From the depths of the Great Depression to the Second World War, Franklin D. Roosevelt's unique four-term presidency saw the nation through tumultuous times. Determined that lessons learned would not be forgotten, Roosevelt donated his voluminous papers to the American people, making them available to all at his presidential library.

Now, with the *Documentary History of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidency*, UPA makes this wealth of knowledge even more accessible. This multi-volume print publication selects the most revealing documents from over 17 million pages concerning the FDR’s four administrations. Through the use of a variety of manuscript collections, researchers will have critical insight into the machinations of the Roosevelt White House, Roosevelt’s presidential style, his policies and programs, and the colorful characters that advised and influenced the President.

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**Volume 21, Executive Reorganization, 1937–1939**
Ever since Theodore Roosevelt’s day the need to reorganize the Federal executive branch has been recognized, and every president thereafter had urged that something be done. The rapid multiplication of government activities during the depression, mad the situation increasingly worse. Consequently, on January 12, 1937, FDR, in a special message, requested legislation to reorganize the executive branch. The President transmitted a proposal carefully formulated by a Committee on Administrative Management. Because of preoccupation with the Supreme Court fight, Congress made little progress in dealing with the proposal until 1938, when a reorganization bill passed the Senate. This bill included several departures from the President’s proposal, including no provision for a department of public works and congressional ability to disapprove of executive orders. Anti-New Dealers accused the President of trying to undermine republican government with the bill and the measure was labeled “a dictator bill.” The House, impressed with this propaganda, killed the bill. In 1939, however, a modified bill was passed without serious opposition. It provided for six administrative assistants to the President and directed him to formulate plans to consolidate or abolish unnecessary agencies for better economy and efficiency. The powers granted to the President fell far short of what he had requested.


**Volume 22, Schechter Case and Unconstitutionality of the NRA, 1935**
In the Schechter case, though the U.S. Supreme Court was only called upon to decide the constitutionality of federal supervision as applied to the purely intrastate poultry business, the effect of its decision was to void the NRA in its entirety and to lay down principles which would seem to bar federal wage, hour, and trade-practice regulation in any business. The case itself seemed almost trivial, involving a small Brooklyn poultry firm charged with violations of National Recovery Administration (NRA) code, but the Supreme Court ruled that Congress had given “virtually unfettered” powers to the NRA, and this was considered inconsistent with the constitutional duties of Congress.


**Volume 23, Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938**
For some time after the overthrow of NRA, the minimum wage and maximum hour provisions of the industrial codes were maintained...
in many fields by voluntary agreement. As old abuses reappeared, however, labor insisted on federal legislation defining labor standards. The proposal for a general wage-hour law, met with strong opposition. Southern legislators were afraid of losing a principal attraction drawing industry to their region. Northern businessmen felt their costs might increase, and farmers feared higher industrial wages would increase their problems with agricultural labor. A wage-hour bill recommended by the President failed in 1937, but in June 1938, the Fair Labor Standards Act was finally approved. It applied to employees engaged in interstate commerce or in producing goods for interstate commerce, but a number of sizable groups were specifically excluded, among them agricultural laborers, seamen, and domestic servants. The immediate result was to raise the wages of about 300,000 persons and to shorten the working hours of some 1.3 million workers. As the standards were gradually raised, more and more members of the labor force benefited. Since these standards were exceedingly modest, the operation of the law reveals much about the sweating of labor that preceded its enactment.


Volume 24, FDR’s Response to German Aggression: Czechoslovakia, 1938

The menace to the world’s democracies was clear by 1938. By that time Adolf Hitler had shown his contempt for treaties by denouncing the Treaty of Versailles and by scrapping the Locarno Pact and willingness to use force by seizing the Rhineland and absorbing Austria in the Anschluss. FDR Realized the gravity of the situation and continuing his stand against totalitarian governments in his “quarantine” speech of October 1937, he took the lead in formulating American foreign policy instead of acquiescing in the prevalent isolationist point of view. While laying the groundwork for American defense, the administration did not relax its efforts to prevent a war in Europe. During the summer of 1938, Hitler made increasing demands for the Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia. A war of nerves, incessant propaganda and saber-rattling, initiated the move against Czechoslovakia, which Hitler declared he must have even though he had to go to war for it. Believing that the struggle over the Sudetenland might involve Europe in a general war, FDR sent personal messages to the leaders of Czechoslovakia, Germany, Great Britain, and France. After pointing out that the U.S. had no political entanglements, he asserted that there is no problem so difficult or pressing that it cannot be justly solved by the resort to reason rather than by resort to force. Therefore, on behalf of the American people, he asked the disputants to seek a peaceful settlement. American opinion overwhelmingly favored any solution that would avoid war. Great was the relief at the news that a last minute conference had been arranged at Munich. On September 30, Germany, France, Italy, and Great Britain signed an accord allowing Hitler a free hand in the Sudetenland. American opinion initially supported appeasement, but eventually reversed itself. Few Americans saw that their own country shared in appeasing Germany. FDR no less than Chamberlain had been desperately anxious to preserve peace, and Congress insisted on the futile policy represented by the Neutrality Acts. Adolf Hitler could therefore continue his aggressive course convinced that the United States would do nothing to help those who resisted him.


Volume 25, FDR, Churchill, and Operation TORCH

When FDR and Prime Minister Winston Churchill conferred at the White House at the end of December 1941, they agreed that the major Anglo-American objective should be the defeat of Germany and her European allies. The first important American troop assignment would be in North Africa, where the British and Italo-German forces had been struggling since the summer of 1940. This African arena was of vast importance to the Allies because control of it was necessary to maintain British domination of the Mediterranean. To the United States, German occupation of the African west coast, of Dakar in particular, would bring the Axis within 1600 miles of Brazil and threaten the Western Hemisphere. Moreover, an Allied victory would pave the way for an invasion of Europe from the south. The Allied invasion plans were still in the formative stage when General Rommel’s Africa Corps suddenly captured Tobruk and moved within fifty miles of the Suez Canal. In October, the British Eighth Army routed the Italo-German forces at El Alamein and began pushing the enemy westward. This offensive was but one arm of the pincer movement that FDR and Churchill had planned for an Anglo-American invasion of Africa from the northwest, calculated to hem in Axis troops and force their surrender. On November 8, a large British and American armada landed 400,000 men under General Dwight D. Eisenhower at Casablanca, Oran, and Algiers.

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