

## Review of Joseph Kennedy (JFK's Father) Myths

From Russia Insider, 21 November 2019

“The Patriarch”, published in 2012, is a fascinating book. Not because it is terribly well-written, but because of the subject matter. A key player in 20th century American society in such diverse fields as Business, Politics, Finance and Entertainment, Kennedy was a unique phenomenon if not a force of nature.

A proper review of this nearly 800 page biography would require 15 or more pages to do it justice, but for the sake of brevity, this review will focus only on one area – controversy! The author David Nasaw was given unprecedented access to almost every document pertaining to Kennedy’s life as well an opportunity to interview former friends, business associates and surviving members of the large Kennedy clan. As a result, Nasaw was able to collect enough evidence to debunk many myths surrounding the patriarch.

The first controversy surrounding the patriarch was that “Kennedy became rich through ill-gotten gains!”

When the millionaire Kennedy was a candidate to head up the newly formed SEC (Securities and Exchange Commission) the FBI was instructed to do a full background check on him. No crimes or illegal activities were discovered. Case closed.

The popular myth about Kennedy’s organized crime connections and bootlegging would arise in 1958 during his son John’s run for the presidency. Using the age old trick of “guilt by association” rumors were spread and published that attempted to smear Joseph Sr. (his son Joe Jr. had died during World War II). Once again the FBI investigated and found no evidence.

There was a Joseph Kennedy who was a bootlegger, but he was from Canada.

Then there was the Catholic controversy...

Charges were leveled against the patriarch that he was secretly working for the Vatican. In America during this time there was significant anti-Catholic (anti-Papist) bias. Nasaw points out that – ironically- the Vatican had actually worked hard to prevent John Kennedy from becoming president!

Another myth about Kennedy was that he was an anti-Semite. The controversial charge of anti-Semitism arose after Kennedy haters published criticisms that Joe made of Jewish leadership.

Nasaw – who is of Jewish heritage - defends Kennedy by pointing out that Joe had tried hard to find a home outside Germany for Jewish refugees, had a number of close Jewish friends, expressed admiration for Jews and even contributed money to Jewish organizations. After JFK was elected Joe Sr. harshly criticized the Catholic leadership - particularly the Vatican, but he was never condemned for being anti-Catholic. Nasaw had the opportunity here to point out that history often consists of “selective condemnation”, but he failed to do so.

Kennedy was also charged with being an isolationist (i.e. reactionary) in the late 1930’s as Hitler began reclaiming land Germans maintained had been stolen from them. Kennedy believed that before a country starts a conflict leading to massive destruction, economic ruin, and perhaps millions of deaths, it might be worth a try to use diplomacy to avoid such a tragedy.

If his detractors had referenced American political figures they would have discovered that America’s founding fathers, including the highly progressive Thomas Jefferson, also embraced this position. Failing to make that connection the condemnation of Kennedy was, therefore, unjust and - again -selective.

Kennedy was harshly criticized for not standing up to Hitler – the “man who started the war”.

In reality, there were a number of political leaders responsible for World War II. The big three – Hitler, Stalin and Churchill – were competitors. Each one had a massive ego, huge ambition, and a personality that would not permit criticism or dissent.

Hitler dreamt of a Third Reich – an Imperial Germany. Churchill was intent on keeping the British Empire supreme. Stalin had plans for a Communist Empire and according to Mark Solonin was planning on invading Europe to liberate the masses from Capitalism and “bourgeois Nationalism”. Not to be left out, Mussolini dreamed of resurrecting the glory days of the Roman Empire.

The notion that World War II was about “good guys versus bad guys” is a simplistic fairy tale. This was not a battle of the civilized world against the barbarians and Kennedy – the well-informed realistic - knew this. The historical record shows that the British had used a forced famine to liquidate the “sub-human” Irish and later Churchill himself would intentionally use a forced famine to kill off more than 4 million people in colonial India. Stalin used a forced famine to eliminate millions of farmers in Ukraine while killing many more in Russia through the mass murder of “enemies of the people” – including aristocrats, intellectuals, merchants and priests. Hitler would follow their lead and engage in the wholesale slaughter and mass execution of “sub-humans”.

It is quite telling that Nasaw leaves out of his biography the letters that Kennedy sent to President Roosevelt when Joseph Sr. was ambassador to Great Britain.

In this correspondence, Kennedy leaves no doubt as to who the trouble maker is on the world stage. Churchill - Kennedy was convinced – was hell-bent on a world war knowing full well that America would join in and become a partner in the post war world order. One gets the impression that Kennedy viewed Churchill as a warmongering lunatic “who must be stopped”.

It would be heresy for an American historian – like Nasaw – to suggest such a thing. Writing about history is a dangerous undertaking. Your reputation is at stake.

An historian, therefore, must engage in “selective condemnation” lest he or she be subject to “collective condemnation”.