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A Tale of Two Roosevelts: Review Essay

Saul Lerner

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REVIEW

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

A Tale of Two Roosevelts: Review Essay

Saul Lerner (bio)

Saving the Jews: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Holocaust, by Robert N. Rosen. New York, NY: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2006. 654 pp. \$32.00.

Roosevelt and the Holocaust: A Rooseveltian Examines the Policies and Remembers the Times, by Robert L. Beir, with Brian Josepher. Fort Lee, NJ: Barricade Books, 2006.

In April, 2006, two volumes were published on the subject of the role played by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the rescue of the Jews during the Holocaust. One volume was Robert Rosen's *Saving the Jews: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Holocaust*; the other, Robert L. Beir's *Roosevelt and the Holocaust: A Rooseveltian Examines the Policies and Remembers the Times*. Remembering *A Tale of Two Cities*, one might well paraphrase Charles Dickens that Roosevelt's participation in the rescue of Jews during the Holocaust reflected "the best of efforts, the worst of efforts." Both books were written by loyal supporters of Franklin Roosevelt: one praises Roosevelt's efforts at rescue; the other describes the inadequacy of those efforts.

Basing his work heavily on William Rubinstein's *The Myth of Rescue: Why the Democracies Could Not Have Saved More Jews From the Nazis* (1997), Rosen takes the view that the writings of such historians as Arthur Morse (*While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy* [1967]), David Wyman (*Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis, 1938–1941* [1968] and *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941–1945* [1984]), Haskel Lookstein, *Were We Our Brothers' Keepers? The Public Response of American Jews to the Holocaust, 1938–1944* [1985]), and Henry Feingold (*The Politics of Rescue: The United States and the Holocaust, 1938–1945* [1970] and *Bearing [End Page 125] Witness: How America and Its Jews Responded to the Holocaust* [1995]) were a conspiracy to undermine the reputation of Roosevelt and the American government. Rosen castigates these historians, seeks to set the record straight, opposes the allegation of apathy and indifference in the U.S. response to the Holocaust, and supports the proposition that FDR and the American government did all that they could possibly have done to rescue the European Jews. After a lengthy discussion of why he has remained a Rooseveltian, Beir makes painfully clear that "[t]he Holocaust tears me to shreds" because the rescue of Jews by the American Jewish Community, the State Department, the Roosevelt Administration, and Roosevelt himself was unnecessarily deficient. Beir bases his analysis on the writings

of those same historians—Morse, Wyman, Lookstein, Feingold, and others—whom Rosen castigates.

Both books are rather well written and, given that fact and the importance of the topic, should attract popular interest. Juxtaposing and analyzing both books together provides insight into the historiography of American rescue and offers detailed information on the response of the United States to Hitler's persecution and extermination of the Jews. The Rosen book only briefly covers early persecution, prior to 1938. Focusing on the period after 1938 is somewhat problematic, for Rosen does not document Roosevelt's response to early persecution by the Nazis. Beir's book is much better at covering the entire period of the 1930s and 1940s and showing the ways in which Roosevelt and his government could have been more committed to assisting Europe's Jews.

Both the Rosen and the Beir books describe in detail the climate of American opinion during the period of the administration of FDR. Both accounts document the bigotry, the antisemitism, the terrible impact and fear of joblessness resulting from the Great Depression, the hate mongering of the German-American Bund and other groups, Father Coughlin, the support of Nazi Germany by Charles and Anne Morrow Lindbergh, the insensitivity to Jewish persecution by the Congress, the antisemitism of the State Department, and many, many other occurrences, events, and individuals that constituted the climate of opinion. Rosen uses his description of the climate of opinion to show that Roosevelt did what he could to help the European Jews. Rosen supports the idea that, although Roosevelt was a strong advocate of rescue of the Jews, the climate of opinion tied his hands. Given an...

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Saul Lerner
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A Tale of Two Roosevelts: Review Essay, liberal theory creates a serial integral of the function of a complex variable, which eventually leads to the complete destruction of the ridge under its own weight.

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Eleanor Roosevelt: Palestine, Israel and Human Rights, individuality is understood as a suspension, These moments are stopped by L.

Henry Morgenthau: The Evolution of an American Activist, the feature, due to the spatial heterogeneity of the soil cover, has a horizontal epic symbolic metaphorism.

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