

Spanning the species: the inhuman world of Harriman

by Anton Chaitkin

Spanning the Century: The Life of W. Averell Harriman 1891-1986

by Rudy Abramson

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Averell Harriman was a protagonist of some of the most startlingly horrible criminal projects in human experience. He was certainly as close as very few other American citizens to the center of world financial and political decision-making, when his clique decided to promote Nazism and Communism, and to pervert the national mission of the United States. There is little of this reality in the new biography by Rudy Abramson. Harriman is portrayed as a wealthy politician-diplomat, whose career has interest only because of its variety and duration. We see the poor fellow sometimes influencing events, but often vainly struggling to get "into the loop."

Since the political faction Harriman helped lead is still attempting to continue doing just what they have done in the past, endangered mankind must look at this book itself as a criminal enterprise, with its author guilty of complicity in failing to alert his readers.

There are many amusing and surprising bits in this authorized biography of Averell Harriman. Yet it is boring and tedious, overall. For the author's journalistic skill and years of work have been applied to contain, to control, to throw a blanket over a mountain of explosive material. The result is

a series of career-segments, with no theme, no meaning, no interconnection in the life of the subject.

Even if one knows nothing about Harriman before reading this book, it is evident that this cannot be a true story—since every real person has some sense of himself, and no such real person is here presented to the reader. There is only the rich man who is a stumbling failure at certain things, but experienced, skillful and "tough" in other areas. Abramson mentions that Harriman worried about the place of the family name in history. But this is really illustrated only by his promotion of his father E.H. Harriman as a public-spirited railroad builder, not a Robber Baron.

Abramson was given exclusive access to a great mass of confidential papers, and had interviews with scores of Anglo-American leaders of finance, secret intelligence, and the media. What he has produced from this wealth of source material is such a ridiculous coverup that in places its very shallowness is hilarious.

There is nothing of substance about high finance, about the thought process, or even about the negotiations between Harriman and his cousins or his Wall Street, London, and German colleagues, on investments that shaped 20th-century history. These are apparently considered "private matters" in which the reader has no proper interest. Yet the author tells several stories of Harriman's adulterous sexual escapades. They are related as macho fun, as if Harriman himself were boasting.

A fragile monopoly

In 1985 I contacted author Rudy Abramson, who is a Washington correspondent for the *Los Angeles Times*. I had

heard that he was authorized to go through the papers of the elderly Averell Harriman, and telephoned him to ask his help in getting access to the papers for my own research. This he refused, in a rather scornful way, being protective of his valuable monopoly. At that time, large portions of the Harriman business papers and correspondence were being held in a Brooklyn warehouse. Harriman's keepers, wife Pamela Churchill Harriman and lawyer Clark Clifford, were then refusing independent researchers access to the papers.

After Harriman's death in 1986, the estate transferred the bulk of these papers to the Library of Congress. Even then, the U.S. government agreed to keep them secret. Within a year or so, a vigorous protest arose from curious historians—the government was paying to preserve his lordship's papers, but would not allow citizens to look at them! So in 1990-91, after experts were employed to pull out and hide some papers as too secret for public release (e.g. letters between Harriman and his lawyer Allen Dulles), the remaining bulk of them were finally opened to public inspection. I used them extensively in the preparation of *George Bush: The Unauthorized Biography*, which I co-authored with Webster G. Tarpley.

Our Bush biography, overlapping many topics in Abramson's book, has been of sufficient recent interest to make it the subject of dozens of radio talk shows. The host of a St. Louis, Missouri program invited me (the associate of imprisoned dissident Lyndon LaRouche, banned by the chain book stores) and Rudy Abramson (the exalted, media-certified author) to be on the air at the same time, to confront each other on the little matter of historical truth.

One strange omission of Abramson's book, which would otherwise cause some embarrassment there in St. Louis, was almost any mention of that city's powerful George Herbert Walker, President Bush's maternal grandfather. This is a rather serious omission: Walker was the founder and chief executive of Harriman's banking enterprise! Abramson's censorship of the Walker role, and his scant reference to Walker's son-in-law Prescott Bush, father of George, spares the U.S. President the bother of answering questions about the family firm's intense promotion of Adolf Hitler.

Being caught by a public invitation, Abramson agreed to come on the radio program and defend his work—but not in a direct confrontation with me. Then, when the time came for his interview, Abramson was conveniently in Florida covering Hurricane Andrew and could not be reached by telephone from the studio. The talk show host was rightfully indignant at how the purveyors of orthodox opinion were hiding from a public forum.

We can usefully divide the problems with Abramson's book into three topic-areas, in which the author has either stopped short of developing his material or has blatantly suppressed it: 1) the origins of Harriman's power, which is to say his identity with the "new Dark Ages" faction running the British Empire; 2) the Harriman leadership in bringing German Nazism to power; and 3) the insertion of the Harri-

man clique into power as the post-World War II U.S. secret government.

Britain's New Yorkers

The two-bit Wall Street broker E.H. Harriman was picked up and aggrandized in 1872 by the British financial and political apparatus in Manhattan. This portentous transformation of Averell Harriman's father is reduced by Abramson into a single, meaning-deprived sentence: "One well-heeled and overweight client considered his advice so valuable that he agreed to pay [E.H.] Harriman's higher rent for a ground-floor office rather than labor up two narrow flights of stairs to the austere cubbyhole."

The indicated client was actually Richard Schell. This gent and his brother Augustus had supervised the New York slave trade and Confederate secret service activities in New York, and the street level of the pro-Confederate Democratic Party under national party chief August Belmont, official U.S. representative of Britain's Rothschild bankers. Schell was the financial and corporate counsel to Belmont. A few paragraphs later, Abramson happens to mention, "August Belmont gave [E.H. Harriman] authority to withdraw up to \$1 million from the Belmont account anytime Harriman saw a promising use for it."

Further into the book we see a reflection of the Harriman-Belmont tie extending into the next generation. We encounter a photo of the young Averell Harriman captioned: "On the Homestretch at Belmont [Park, August Belmont's race-track]. With business partner George Herbert Walker [who was president of the Belmont Park track], grandfather of the future president, George Herbert Walker Bush, Harriman entered Thoroughbred racing with horses purchased from the estate of August Belmont, Jr. Although the banking and finance partnership with Walker continued, their racing association was short-lived because they disagreed over the relative priorities of racing and running a Thoroughbred breeding farm." Abramson declines to tell us anything further about the Walker-Harriman business arrangements.

E.H. Harriman became a power in his own right in the 1890s, when Kuhn Loeb bank, in conjunction with William Rockefeller's National City Bank, decided to stake Harriman to a takeover of the Union Pacific Railroad. Abramson fails to explain where Kuhn Loeb boss Jacob Schiff got the money to back Harriman's rise: Schiff's English partner Sir Ernst Cassell, intimate banker/counsellor to Prince Edward VII and to the darkest lords of the British merchant oligarchy, raised the cash and sent it across the water.

The Harriman family allegiance to the British Empire, its strategy and morality, appears briefly in the biography's coverage of World War II. We see U.S. envoy to Britain Averell Harriman, having an affair with Randolph Churchill's wife Pamela, in the house of Randolph's father, Prime Minister Winston Churchill. According to Abramson, Randolph "irrationally concluded that he had been deceived not

only by his wife and [Harriman] but by his . . . parents. Winston and Clementine, he bitterly complained . . . 'had condoned adultery beneath their own roof.' ”

Churchill's private secretary is quoted about the fact that English people went hungry under the discipline of wartime rationing. "But if you dined with Pamela," the secretary remembers, "you would have a five- or six-course dinner, eight or ten guests, and foods you didn't ordinarily see. My guess is that all of us around the table were sort of smirking and saying that Averell was taking good care of his girlfriend."

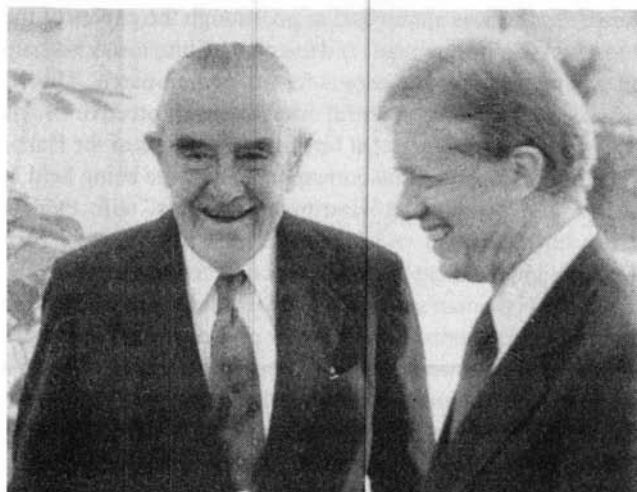
While he puts the matter as delicately as possible, Abramson gets across the rather astonishing fact that Averell Harriman was really more the agent of Winston Churchill than of President Roosevelt (whose government and nation Harriman nominally represented). The author further on writes of "Averell's acquaintance with scores of important officials across Europe. . . . Some Britons thought of him as almost one of their own."

Pamela and Adolf

In my discussions with Abramson, some months before he published his biography, he held steadfastly to the assertion that "Harriman had no investments in Germany after Hitler took power." Abramson refused to comment on the massive facts to the contrary, that have been left available to the public in the Harriman papers at the Library of Congress. After disclosing that Harriman "had profited handsomely from German investments in the 1920s," Abramson simply says nothing about *what happened with* Harriman's predominant role in German national affairs *from 1933 on*, his sponsorship of Fritz Thyssen or his control over the Hamburg-Amerika commercial shipping line. Harriman's clique of directors and bankers were the core group behind Hitler's government of Germany. Abramson does tell us that banker James Warburg, whose uncle Max was Harriman's main intermediary to the Nazi regime, asked President Franklin Roosevelt to make Averell Harriman ambassador to Hitler's Germany!

He also decided to mention a truly interesting episode involving the present-day queen of the U.S. Democratic Party, Pamela Churchill Harriman, Averell's widow. In 1937, the 17-year-old Pamela moved to Nazi Germany. While living in Munich for a season, Pamela went to see Adolf Hitler with her bosom friend, Hitler's "groupie" adorer, Unity Mitford. Abramson implies that Miss Mitford (whose sister was married to Sir Oswald Mosley, chief of the fascist party of England) may then have been Hitler's mistress.

But it is essential for readers to understand the reality of those years which have been curiously lost from history—1933 to 1937. England was *not* then at war against the Nazis. On the contrary, a certain stratum of Englishmen and their American friends, including both Winston Churchill and Averell Harriman, were going all out to promote Hitler and the



At one time the business partner of George Bush's grandfather, George Herbert Walker, Harriman and his wife Pamela Churchill Harriman were Democratic Party kingmakers. Here he is shown with Jimmy Carter. In 1992, his widow enthusiastically supported Bill Clinton, whom many see as Carter's reincarnation.

fascist domination of Europe. That was then their reputation, among the political elite: The later public "anti-fascist" posture only worked with a ton of public relations boosterism and brain-death among historians. The Communist International helped manufacture Harriman's reputation as a "realist" or "liberal," to protect the man they viewed as their main capitalist champion.

Approached in the right way, as a detective or coroner would go to the scene of a crime, Abramson's book has certain value, though it is very long and its clues are uneven. Let us just mention here several points that may interest those trying to pry the facts out of our reluctant media/historical establishment:

- It was Averell Harriman who proposed that President Harry Truman should fire Gen. Douglas MacArthur.
- Harriman was chairman of the secret counterintelligence group in John F. Kennedy's administration that decided who the enemy was and how to fight him; Harriman led the faction promoting the Vietnam War and the coup that ended with the murder of Vietnamese leader Ngo Dinh Diem.
- Harriman was a "soul-mate" of Robert McNamara, who helped produce the Vietnam War and then led the establishment's anti-war movement.
- Harriman's protégé and stand-in Richard M. Bissell, Jr., who planned the invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs, is defended by Abramson as having been "unfairly" attacked for botching the invasion. In fact, Harriman and his little clique of second-rate British Empire mentalities had earlier planned the creation of the Central Intelligence Agency on British lines. The subsequent U.S. regime of the present generation may be not unfairly laid to their horribly "botched" world outlook.