



The Fall of the House of Roosevelt: Brokers of Ideas and Power from FDR to LBJ (Columbia Studies in Contemporary American History)

Michael Janeway

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In the 1930s a band of smart and able young men, some still in their twenties, helped Franklin D. Roosevelt transform an American nation in crisis. They were the junior officers of the New Deal. Thomas G. Corcoran, Benjamin V. Cohen, William O. Douglas, Abe Fortas, and James Rowe helped FDR build the modern Democratic Party into a progressive coalition whose command over power and ideas during the next three decades seemed politically invincible.

This is the first book about this group of Rooseveltians and their linkage to Lyndon Johnson's Great Society and the Vietnam War debacle. Michael Janeway grew up inside this world. His father, Eliot Janeway, business editor of Time and a star writer for Fortune and Life magazines, was part of this circle, strategizing and practicing politics as well as reporting on these men. Drawing on his intimate knowledge of events and previously unavailable private letters and other documents, Janeway crafts a riveting account of the exercise of power during the New Deal and its aftermath. He shows how these men were at the nexus of reform impulses at the electoral level with reform thinking in the social sciences and the law and explains how this potent fusion helped build the contemporary American state. Since that time efforts to reinvent government by "brains trust" have largely failed in the U.S. In the last quarter of the twentieth century American politics ceased to function as a blend of broad coalition building and reform agenda setting, rooted in a consensus of belief in the efficacy of modern government.

Can a progressive coalition of ideas and power come together again? The Fall of the House of Roosevelt makes such a prospect both alluring and daunting.

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