



Adlai Stevenson

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Fated to be the Democratic party's sacrificial lamb in 1952 and 1956 against the unbeatable Dwight D. Eisenhower, Stevenson was "mistimed, but not miscast," as one admirer put it. Despite his political failures, Stevenson's commitment to liberalism and his urbanity and self-deprecating wit have prompted a number of biographies. McKeever, for the most part, merely reiterates the conclusions of others. The reader learns more than good taste requires, however, about the mental problems of Stevenson's estranged wife and is told repeatedly that Adlai was not weak and indecisive but merely employed "the calculated use of uncertainty" to achieve his goals.

The temptation is to snicker at Lyndon B. Johnson's characterization of Stevenson as a "fat ass" who "squats when he pees." Adlai disliked tawdry politicians of Johnson's (and Harry S Truman's) ilk and preferred the company of Lake Forest Republicans (especially the women) and sophisticated United Nations dignitaries. Neither was Stevenson comfortable with John F. Kennedy, who eschewed the egghead style of fifties liberalism.

While Stevenson certainly was an inspirational public figure, McKeever exaggerates his influence in causing the demise of McCarthyism and moving the Democratic party on a more progressive path. Stevenson accepted the shibboleths of the Cold War; indeed, according to *THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION*, he "would have made a better Republican President than General Eisenhower."

"He redeemed his time," McKeever concludes, "and he may yet help us to redeem ours." If this sentiment seems vague to a generation which has no memory of what it was like to be "madly for Adlai," it is no less heartfelt coming from a friend and colleague who idolized him.

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