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The Nation Has a Progeny of Troubles Because of JFK's and Johnson's Vanity

WASHINGTON—It is the unnecessary wars, like the excesses in population, that threaten to overwhelm us. But conflict, like conception, can be controlled without trying to abolish hate and love from the face of the earth.

It might not be amiss to note how history is already registering some preventable offspring of recent years. For example:

"... the fact of his (Kennedy's) saying 'No' would promptly leak to the Republicans—and his administration, plastered with the label of 'weakness' would never get off the ground in the great enterprises he had set for it."—Roger Hilsman in "To Move a Nation."

Mr. Hilsman, who headed the State Department's Bureau of Research and Intelligence, and later headed the Bureau for Far Eastern Affairs, certainly knows whereof he speaks.

No accident, then, was the military disgrace and disaster which we suffered at the Bay of Pigs, leading to the missile crisis of 1962 and the solid establishment of a Soviet base in the Western Hemisphere.

A political fear of Republicans, and ambition for his New Frontier domestic program, are here given as President Kennedy's unworthy reasons for joining and losing a battle which he shunned to fight and win.

"Had he not suffered reverses in the Bay of Pigs and in Laos, it may well be that President Kennedy would have thought twice before expanding the Vietnam commitment early in 1962 from 700 to 11,000 advisers. Had he followed a long-range policy plan rather than an understandable concern for his image as a result of the Bay of Pigs, he may have reduced rather than increased the Vietnam commitment."—Edward Weintal and Charles Bartlett in "Facing the Brink."

Again from competent, intimate, pro-Kennedy authority, there is testimony that a war was joined or enlarged for reasons that did not occur in the war zone. Stung by his Cuban misadventure, itself undertaken for partisan and domestic reasons of politics, Mr. Kennedy gambled with the nation's life because of "an understandable

concern for his image."

The chain reaction of a foolish and timid lunge to unseat Castro carried over into the ill-considered adventure in Vietnam. There is no cosmic inevitability in either of these actions. Both



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were too feeble to bring victory, both were careless as to consequence.

Here is the almost-untold Kennedy story. Internal politics rather than foreign policy led to defeat, to nuclear crisis and to a lasting disadvantage in the Caribbean.

Something close to personal vanity—his "image"—caused JFK to up the stakes in Vietnam. A bad situation was immeasurably worsened in Cuba, and the risks of a dreaded involvement in the Asian landmass were increased under motivations that do no credit to the leader of his nation.

The passive voice won't do to explain what happened. A bad time was not had by President Kennedy. He was not betrayed by bad luck. He became the father, by absence of preventive forethought, of hapless offspring which are still with us.

"The Vice-President (Mr. Johnson) found Diem 'remote from the people . . . surrounded by persons less admirable than he'—but he felt it necessary to hail him publicly as 'the Winston Churchill of Southeast Asia.'"—Hilsman in "To Move a Nation."

Vice-President Johnson, sent on a fact-finding tour to Asia, liked the sound of his rhetoric too well for his country's good. The invalid comparison of Diem to Churchill, was a phony justification of an Asian policy which the American public was asked to take on faith.

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