



Richard M. Nixon: A Life in Full

By Conrad Black

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From the late 1940s to the mid-1970s, Richard Nixon was a polarizing figure in American politics, admired for his intelligence, savvy, and strategic skill, and reviled for his shady manner and cutthroat tactics. Conrad Black, whose epic biography of FDR was widely acclaimed as a masterpiece, now separates the good in Nixon—his foreign initiatives, some of his domestic policies, and his firm political hand—from the sinister, in a book likely to generate enormous attention and controversy.

Black believes the hounding of Nixon from office was partly political retribution from a lifetime's worth of enemies and Nixon's misplaced loyalty to unworthy subordinates, and not clearly the consequence of crimes in which he participated. Conrad Black's own recent legal travails, though hardly comparable, have undoubtedly given him an unusual insight into the pressures faced by Nixon in his last two years as president and the first few years of his retirement.

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Richard M. Nixon: A Life in Full By Conrad Black Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #121442 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Public Affairs
- Published on: 2007-10-23
- Ingredients: Example Ingredients
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 2.26" h x 6.36" w x 9.58" l, 3.35 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 1184 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Recently convicted of mail fraud and obstruction of justice, former Hollinger International chairman and newspaper magnate Black (*Franklin Delano Roosevelt: Champion of Freedom*) is better positioned than most men to chronicle the power and disgrace experienced by Richard Nixon. Black is a versatile and thorough biographer who brings not only sympathy but eloquent clarity to his task. The result is a vibrant narrative of personal and political accomplishment that, though great and heroically achieved, was often marred by self-inflicted wounds springing from personal paranoia. Black is at his best portraying the many contradictions in Nixon's personal makeup and political history. The Nixon who most fascinates Black is the firebrand cold warrior who (in partnership with Henry Kissinger) went on to invent the notion of detente and eventually opened relations with China. As Black shows, Nixon's duality followed him into his postpresidential years. The tireless son of Quakers methodically sought after Watergate to rebuild his reputation as a statesman by issuing carefully crafted publications and granting strategically timed interviews. Black's superb volume, incorporating much new research, is an important and worthy addition to the literature. 16 pages of b&w photos. (Nov.)

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From [The New Yorker](#)

In the thousand and fifty pages of this biography by a fallen media baron of a fallen President, few events are neglected and many are well told. But Black, attempting a reconsideration of his subject, merely provides an exculpatory gloss for seemingly every grimy facet of Nixon's career. He presents the 1968 "Southern strategy" as a principled stand against Northern hypocrisy. On Vietnam, his invocations of "insolent" Communists, their "witless dupes," and "child grenade carriers" (as he refers to those murdered at My Lai) take on a deranged air; he unwittingly provides an object lesson in the kind of thinking that mired America there. Interestingly, given what Black refers to in the acknowledgments as his own "serious judicial problems," he argues that Nixon's best move in Watergate would have been to surreptitiously delete damaging parts of the tapes and then make up a cover story—"whatever he wanted." Hoping to be Nixon's redeemer, Black comes off as his apologist.

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Review

"Many writers who know their subjects so well might be tempted to take shortcuts in the archives. Not Black. He's researched everything and read everything, and delights in pulling up amazing let-Nixon-be-Nixon and let-Henry-be-Henry nuggets.... The overwhelming impression one takes away of the narrator...is that of a man without guile. Black's two favorite adjectives are "distinguished" and "considerable." He is a straightforward admirer of the institutions of American government and the great men of his youth: not only Roosevelt and Nixon, but also Eisenhower and, preeminently, de Gaulle. In all the mass of this book, you will find not a whiff of that touch of evil on which Nixon prided himself....This is an impressive and profound book by a decent man, written under travail and adversity. One is left wishing that there will be many more like it from Conrad Black, and that a writer who, in his tycoon days, did so much to assist and support the work of others will at last be granted the tranquility to complete his own." -- *National Review*, February 11, 2008

"To read Black's book is to be treated like the guest at a lavish dinner party presided over by an opinionated, brilliant, mordantly amusing, powerful, and loquacious host...a 'rocking, socking' (to borrow a term Nixon used to describe his more vigorous campaigns) yarn." -- *New Criterion*, March, 2008

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