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Editorial Book Review

America's Greatest Political Adventure

THE COMING OF THE NEW DEAL. Vol II of "The Age Of Roosevelt." By Arthur Schlesinger Jr. Houghton Mifflin. 669 pp. $6.75.

Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.

THE weather was disagreeable on March 4, 1933. Washington was wrapped in a somber mist and the crowd before the Capitol must have shivered as it listened to the new President of the United States.

"The nation asks for action and action now," he said, giving each broadened "a" velvety emphasis. "We must act and act quickly."

There was a burst of applause. In another minute or so the inaugural address was over and the nation embarked on the greatest peacetime adventure in its history. The Age of Roosevelt had begun.

Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., Harvard professor, son of a distinguished historian, Pulitzer Prize-winning author, is using THE AGE OF ROOSEVELT as the working title for a long history of those turbulent times. Last year, we reviewed Volume I, THE CRISIS OF THE OLD ORDER, a brilliant study of the decay of U. S. leadership in the 1920s and the conditions which brought Franklin D. Roosevelt to power. Volume II, THE COMING OF THE NEW DEAL, deals with the first two years of the long Roosevelt administration. But those two years contained enough social, economic and political drama to enliven a century. In 669 pages, Mr. Schlesinger has skillfully captured both the excitement and the significance of the times. It is, quite simply, a superb achievement, almost a masterpiece.

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THE New Deal was not a radical invention. The whole enterprise, as Henry Steele Commager has pointed out, was conservative in character. Its first chore was to save the structure of the banking system. Then it went quickly to work to save big business, the farmers, the nation's natural resources and, finally, our political institutions.

To do the saving, Roosevelt brought to Washington the New Dealers, that endless army of brilliant men who were at home in the world of ideas, who were delighted with the play of the free mind.

The early effect was stimulating to say the least. "It was one of the most joyous periods of my life," wrote newsman Thomas L. Stokes who covered Roosevelt's arrival in Washington. "We came alive, we were eager." Rexford G. Tugwell, one of the original braintrusters, called it a "renaissance spring . . . a time of rebirth after a dark age."

Said Schlesinger: "At his worst, the New Dealer became an arrant sentimentalist or a cynical operator. At his best, he was the liberal, most intelligent and most disinterested public servant the United States ever had."

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THE accomplishments of the First Hundred Days were monumental and Schlesinger records them with loving care. Roosevelt was inaugurated on March 4. On March 9 Congress passed the Emergency Banking Act, on March 20 the Economy Act, on March 31 the Civilian Conservation Corps Act. The gold standard was abandoned on April 19. In May, the Agricultural Adjustment Act, the Emergency Farm Mortgage Act, the Tennessee Valley Authority Act and the Truth-in-Securities Act were passed. In June came the abrogation of the gold clause in public and private contracts, the Home Owners' Loan Act, the National Industrial Recovery Act, the Glass-Steagall Banking Act, the Farm Credit Act and the Railroad Coordination Act.

"This was the Hundred Days," writes Schlesinger, "and in this period Franklin Roosevelt sent 15 messages to Congress, guided 15 major laws to enactment, delivered ten speeches, held press conferences and Cabinet meetings twice a week, conducted talks with foreign heads of state, sponsored an international conference, made all the minor decisions in domestic and foreign policy and never displayed fright or panic and rarely even bad temper."

What manner of man was this? He was too big, too mysterious even for Schlesinger to capture completely within the covers of a single book. He was, the author confesses on page 511, a "profoundly enigmatic President."

He kidded the solemn, soothed the egotistical and inspired the downhearted. But, Schlesinger writes, there remained a sense of ambiguity and craftiness. "He could be hard and frightening when he wanted to be," and he played the political game with cold skill. Charm, humor, power, persuasion, menace, idealism—all were weapons in his armory."

The honeymoon was short for some early admirers. Big businessmen who had embraced the New Deal in 1933 began to see it in 1934 as an agency of totalitarian tyranny. The American Liberty League was formed. Roosevelt called it the "I Can't Take It" Club, and numbered among its members Al Smith, John W. Davis and the du Ponts but the vast majority of Americans were still captivated by FDR. "At no point on record," writes Schlesinger, "did the American Liberty League construe 'liberty' as meaning anything else but the folding stuff. At no point did it show convincing interest in the suffering of people who lacked plantations in South Carolina or houseboats on the Caloosahatchee."

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THERE was plenty of suffering to go around in 1933-34. "I do not think it is too much to say," wrote Tugwell in 1933, "that on March 4 we were confronted with a choice between orderly revolution — a peaceful and rapid departure from past concepts — and a violent and disorderly overthrow of the whole capitalist structure." People were hungry—and they got hungrier. There was widespread unrest. But Roosevelt and his New Dealers brought hope—and new ideas. "We have had our revolution," said COLLIER'S later, "and we like it."

Schlesinger writes with considerable persuasiveness that the tenents of the First New Deal (1933-34) were that technological revolution had rendered bigness inevitable; that competition could no longer be relied on to protect social interests; that large units were an opportunity to be seized rather than a danger to be fought, and that the formula for stability in the new society must be combination and cooperation under enlarged federal authority. The New Deal's big tool in industry was the National Recovery Act, the much-abused Blue Eagle. It is fashionable today to view NRA as a flop. True, its strictly economic contributions to recovery were limited. It was a hastily improvised holding action. But it can be credited for a whole series of enduring achievements in the social field—achievements discussed with great adroitness by Schlesinger.

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NRA established the principle of maximum hours and minumum wages. It abolished sweatshops and child labor, made collective bargaining a national policy, gave new status to the consumer, stamped out many unfair trade practices and set new standards of economic decency in U. S. life. "For all its defects," writes Schlesinger, "NRA represented an essential continuity which in face of crisis helped preserve American unity."

But THE COMING OF THE NEW DEAL is no starry-eyed tabulation of FDR's early successes. It is basically an adventure yarn full of cliff-hanging suspense and exciting twists of plot. It is a peek backstage at the people who made history and a critical rendering of the history they made.

The portraits of early New Dealers are often cruelly revealing. The whole family is here: Henry A. Wallace ("no airs, no polish, no small talk, no wit, no front"), Gen. Hugh Johnson ("No one in Washington labored so long, shouted so loudly, smoked so many cigarettes or drank so much liquor"), Donald Richberg ("sly, cynical humor, great ambition . . . cunning"), Frances Perkins ("poignancy of character, a dry wit, an inner gaiety, an instinct for practicality . . . and a compulsion to instruct"), Harold L. Ickes ("the incarnation of lonely, righteous and unextinguishable pugnacity"), Harry Hopkins ("resourcefulness and cynicism"), Henry Morgenthau Jr. ("a pervading mixture of insecurity and aggressiveness").

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CURIOUSLY, the only incomplete portrait in the book is of Roosevelt himself. He had, in Schlesinger's own words, not one personality but a ring of personalities each one dissolving on approach, always revealing still another beneath. He will no doubt emerge more clearly as this significant project unfolds. For Mr. Schlesinger without doubt, is producing one of the most important works in American historical literature.

Smellevision, as developed by an English inventor, sounds promising, but wouldn't it be something of a nuisance moving upwind during the commercials? —ASHEVILLE CITIZEN.

Overtime is basic to the American economy. Would there be any chance of getting time and a half for undertime, in case somebody finished a job in a hurry? — JACKSONVILLE TIMES-UNION.

Nixon Wraps Political Strategy In Senate Tactics

By JOSEPH ALSOP

WASHINGTON

AT THE most stirring opening of a Senate session in recent history, Vice President Richard M. Nixon was pale, tense, and plainly ill at ease. Under the stern, intimidating glare of Majority Leader Lyndon B. Johnson, Nixon gave his crucial rulings hesitantly, nervously, and unclearly.

It was a curious confrontation between a master parliamentarian and a master politician. One reason for Nixon's uneasiness, very obviously, was his consciousness of his own parliamentary weakness. For the most different possible reasons, Nixon is no more a "Senate man" than Henry Wallace was before him. Otherwise, he could hardly have brought himself to raise his famous doubts about the Senate being a continuing body with enduring rules.

POLITICIAN SPEAKING

When he raised these doubts in 1957, and on this new occasion when he so tensely reiterated them, politician-Nixon was speaking. But there was also another, purely political reason why Nixon was not at his ease. In this matter, the politics were hardly more plain sailing than the parliamentary procedure.

Indeed, Nixon must have minded the confrontation with Johnson a good deal less than another confrontation that occurred the day before he gave his 1957 decision calling in question the whole sacred, immemorial structure of the Senate's rules.

DEFYING HIGH COMMAND

Nixon then defied the entire Republican high command in the Senate—the true but behind-the-scenes leader, Styles Bridges of New Hampshire; the official leader, William Knowland of California; and the Chairman of the party conference, Leverett Saltonstall of Massachusetts. Each of these men, even the mild Saltonstall, was bitterly angry with Nixon. Each showed his anger in his own way. Saltonstall by expostulation, witty Bridges with his cutting tongue, and violent Knowland by something very close to a physical explosion.

According to one of those who were present, they "came as close to blows as men can without actually using their fists." No wonder, then, that this scene has become a major legend of the Senate's inner history.

The story did not end there, either. Led by Bridges, the Republican conservatives are still working with Lyndon Johnson to prevent any over-drastic change in the Senate rules by the civil rights advocates. Bridges therefore went to Nixon, again the day before the session opened, to make the same arguments that were made in 1957. This time Nixon did his best to be accommodating on lesser points of procedure. He agreed, for instance, to hold that the old rules retained their force until they were directly challenged. But he flatly refused to change his stand on the main point.

Bridges had practical arguments to offer, too. Even in 1957, Nixon was primarily the candidate of the Republican conservatives. Today, when Nixon's nightmares, if he has any, are haunted by the hustling specter of Nelson Rockefeller, the conservatives are Nixon's necessary mainstay. Yet the Republican conservatives care not at all about civil rights, and they care very deeply indeed about preserving the Republican-Southern conservative coalition.

OUTRAGE

For this reason, Nixon's stand has outraged his strongest supporters in his own party, and particularly in the Senate. He has not diminished the outrage, either, by pleading his necessity to "represent the Eisenhower administration's" position on civil rights. The President's total rejection of the civil rights issue is too flagrantly apparent. Nixon's own eager efforts to promote a much stronger civil rights policy are too well known. In short, it is well understood that he had been representing himself, and not Eisenhower.

These facts in turn speak volumes about the political strategy Nixon means to use, in order to ward off the threat of Nelson Rockefeller. This strategy is plainly based on the assumption that the conservatives will have to join the Nixon camp in the end, if only because Nixon will be the lesser of two evils. On this assumption, Nixon will not be bound by the traditional conservative attitudes. He will be free to compete with Rockefeller on his own ground. Holding the old Taft group while sounding like Nelson Rockefeller will be something of a feat; but Nixon means to try it.

'Gambling Isn't Being Entirely Eliminated'

On The Tracks

Johnson: Virtuoso

By DORIS FLEESON

WASHINGTON

THE opening of the new Congress finds the vanquished in ferment and the victors held firmly in leash by their Southern leadership.

House Republicans demanded and got more vigorous, acute leadership with the help of Vice President Richard M. Nixon and White House aides, though they did not change direction and show few signs of wanting to do so. GOP Senate insurgents elected their choice for second in command and demonstrated an ability to work in concert for new goals and a more progressive course of action.

PRICE TAGS

The majority leaders scored impressive personal triumphs to which some price tags are attached.

Speaker Sam Rayburn has committed himself to House approval of fairly comprehensive liberal legislation in return for a harmonious and traditional opening of the session. These debts will be called in time by a liberal Democratic bloc possessing an unusual grasp of legislative detail and a self-discipline rare among any species of reformer.

In the Senate, Democratic leader Lyndon B. Johnson, operating at the top of his form, put the filibuster train on a track marked Johnson and headed straight for the compromise destination he has plotted out for it.

His virtuoso performance dealt purely with procedural matters; he has won only the initial skirmish. Liberal strategists determined to end the filibuster and enact a strengthened civil rights bill are now obliged to find new tactics with which to counter him. It is a struggle in which reputations for political capacity will be made, enhanced, or perhaps lost altogether.

Johnson has set the pace in a dazzling display of a leader determined to lead. His grasp on the parliamentary situation never faltered; he took brilliant advantage of his power as majority leader in control of the calendar. At exactly the right moment he exploited the camaraderie and confusion of opening day when new senators particularly are emotionally involved with their families and supporters.

A casualty he may have hoped for but could not have controlled came his way from the opposition party. It was Vice-President Nixon, whose constitutional duty it is to preside over the Senate.

The vice-president has been acclaimed as a political craftsman, and civil rights advocates were counting heavily on his help. But he seemed thrown completely off balance by Johnson's sudden swift penetration of the liberal lines. Even Nixon's voice faltered as he weakly attempted to stave off the Johnson threats to the whole liberal position.

RUTHLESSNESS OF PRICE

The laymen in the galleries could not have realized how extraordinarily ignorant of Senate rules and practice the young vice president seemed. They must have noticed that he lacked assurance, much less boldness. With experienced senators, Nixon lost much ground; they had expected at the very least more adequate preparation for the struggle everyone knew would mark the opening day.

Nothing like this Senate's debut has been seen here since Franklin Roosevelt laid out the first New Deal track to hit precisely the destinations he set for it. Incidentally, two of the old Roosevelt engineers, lawyers Thomas Corcoran and Benjamin Cohen, are advising Johnson.

Such ruthlessness has a price attached to it, which Roosevelt always managed to pay; it remains to be seen whether Senator Johnson has any such hold on the American voter.

People's Platform

Bowl Officials Send Thanks

Charlotte

Editors, The News:

THE following resolution was adopted by the board of governors of the Shrine Bowl of the Carolinas, Inc., in appreciation of the publicity given the 22nd annual Shrine Bowl all-star football game played for the benefit of the crippled children in the Shriners' Hospital for Crippled Children, Greenville, S. C., on Saturday, Dec. 6, in Charlotte.

Whereas, The Charlotte News has again this year through its columns and in its sport pages presented so effectively the annual Shrine Bowl all-star football game, played for the benefit of the Endowment Fund of the Hospital; be it RESOLVED, That the Shrine Bowl Board of Governors in its endeavor to perpetuate the resemblance of the less fortunate child, hereby records its appreciation of the assistance and cooperation it is receiving from The Charlotte News and its staff of reporters and photographers, and directs the secretary to express its thanks to The Charlotte News for this assistance.

— CLARENCE BEESON
Chairman, Board of Governors
Shrine Bowl

The Greatest Gift Doesn't Seek Fame

Charlotte

Editors, The News:

TODAY as I think of the wonderful thing Jerry Ball, the pianist, is doing to help raise money for the March of Dimes I think of those who need help and will receive better treatment. Recently my 8-year-old granddaughter spent the night with me and said that although she didn't have much money she was going to put some in the March of Dimes box. How much more should a grown person give.

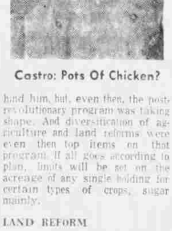
The greatest gift anyone can give is one which doesn't seek headlines or popularity — but the good it can do.

— MAYME BARGER

A Glimpse At Castro's Plans

By ROBERT TABER

Editors' Note: CBS Newsman Robert Taber, the first broadcast journalist to interview Fidel Castro at his rebel headquarters in Cuba's Sierra Maestra Mountains, presented the following observation of Castro and his post revolutionary program on CBS Radio's "The World Tonight":



Castro: Pots Of Chicken?

I KNOW the new leader, Fidel Castro. And I've had the opportunity, over the past two years to study the program of which he is — to a great extent, but not entirely — the author.

With regard to the immediate outlook for Cuba, I should say that a sharp turn to the political and economic Left is in prospect, but that doesn't necessarily mean a swing toward Moscow. In Fidel Castro's mind, at least, it means a swing toward something resembling the politics of the New Deal under F.D.R.

CALL IT SOCIAL JUSTICE

Castro certainly would not call it socialism; he'd call it social justice. Cuba has thousands of rural families, tenants and so-called squatters, who can't raise the cash to pay rent on small plots that their ancestors have squatted on for centuries. The island also has millions of acres that are idle. It has much of its best land in sugar, the big cash crop, and imports the major part of its food.

Castro told me some of these things when I first interviewed him deep in Cuba's Sierra Maestra mountains, nearly two years ago. He had landed little more than three months before. He had scarcely 100 armed men behind him, but, even then, the post-revolutionary program was taking shape. And diversification of agriculture and land reforms were even then top items on that program. If all goes according to plan, limits will be set on the acreage of any single holding for certain types of crops, sugar mainly.

LAND REFORM

The acreage deemed excess would be distributed to small holders who would use it to grow food crops and would pay for it, at nominal prices or on long term basis. Idle acreage would be expropriated and redistributed to landless rural families, of which there are perhaps two hundred thousand in Cuba. Castro would like a vast road-building program. Thousands of square miles of the highland territory over which he has marched have only footpaths and mulepaths. He wants rural electrification. Above all — industry. That again could have its effect on the United States. If some of the movement's top policy planners have their way, it will mean tariff barriers to protect a new-born industry, and possibly currency restrictions to keep that sugar money in Cuba.

OPTIMIST

As to the man Fidel Castro, he is many things, but I should say definitely not a likely recruit for Moscow. Castro is the son of a land-owner, in some respects he is a provincial aristocrat in the Spanish tradition. He is a devout Catholic like the vast majority of his followers. He is, it does not need saying, an optimist. A man who can inculcate a country of five and a half million people with 81 followers and take over the government within little more than two years, needs to be an optimist.

CHICKEN POT SHOTS

I remember seeing him, with a ragged blanket draped over his shoulders, standing on a hill one early, misty morning, trying to shoot a bald-wild chicken with a .45 caliber pistol at 30 yards. He knew it looked ludicrous, and said: But when he saw me he just turned his head and grinned, and then went back to what he was doing. We were hungry; we needed the chicken.

P. S. We didn't get it.

Leftward Ho!

Drew Pearson's Merry-Go-Round

WASHINGTON

POLITICAL observers, accustomed to keeping score on the ebb and flow of American politics, give the edge in the past 10 days to the Republicans.

In November, after the Democrats elected the largest number of senators in two decades, and rolled up a big new margin in the House, some observers were predicting that the Republican elephant was just about down and out. Now they've decided there's life in the old gal yet.

Perked Up

What's perked up opinion of Republicans is largely the fact that they have resorted to the democratic processes. In contrast, the Democrats deserted the democratic processes in passing on the gag rule of Congressman Smith's Rules Committee. They let one man, Speaker Sam Rayburn, decide the issue. There was no democratic debate in caucus. Everything was decided in advance, even to the seating of contested Congressman Dale Alford of Arkansas.

Democratic Process

Meanwhile, the Republicans battled it out, by the democratic process, for their new leader. Actually the new leader, Charlie Halleck, will be no different in policy from good old Joe Martin. But the fact that the Republicans staged a battle and changed leaders gave the GOP a healthier look.

Simultaneously, Republican senators also staged a healthy battle between Dirksen and Cooper for the Senate GOP leadership. The old guard won, but battling it out gave the public an impression of vigor.

School Fires

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce issued a special bulletin berating me when I called attention to its lobbying against the school construction bill. It was especially irate over mention of the fact that crowded, inadequate schools can lead to fires.

However, the U.S. Chamber might well read the report of the American Institute of Architects.

Pointing To Chicago

"Chicago's disastrous school fire," report the architects, "has focused attention on the unsafe conditions which exist in thousands of obsolete school buildings still in daily use. Despite prodigious efforts of communities during the past few years to provide adequate educational facilities for their booming enrollments, the rate of construction has barely kept pace with increased attendance. Overcrowded classrooms in outmoded buildings are all too common in U.S. cities and towns today."

'Democracy' Rejuvenates Republicans

Charlie Halleck, new House GOP leader, can now be called "three-Cadillac Charlie." Immediately after the war when automobiles were extremely hard to get, Congressman Halleck blossomed out with two Cadillacs—how, still remains a mystery. This week he took away Joe Martin's Cadillac . . .

Playing Ball

When hard-hitting Congressman Chet Holifield called on Speaker Sam Rayburn to revamp the gag rule which bottles legislation up in the Rules Committee, Sam replied: "Howard Smith will have to play ball like everyone else. No one is bigger than the Democratic party." . . . Aside: Sen. Lyndon Johnson sent some campaign funds to help out Sen. Dennis Chavez in his race for re-election last November. Today Chavez, once a battler for civil rights, is siding with Johnson on the question of ending filibusters.