American liberalism. The assassinations of John and Robert Kennedy not only devastated the Kennedy family, they brought to close a whole stage of American politics and the explosive character of class relations in the United States. The assassinations of John and Robert Kennedy not only killed when his plane exploded in August of 1944). Joe Jr., the eldest brother, was a navy pilot in World War II. He succumbed to brain cancer at age 77, served 47 years in the Senate. He was the last significant political representative of a major force in American politics. Ted Kennedy, who represented, in all of its contradictions, the Democratic Party, depended for its electoral success on its alliance with the right-wing labor bureaucracy. These contradictions would play a major role in the mounting crisis that beset the Kennedy administration and its successor, that of Lyndon B. Johnson.

Ted Kennedy and the decay of American liberalism

Barry Grey

The death of Massachusetts Senator Edward (Ted) Kennedy on Tuesday marks the end of the Kennedy family’s role as a major force in American politics. Ted Kennedy, who succumbed to brain cancer at age 77, served 47 years in the Senate. He was the last significant political representative of a family that loomed large in American political consciousness for more than half a century.

Ted Kennedy died some 46 years after the horrific events in Dallas that ended the administration and the life of his brother, John F. Kennedy, and 41 years after the assassination of his remaining brother, Robert F. Kennedy. Joe Jr., the eldest brother, was a navy pilot in World War II. He was killed when his plane exploded in August of 1944).

The political careers of the Kennedys span the entire post-war period. Their personal tragedies are intimately bound up with the mausoleum of American politics and the explosive character of class relations in the United States. The assassinations of John and Robert Kennedy not only devastated the Kennedy family, they brought to close a whole stage of American liberalism.

John F. Kennedy represented, in all of its contradictions, the Democratic Party as it emerged from Roosevelt’s New Deal. He was elected to the US House of Representatives from Massachusetts’ 11th congressional district in 1946 and to the US Senate in 1952. He entered Congress only one year after Roosevelt’s death and the end of World War II. His father, Joseph Kennedy, a millionaire businessman, had served in the Roosevelt administration.

When Kennedy began his political career, American liberalism was already deeply compromised by its association with American imperialism and its embrace of anti-communism. Its decline was covered over for a period by the immense resources of American capitalism, which enabled the Democratic Party to make certain concessions to the working class. These, in turn, were bound up with its alliances with the right-wing labor bureaucracy.

The United States emerged from World War II as the dominant world imperialist power. American liberalism adopted the technique of combining idealist rhetoric with collaboration in criminal interventions by the US State Department, the CIA and the military directed against the international working class.

Even as it presented itself as the global champion of democracy and freedom, the Democratic Party depended for its electoral success on its control of the “Solid South,” which was based on its defense of racial apartheid in much of the US. These contradictions would play a major role in the mounting crisis that beset the Kennedy administration and its successor, that of Lyndon B. Johnson, whose Great Society program of social reform collapsed under the weight of the disastrous war in Vietnam and economic problems linked to the unraveling of the post-war economic boom.

John Kennedy’s political career spanned the halcyon days of US global dominance and the beginning of the breakdown of that dominance. Kennedy was elected president in 1960 as a Cold War liberal. In the White House, he attempted to marry a program of moderate domestic