



Nixon, Volume III

©2009 eNotes.com, Inc. or its Licensors. Please see [copyright information](#) at the end of this document.

By clearly documenting Nixon's criminal role in the Watergate coverup, Ambrose offers a rebuttal to the former President's claim, recently made in the book *IN THE ARENA: A MEMOIR OF VICTORY, DEFEAT, AND RENEWAL* (1990), that he had not committed any impeachable offenses but resigned for the good of the country because he had lost the support of Congress and therefore could not govern while in the dock defending himself.

Ambrose faults Democratic administrations for having helped create an "Imperial Presidency" but concludes that Nixon's abuses of power were more ruthless and reckless. Once Nixon denied playing any role in the coverup, he sowed the seeds of his own political demise. Had he destroyed the White House tapes or admitted his guilt, he might have saved his presidency. Confessions, however, were not his style. Secretive, competitive, obsessed with public relations, Nixon was like a dramatic actor brought down by his own pride. His considerable foreign policy achievements (SALT, the China opening, winding down the Vietnam war, a Middle East cease-fire) were obscured by the shame of Watergate.

In 1974, Ambrose wanted Nixon imprisoned. He has since changed his mind regarding President Gerald Ford's pardon and now professes a grudging admiration of Nixon's refusal to go quietly into the night. Perhaps sixteen years in purgatory, Ambrose suggests, is sentence enough for one who "was not, after all, remotely like Hitler or Stalin, a man to be forever loathed." Yet if Ambrose is willing to forgive, the point of his book is that the American people must not forget Nixon's misdeeds and how they contributed to a climate of cynicism and polarization, leading to the ultimate empowerment in 1981 of the Republican right wing. "Because Nixon resigned," Ambrose concludes, "what the country got was. . . massive, unbelievable deficits. It got Iran-contra. It got the savings and loans scandals. It got millions of homeless, and gross favoritism for the rich." Highly recommended.

Sources for Further Study

Booklist. LXXXVIII, September 15, 1991, p. 97.

Boston Globe. December 8, 1991, p. 14.

The Christian Science Monitor. November 19, 1991, p. 14.

Kirkus Reviews. LIX, September 1, 1991, p. 1125.

Library Journal. CXVI, October 15, 1991, p. 90.

Los Angeles Times Book Review. November 24, 1991, p. 4.

The New York Times Book Review. XCVI, November 24, 1991, p. 3.

Publishers Weekly. CCXXXVIII, September 20, 1991, p. 117.

Times-Picayune. November 24, 1991, p. D1.

The Washington Post Book World. XXI, November 10, 1991, p. 5.

Copyright Notice

©2009 eNotes.com, Inc.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

No part of this work covered by the copyright hereon may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, Web distribution or information storage retrieval systems without the written permission of the publisher.

For complete copyright information, please see the online version of this work:

<http://www.enotes.com/nixon-volume-iii-salem>