

However, there were civilians who knew that Rickover was a rigidly honest man who could be relied upon in an emergency. After the March 1979 nuclear accident at Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania, President Jimmy Carter, who had been a nuclear engineer in the Navy, called on Rickover for advice. Rickover submitted a report to the President and met with the President's appointed group, the Commission on the Accident at Three Mile Island. Later, in 1983, the Metropolitan Edison Co. itself called on Rickover to help it get its undamaged plant, TMI-1, started up again, because, as the utility representative said, "We don't seem to be able to persuade anyone to examine us and pronounce us ready to go." On the basis of Rickover's favorable recommendation, the plant was allowed to start up in 1986.

### Committed to the best

The admiral's zeal for technical improvements did not begin with the nuclear navy—it was a lifelong obsession. As an engineering officer on the S-48, an old submarine, Rickover put out a fire caused by the main batteries. When he discovered that the design of the motor was at fault, he redesigned and rebuilt the motors.

As second in command of the Electrical Section of the Bureau of Ships, Rickover decided that some of the hardware on ships was too big and heavy. He drew up a new set of plans for control panels, warning the manufacturer to make them to his specifications: "If you won't, the Navy will cancel all future orders for control panels work [and] with someone who will." In another instance, writes Rockwell, a "vendor announced proudly that it [a redesigned instrument] was now a fully shockproof design. He handed it over to Rickover, expecting the commander to look it over admiringly and perhaps comment on its sleek appearance. But Rickover merely hurled it against the old-fashioned radiator and didn't even wince as it shattered. He then turned on his heel and strode silently back to his office."

Rockwell writes that "one of Rickover's greatest assets, as leader of a technically sophisticated project, was incredible technical intuition," and he quotes a General Electric executive that "his engineering intuition is eerie." It was Rickover's design for a pressurized-water reactor to power nuclear submarines that won out over the many others, when detractors felt that it was "too unimaginative." But, continues Rockwell, "essentially all of the world's nuclear power plant builders have independently come to adopt Rickover's design concept and technology." The author also shows how Rickover's work acted as what Lyndon LaRouche has called a "science driver" in the U.S. economy: "Whole new industries were set up to produce tonnage lots of zirconium, hafnium, uranium oxide, and other exotic materials previously known only as laboratory curiosities. Totally new types of valves, pumps, heat exchangers, and control systems were developed, which quickly found application in fields as diverse as biomedical research and water treatment plants."

## FDR's second term: a study in opposites

by Stuart K. Lewis

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### **FDR: Into The Storm, 1937-1940**

by Kenneth S. Davis

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Some of the major events in President Franklin Roosevelt's second term, such as his trying to pack the Supreme Court, his struggle to get the National Recovery Administration programs passed, and his fight against isolationism, which Roosevelt saw as crippling his efforts to rearm the country in the face of expanding fascism in Europe, are thoroughly discussed in this long book by Kenneth Davis. Unfortunately he never deals with the British-steered geopolitical control over American policy, which set the forces in motion for both world wars, and of which FDR was sometimes the instrument, and other times the opponent; but for the student of history who is aware of those more fundamental causes, the book's detailed account of certain secondary features of the times and the gigantic personality of FDR, the last U.S. President to make such a mark on history, is both useful and fascinating.

Timely, in the context of today's western impotence to oppose Serbian fascism, is a long discussion of British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's appeasement policy of telling Czechoslovakia, which had one of the best armies in Europe at the time, to just give up its Sudetenland region to appease Hitler's Germany. Some other subjects Davis details are: the development of the Tennessee Valley Authority, which helped in flood control and gave the TVA area twice the national average in per capita use of electricity at half the national average in cost; a letter to Roosevelt from scientists concerning the use of nuclear power as a weapon, led to a whole discussion of the history of nuclear radiation; and the Russian invasion of Finland.

### **Spiteful appointments**

Roosevelt's choices for Supreme Court justices and ambassador to England reveal the way his petty frustration would boil over into intensely damaging policy results. One of the most disastrous of all such decisions was his choice of Hugo Black for Supreme Court justice. Davis writes that

Roosevelt, seeking revenge against the Senate for its opposition to his New Deal legislation, thought, "if possible, the appointment should be one the Senate would have to confirm, yet whose confirmation would be as gall and wormwood to many senators, to all conservatives." Davis continues, "Roosevelt himself had no high opinion of Black's abilities as a lawyer; he confessed as much to [Harold] Ickes." It came out that Justice Black had been a member of the Ku Klux Klan, and possibly continued to be after his election to the U.S. Senate; at least, he likely continued his ties, if not his secret membership. Of course, our country is still suffering today for that nomination through Black's leadership in erecting the "wall" of separation of church and state, which has thrown all notions of God and morality out of the schools.

Similarly, Roosevelt's appointment of Joseph Kennedy as ambassador to Britain was also made to spite someone. Davis writes: "The idea of naming an Irish Catholic to the Court of St. James . . . was initially so hilariously outrageous, according to son James that 'he almost toppled from his wheelchair' with laughter." Roosevelt was annoyed by a snub from Neville Chamberlain for "the arrogance with which Chamberlain had refused his recent invitation to come to Washington for talks." Roosevelt felt that Kennedy was "a very dangerous man — too dangerous to have around here" in Washington.

As it turned out, the Kennedy posting not only did not pique the British, but the ambassador also became a member of the notoriously pro-Nazi Cliveden set and gave Roosevelt headaches with his numerous statements calling for the appeasement of Hitler.

Roosevelt's worst concession to crass pragmatism was his refusal to change immigration quotas to allow entry to more Jews from Nazi Germany, and the regulations took no account of horrendous circumstances: They couldn't prove they could support themselves in the United States, because if they left Germany, the state would take 95% of their personal property. Davis writes that Roosevelt feared popular opposition to raising the quotas for Jews to immigrate: "He was determined to conserve every bit of his depleted political capital for expenditure on matters he deemed of supreme importance, and the Jewish refugee crisis was not one of these."

### **Roosevelt's defense posture**

Thankfully, Roosevelt was not a crass pragmatist when it came to defending the country from the threat of German and Japanese expansion. One shudders to think what would have happened if the United States had been unprepared for World War II. The book recounts Roosevelt's efforts to re-arm the country over the violent opposition of American isolationists, many of whom were blindsided by an understandable fear that the United States would be dragged into a war to promote British oligarchist interests.

According to Davis, Roosevelt warned Senate leaders of

"the Nazi-Fascist aggressions, the democracies' yieldings to these aggressions, whereby Europe had been brought to the verge of a world war, which, he stressed, could now break out at any moment." Roosevelt also thought the efforts to help our allies in Europe was severely hamstrung by neutrality legislation, and he "spoke of his own efforts to save the peace and of how these had been hampered and weakened by existing neutrality legislation." However, Sen. William E. Borah told Roosevelt, "he had his own sources of European information which he deemed 'more reliable than those of the State Department,' and they told him emphatically 'that there is not going to be any war.' "

Roosevelt also had to put up with the antics of aviation hero Charles Lindbergh, who preached against any intervention in Europe; Roosevelt said he was "absolutely convinced that Lindbergh is a Nazi." Lindbergh, for his part, vastly overestimated the number of planes in Nazi Germany, in order to instill a false fear of German air strength. In a radio broadcast, Lindbergh railed: "Our bond with Europe is a bond of race and not of political ideology. . . . It is the European race we must preserve; political progress will follow. Racial strength is vital — politics a luxury. If the white race is ever seriously threatened, it may then be time for us to take our part for its protection, to fight side by side with the English, French, and Germans. But not with one against the other for our mutual destruction."

Davis documents communications between Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill of the latter's request for military ships to help in the Battle of Britain. (Of course, Davis does not reference the well-known fact that Churchill himself was an early Fascist sympathizer and advocate of "racial purity" who had turned against the Nazis when Hitler went out of control.) Churchill, telling Roosevelt that Britain could not build destroyers in time, said, "The American destroyers presently immobile in American ports, doing no good to anybody, could make at this juncture, if properly employed, the difference between death and survival for freedom's cause, but the time in which they could do so, as Churchill warned, was rapidly running out." Roosevelt's efforts to increase military production, including his famous call for 50,000 airplanes a year, are described in the book.

In the realm of economics, the book provides an interesting reflection on today's depression dilemmas. Then, as now, there was furious debate between those who wanted to build infrastructure to stimulate an economy and those who thought "balancing the budget" was more important than anything else. As Davis points out, despite many of Roosevelt's social programs, unemployment never really started going down to acceptable levels until production for the war mobilization started. The 1939-43 gearup to defeat the Nazis was Roosevelt's greatest accomplishment, suitably followed later by his determination — as reported by his son Elliott Roosevelt — to prevent the reestablishment of the British and French colonial empires after the war.