

PERIODICALS

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POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

Why Scholars Now Like Ike

"Eisenhower Revisionism: The Tide Comes In" by Anthony James Joes, in *Presidential Studies Quarterly* (Summer 1985), 208 East 75th St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Few Chief Executives have fared so poorly among scholars of the presidency as Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953-61). Only two years after he left office, a poll of historians ranked him 20th in stature among U.S. presidents—tied with Chester A. Arthur (1881-85).

But the scholarly rehabilitation of Ike is now under way. Indeed, according to Joes, professor of politics at St. Joseph's University, this revisionism amounts to a minor "intellectual revolution," reflecting a recent change in the way Americans view their presidents and the United States' role in the world arena.

During his days in the Oval Office, the popular former World War II commander was no stranger to criticism. In *Eisenhower: Captive Hero* (1958), columnist Marquis Childs described the president as "a man little given to reflection" who "seemed to regard the presidency almost as a ceremonial office." Childs faulted, among other things, Ike's refusal to stop the anti-Communist "witch hunts" of Sen. Joseph McCarthy (R.-Wis.); his hesitant support for civil rights; and his apparent abdication of foreign policy-making to Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. A bleak post-mortem came in *Ordeal of Power* (1963) by Emmet J. Hughes, a former Eisenhower speechwriter who cited Ike's frequent consultations with his Cabinet as proof of failed leadership. Hughes concluded: "The 1950s were essentially a lost decade."

The passage of time, notes Joes, has "cooled old passions" and yielded new evidence. Many historians now believe that Eisenhower "worked out a self-conscious strategy which allowed him to use political power while appearing to be above the sweaty political arena." Thus, Eisenhower preferred to undermine McCarthy indirectly rather than to launch open attacks that might have generated added public support for the senator. Records of his Cabinet meetings reveal that the members met, more often than not, to

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discuss issues that the President had already decided. According to current historians (e.g., Princeton's Fred Greenstein), Eisenhower's record should be judged in terms of what he *prevented* rather than what he achieved. His era saw "no roll-back of New Deal legislation, no further advance of the welfare state, and most of all, no intervention in another war."

With this new estimation of the 34th U.S. President, Joes suggests, the "professoriate" is falling into step with the electorate. "'Activist' presidents—those with glamorous agendas for social renewal—have long been the darlings of journalists." But today, after the turmoil induced by the Great Society, the Vietnam War, and the Watergate scandal, Eisenhower's low-key emphasis on "seeking consensus behind limited aims" seems more attractive to both scholars and the general public.

Democrats Divided

"The New Class in Massachusetts: Politics in a Technocratic Society" by Philip Davies and John Kenneth White, in *Journal of American Studies* (Aug. 1985), Cambridge University Press, 32 East 57th St., New York, N.Y. 10022.

America's Democratic Party is a house divided. Ironically, the causes and consequences of that division are nowhere more evident than in Massachusetts, a state with unusually strong Democratic traditions.

Davies and White, historian and political scientist, respectively, at the University of Manchester (England) and the State University of New York, note that Massachusetts Democrats now enjoy a 3-to-1 advantage over Republicans in voter registration. They also control more than three-quarters of the seats in the state legislature.

During the last decade, however, a series of hotly contested Democratic gubernatorial primaries has highlighted the factionalism within what was once known as the "Everyone Party." In 1978, Edward J. King, a conservative Democrat, unseated incumbent Michael Dukakis by challenging his liberal stance on social issues, such as abortion rights and the death penalty. Four years later, Dukakis regained the governorship, after beating King in the Democratic primary by a margin of 54 to 46 percent.

Such voting shifts among the Massachusetts Democrats, argue Davies and White, point to a struggle "between an Old Class, the less educated, trapped in declining industries and potentially facing a future of long-term unemployment, and a burgeoning educated New Class working in highly profitable, expanding industries."

Social conservatives, the "Old Class" Democrats (mainly 45- to 65-year-old children of European immigrants) once toiled in the state's many textile, footwear, and jewelry plants. Today, most of those firms have either migrated south or gone out of business. (Between 1962 and 1973, some 130 Massachusetts shoe and textile manufacturers closed their doors.) Meanwhile, the state's computer and electronics industries—led by hi-tech firms such as Wang Laboratories, Raytheon, and TRW—have lured thousands of well-educated white-collar workers into the state. Joined by the roughly one-half million students (and their teachers) in Massachusetts's 118 col-