
Reviewed by Brannon Price (University of Southern Mississippi)

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Commissioned by Margaret Sankey (Air University)

David B. Woolner’s *The Last 100 Days* sets out, not surprisingly, to examine the political and personal aspects of the last one hundred days of the presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The author points out that many historians have placed great emphasis on two of FDR’s greatest achievements: his handling of the Great Depression and his decision to support Great Britain in 1940 after the fall of France. Woolner, however, aims to answer some of the pressing questions of the president’s last days in office: “Was he too ill during these last months to properly carry the burdens of office? Did Joseph Stalin dupe him at Yalta because FDR was too weak to resist?... What role did the members of his family or his closest confidants play—if any—in his ability to lead despite his reduced capacity for work” (pp. xii-xiii)? Drawing on sources previously unavailable to historians, including many declassified documents, Woolner effectively answers all of these questions. This work also shows, however, that Roosevelt’s main concern during his last days in office was the ushering in of a new, more peaceful, world order through the creation of the United Nations.

Much of Woolner’s book narrates the major events of the last one hundred days of the Roosevelt administration. FDR’s travels to, and involvement in, the Yalta Conference makes up the bulk of this study. The president’s health and its effect on his ability to carry out his duties are also examined in great depth. Roosevelt struggled with his health on a daily basis. It was such a concern for the president and his closest companions that his physicians made the journey to Yalta with him. Through this examination of the conference, Woolner answers many of the questions he asks at the beginning of this work. Although his health was indeed failing, Roosevelt was able to coherently discuss the major issues of Yalta with Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin. Time and again, *The Last 100 Days* shows that the issues of the governance of Poland and the creation of the UN, as well as the specifics of its operations, were questions of paramount importance. The author points out that some historians have blamed FDR’s health for his failure to gain concessions from Stalin on the issue of Poland. Woolner, however, disagrees with this assertion, stating that “as FDR’s forceful directions and instructions to Stettinius over these two days make clear, FDR was not only engaged but in charge” as well (p. 133). By relenting on certain issues, Roosevelt was able to shift the discussion in a manner of his choosing in order to achieve some of his other goals for the conference. Using these examples, the author shows that Roosevelt’s illness did not prevent him from effectively carrying out his duties as chief executive of the United States.

Throughout this work, Woolner shows the almost constant presence of Roosevelt’s closest friends and family during the last days of his life and administration. FDR’s daughter “was becoming something of a policy adviser—for instance, commenting on and helping draft her father’s public pronouncements” (p. 32). Examples such as this clearly show that those closest to the president played an important role in assisting him in his day-to-day responsibilities as the leader of the free world, thus answering one of the central questions this book sets out to examine.

Woolner takes great care throughout his work to show that, while Roosevelt’s health was failing, and
while he was bombarded on all sides by political issues, his primary goals remained the creation of the UN and the assurance of a lasting peace. This was the main issue discussed at Yalta, and one of the greatest debates that took place in the United States Congress at this time. The president would not allow his health problems to stand in the way of achieving these goals. Thus, as *The Last 100 Days* displays, FDR was not so infirm as to be unable to work toward and realize the tasks he set before himself at the end of his life.

While this work is an excellent addition to the historiography of books examining the United States’ longest-tenured chief executive, it is not without some weaknesses. Presumably, Woolner discusses the trips to and from the Yalta Conference to further show the state of FDR’s health. However, these chapters feel out of place in a book that concerns itself mostly with diplomatic and political history. This criticism aside, *The Last 100 Days* is an excellent account of the last days of the Roosevelt administration and the issues with which it was faced, both foreign and domestic.

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