

Since republication, Joseph says, he hasn't heard a peep out of Bradlee, even though Davis has included new information on the CIA allegations. The juiciest is a memo, obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, written December 13, 1952 by a prosecutor in the Rosenberg case. The memo said Bradlee had called to say he'd just flown in from Paris and wanted "to look at the Rosenberg file in order to answer the Communist propaganda about the Rosenberg case in the Paris newspapers." It also said that Bradlee "further advised that he was sent here by Robert Thayer, who is the head of the CIA in Paris. . . . He stated that he was supposed to have been met by a representative of the CIA at the airport but missed connections. He has been trying to get in touch with Allen Dulles but has been unable to do so." (Dulles was deputy director of the agency at the time.)

This is far from an airtight case, of course. But if the *Post* were doing a story on, say, Pat Buchanan, and found a similar memo, it would surely use it. It's also possible that the memo was all wrong, and one wonders what the accused has to say about this latest assault. These things should be checked out, as Bradlee pointed out in his letter to Davis's editor in 1979. So I rang him up.

"Mr. Bradlee is not commenting," said a spokeswoman, "but if he were, he would say that it is all untrue." Bradlee did tell UPI that Thayer was CIA station chief in Paris when he was working in the embassy. He also said

he had not worked for or with the CIA, and that neither Thayer nor the CIA was involved in countering propaganda about the Rosenberg prosecution.

So what are we to think? Davis, for one thing, is a pretty tough number, and held up pretty well when the dragon cut loose. By republishing, she has overcome a strong challenge to her reputation at a critical point in her career. And even though her book might not get quoted in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, she has succeeded in sinking a tooth through the legendary

hide of Ben Bradlee. Unless it turns out that the new evidence was faked, which no one has claimed, there's at least some reason to believe that Ben really was a 1950s Commie-basher for the CIA. That will cause many a conservative to tip his hat toward the *Post* building at 15th and L in downtown D.C. Then again, if it is true, Bradlee's assault on Deborah Davis represented the attempted infanticide of a young writer's career in order to save himself some "embarrassment." But that's probably a charge he wouldn't mind. □

NIXON: THE EDUCATION OF A POLITICIAN, 1913-1962

Stephen E. Ambrose/Simon and Schuster/\$22.95

Alonzo L. Hamby

Why did we hate him so? It is a question that in retrospect many thoughtful people must ask themselves about Richard Nixon. However one feels about his presidency—and I confess to a mixed evaluation—it is undeniable that in sheer personal competence he far surpasses his successors. Had he not allowed himself to get caught up in the Watergate scandal, he surely would be remembered as one of the more talented and effective chief executives of this century. His foreign policies were far more subtle, intelligent, and flexible than his opposition's. When he became President, he had no choice but to extricate the United States from Vietnam; it is hard to imagine how anyone could have done it with less damage. His domestic policies—among them revenue-sharing and the aborted Family Assistance Plan—were at times bold and innovative. He brought to the presidency qualities central to the textbook conception of the office—a sense of policy direction, political realism, pragmatic opportunism, and a remarkable talent for political and diplomatic strategy.

Yet I could never bring myself to vote for him. (I would have done so in 1972 if I had thought there was any real prospect of a McGovern presidency; instead I indulged in the luxury of leaving the presidential portion of my ballot blank.) Like others in broad sympathy with many of his policies, I found myself so lacking in sympathy for the man that I cheered his resignation.

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tion in 1974 even as I was dismayed at the prospect of a successor obviously inferior in ability. Many among my family and acquaintances, quite a few of them considerably more conservative than I, felt the same way.

Why did so many Americans hate him? His newest and, to date, best biographer, Stephen Ambrose, poses the question a bit better than he answers it. Clearly, however, he thinks that Nixon's problems stemmed not from what he stood for but simply from the sort of man he was. In covering Nixon's career through his ill-fated race for governor of California in 1962, Ambrose gives us a picture of a man who uniquely polarized the electorate, had a way of appearing devious, and (the author hints) may have possessed some self-destructive impulses.

In the externals of his life, Nixon seems like someone who should have won the admiration of most Americans. He lived the American Dream; he was a poor (or at least near poor) boy who not only made good but achieved the highest office in the land. Is it possible, then, that for all the lip service we give the American Dream, Americans do not much like the qualities it instills in those who achieve it?

No one can read of Nixon's childhood and his life as a young adult without feeling sympathetic. His mother was kind and concerned, but his father was difficult, temperamental, and quick to take a ruler or a razor strap to a disobedient child. (Ambrose does his best to soften Frank Nixon's image, but he is not very persuasive.) Two of his brothers died young, one of them unexpectedly, the other slowly

and tragically. (Inevitably, the one who survived became a personal and political liability, a kind of Republican Billy Carter.) The family survived only through ceaseless work.

Unable to afford Harvard, even with the aid of a full scholarship, Richard opted for Whittier College. He made his way through Duke Law School with a scholarship, money borrowed from his father, part-time jobs, and unremitting study; all the while, he lived in conditions that would horrify a case-hardened social worker today. Throughout his youth, he rarely had fun of any sort. American mythology tells us that this builds character; Nixon's story suggests that it can also pass a point of diminishing returns, where it grinds one down and closes one off from the world.

Ambrose does not explicitly analyze the development of Nixon's personality, but he finds in the young Nixon an insatiable thirst for achievement and recognition alongside a profound disregard for others. Among his many accomplishments, he was a star debater in high school and college; Ambrose suggests he well learned that debating, far from being a search for truth, is an exercise in persuasion and, often, in the manipulation of facts. He cites the comment of a Duke Law School acquaintance that Nixon was "not unmoral, just amoral." Many people respected him; no one, it seems, loved him. He was too detached, too tightly self-controlled, too single-minded. Above all, he appears early on to have come to the conclusion that life was a struggle in which Marquis of Queensberry Rules were irrelevant.

One detects also traces of self-doubt, possibly self-destructiveness, that the author does not probe. It seems certain that Nixon wanted to break out of his provincial environment, that, as he would say many years later, he listened to the sound of train whistles in the night. Yet there is evidence that young Nixon was equally frightened of the larger world. Did he really turn down a full scholarship to Harvard because of money problems? Four years later, he made it through Duke Law School under similar conditions, and his younger brother was able to attend a nearby private prep school. Was he really compelled to return to Whittier because he was "only third" in his class at Duke? It is true that Duke Law School's reputation was then relatively unproved; but Nixon did not try terribly hard to establish himself on the East Coast.

Two things appear to have changed Nixon's life—his marriage and his military service. Ambrose's treatment of the marriage is intriguing, and satis-

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factory, given the difficulties of researching living subjects who value their privacy. Pat Nixon, he tells us, is an exceptional woman whose toughness and ambition matched her husband's. He summarily dismisses the media image of her as "plastic Pat." Yet his treatment of her is mostly within the confines of that very image; he depicts her as always dutiful, devoted to her husband's career, and largely responsible for rearing their two daughters. Nixon, by contrast, is pictured as almost callously neglectful of his wife, even indifferent to her physical safety, and usually out of contact with their children.

Perhaps it is none of our business; perhaps it is impossible to get at the full truth. One instinctively believes, however, that their marriage was more complicated than Ambrose makes it out to be. If Nixon, like most politicians, spent more time away from home than men in other occupations, he also was faithful to his wife and won the devotion of his daughters. He presumably played some part in their development into two of the more exemplary presidential offspring of recent generations. In short, by most standards, Richard Nixon seems to have been a quite successful husband and father, much more so than the narrative leads one to believe.

The impact of Nixon's tour of duty in the Navy during World War II is much easier to deal with. It took him around much of America and into the South Pacific, taught him to deal with all types of men, and to manage new challenges. Nixon was a first-rate officer who was liked and respected by the men who served under him. Certainly his experiences in the military widened his horizons.

With that in mind, does the author have to put so much emphasis on the fact that during the war Nixon learned how to play a mean game of poker? His point is that poker taught Nixon to sense a bluff and to call it, as he did later, most notably, in the case of Alger Hiss. Well, possibly. But Nixon's instincts were not so solid in dealing with Communist-led Latin American demonstrators who, hardly bluffing, came close to killing him and his wife during a state visit to South America in 1958. Nor was he himself very good at bluffing when he was away from the card table; few politicians have been so inept at concealing emotion.

In dealing with Nixon's early political career, Ambrose works hard to give him every benefit of the doubt. Still, he cannot find a redeeming excuse for the character of Nixon's 1946 congressional campaign against Jerry Voorhis or for the rhetorical excess he showed following his 1962 loss to Pat Brown. The author's explanations are not ter-

ribly convincing: Truman's campaigning was as outrageous (HST was never known to use the word "treason" against his opponents), Helen Gahagan Douglas started the mudslinging in the 1950 campaign, American politics (or California politics) was a dirty business during these years, and so on. In fact, the young Richard Nixon was ambitious, highly partisan, instinctively combative, and only a bit more scrupulous than Joe McCarthy.

Ambrose is more convincing when he examines the positive side of Nixon's career. He was a constructive internationalist who not only defied the isolationist-minded businessmen who launched him into politics but educated them and made them like the world. He was right on Alger Hiss, whether by virtue of his poker experience or some other instinct. (My own guess is that he reacted out of a revulsion against Hiss's patrician smugness.) And he was from time to time the victim of cheap shots himself, most notably the "secret fund" issue of 1952, a pseudo-scandal that nearly destroyed him.

As one might expect, Ambrose—the major biographer of Dwight D. Eisenhower—is at his best in examining the frequently difficult relationship between the hero-President and his Vice President. Ike does not come out well. Caring little for the Republican party and unwilling to sully his image with partisan campaigning, he used Nixon primarily as an effective Democrat-basher. Time and again, he sent the younger man out on search-and-destroy missions, then privately deplored his rough tactics.

Ambrose leaves no doubt that the Old Hero wanted Nixon off the ticket in 1956, but could not bring himself to issue a direct order. At no point did he give the Vice President any truly significant responsibility. Consequently, Nixon had little choice but to seek out opportunities for unsubstantial but noticeable diplomatic trips and to act as the Administration's chief campaigner. In the latter role, he too often threw large chunks of raw (and frequently rancid) political meat to the party regulars. He won their devotion, and an eventual presidential nomination, at the cost of irrevocably alienating most Democrats and many independents.

Perhaps, as Ambrose believes, Ike was just insensitive in Nixon's case, but such would be amazing in a man justly renowned for his skill in personal relations. Eisenhower had established his career on his reputation as a consensus builder; Nixon was a polarizer. It is more conceivable that Ike saw him as he did George Patton—a combat leader of the first order with a tempera-

ment that disqualified him for the top job. At one point, Ambrose suggests that Ike treated Nixon no worse than he treated his own son. Possibly so, but with a father-substitute like this, who could blame Nixon if he became a bit paranoid?

In the end, what brought Nixon down was his own personality. If he had possessed half of Eisenhower's charm (or that of his old adversary Hiss), he would be remembered as one of the great politicians of this century. Instead, he had a way of appearing devious even when he was not. As Ike's secretary Ann Whitman put it, "the Vice President sometimes seems like a man who is acting like a nice man rather than being one." The word "sometimes" could have been replaced by "usually." Nixon was no more insincere than most politicians, but I suspect that he was more prone than most to doubt his credibility. The result was an extra effort to appear "nice" or "sincere" that more often than not came across as phony.

As shrewd political tactician, Nixon made critical mistakes in his 1960 presidential and 1962 gubernatorial campaigns. Perhaps they were the result of his customary overwork and inability to delegate responsibility; perhaps they were the outgrowth of a political death-wish that only a therapist could explain. In 1960, for example, he fully understood the importance of television but nevertheless agreed to go on the air with Kennedy and did so with insufficient preparation and inadequate attention to his physical appearance. His 1962 campaign against Pat Brown with its references to "the mess in Sacramento" and Brown's alleged softness on Communism was ludicrous. (One can only say in exculpation that it was not yet possible to attack Brown for one of the graver political sins of the last generation, his role in rearing his son Jerry.)

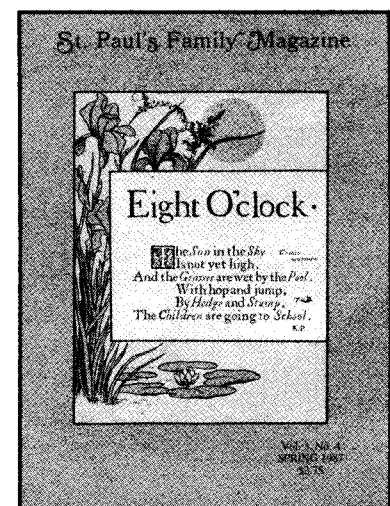
Still, Ambrose does not quite develop a full answer to the problem of why so many hated Nixon. My hunch is that he displayed too many of the rough edges of the American success myth. Overachievers who fight their way to the top are frequently unattractive. They tend to be tense, insecure, aggressive. Those born at the top, like John F. Kennedy, often radiate a charm that comes easily to those who feel they have nothing to prove. Kennedy, as Ambrose points out, was no better, intellectually or morally, than Nixon; on television there seemed no comparison.

This book ends at the nadir of Nixon's political life—just after he has told California reporters that they won't have him to kick around anymore. Of course they would, and I hope Am-

brose will recount the second phase of the Nixon saga as well as he has recounted the first. If he does, I suspect he will leave us feeling that Nixon was a more impressive President than many people like to admit. Indeed, as one surveys the various faceless dwarfs, Snow Whites, wimps, and assorted gnomes aspiring to the office today, one is compelled to feel that in 1988 we could do worse—and probably will. □

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OUT OF EGYPT: SCENES AND
ARGUMENTS OF AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY
Ihab Hassan/Southern Illinois University Press/\$15.95

Mark Falcoff

Ihab Hassan is a distinguished literary critic of American and comparative literature at the Milwaukee campus of the University of Wisconsin. Born in Egypt in 1925, he thought or spoke, until well into his adolescence, in either Arabic or French; in 1946 he left his native country on a scholarship to study electrical engineering at the University of Pennsylvania. Somewhere along the way he shifted his focus of academic interests, achieved an astounding mastery of English, and became an American citizen. He has had two American wives, fathered an American son with the first of them, and has never returned to the land of his birth. His *Radical Innocence* and *The Literature of Silence* are familiar to all serious students of literature; *Out of Egypt* now reveals the man behind them.

As the subtitle indicates, this is not really an autobiography, but rather a series of sketches and reflections. They do, however, reveal much about a reticent, almost painfully discreet academic. (One can imagine many of his closest American colleagues and friends learning of these episodes from his past only by reading them here!) What is more to the point, they address in a deeply personal way some of the central issues of the post-colonial era. Thus *Out of Egypt* is at once a contribution to belles-lettres, sociology, and historical commentary—all in hardly more than a hundred pages! It is also an utterly delightful read.

The principal theme of this book is one which most Western liberals who speak so wistfully about the "Third World" cannot even grasp—namely, that most intellectuals and people of "modern" outlook in such countries are trapped in a cosmopolitan no-man's-land. This was certainly the case in pre-Nasser Egypt, where the language of the cultured classes was French, and the tastes and life-styles evocative of Southern or even Central Europe. One did not need to ascend to the top of the social pyramid to observe this: Hassan's father was a lawyer who eventually became a governor of several provinces under the fraudulent monar-

chy of King Fuad, and therefore a member of the professional upper-middle class. While his parents could never enter the British clubs in Cairo, they lived at a certain level of comfort and refinement; their friends were not merely Egyptian, but French, Italian, Greek. They accepted European domination of their country as in some ways regrettable, but saw no reason not to enjoy its better aspects. In some ways, this made them foreigners in their own country; small wonder that when the nationalist banners they waved as students became the standards of a new state, so many emigrated, or wished to.

Prewar Egypt has disappeared forever, a victim of decolonization and a spurious "Arab Socialism," which now in turn is threatened by Muslim fundamentalism. Though Hassan has no illusions about the *ancien regime*, he manages to evoke it with charm and nostalgia. "The story of the royal family," he writes, "encapsulates that of Egypt itself: prodigal, corrupt, cruel sometimes, flashing in rare moments of splendor." And then he adds, "In my day, nothing flashed brighter than the 'King's Crimson,' a vibrant orange-red paint that marked the royal fleet of Rolls-Royces and Cadillacs, before

which Cairo traffic opened like the Red Sea."

Here is his description of the arrival of a royal party to one of the provincial capitals where his father served as governor:

King Fuad came up the Nile in his brilliant white yacht *El Mahroussa* (The Protected One). The ship glowed at night like a floating galaxy, outshining the spangled, colored bulbs and floodlights on each shore. The next morning, brass bands struck up as the yacht began to dock. Mounted police, their lances trimmed with green and white streamers, lined the embankment, while their officers pranced their horses back and forth, swords at rest, glinting in the sun. Headed by my father, the reception party stood nervously waiting on a pier swatched with vast oriental carpets while the ship churned the muddy water, nosing into place.

Finally, the portly king, clad in a tight pearl-grey *redingote*, stepped down at the gangplank on small, elegant feet. I felt a quiet push at my back, and walked up to him, beribboned bouquet in my hand and rubber in my knees. Somehow, I managed to bow from my small height—I had rehearsed this with my mother endlessly—bow without sweeping the ground with white roses. In a whisper, I welcomed the king to Sohag [the town]. With the flicker of a smile, he received the bouquet, said, "*Mutashakereen*" (we thank you), and passed on. Suddenly, after weeks of timorous expectation, I found myself standing on the pier, free and unburdened, alone.

Shortly after that Hassan's father fell afoul of the ascendant party in the palace, and was dismissed from royal service. They lived thereafter, as he says, "in reduced circumstances," though not, it would seem, unbearably so. By that time Hassan was entering school in Cairo, and subject to all of

the ideological trends which swept Egypt towards the end of the Second World War. When he finished high school he wanted to enter the Royal Military School (Egypt's Sandhurst), his only dream—as that of all his class and generation—to expel the British from Egypt. (As he wryly observes, had he done so he might have ended up in Nasser's Free Officer Movement, or in a Sinai grave in 1947.) His parents would hear none of it, so instead he enrolled in the Engineering School of the University of Cairo.

The description of university life will do for any "developing" country (mercifully, Hassan himself always uses the quotation marks). The quality of instruction was indifferent; there were few opportunities for extra-curricular activity; except for athletics, there was no place for the university population to develop a sense of community. "Indeed," he acutely observes, "the notorious student riots of Egypt may have been sparked less by political events than the need of fervent youths to meet one another in common hope." In the case of one occupation of a building, he writes,

our families fretted; the deans chafed; *el bolice* [the police] lolled outside, yawning beneath their steel helmets. They could have flushed us out easily with their cudgels and canes; but too many students there came from "good families," and the governor of Giza counselled restraint. Time took their side, entropy ours. They made a few "concessions," rescinded them quietly later. We came out on the third day, claiming *nasr* (victory).

Shortly thereafter, Hassan won a scholarship to the United States, and left, never to return—never, indeed, intending to do so. (Just why is not explained.) The two sentiments—the nationalist effervescence combined with a strong will to exile—so neatly coupled, so inextricably linked, one following the other without even a pause, without embarrassment or self-consciousness—does this not suggest how thin is the veneer of "nationalism" of Third World countries, the same phantasm we are constantly urged to take seriously, to conciliate, even to appease? Of course, Hassan does not say this, since he is no V. S. Naipaul, but then he is not Edward Said either. ("Had Britain brought illiteracy and disease to Egypt in the first place?" he asks doubtfully. "Did it impose poverty on the fellah for millennia? Who makes imperialism possible? And how healthy, free, or affluent are Egyptians thirty years after liberation?")

One would have expected Hassan, having lived for so many years in the United States, to say a bit more



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