

latter years of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. Secondly, he offers almost no real analysis of the immigrant composition of the Socialist movement during this period, the one exception being his focus on the Jewish Socialists of New York City, who came to assume major party roles after World War I.

Overall, the author fails to offer a significant analysis of the challenge that the Communist Party posed to American Socialism, especially during the 1930s. Ross writes about the Communists as if he were still looking at the differences through the eyes of a Socialist Party factionalist, petulantly complaining about either

the Communist Party's support for the Soviet Union or about how the Socialists were the "real" revolutionaries. After twenty years of detailed historical scholarship on the role of the Communists in communities and in unions, this is a major weakness. In the end, I was impressed by the depth of archival research, and by the story itself, which has been left mostly untold—at least recently. The book's weaknesses should encourage scholars to engage more fully in this history.

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Franklin D. Roosevelt: Road to the New Deal, 1882-1939

By Roger Daniels

(Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015. Pp. 568. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95.)

At the outset of *Franklin D. Roosevelt: Road to the New Deal, 1882-1939*, Roger Daniels tells us that he had initially planned to write a small, single-volume work. But there is something about writing about Franklin (and Eleanor) Roosevelt that inevitably results in multi-volume efforts of five hundred pages or more, of which this book is yet another example.

Daniels has written what he calls a "political biography," that is, a biography about the public—rather than the personal—man. The narrative is structured around extracts from Roosevelt's *Public Papers and Addresses* (thirteen

volumes) and *Complete Press Conferences* (twenty-five volumes). These public statements are enlivened and interwoven with contemporary press accounts from the *New York Times*, which covered Roosevelt beginning in 1905. While much of the Roosevelt material is available in published and online sources, Daniels's extensive use of the *Times* archives makes this a new approach to a familiar topic. "The fact that modern technology placed a searchable version of the *Times* on my desktop," the author tells us, "facilitated my ability to extract even passing references" (p. xv).

That the book largely ignores FDR's personal life (Eleanor Roosevelt and his mother and children are mostly absent from these pages), not only makes for rather dry reading, but omits the substantial influence that Eleanor had on prodding him on civil rights, labor, housing, and refugee issues. Nonetheless, Daniels's lifetime of thinking about FDR as a leader makes the work invaluable. It is carefully researched and provides an uncommonly complete contextual analysis for virtually all of the president's public utterances, and thus for his political strategy.

Daniels has an encyclopedic knowledge of the secondary literature, without which his reliance on published sources would be flat and uninformative. His real energy, however, is directed at critiquing much of the traditional historiography. He argues, for example, that the New Deal was not killed by FDR's ill-conceived court reform plan (a view advanced by Alan Brinkley and others) and that meaningful reform did not come to an end in 1938. He takes issue with James MacGregor Burns and David M. Kennedy on the view that FDR's attempt to "purge" conservative Southern Democrats in 1938 was a political setback. While highly critical of Roosevelt's lack of public support for the anti-lynching bill in 1938, he states, "What we need to understand about this episode is that it marks the beginning of a remarkable and unprecedented dialogue between Franklin Roosevelt and the unelected leaders of black America. . . . Not until Lyndon Johnson reached the White

House would a comparable dialogue recur" (p. 338).

Daniels is highly critical of Roosevelt's record on the rescue of Jewish refugees, but still asks readers to remember that the United States, by 1945, "took in something less than 200,000 Jewish refugees, more than the rest of what came to be called the free world combined" (p. 378). And with regard to the recession of 1937–38, he concludes, "Most historians give Roosevelt failing grades for his performance as 'economist in chief.' A sounder judgment . . . is that Roosevelt did err badly by taking his foot off the economic gas pedal after the 1936 election and was slow to realize that a serious recession was in progress. . . . But within a few months, he put together and sold to Congress a collection of measures that ended the decline and resumed the pattern of economic improvement that had begun in the hundred days. Compared with his initial understandings of the economy in 1933, his perception and understanding of the nation's economic processes had expanded enormously" (p. 361).

Some might find Daniels's approach an *apologia* for Roosevelt's missteps, but I found his arguments sound. The opening chapters recount a familiar story; the book really comes to life in later chapters, when he puts his prodigious knowledge of Roosevelt scholarship to work.

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