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Chapter 38 - The Stormy Sixties

I. Kennedy's "New Frontier" Spirit

1. In 1960, young, energetic John F. Kennedy was elected as president of the United States—the youngest man ever elected to that office.
2. The 1960s would bring a sexual revolution, a civil rights revolution, the emergence of a "youth culture," a devastating war in Vietnam, and the beginnings of a feminist revolution.
3. JFK delivered a stirring inaugural address ("Ask not, what your country can do for you..."), and he also assembled a very young cabinet, including his brother, Robert Kennedy, as attorney general.
 - Robert Kennedy tried to recast the priorities of the FBI, but was resisted by J. Edgar Hoover.
 - Business whiz Robert S. McNamara took over the Defense Department.
4. Early on, JFK proposed the Peace Corps, an army of idealist and mostly youthful volunteers to bring American skills to underdeveloped countries.
5. A graduate of Harvard and with a young family, JFK was very vibrant and charming to everyone.

II. The New Frontier at Home

1. Kennedy's social program was known as the New Frontier, but conservative Democrats and Republicans threatened to kill many of its reforms.
 - JFK did expand the House Rules Committee, but his program didn't expand quickly, as medical and education bills remained stalled in Congress.
 - JFK also had to keep a lid on inflation and maintain a good economy.
 - However, almost immediately into his term, steel management announced great price increases, igniting the fury of the president, but JFK also earned fiery attacks by big business against the New Frontier.
 2. Kennedy's tax-cut bill chose to stimulate the economy through price-cutting.
- iii. Kennedy also promoted a project to land Americans on the moon, though apathetic Americans often ridiculed this goal.

III. Rumbblings in Europe

1. JFK met Russian Premier Nikita Khrushchev and was threatened, but didn't back down.
2. In August of the 1961, the Soviets began building the Berlin Wall to separate East and West Germany.
3. Western Europe, though, was now prospering after help from the super-successful Marshall Plan.
 - America had also encouraged a Common Market (to keep trade barriers and tariff low in Europe), which later became the European Union (EU).
 - The so-called Kennedy Round of tariff negotiations eased trade between Europe and the U.S.
4. Unfortunately, French leader Charles de Gaulle was one who was suspicious of the U.S., and he rejected Britain's application into the Common Market.

IV. Foreign Flare-Ups and "Flexible Response"

1. There were many world problems at this time:
 - The African Congo got its independence from Belgium in 1960 and then erupted into violence, but the United Nations sent a peacekeeping force.
 - Laos, freed of its French overlords in 1954, was being threatened by communism, but at the Geneva Conference of 1962, peace was shakily imposed.
 - Defense Secretary McNamara pushed a strategy of "flexible response," which developed an array of military options that could match the gravity of whatever crises came to hand.
 - One of these was the Green Berets, AKA, the "Special Forces".

V. Stepping into the Vietnam Quagmire

1. The American-backed Diem government had shakily and corruptly ruled Vietnam since 1954, but it was threatened by the communist Viet Cong movement led by Ho Chi Minh.
2. JFK slowly sent more and more U.S. troops to Vietnam to "maintain order," but they usually fought and died, despite the fact that it was "Vietnam's war."

VI. Cuban Confrontations

1. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress was dubbed the "Marshall Plan for Latin America," and it aimed to close the rich-poor gap in Latin American and thus stem communism.
 - However, too many Latin Americans felt that it was too little, too late.
2. Kennedy also backed a U.S.-aided invasion of Cuba by rebels, but when the Bay of Pigs Invasion occurred, on April 17, 1961, it was a disaster, as Kennedy did not bring in the air support, and the revolt failed.
 - This event pushed recently imposed Cuban leader Fidel Castro closer to the communist camp.
 - JFK took full responsibility for the attack, and his popularity actually went up.
3. Then, in 1962, U.S. spy planes recorded missile installations in Cuba. It was later revealed that these were, in fact, nuclear missiles aimed at America.
 - The Cuban Missile Crisis lasted 13 nerve-racking days and put the U.S., the U.S.S.R., and the world at the brink of nuclear war. But in

the end, Khrushchev blinked, backed off of a U.S. naval blockade, looked very weak and indecisive, and lost his power soon afterwards.

- The Soviets agreed to remove their missiles if the U.S. vowed to never invade Cuba again; the U.S. also removed their own Russia-aimed nuclear missiles in Turkey.
- There was also a direct phone call line (the “hot line”) installed between Washington D.C. and Moscow, in case of any crisis.
- In June, 1963, Kennedy spoke, urging better feelings toward the Soviets and beginning the modest policy of détente, or relaxed tension in the Cold War.

VII. The Struggle for Civil Rights

1. While Kennedy had campaigned a lot to appeal to black voters, when it came time to help them, he was hesitant and seemingly unwilling, taking much action.
2. In the 1960s, groups of Freedom Riders chartered buses to tour through the South to try to end segregation, but white mobs often reacted violently towards them. This drew more attention to the segregation and what went on down South.
3. Slowly but surely, Kennedy urged civil rights along, encouraging the establishment of the SNCC, a Voter Education Project to register the South’s blacks to vote.
4. Some places desegregated painlessly, but others were volcanoes.
 - 29 year-old James Meredith tried to enroll at the University of Mississippi, but white students didn’t let him, so Kennedy had to send some 400 federal marshals and 3,000 troops to ensure that Meredith could enroll in his first class.
5. In spring of 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr. launched a peaceful campaign against discrimination in Birmingham, Alabama, but police and authorities responded viciously, often using extremely high-pressured water hoses to “hose down” the sit-in protesters.
 - The entire American public watched in horror as the black protesters were treated with such contempt, since the actions were shown on national TV.
 - Later, on June 11, 1963, JFK made a speech urging immediate action towards this “moral issue” in a passionate plea.
6. Still, more violence followed, as in September 1963, a bomb exploded in a Birmingham church, killing four black girls who had just finished their church lesson.

VIII. The Killing of Kennedy

1. On November 22, 1963, while riding down a street in Dallas, Texas, JFK was shot and killed, allegedly by Lee Harvey Oswald, who was himself shot by self-proclaimed avenger Jack Ruby, and there was much controversy and scandal and conspiracy in the assassination.
2. Lyndon B. Johnson became the new president of the United States as only the fourth president to succeed an assassinated president.
3. It was only after Kennedy’s death that America realized what a charismatic, energetic, and vibrant president they had lost.

IX. The LBJ Brand on the Presidency

1. Lyndon Johnson had been a senator in the 1940s and 50s, his idol was Franklin D. Roosevelt, and he could manipulate Congress very well (through his in-your-face “Johnson treatment”); also, he was very vain and egotistical.
2. As a president, LBJ went from conservative to liberal, helping pass a Civil Rights Act of 1964, which banned all racial discrimination in most private facilities open to the public, including theaters, hospitals, and restaurants.
 - Also created was the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), which was aimed at eliminating discriminatory hiring.
3. Johnson’s program was dubbed the “Great Society,” and it reflected its New Deal inspirations.
 - Public support for the program was aroused by Michael Harrington’s *The Other America*, which revealed that over 20% of American suffered in poverty.

X. Johnson Battles Goldwater in 1964

1. In 1964, LBJ was opposed by Republican Arizona senator Barry Goldwater who attacked the federal income tax, the Social Security system, the Tennessee Valley Authority, civil rights legislation, the nuclear test-ban treaty, and the Great Society.
2. However, Johnson used the Tonkin Gulf Incident, in which North Vietnamese ships allegedly fired on American ships, to attack (at least partially) Vietnam, and he also got approval for the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, which gave him a virtual blank check on what he could do in affairs in Vietnam.
3. But on election day, Johnson won a huge landslide over Goldwater to stay president.

XI. The Great Society Congress

1. Johnson’s win was also coupled by sweeping Democratic wins that enabled him to pass his Great Society programs.
2. Congress doubled the appropriation on the Office of Economic Opportunity to \$2 billion and granted more than \$1 billion to refurbish Appalachia, which had been stagnant.
3. Johnson also created the Department of Transportation and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), headed by Robert C. Weaver, the first black cabinet secretary in the United States’ history.
4. LBJ also wanted aid to education, medical care for the elderly and indigent, immigration reform, and a new voting rights bill.
 - Johnson gave money to students, not schools, thus avoiding the separation of church and state by not technically giving money to Christian schools.
 - In 1965, new programs called Medicare and Medicaid were installed, which gave certain rights to the elderly and the needy in terms of medicine and health maintenance.
 - The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 abolished the “national origin” quota and doubled the number of immigrants allowed to enter the U.S. annually, up to 290,000.

- An antipoverty program called Project Head Start improved the performance of the underprivileged in education. It was “pre-school” for the poor.

XII. Battling for Black Rights

1. Johnson’s Voting Rights Act of 1965 attacked racial discrimination at the polls by outlawing literacy tests and sending voting registrars to the polls.
2. The 24th Amendment eliminated poll taxes, and in the “freedom summer” of 1964, both blacks and white students joined to combat discrimination and racism.
 - However, in June of 1964, a black and two white civil rights workers were found murdered, and 21 white Mississippians were arrested for the murders, but the all-white jury refused to convict the suspects.
 - Also, an integrated “Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party” was denied its seat.
3. Early in 1965, Martin Luther King, Jr. resumed a voter-registration campaign in Selma, Alabama, but was assaulted with tear gas by state troopers.
 - LBJ’s responded by calling for America to overcome bigotry, racism, and discrimination.

XIII. Black Power

1. 1965 began a period of violent black protests, such as the one in the Watts area of L.A., as black leaders, mocking Martin Luther King, Jr., like Malcolm X (born Malcolm Little), who was inspired by the Nation of Islam and its founder, Elijah Muhammed. They urged action now, even if it required violence, to the tune of his battle cry, “by any means necessary.” But, Malcolm X was killed in 1965 by an assassin.
2. The Black Panthers openly brandished weapons in Oakland, California.
3. Trinidad-born Stokely Carmichael led the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee and urged an abandonment of peaceful demonstrations.
4. Black power became a rallying cry by blacks seeking more rights, but just as they were getting them, more riots broke out, and nervous whites threatened with retaliation.
5. Tragically, on April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated.
 - Quietly, though, thousands of blacks registered to vote and went into integrated classrooms, and they slowly built themselves into a politically powerful group.

XIV. Combating Communism in Two Hemispheres

1. Johnson sent men to put down a supposedly communist coup in the Dominican Republic and was denounced as over-anxious and too hyper.
2. In Vietnam, though, he slowly sent more and more U.S. men to fight the war, and the South Vietnamese became spectators in their own war. Meanwhile, more and more Americans died.
3. By 1968, he had sent more than half a million troops to Asia, and was pouring in \$30 billion annually, yet the end was nowhere in sight.

XV. Vietnam Vexations

1. America was floundering in Vietnam and was being condemned for its actions there, and French leader Charles de Gaulle also ordered NATO off French soil in 1966.
2. In the Six-Day War, Israel stunned the world by defeating Egypt (and its Soviet backers) and gaining new territory in the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank of the Jordan River, including Jerusalem.
3. Meanwhile, numerous protests in America went against the Vietnam War and the draft.
 - Opposition was headed by the influential Senate Committee of Foreign Relations, headed by Senator William Fullbright of Arkansas.
 - “Doves” (peace lovers) and “Hawks” (war supporters) clashed.
4. Both sides (the U.S. and North Vietnam) did try to have intervals of quiet time in bombings, but they merely used those as excuses to funnel more troops into the area.
5. Johnson also ordered the CIA to spy on domestic antiwar activists, and he encouraged the FBI to use its Counterintelligence Program (“Cointelpro”) against the peace movement.
6. More and more, America was trapped in an awful Vietnam War, and it couldn’t get out, thus feeding more and more hatred and resentment to the American public.

XVI. Vietnam Topples Johnson

1. Johnson was personally suffering at the American casualties, and he wept as he signed condolence letters and even prayed with Catholic monks in a nearby church—at night, secretly. And, the fact that North Vietnam had almost taken over Saigon in a blistering attack called the Tet Offensive didn’t help either.
2. Johnson also saw a challenge for the Democratic ticket from Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy, and the nation, as well as the Democratic party, was starting to be split by Vietnam.
 - LBJ refused to sign an order for more troops to Vietnam.
3. Then, on March 31, 1968, Johnson declared that he would stop sending in troops to Vietnam and that he would not run in 1968, shocking America.

XVII. The Presidential Sweepstakes of 1968

1. On June 5, 1968, Robert Kennedy was shot fatally, and the Democratic ticket went to Hubert Humphrey, Johnson’s “heir.”
2. The Republicans responded with Richard Nixon, paired with Spiro Agnew, and there was also a third-party candidate: George C. Wallace, former governor of Alabama, a segregationist who wanted to bomb the Vietnamese to death.
3. Nixon won a nail-biter, and Wallace didn’t do that badly either, though worse than expected.
4. A minority president, he owed his presidency to protests over the war, the unfair draft, crime, and rioting.

XVIII. The Obituary of Lyndon Johnson

1. Poor Lyndon Johnson returned to his Texas ranch and died there in 1973.
2. He had committed Americans into Vietnam with noble intentions, and

he really wasn't a bad guy, but he was stuck in a time when he was damned if he did and damned if he didn't.

XIX. The Cultural Upheaval of the 1960s

1. In the 60s, the youth of America experimented with sex, drugs, and defiance.
2. They protested against conventional wisdom, authority, and traditional beliefs.
3. Poets like Allen Ginsberg and novelists like Jack Kerouac (who wrote *On the Road*) voiced these opinions of the Beatnik generation.
4. Movies like *The Wild One* with Marlon Brando and *Rebel without a Cause* starring James Dean also showed this belief. Essentially, they championed the "ne'er-do-well" and the outcast.
5. At the UC-Berkeley, in 1964, a so-called Free Speech Movement began.
 - Kids tried drugs, "did their own thing" in new institutions, and rejected patriotism.
6. In 1948, Indiana University "sexologist" Dr. Alfred Kinsey had published *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, and had followed that book five years later with a female version. His findings about the incidence of premarital sex and adultery were very controversial.
 - He also estimated that 10% of all American males were gay.
 - The Manhattan Society, founded in L.A. in 1951, pioneered gay rights.
7. Students for a Democratic Society, once against war, later spawned an underground terrorist group called the Weathermen.
8. The upheavals of the 1960s and the anti-establishment movement can largely be attributed to the three P's: the youthful population bulge, the protest against racism and the Vietnam War, and the apparent permanence of prosperity, but as the 1970s rolled around, this prosperity gave way to stagnation.
9. However, the "counterculture" of the youths of the 1960s did significantly weaken existing values, ideas, and beliefs.

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