

Saddam is scarcely an enigma

By Robert B. Adolph Jr.
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This is the story of Saddam Hussein's journey into darkness and brutality. While on that journey, this man was responsible for hundreds of thousands of deaths.



Adolph

The truly frightening part of this tale is that it is still unfolding. How many more are to die? Saddam has been presented in the West as something of an unknown. This is not wholly true. We know enough about Saddam to take some pretty good guesses concerning why he has become the man some call the "Butcher of Baghdad." Perhaps he is no enigma at all.

Saddam Hussein was born in the Iraqi village of Tikrit. It was once home to one of the greatest Arabs who ever lived: Saladin. He defeated the Christian armies of Richard the Lion Heart of England during the last Crusade. It has been reported that Saddam sees himself as the modern-day incarnation of this legendary hero.

It is rumored that Saddam was a bastard and never discovered the true name of his father. In other stories it is said that his father died prior to his birth. In any event, Saddam never knew his father. The importance of a father in Arab societies cannot be overstated. A boy without a father is horribly stigmatized. The young man no doubt grew up ashamed and angry. Saddam was born around April 28, 1937.

Apparently, his mother did not want him; she gave him to his uncle, Khairallah. Unfortunately, Khairallah was soon imprisoned for revolting against British rule.

With his uncle in jail, Saddam's mother was compelled to take him back. But by this time, his mother had remarried and moved. Thus, Saddam was alone there and shunned by the other children because he was a stranger and had no father. It was while he was living with his mother that he is rumored to have begun torturing and killing animals. His stepfather, known as Hasan the Liar, was a brutish man who reportedly abused Saddam physically and psychologically. Hasan also reportedly forced the boy to steal for him.

When Khairallah was released after five years in prison, Saddam came to live with him again in Tikrit, back home. He later moved to Baghdad with his uncle when he was 18. At the age of 20 he joined the ranks of the Arab Nationalist Baathist Party. From that time forward his future footsteps were set. Between 1957 and 1979, Saddam steadily moved up the ranks of the Baathist Party through murder, torture, and intimidation. He personally established the party security apparatus, thus becoming the most influential man in Iraq behind the future president, Saddam's long-time friend and mentor, Ahmad Hasan Al-Bakr.

When Saddam was still a young man, in his early 20s, he took the entrance exam to the prestigious Baghdad Military Academy. He failed to pass, and so was rejected for his first choice of career. Years later, in 1976, President Al-Bakr appointed Saddam to the rank of general, without his ever having served one day in the armed forces.

Khairallah may have had the greatest early influence on Saddam.

Saddam had a small booklet of his uncle's political thoughts published in 1981. Here is a quote from that booklet: "Persians are animals in the shape of humans, — Jews, a mixture of the dirt and leftovers of diverse people" — while flies, apparently the least appalling of the three, by way of comparison were merely trifling crea-



tures. The name of Khairallah's booklet was "Three Whom God Should Not Have Created: Persians, Jews and Flies." The source of Saddam's racism and bigotry seems clear enough.

On July 16, 1979, Saddam assumed com-

plete power in Iraq — deposing his oldest and dearest friend, Ahmad Hasan Al-Bakr. For 11 years, Saddam had been the power behind the throne. Saddam had grown impatient with being the No. 2 man. He was 42 at the time, and he could wait no longer.

But Saddam's ascendancy was not assured. To ensure that no one could threaten him, Saddam began the longest, most brutal and complete purge in Iraq's history. In one day, he eliminated 66 potential rivals — some of whom were close friends and supporters. Saddam fabricated the story of a plot against Iraqi interests to support his purge. All were tortured and executed.

Saddam was raised without a father. His mother abandoned him. His stepfather abused him. His uncle taught him to be a racist and a bigot. He learned early in life to trust no one.

He failed in his first choice of career, the military. He achieved in life through bloody plotting and intrigue. Those skills were honed time and again in an extraordinarily violent Iraq which suffered more coups and coup attempts than any other country in modern history. Saddam was treated with brutality during much of his young life, and has responded in kind because that is all he knows. In his world you will either kill or be killed. Those without power are always vulnerable, so he amassed power, which in turn only fed his already-substantial paranoia.

Saddam is a product of his times and nation. He is a monster, but one who was apparently made and not born. Is that an enigma?

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'Feminists' seem to care only about certain women

By Karen Grigsby Bates
Special to the Los Angeles Times

Two days after saying it might support Paula Corbin Jones in the appeal of her sexual harassment case against President Clinton, the National Organization for Women changed its mind.

Would NOW's abrupt slamming

of the brakes have been because Jones is not NOW's sort of woman?

Whenever NOW is in the news, I can count on hearing a comment from any one of my friends who is a black woman like:

"There they go again; they still don't get it." Or: "They should call it the National Organization for White Women, or the National Organization for Wealthy Women."

A lot of black women who walk

the feminist walk and talk the feminist talk refuse to be called "feminist" because that word, and the acronym NOW, carry a lot of baggage. The issues of chronic poverty and overall racism, which directly affect black women's place in American society, seem to take a back seat to more hypothetical issues such as sexual harassment.

In the early 1970s, Louis Harris and Virginia Slims conducted a poll

to gauge the sympathies of black and white women to the then-budding feminist movement. Interestingly, when asked whether they supported "efforts to strengthen or change women's status in society," 62 percent of black respondents said yes; only 45 percent of their white sisters did.

For many black women, NOW's initial reluctance to support Jones is seen as better-off women shying

away from someone outside their socioeconomic circle. In a lot of black women's minds, either you're for women, even if they don't have Ivy League degrees, Democratic leanings and aren't dressed by Ralph Lauren, or you're for certain women. And if that's the case, just say so.

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