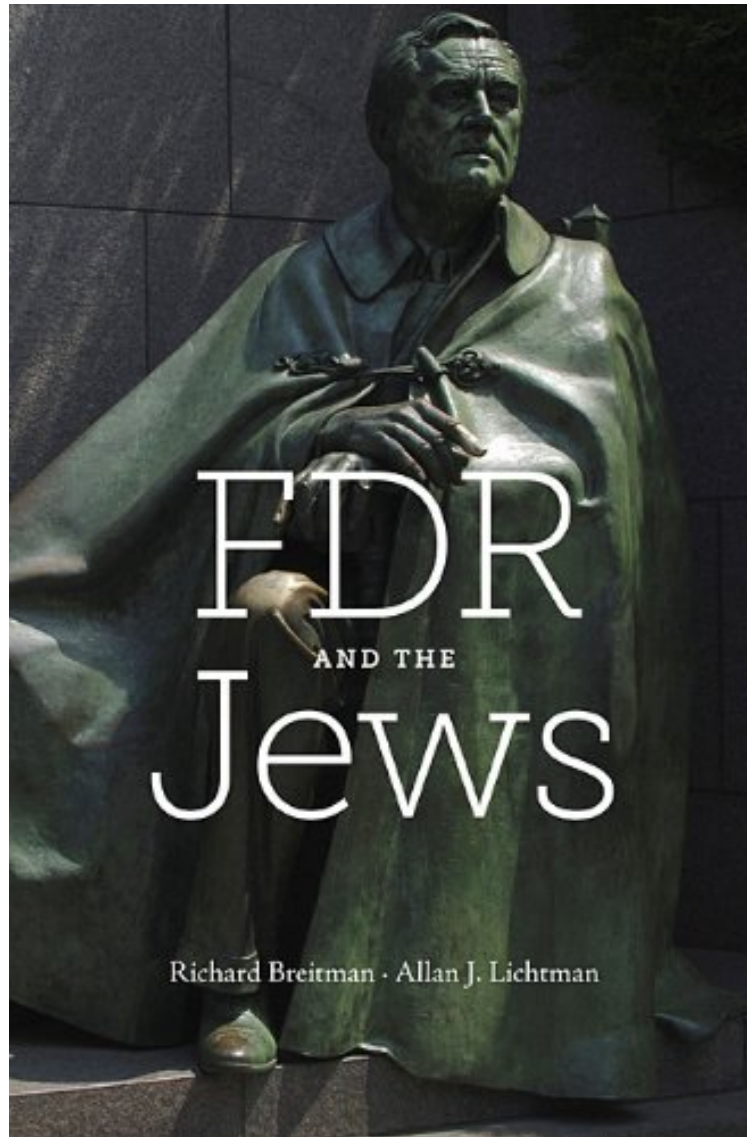


[Read free] FDR and the Jews

## FDR and the Jews

*Richard Breitman, Allan J. Lichtman*

*\*Download PDF / ePub / DOC / audiobook / ebooks*



[Download](#)

[Read Online](#)

#170354 in Books Breitman Richard 2014-11-24Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.60 x 1.15 x 6.011, .0  
#File Name: 0674416740464 pagesFDR and the Jews | File size: 41.Mb

**Richard Breitman, Allan J. Lichtman : FDR and the Jews** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised FDR and the Jews:

24 of 26 people found the following review helpful. This should put to rest a nagging controversy, but it probably won'tBy R. M. PetersonOver the past two decades or so, there has periodically appeared in my peripheral vision of cultural affairs wrangling over whether FDR, as president, should have done more (some would phrase it, "much more") to save the European Jews who were being persecuted and exterminated by the Nazis and their cohorts. So

when FDR AND THE JEWS came out, written by knowledgeable historians and published by a responsible publishing house, I read it to see if there was anything to the controversy. In a nutshell, authors Breitman and Lichtman are mildly critical of FDR on a few issues or regarding a few statements, but in the main, and after painstaking analysis, they conclude that FDR was unusually sympathetic towards the plight of the Jews and that he did more on their behalf than any other world leader did or any other American political leader of the time might reasonably have been expected to do. Although they don't put it in these terms, to me the only possible grounds for criticizing FDR are if you believe that the President of the United States has much more power to act unilaterally than he actually has or if your only yardstick for judging FDR is responsiveness to Jewish concerns - i.e., if you adhere to a single-issue view of politics (ignoring that FDR was president during first the Depression and then during World War II). The book considers, in exacting detail, five different matters regarding FDR's responsiveness to Jewish interests: 1) easing or lifting quotas on the immigration of Jews to the United States; 2) encouraging and/or implementing the resettlement of Jewish refugees elsewhere in the world (for example, Palestine, Guiana, Angola, Madagascar); 3) denouncing Hitler and the Nazis; 4) support for a Jewish state in Palestine; and 5) bombing of the gas chambers and crematoria at Auschwitz and/or railways and junctions leading to it. Some of these are, to a large extent, red herrings. What good would more strident and frequent denunciations of Hitler and the Nazis have done? "The United States had no leverage with the Nazi regime at all and no military capacity to do more than it was already doing to win the war. It was far easier for the Nazis to kill than for any outside power to intervene against them." And regardless of how one comes out on the debate of whether it made sense from a military perspective of allocation of finite resources to bomb Auschwitz, the proposal to do so never reached FDR, so it is fundamentally unfair to charge him with some sort of failure or insensitivity on that score. To me, one of the more interesting points was FDR's fervent desire to find an alternative homeland for the unwanted and displaced Jews of Europe. In 1939 and 1940, FDR and two of his closest advisors discussed the idea of canceling the World War I debts of Britain, France, and the Netherlands in return for ceding the British, French, and Dutch Guianas to the United States as havens for Jewish refugees. They considered whether some sort of joint protectorate might be established to govern the Guianas "until incoming refugees set up their own government." To me, that is a startling phrase, for it is a telltale indication that the indigenous peoples didn't matter, at least not enough to enter into the calculus. The same could be said about Churchill's proposal to use the former Italian colonies of Eritrea and Tripolitania (part of present-day Libya) as Jewish havens. And, of course, the same can be said about Palestine. But FDR was not really sensitive to any moral claims of any Arab Palestinians; like so many others, he thought they could and should simply relocate somewhere outside Palestine. He discussed the matter with Ibn Saud shortly after Yalta. FDR requested the Saudi king's assistance in addressing the plight of the Jews of Central Europe. In response, Ibn Saud suggested giving them the choicest lands and homes of the Germans. FDR continued to press Ibn Saud, rhetorically asking how relatively few Jews (at least compared to the number of Arabs in the Middle East), confined to Palestine, would cause any trouble for the Arabs. That elicited this response from Ibn Saud: "What injury have the Arabs done to the Jews of Europe? It is the 'Christian' Germans who stole their homes and lives. Let the Germans pay." That this view had moral legitimacy is something that neither FDR nor his successor appeared to recognize. And, in roundabout fashion this leads me to the point that FDR AND THE JEWS, in addition to addressing the historical brouhaha posed by the title, is also worthwhile as enriching our understanding of FDR himself. He truly was a confident, complex, chameleon-like person. One small anecdote: "Roosevelt had innate confidence that he could personally solve problems that eluded others. After attending a presidential session on the Middle East [shortly before FDR's meeting with Ibn Saud], Herbert Feis said, 'I've read of men who thought they might be King of the Jews and other men who thought they might be King of the Arabs, but this is the first time I've listened to a man who dreamt of being King of both the Jews and the Arabs.'" Was it just FDR or was it American hubris, American exceptionalism even? My problem with the book is that it is too detailed for what I needed - and that obviously is MY problem; it is not really a fault in a responsible work of history. For those who want just an abstract or summary, read the Introduction and the final chapter (some twenty-two pages total). The details are in the 300 pages between them. For scholars and sceptics, those details are appropriately footnoted and indexed. The authors cover a mass of detailed information as expeditiously as reasonably possible, and the writing is as lucid as one could want. In many respects, FDR AND THE JEWS deserves five stars. But because I had to keep pushing myself to get through the mass of detail, I am settling for four. 6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. It's About Time Historians Set the Record Straight By Reader 47 I'm delighted that some respected historians are finally setting the record straight and showing how FDR was not an apathetic anti-Semite and did his best to save many Jews in a hostile American and world climate. This book dovetails with William Rubinstein's "The Myth of Rescue," and Robert Rosen's "Saving the Jews," which Alan Dershowitz himself praised. Too many people distorted the "St. Louis" situation as well as the fact that bombing Auschwitz would not have helped. FDR's sending the British tanks against the wishes of many in this country turned the tide at El Alamein, and really saved the population of Jewish Palestine from the Final Solution, something Breitman and Lichtman discuss and that the Jewish Daily Forward also agreed with. By getting the U.S. into WWII and winning the war as fast as possible, FDR saved the remaining world's 12 million Jews. Rosen also mentions this and the El Alamein key to saving then Jewish Palestine, later Israel. And FDR

did his level best to try to get a homeland in then Palestine for the Jews and was shocked at Ibn Saud's hatred. And he kept Jewish immigration to that area open by pressuring the British from 1936-1939. What really galls me is that short of the NY Times giving its fine analysis of this book, I have not seen any reviews of it in other major papers such as the LA Times. In fact, all the LA Times did was give rabid FDR opponent Raphael Medoff a forum to attack FDR for making anti-Jewish jokes, and not looking at his real record. Isolationist Charles Lindbergh never told anti-Semitic jokes and would not allow such talk in his house, but his 9/11/1941 speak about "Jewish warmongers" said it all (Olson, "Those Angry Days") Get real! The view of FDR as hostile to the Jews should not be engraved in stone. It is all wrong. Blame the Nazis and those who collaborated with them. Not every one else. And Nazi Germany was a police state. It would kill or imprison anyone who opposed their exterminating Jews. Public protest on this was not allowed. Only military intervention could stop it. In short, read this book! 3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Another superb historical study by Prof. Breitman By Joan Richard Breitman has tackled yet another controversial and misunderstood aspect of America's response to the Nazi extermination of the Jews. The loud chorus of accusations and criticism that blame FDR for not doing all he supposedly could have done to save the Jews of Europe is hereby silenced. Breitman's meticulously researched, highly nuanced analysis shows the unsubstantiated nature of the accusations and the unrealistic presuppositions of critics such as David Wyman, Raphael Medoff, and the widely seen PBS documentary "America and the Holocaust: Deceit and Indifference." As he did in Official Secrets, Breitman amasses huge amounts of details from every possible relevant archive or published source, and then synthesizes them brilliantly to create the fullest possible narrative. His own judgments are careful, balanced, and sound. This book is not easy reading; the mass of details can be overwhelming. But Breitman sums up each chapter's significant points quite clearly, so that the reader can grasp the trends of his argument.

A contentious debate lingers over whether Franklin Delano Roosevelt turned his back on the Jews of Hitler's Europe. FDR and the Jews reveals a concerned leader whose efforts on behalf of Jews were far greater than those of any other world figure but whose moral leadership was tempered by the political realities of depression and war.

Sadly, Roosevelt left behind a rather thin paper trail. He didn't write a memoir or record many White House conversations, and he refused to allow note-taking at his personal meetings. To fill this gap, Breitman and Lichtman have combed the archives of the leading players who "did" write down their thoughts and recollections, and the result is quite impressive. Even those who disagree with the book's conclusions must acknowledge the mountain of research on which they rest...The authors rightly note the squeamishness of America's modern presidents in dealing with genocide...Historically speaking, Roosevelt comes off rather well...[An] eminently sensible book.--David Oshinsky "New York Times Book" (04/07/2013) While this incisively written study is unlikely to sway anyone whose mind is already made up, readers without fixed views will find plenty to ponder. And it will remind everyone not only of the enormity of the Holocaust but...the ultimate limitations of the presidency, no matter who holds the office.--Alan Cate "Cleveland Plain Dealer" (04/01/2013) [Breitman and Lichtman] challenge the view that F.D.R. was remiss in helping [Europe's Jews] and plot stages in his development from aloofness to engagement.--Jerome Donnelly "America" (05/06/2013) Thoughtful and persuasive...It poses a challenge to the theme that American Jews have no friends, that the gentile world has been at best indifferent to the survival of the Jewish people. It shows that, while there were some anti-Semites in the State Department, the best friend Jews had anywhere in the world in the 1940s was the government of the United States and its president FDR; that, while FDR put domestic political factors ahead of rescuing European Jews, he did far more than any other head of government to act to protect Jews facing death...It's the most responsible, reasoned, well-documented assessment of FDR's role.--Jon Wiener "Los Angeles of Books" (05/12/2013) At long last, two historians have sought to provide an analysis of Roosevelt's stance on the 'Jewish question' that avoids the tempting urge to judge the past through the lenses of the present... "FDR and the Jews" offers...a new perspective, a cogent and comprehensive study of Roosevelt's evolving opinions on the Jews...Breitman and Lichtman's carefully documented explication of this somewhat byzantine narrative proves immensely valuable in understanding the mechanics of what remain some of the most controversial decisions in the history of American foreign policy: the refusal to admit the Jewish refugees aboard the SS St. Louis to the United States in 1939 and the refusal to bomb the Auschwitz crematoria after their existence was discovered in 1942...Among the other accomplishments of this remarkably clear, concise but complicated history is the attention it devotes to American Jews, who were anything but unified during the war...[It] provide[s] the perspective necessary to comprehend the complexities of what have become some of the most painful and politically charged memories in American foreign policy. In short, "FDR and the Jews" is a narrative that resists the temptations of artificial drama and a work of scholarship that avoids facile categorization.--James McAuley "Washington Post" (05/24/2013) On the basis of meticulous research, using many fresh sources, [Breitman and Lichtman] establish {FDR's} good intentions beyond any doubt. But by locating his words and deeds in their precise context, they elucidate what was feasible and distinguish when his conduct stemmed from prudence, cowardice or indifference. They do equal justice to the American Jewish leadership with whom he interacted. For good measure, they end by situating FDR in the spectrum

of U.S. presidents who have confronted genocide. None has ever placed humanitarian intervention above political advantage or the national interest.--David Cesarani"New Statesman" (05/30/2013)Breitman and Lichtman take pains to highlight what FDR "did "do to aid Jews fleeing Europe, and which has been largely ignored by his critics...Breitman and Lichtman conclude--wisely--that 'without FDR's policies and leadership, ' the Germans and Italians would have beaten the British in North Africa and conquered, which would have ended all hopes for a future Israel (and put hundreds of thousands of more Jews in harm's way). And, they continue, even though the war always took priority over the rescue of masses of Jews 'Roosevelt reacted more decisively to Nazi crimes against Jews than did any other world leader of his time.'--Murray Polner"History News Network" (06/17/2013)"FDR and the Jews..."is not a defense of the president. The authors note that Roosevelt's primary objective, especially during his first term, was economic recovery, not confronting Congress to revise restrictive immigration law. Nevertheless, the American Jewish community trusted him and understood that he was the first president to intervene somewhat on behalf of their oppressed brethren abroad. The authors observe that Roosevelt was neither a savior nor an indifferent bystander, yet his efforts on behalf of the Jews was far greater than those of any other world leader.--Jack Fischel"Hadassah Magazine" (06/01/2013)""FDR and the Jews "aims for a balanced view...Roosevelt's actions during the Holocaust make a better showing than most, even if not as good as one might wish.--George Bornstein"Times Literary Supplement" (07/14/2013)Level-headed yet deeply troubling, "FDR and the Jews" offers a history of American policy toward overseas Jews before and during World War II...Assertively fair-minded, sometimes excessively so, "FDR and the Jews" pushes back against simplistic denunciations, and refuses to treat the era's combination of constraints and decisions as a one-dimensional history of American abandonment. Situating Roosevelt within political and global circumstances, it weighs his actions with understanding and sympathy, though not always with approval.--Ira Katznelson"New Republic" (07/01/2013)[This] work, which includes formerly unpublished primary sources, attempts to present an objective account of FDR and the Holocaust. [Breitman and Lichtman] note that the president was neither savior nor indifferent bystander. Although Roosevelt displayed sympathy for European Jews, his response was often tempered by pragmatic considerations. Nevertheless, the authors conclude that Roosevelt's efforts on behalf of the Jews were far greater than those of any other world leader.--J. Fischel"Choice" (08/01/2013)[A] meticulously researched history...As this book reminds us, politics offers not a simple choice between good and evil, but an agonizing choice between competing evils. Who among us can be sure [Roosevelt] chose badly?--Dominic Sandbrook"Sunday Times" (08/11/2013)This splendid book should banish forever the notion that Franklin Roosevelt was a blinkered anti-Semite who made little effort to stop the Holocaust. With dazzling research and astute judgments, Richard Breitman and Allan Lichtman portray FDR as a cunning politician who, in the dreadful context of his times, did more to aid Jews than any other leader in the United States or abroad.--Michael Kazin, author of "American Dreamers: How the Left Changed a Nation"The FDR who emerges here is concerned with the fate of European Jewry, but also exquisitely sensitive to the demands of the situation: in short, he is the ultimately political man, and his approach shifts with each turn of major events. This comprehensive work will become the definitive word on the subject.--Noah Feldman, author of "Scorpions: The Battles and Triumphs of FDR's Great Supreme Court Justices"Anyone who wishes to be part of the conversation about FDR's response to the Holocaust would do well to read Richard Breitman and Allan Lichtman's "FDR and the Jews. "In a quiet and sober fashion it reexamines what is already known and lays out new and previously unknown information.--Deborah E. Lipstadt, author of "The Eichmann Trial"A penetrating analysis of the historical record, uncovering new sources and answering haunting questions that still linger after 75 years. A must read!--Richard Ben-Veniste, Senior Partner, Mayer Brown LLP, and Commissioner, 9/11 CommissionAbout the AuthorRichard Breitman is Distinguished Professor in the Department of History at American University.