

FDR'S SPLENDID DECEPTION

by Hugh Gregory Gallagher
Dodd, 1985
250 pp. \$16.95

A victim of polio at age 39, Franklin Delano Roosevelt went through the rest of his life paralyzed from the waist down. Yet very few Americans knew the extent of their President's disability. Gallagher, a Washington writer and a paraplegic himself, argues that getting polio was the central event of FDR's life: It turned a frivolous patrician who grew up in a world "of nannies and governesses, ponies and sailboats" into a man genuinely concerned about the sufferings of others. After Roosevelt contracted the disease in 1921—having served as a New York state senator and assistant secretary of the Navy—his political future looked grim. He quickly devised ways to hide his disability. Limiting public appearances, he entered halls through rear entrances and campaigned from the back seat of his car. The press helped to sustain Roosevelt's "splendid deception" by honoring his wish never to be photographed while being lifted or carried. (Of the 35,000 photographs at the FDR Library in Hyde Park, N.Y., only two show the 32nd president in a wheelchair.) The psychic price of maintaining the front was isolation and depression, particularly during the last years of his life. Even his wife, Eleanor, interpreted FDR's low spirits in 1944 as a sign that he had given in to "invalidism." The opposite, Gallagher believes, was true: Roosevelt had never fully acknowledged his condition. Gallagher also maintains that the deception ultimately created a "barrier" between FDR and the public. Even so, Americans sent Roosevelt an unprecedented four times (1932, '36, '40, and '44) to the White House.

*Contemporary Affairs***THE LAST TWO YEARS OF SALVADOR ALLENDE**

by Nathaniel Davis
Cornell, 1985
480 pp. \$24.95

Can the virtues of an "insider's" account—depth, urgency, immediacy—offset the inevitable distortions of personal bias? Davis, U.S. ambassador to Chile during the rise and fall of its only Marxist president, Salvador Allende, gives life to the possibility. His comprehensive account of events in Chile be-