should speak with the language of the foreign country and live in the same way as native people. According to Erskine's survey, it is important to mention, that Americans in most cases agreed with this organisation. This fact supports an example below.

The 71% who said they had heard or read about the Peace Corps were asked: *In general, do you approve or disapprove of the job being done by the Peace Corps?*

	<i>Approve</i>	<i>Disapprove</i>	<i>No Opinion</i>
1962: November 21	74%	9%	17%
By age:			
21-29 years	83	2	15
30-49 years	80	7	13
50 years and over	64	13	23

(Erskine 342)

The first departure was in 1961 to Ghana and it was comprised of 51 people. In the same year, when the Peace Corps started, the group was comprised of 900 people working in 16 countries. Until the last year, when Peace Corps had the 50th anniversary, has joined around 8,500 volunteers in 77 countries. On the whole, during the fifty years more than 200,000 people in 139 countries from whole the world, including China, Mexico or Poland, worked for the group ("Encyclopædia Britannica"). The group manages a director, who is appointed by the president of the United States of America. The Peace Corps also served in the Czech Republic between the years 1990 – 1997 with 234 volunteers. The present status is closed ("Peace Corps").

Berlin

After the World War II Germany, with its capital city Berlin, was divided into two parts – Western and Eastern. Already at the interviews during his Presidential campaign Kennedy predicted “that Berlin in time was certain to be a harsh “test of nerve and will” (Sorensen 750). Eastern Germany and Berlin were subordinated to Communists and many people who lived there were very dissatisfied and tried to escape. Kennedy knew that the United States should intervene against the Communists. Therefore he met Khrushchev at a summit in Vienna 1961 (Sorensen 699). Khrushchev’s refusing attitude about general disarming made Kennedy relatively nervous. Later everything culminated with The Cuban Crisis and the Bay of Pigs Invasion, which were mentioned above. The Soviets built the known Berlin Wall.¹¹ This wall could be understood as a barrier which divided the Khrushchev Soviets and Kennedy’s USA. The West was accused of silent permission of building this barrier for many years. On July 25, 1961, Kennedy had a TV address. He mentioned the possibility about militarily defend of freedom in West Berlin. Kennedy stated: “We will at times be ready to talk, if talk will help. But we must also be ready to resist with force, if force is used upon us. Either alone would fail. Together, they can serve the cause of freedom and peace” (Kennedy). His words confirmed the fact, that the Wall “was a chilling symbol of the Iron Curtain that divided all of Europe between communism and democracy” (“John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum”). Although the Soviets made another barrier behind the original Wall one year later Kennedy decided not to attack the Soviet Union.

The 1963 was the last year of Kennedy’s life. In August 1963 he visited Berlin. We can say that Kennedy was one of a few American politics or, better said, the only one, who received such a support and delight from German citizens. He obtained “the most overwhelming reception in his career” (Sorensen 771). Kennedy delivered a speech in the Rudolph Wilde Platz, where he emphasized the importance of freedom. Kennedy’s style of speaking also helped a lot. He articulated very much and his voice encouraged the Berlin people. The most famous quote from this speech says: “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“ (Sorensen 772). Kennedy’s speech was broadcast by television and radio to all Germans. His support sensed people in Germany and the Soviets realized, that Western

¹¹ Berlin Wall was a barrier which separated the West Berlin from the East Berlin between 1961 and 1989 (“Encyclopædia Britannica”).

Berlin and Germany had the United States' support. There also exist satirical considerations about Kennedy's words. These claim that "Ich bin ein Berliner" in fact means "I am a jelly doughnut", because a Berliner is a kind of a doughnut in some parts of Germany. In fact, his words were meant in a sense of I am a citizen of Berlin or I am a part of Berlin. Kennedy simply wanted to show the support to the citizens of Berlin. Therefore these speculations do not have the right point for support.



John Fitzgerald Kennedy during his speech in Berlin
("B.Z. News aus Berlin")

Racial problems

Kennedy knew that it was very important to finish, or at least to suppress the racial discrimination, because the American ideals did not agree with the discrimination. He stated:

I do not say that all men are equal in their ability, their character or their motivation... but I say they should be equal in their chance to develop their character, their motivation and their ability. They should be given a fair chance to develop all the talents that they have (Sorensen 611).

The year 1963 was really eminent for Kennedy. Not only that he was assassinated, but in the USA, the racial problems were culminating. For instance, in Birmingham, Alabama, a church was burnt down and a girl died in that fire. With these racial problems is associated the term *outside agitators*. These were people, who were accused of responsibility for the racial problems on the South, particularly in Birmingham (Kyncl 82-90). Important description of the then situation provided Arthur Schlesinger, who was an American historian who served in Kennedy's White House (Douglas). According to his

book *A Thousand Days* we can see the situation that happened in the USA. The campaigns to end the discrimination took place also in Birmingham. These demonstrations were led by Martin Luther King Jr.¹² The aim of these demonstrations was to support the end of the Afro – American racial discrimination (Schlesinger 958). Kennedy knew that this problem should be solved. As he said: “What seems terribly important, is to get, and keep, as many Negro children as possible in schools this fall” (Schlesinger 971). In June he gave a bill called the *Civil Rights Act* to the Congress. It included two main ideas. The first was the ban of discrimination in public places like schools or restaurants. The second was the right of the Attorney General¹³ for his own searching for desegregation (Sorensen 640-642). At the same time there was a significant pressure from the Afro-American minority. That supported a demonstration of the Afro – Americans and the whites for a faster approval of this bill. Although Kennedy endeavoured to emancipate the minorities, the promise of equality was fulfilled after his death (Heidekin and Mauch 417). If we look at this situation from a different point of view, Kennedy, at least, tried to improve the racial problems and not to close his eyes before them. On ground of this argument, we can say that Kennedy tried to change existed conditions.

Space program

Exploring the space was one of Kennedy’s dreams and aims. On October 1, 1958 was established the national Aeronautics and Space Administration by the president Dwight D. Eisenhower, more likely known under the term NASA (Garber and Launius). The Soviet’s satellite Sputnik, which was mentioned before and also Yuri Gagarin, the first man in space, had an important influence on the American space research. Americans felt offended from many points of view, e.g. the defeat about the first place in space or a duress on President Kennedy at the Cuban Crisis. They also felt that the Soviets were ahead them. Therefore they immediately started to work on a new project called Explorer I.¹⁴, which was successfully launched on January 31, 1958 (Garber and Launius).

Kennedy, as any other American, wanted to outstrip the Soviet Union. His main aim about the space was the Moon. He wanted that Americans would be the first who

¹² Martin Luther King was a fighter for civil rights and the youngest man who received the Nobel Peace Prize - he was 35 years old. In 1968 was MLK just as Kennedy also assassinated ("Nobel Prize").

¹³ Attorney General is a head of the Department of Justice ("Encyclopædia Britannica"). In Kennedy’s government it was his brother Robert Fitzgerald Kennedy (Heidekin and Mauch).

¹⁴ Explorer I. was the first Earth satellite launched by the USA (Garber and Launius).

would step on the Moon. His project called Apollo had the biggest precedence. On May 25, 1961 Kennedy had a speech in the Congress, where he spoke about the competing with the Soviets. He emphasized the importance of staying together and the ambition about the space. This fact confirmed his words: "I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to Earth" (Kennedy). He wanted to show to the Soviets, that Americans are big and strong and that they could overcome their nation. Americans also wanted to have their man in space. The project called Friendship 7 was successful and on February 20, 1962, John Glenn Jr. was the first American at the Earth orbit ("John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum"). Kennedy did not manage to finish the Apollo project during his life, but finally it launched after eleven years, i.e. on the July 20, 1969 (Garber and Launius). Kennedy's name stayed connected with the space. On Florida, USA, there exists the Kennedy Space Center, which celebrates the 50 years of existence this year.

Assassination

When President Kennedy on November 21, 1963 travelled to Texas, he did not have an idea, that this journey would be the last in his presidency and life. Texas is situated in the South of the United States. The South was always different from the North. Already in history there could be seen differences. For instance the Civil War which broke because of the slavery, in which the Union, i.e. the free North without the slaves, won. In Kennedy's period there still existed the problems, then already known as the racial problems, which were discussed before. Kennedy knew that this political trip, which could be taken as a part of his forthcoming presidential campaign, would be complicated. But he did not know how much.

Although the newspapers prepared to Kennedy a relatively unpleasant welcome, the citizens, who were supporting his policy, did not. When Kennedy got off the plane, he was invited by the enthusiastic crowds. Even the rainy weather did not discourage the people who were listening to his speech in front of the Texas Hotel. Kennedy's words supported the citizens of Texas. When he said: "We will continue to do...our duty, and the people of Texas will be in the lead" (Kennedy), the crowds applauded. After the speech, Kennedy flew to his fatal city, to Dallas. The weather was much better. The sun was shining and nothing indicated the tragic finish of Kennedy's life. Presidential convoy drove from the airport to the Trade Mart (Volek 244). The route was lined by many excited Dallas' citizens. Kennedy's car stopped for many times to allow Kennedy to speak to the citizens

personally. He sat in a car without any protection with his wife. The shield, which should protect him from the rain, was removed thanks to the sunny weather. The shooter, Lee Harvey Oswald, was ready to assassinate the 35th President of the United States. At 12:30 p.m., Kennedy's car turned off the Main Street to Dealey Plaza. The car was near the tunnel, which could serve as a short time for a rest. Kennedy's wife was looking forward to it, because she could hide herself from the hot Dallas' sun. But when the car was passing the Texas School Book Depository, Oswald shot for the first time. Of course, there exist conspiracies, if Oswald was the only shooter. People who were present said that they heard shots from more directions. But this fact had not been solved yet and Oswald stood the only murderer ("John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum").

Kennedy was shot through the nape to his lung. This shot was not fatal. The other shot was headed to Kennedy's brain and that was mortal. From the records we can see that Kennedy's brain exploded. He was immediately driven to a local hospital. He was on the emergency table for forty minutes ("Report of the Warren Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy"). Even though he obtained a quick help, his body did not survive. According to the *Report of the Warren Commission Report on the Assassination of President Kennedy*, we can say, that Kennedy's chances for survival were minimal. The report claims: "Medically, it was apparent the President was not alive when he was brought in.... It was obvious he had a lethal head wound". After half an hour, at 1:00 p.m., November 22, 1963, the 35th President of the United States was pronounced death. On November 24, the Americans had a possibility to see the coffin. On Monday, November 25, was Kennedy's funeral at Arlington National Cemetery. At the funeral, many important politicians from more than 100 countries were present. Finally Jacqueline and Kennedy's brothers Robert and Edward lit an eternal flame ("John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum").

Kennedy's assassinate Oswald had the same destiny as JFK. He was shot during a transfer to the county jail two days after President's death. Also thanks to this there had remained the speculations, if Oswald was the real shooter or that Kennedy's death was caused by his attitude to Cuba or the Soviet Union (Heideking and Mauch 422). The new President became Lyndon B. Johnson, Kennedy's Vice – President (Volek 250). He appointed the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy, also known as the Warren Commission. The *Report of the Warren Commission Report on the Assassination of President Kennedy* answers a number of speculative questions concerning Oswald's blame. However, according to its conclusion, the Commission found out that

Oswald was able to kill Kennedy and that he was guilty of assassinating Kennedy ("Report of the Warren Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy 183"). That confirms Commission's statement: "Out of these and the many other factors which may have molded the character of Lee Harvey Oswald there emerged a man capable of assassinating President Kennedy" ("Report of the Warren Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy 399").

Kennedy's death meant a considerable shock. It was not a natural death. His aims remained unfinished. As it was said before, Kennedy was a symbol for a change. From today's point of view, his death was really symbolical. On the one hand, it slowed down the effort for betterment for a moment. On the other hand, Kennedy's death roused Americans. Their most important man in country was dead. They knew he would be honoured that so many people in his country paid tributes for his person. It should be noted that Kennedy's death was also iconic. He obtained more fame after his death than during his lifetime. Although he was not an example of chastity, he will stay in the American hearts and remain an icon.



JFK's neck wound
("The Exiled")

LEGACY

Kennedy's name was primarily connected with the politics. On the other hand, he was also known thanks to the details from his personal life. The love affairs with his assistants or his most known mistress, Marilyn Monroe, were a public secret. The health problems, mainly his Addison's disease¹⁵, are often discussed in the connection with his medicaments. He could be connected with a perfect style, which changed the whole generation. The stop of wearing hats or the typical sunglasses speaks for all. A renovation of the White House brought back the grandeur and importance to one of the most important places in the United States. Another fact could be called as a kind of media star. The presence of the television in the course of his campaign and continual activity of the press during whole his life, moved Kennedy nearer to his nation. We can say that Kennedy was one of the Presidents, who was and still is known on the whole world. In comparison with the other United States Presidents, e.g. Herbert Hoover¹⁶ or Gerald R. Ford¹⁷, Kennedy always surpassed not only his following colleagues. According to the *CNN Poll Opinion Research* from January 2011, we can confirm Kennedy's popularity. The question was, if people approved or disapproved that the concrete President handled his job as a President. In Kennedy's case the situation was clear, 85% approved, 8% disapproved and 7% had no opinion. Richard Nixon, Kennedy's opponent in 1960's Presidential elections, had relatively negative results; 30% approved, 64% disapproved and 6% had no opinion. Bill Clinton, also known for his affair, had a relatively positive result. 72% approved, 27% disapproved and only 1% had no opinion. The second worst result obtained George W. Bush; 40% approved, 60% disapproved ("CNN Politics"). This fact really supports the statement about Kennedy's icon. However, Kennedy's person still divides people into two groups. One group promotes his progressivism, whereas their opponents states, that Kennedy was only "a militant cold warrior, and unenthusiastic about attaining social justice at home" (Chang 249). After his death, Jacqueline helped to make a legend from her husband, which substantiates the Eternal Flame at the Arlington National Cemetery. This chapter briefly describes Kennedy's influence apart from politics and a legacy he left to the further generations.

¹⁵ Primary adrenal insufficiency ("PubMed Health")

¹⁶ Herbert Hoover was the 31st United States President between 1929 – 1933 ("White House")

¹⁷ Gerald R. Ford was the 38th United States President between 1974 – 1977 ("White House")

New Vision of the White House

Both, John and Jacqueline, loved art, which also supports a statement from The National Association for Music Education: "...Kennedy concern for the arts is by no means exhaustive, perhaps it will serve as sufficient indication of the high patronage and support now emanating from the most powerful position in this country" ("MENC: The National Association for Music Education 36"). Also due to this fact, the Presidential couple, rather Jacqueline, was disquieted with the White House condition. Therefore she decided to restore it. As she said: "It would be sacrilege merely to "redecorate" it -- a word I hate. It must be restored -- and that has nothing to do with decoration" ("John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum"). Jacqueline created a highly representative place. From that moment, concerts or dramatic performances took place there. In 1961, Jacqueline established The White House Historical Association¹⁸ and provided a televised tour through the White House, which noted a significant success. The cultural life in the White House was also proved by organizing of many dinner parties. For instance, Kennedys' entertained the Nobel Prize winners in 1962 ("John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum"). Before they came to their temporary home, the White House was not a frequently visited place. Kennedys' presence had publicized this place and they indisputably had a positive influence on a life of the White House. During Kennedy's Presidency, the formal Oval Office became a place for a family. If we look at the photographs from Kennedy's Presidential term, we will see his children playing in the Oval Office. That happened never before. Since then, American Presidents put an emphasis on their image and they also allow their children to play there. Thanks to Kennedy's family, the forthcoming Presidential couples could enjoy and utilized their eager work.

Press & Hollywood

The press was Kennedy's strong feature already during his presidency campaign or later, when it ignored his love affairs. He and his wife, due to their experiences knew, what involves a job of a journalist. Therefore they both tried to get on with press. Kennedy also realised that press could be utilized in his favour. Sorensen states: "He regarded newsmen

¹⁸ The White House Historical Association serves as a non-profit institution, which produces literature and films about the White House history ("White House Historical Association").

as his natural friends and newspapers as his natural enemies” (Sorensen 406). Another author also confirms Kennedy’s positive attitude to press:

Kennedy’s wit and articulateness especially endeared him to those journalists who had soldiered through the Eisenhower years with a president who often left the press puzzling over what he had actually said or meant to say (Dallek 478).

Very important fact to realize is that the role of a President in the 1960’s was somehow sacred. He was considered as the guard of a country. We should also take into the consideration a fact, that the tabloid newspapers were not so much popular as they are in these days. There were not any headlines discussing a relationship with Marilyn Monroe or emphasizing his health problems. It is a publicly known truth that he provided interviews in an exchange for a silence and if he had any suspicion about a journalist, he simply did not let him/her into the White House. Once, when Kennedy was at a convention and wanted to leave his room just in undershorts and T-shirt, his aide told him that it was not appropriate. But Kennedy replied: “I know these fellows. They’re not going to take advantage of me” (Dallek 478). This relation, between the press and the White House, was a new connection. The personal and informal relationship was something, which was not very used before. In Kennedy’s case, this connection had mainly positive effect. He established the cooperation, which more or less works until now. From the other point of view, it was the press, who nearly wrecked Kennedy’s political career. During the last months of Kennedy’s life it was close to disclose his affairs ("JFK's Women: The Scandals Revealed"). If would that happen, it is very probable, that Kennedy’s chances for the re-election would considerably decline.

Kennedy’s relationship to a television and Hollywood was clearly given. His father was a film magnate in the 1930’s. During the Presidential elections the television network was used for the first time and this fact helped mainly to Kennedy. His young face and beautiful wife literally enticed television cameras. Another connection with Hollywood was represented in a course of the 1960’s elections by Kennedy’s big supporter Frank Sinatra.¹⁹ He recorded for Kennedy a song called “High Hopes” with “The Jack Pack”

¹⁹ Frank Sinatra was a singer, actor and one of the most notable entertainers in the 20th century ("Sinatra").

group ("Pop History Dig"), which he sang in a West Virginia during the 1960's elections campaign (Klein 177-178). Also thanks to Sinatra, who was a part of the underworld, Kennedy personally met his mistress Marilyn Monroe. She also had an affair with his brothers Robert and Edward ("Mail Online"). Other problem was that Kennedy's another mistress, Judith Campbell, was in a connection with the mafia. This fact was not for the American President very appropriate and FBI had to secure the United States' safety very properly ("JFK's Women: The Scandals Revealed"). Although Kennedy's behaviour was not always appropriate, he knew very well, that it was not admissible to made any troubles and scandals publicly.

Camelot

For Europeans, the world Camelot represents a King Arthur's Castle. For Americans, the word Camelot represents a phrase connected with the Kennedy's family. As it was said before, his extended family, together with their position, comprised a kind of a European Aristocracy that America never had. For the young Presidential couple was the White House their own castle with their own round table. They represented an exemplary American family. Everything indicated to Kennedy's success. He was the youngest, on top of that a Catholic elected President. Kennedy was open to new political attitudes and had a verve which Americans needed. His most famous inaugural words "Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country" (Kennedy), aroused a general ardour. He sent a message to his citizens, that it was not only a work of their government, but they also had to prove an effort to change the situation. Therefore his death was a shock. After the assassination, his widow uttered words depicting his life and presidency. She said, that Kennedy "was a man of magic, his presidency was truly special, the era was one brief shining moment that was known as Camelot" (White). She decided to continue with this Kennedy legend and did not allow to anybody to thwart her aims. Even though he was not always an orderly husband, he was a sample father and politician. The enthusiasm to his work could be taken for granted. On the other hand, if we compare Kennedy with the contemporary politicians, and especially the Czech ones, we have to confess, that Kennedy was much more exemplary than our politicians. His mythic legend will remain for the forthcoming generations and his person will not be forgotten.

CONCLUSION

“Dear God, please take care of your servant John Fitzgerald Kennedy.”

(Jacqueline Kennedy)

Many authors focused on the person of John Fitzgerald Kennedy. They emphasized the blunders he made during his Presidency. He was criticized for his domestic policy and also for the risk he took during the Cuban Missile Crisis. He obtained a considerable criticism for his government, because he gave posts to some of his family members (Heidekin and Mauch 423). Nevertheless, Kennedy became a symbol and an icon of the 1960's. He still belongs to the most famous presidents of the United States history and is admired across the generations. His person, symbolizing change, along with his charismatic wife, contributed to the huge popularity they gained as the Presidential couple. The quote above, uttered by Kennedy's widow Jacqueline, confirms her vision about Kennedy's mythic icon. His death meant the end of a period which was full of hope. Facts, which are mentioned in this thesis, support Kennedy's importance not only in the United States. After his Berlin Speech, the citizens of Berlin took Kennedy as their brother. After the assassination, they were saddened and honoured his memory. The mourning mood in the United States was expressed by the Senator Mike Mansfield, who said: “This is terrible – I cannot find words” (“BBC”). Also Arthur Schlesinger supports the situation after the assassination in the United States, with his own words: “It was all gone now – the life affirming, life-enhancing zest, the brilliance, the wit, the cool commitment, the steady purpose” (Schlesinger 1030).

Kennedy definitely was a controversial person. On the one hand, he was a President, whose behaviour could be taken as reasonable and smart. On the other hand, there still exist speculations about his behaviour, which are taking into a consideration his sex and drug addiction. During the Presidential elections, Kennedy concealed his health condition. Owing to the Addison's disease, he was dependent on a hormonal treatment. Logically should be asked a question about his medical addiction. Could the medicaments somehow influence his decision-making? As a layman, we are not able to say, if they did. But from a consideration, if a man/woman has a headache and takes pills, he/she usually feels better. Kennedy could be the same case. He had to take his medicaments to stop the pain and to be able to govern. Important fact states Dallek, in his book *An Unfinished Life*, who said: “To the contrary, Kennedy would have been significantly less effective without

them and might not even have been able to function“ (Dallek 576). Kennedy was a man, who managed his health problems in a large part. From this point of view, he definitely could be taken as an icon. From the other point of view, the medicaments he had to take, had an influence on Kennedy’s sexual addiction and increased his desire ("JFK's Women: The Scandals Revealed"). He knew very well, that his health was not in good condition and he enjoyed his life as much as he could.

As it was written for many times above, Kennedy signified change. He was not only a political change, but he also represented a change in a communication with the media and citizens. Often repeated press conferences moved him closer to his nation. His wife, Jacqueline, also supplemented a new presidential age. She provided *A Tour of the White House with Mrs. John F. Kennedy*, where she presented the White House from a different, better said unknown perspective. The White House Historical Association brought the history closer to citizens. Photographs of Kennedy’s sample family filled up the then magazines. It is not said in vain, that Kennedy was a kind of a Hollywood star. His manners of communication and behaving, completed with his fashion style, created a different type of President. The new cultural life in the White House, full of concerts, dinners and banquets, was only a supplement of a new era and a vision of the United States. The endeavour to alter the existing situation and overtook the Soviet Union, served as a power not only for Kennedy, but also for all Americans. Jacqueline Kennedy was also a new type of the First Lady. Her style and behaviour was appreciated for many times. The importance of Jacqueline Kennedy support statements about the contemporary First Lady, Michelle Obama. She is often compared to Jacqueline with her style and behaviour. Kennedy’s relatively positive relation to newspapers and journalist, style and desire to change America, completed the last parts of his iconic mythical hero.

Kennedy’s policy was relatively controversial. Restless moments during the Cuban Missile Crisis were definitely one of the worst in a world’s history. However, due to his decisions, the United States won their reputation back. Therefore, Kennedy’s policy can be taken as a beneficial change. Youthful touch of his ferocity encouraged many Americans to support their country. Perhaps more important fact, which he launched was, that Americans started to be proud of their country again. It was the country, which occupies the supreme positions. It was the country of their ancestors, who fought for honour and justice.

To summarize the facts mentioned in this thesis, John Fitzgerald Kennedy definitely can be considered to be an icon. Thanks to his deeds, he is stuck in minds of many people all over the world. His untimely death aroused an unexpected wave of an attention to his person. In my opinion, if he would not be assassinated, he probably would not be obtained by such kind of an attention. It is an unwritten rule, that almost every President or politician loses his/her preferences in the course of their mandate. Kennedy did not make an exception. On question “Do you approve or disapprove of the way Kennedy is handling his job as President”, which was asked on November 10, 1963, 59% of people answered Approve. Contrary to the beginning of his Presidency, in March 1961, the option Approve chose 72% of people (Erskine). That shows a change over a time. However, his assassination changed this traditional course and Kennedy became one of the most admired Presidents ever. According to several contemporary public surveys, Kennedy still belongs to the most favourite politicians and Presidents in the United States history. Although the bullet finished his life, it saved his reputation. From one point of view, Kennedy can be criticised for his behaviour during his whole life. From the other point of view, his person still attracts people all around the world. Therefore I hold the opinion, that John Fitzgerald Kennedy is an American icon.

SUMMARY IN CZECH

Tématem této bakalářské práce je JFK – Americká Ikona. Toto téma jsem si zvolila z důvodu, že osoba Johna Fitzgeralda Kennedyho stále vzbuzuje zájem i po 49 letech. Bakalářská práce se zabývá 35. prezidentem Spojených Států Amerických, Johnem Fitzgeraldem Kennedym, který byl zavražděn 22. listopadu 1963 v Dallasu. Bakalářská práce poskytuje stručné popsání jeho života, politické kariéry a odkazu, jenž ponechal. Tato bakalářská práce je rozdělena do tří hlavních kapitol, kde každá obsahuje několik podkapitol. První kapitola poskytuje pohled na Kennedyho rodinné zázemí, jeho otce Josepha Kennedyho a bratra Josepha Kennedyho Jr. Dále pokračuje Kennedyho vzděláním, zkušenostmi ve válce, před prezidentským obdobím a končí jeho ženou, Jacqueline, která se také stala určitou ikonou. Následující kapitola pojednává o Kennedyho politice. Konkrétně o tom, jak se stal prezidentem a popisuje nejznámější události, které se odehrály během jeho vlády. V poslední kapitole bakalářské práce je diskutován Kennedyho odkaz a vliv na následující generace. V závěru bakalářská práce shrnuje fakta, proč může být John Fitzgerald Kennedy považován za Americkou ikonu.

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