

cruiser, or the Bradley Fighting Vehicle, that's fine, but one has to prove one's bona fides by saying the budget still needs to be bigger. There is still an extremely strong us-against-them feeling in the military, accompanied by a sense of life on the outside that's hazy at best. Typically, smart military people (and Luttwak) will wave off any concerns about the deficit by saying, "cut welfare" or "not our problem." The cultural divide between military and civilian is by now practically the main impediment to reform. If the like-minded inside and outside the Pentagon could ever get together, they'd be unstoppable.

Second, Luttwak's solution to the mess, a "national defense staff" that would replace the Joint Chiefs, is a good idea—there's plenty of reason

why so many people want to abolish the Chiefs, who tend to be just lobbyists for their services—but it's outweighed by the weight of the condemnatory detail that has gone before. Luttwak has done such a good job of convincing us that the Pentagon is rotting from top to bottom that he makes it hard to believe that one simple change is the answer. ■

Nicholas Lemann is a national correspondent for the Atlantic and a contributing editor of The Washington Monthly.

**The Pentagon and the Art of War: The Question of Military Reform. Edward N. Luttwak. Simon & Schuster, \$17.95.*

Why I Like Ike

by Richard Reeves

Most of us "liked" Ike, but respect was something else—at least until recently. Now the second volume of Stephen E. Ambrose's workmanlike and intelligent biography* confirms what some of us first suspected, reluctantly, then knew: Dwight D. Eisenhower, the 34th president of the United States, was a gifted and moderate leader who usually knew exactly what he was doing and was personally sensible and secure enough not to need constant private reinforcement or public adulation. In other words, it may have made Eisenhower mad as hell if people thought he was stupid or weak, but it did not confuse him or deter him from continuing in a seemingly unspectacular way to do what he thought was right for Americans and possible in America.

That does not mean that he always understood the right or the possible. Ambrose, who was associate editor of Eisenhower's papers and spent five years with the former president at the end of his life, is sorrowfully critical of his subject

in two areas: his passive resistance to civil rights for blacks and his unwillingness to act against his party's most poisonous member, Senator Joseph McCarthy.

"As always when he got back from Augusta," Ambrose mentions in an aside after Ike had been playing golf with rich cronies in Georgia, "Eisenhower was full of sympathy for the white southerners' point of view." As for the president and the senator from Wisconsin, Ambrose concludes that Ike's way may have been paved with good intentions, but it led to overestimation of the strength of McCarthy's noisy supporters on the Republican right and then to cowardice: "He was determined to destroy McCarthy, as he destroyed Hitler, but... the direct assault against Hitler was replaced by an indirect assault against McCarthy, one so indirect as to be scarcely discernible, and one which contributed—at best—to McCarthy's downfall."

That is as critical as this volume gets in covering Eisenhower's life from the day he became president in 1953 until his death in 1969. (Ambrose's first volume, *Eisenhower: Soldier, General-of-the-Army, President-elect*, covered the years from 1890 to 1952.) The work ends with these sentences: "'I want to go; God take me.' He was ready to go home, back to Abilene, back to the heart of America, from whence he came. His great heart stopped beating."

Ambrose, a professor of history at the University of New Orleans, found Ike "appealing... firm, fair, objective, dignified, he was everything most Americans wanted in a president." This Ike was not the syntax scrambler we saw on television. This president came to office

among the best qualified in American history, having lived many places in the world, worked with the leaders abroad and at home, and "in his spare time" was reading the Federalist Papers at his desk in the Oval Office.

Eisenhower, both volumes, is an admirable and professional job. It will, I would guess, stand as the definitive work for a decade or two. Then someone will produce a more judgmental version of the great American story of the poor boy from Kansas, a football player, who went on to lead the most powerful nation of his time. Beneath Ambrose's pleasant glow of hero-worship, the book generally does not even choose between the worth of actions and passions. The organization is chronological, day-by-day in the White House and beyond.

Seen that way, Eisenhower, who kept a diary to guide biographers, comes off as a sophisticated, determined and sane leader. He not only listened; there is ample evidence here that he heard what people were saying. He seemed open in many areas, to many ideas. (Race, unfortunately, did not seem to be one. Ike may have been a nice racist. But, if he did not have the commitment to push civil rights, he had the wisdom to keep his mouth shut in public.)

As president, Eisenhower, among other things not always associated with moderate conservatives, increased the national commitment to government support of education and the elderly—and he used massive amounts of federal money to build the modern road system essential to the country's post-war boom years. In the area he knew best, national security, he had the sense and political clout to get his army out of an unwinnable war in Korea, and, again and again, he spoke in words that should be engraved on buildings around the country:

"Ladies and gentlemen, there is no amount of military force that can possibly give you real security, because you wouldn't have that amount unless you felt there was a similar amount that could threaten you somewhere in the world. . . . The jet [fighter] plane that roars over your head costs three-quarters of a million dollars. That is more money than a man is going to make in his lifetime. What world can afford this sort of thing for long? We are in an armaments race. Where will it lead us? At worst, to atomic warfare. At best, to robbing every people and nation on earth of the fruits of their own toil."

That came from our greatest soldier, but we still don't get it. There is a lot Eisenhower knew, at least intellectually, that he and we ignored and continue to ignore at our great peril. This is what Ambrose wrote of the president as he prepared for a summit meeting with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and French Premier Joseph Laniel at the end of 1953: "Eisenhower thought both European leaders were just hopeless on these colonial questions. In the president's view, they were simply blind to the strength of nationalism as a force, and he feared that their refusal to meet demands for self-government would lead to the loss of the Third World to Communism."

So, all in all, I found myself still liking Ike. Growing up in a Republican family, I can remember writing an essay as a high school freshman regretting that I wasn't old enough to vote for him. Over the years, impressed by the brilliance and commitments of Adlai Stevenson, I questioned that young enthusiasm. Now, I think again that Ike was the man for that time. Perhaps it is only nostalgia, but I would be happy, in some future election, to have to choose between two such men. ■

*Richard Reeves, whose work formerly appeared regularly in this space, is a syndicated columnist. He is author, most recently, of *Passage to Peshawar*, published by Simon & Schuster.*

**Eisenhower: The President. Stephen E. Ambrose. Simon & Schuster \$24.95.*

Redistributing Misery

by Mickey Kaus

Psst, Democrats! Wanna new idea? Martin Weitzman's got one. In this short, fascinating book,* he says that with one simple change modern capitalism can overcome its basic dilemma: how to achieve full employment without inflation.