



Tricky Dick and the Pink Lady : Richard Nixon vs Helen Gahagan Douglas-Sexual Politics and the Red Scare, 1950

Greg Mitchell

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The year 1950 was a time of absolute trauma for America. The Korean War began, the Communists completed their takeover of China, and the United States sent its first military advisers to South Vietnam. The Rosenbergs were arrested as spies for the Soviet Union, which had recently tested its first atomic bomb. Senator Joseph McCarthy and the Hollywood blacklist were making headlines across the country. And it was a year that produced one of the most notorious and influential election contests in America's history. In California, two prominent members of Congress, Richard Nixon and Helen Gahagan Douglas, squared off for a seat in the U.S. Senate. He was a dynamic thirty-seven-year-old lawyer of moderate means who had just helped send Alger Hiss to jail; she was a rich and beautiful former actress turned progressive Democrat--a pioneering female activist in Congress who attempted to become one of the first women elected to the Senate. In a climate of Red hysteria, Nixon's chief election strategy was smearing Douglas as a Communist sympathizer. She was, he said, "pink right down to her underwear."

Tricky Dick and the Pink Lady is the first book to present a full-length portrait of the campaign widely remembered as one of the dirtiest ever--and pivotal in the history of gender politics. Greg Mitchell draws on a wealth of original documents--including shocking, never-before-published letters and memos by Nixon and his tenacious campaign manager Murray Chotiner--that he recently discovered at the National Archives. In an engrossing blow-by-blow narrative featuring Earl Warren, Edward G. Robinson, Eleanor Roosevelt, William Randolph Hearst, Cecil B. De Mille, Melvyn Douglas (the candidate's husband), Harry Truman, and future presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Reagan, Mitchell vividly captures the sensational 1950 race: the cunning tactics of a young Nixon that first earned him the indelible nickname "Tricky Dick"; the challenges and criticism Douglas faced as a woman in politics; and the paralyzing fear that marked the dawn of the McCarthy era and blacklisting in the movies, television, and radio. The book is full of startling anecdotes, humorous incidents, and newly uncovered "dirty tricks."

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