

The Documentary History of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidency

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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.

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Volume 11: FDR and Protection from Lynching, 1934–1945

FDR publicly called lynching “a vile form of collective murder,” but when the 1934 anti-lynching bill came before the Senate, he refused to challenge the southern leadership of his Democratic Party, knowing full well that if he did so they would block every piece of legislation he needed to put America back on the road to recovery. Still, largely because of Eleanor's deeply felt and strongly fought battles for racial justice (for which she was often reviled), FDR is today perceived as a champion of the rights of African Americans.

Volume 12: FDR's Protest of the Treatment of Jews in Germany, 1938

Kristallnacht (or “Night of the Broken Glass”) turned President Franklin D. Roosevelt's protest of Nazi treatment of the Jews to outrage. FDR expressed deep shock over the November 9–10 pogrom that resulted in the internment of countless German Jews and some 4,600 Viennese Jews in Nazi concentration camps, and he promptly recalled U.S. Ambassador Hugh Wilson from Germany. Despite the President's outrage and protest voiced by the Western press and public, the German Reich remained unaffected; the German government merely called home its ambassador in the United States due to “American interference in internal German affairs.” Pressure from the FDR administration and the American public did, however, force most of the western European governments to admit more refugees, especially children.

Volume 13: The Presidential Campaign of 1940

In 1940, Americans turned their attention to a precedent-setting presidential election. With the fall of France, many Americans believed it was only a matter of time before their country would be at war with Germany. On the domestic scene, the great problem was whether the New Deal had accomplished its objectives; a growing conservative element believed it had not and that a change to Republicanism would speed the return of prosperity. In addition, there was much public concern because the third term precedent was being seriously challenged for the first time.

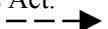
Volume 14: The Yalta Conference, October 1944–March 1945

In February 1945, The Big Three—Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt—met at Yalta in the Crimea. They announced agreement on the postwar occupation of Germany, fixing of reparations, right of liberated peoples to establish governments of their own choosing, reorganization of provisional governments in Poland and Yugoslavia, and establishment of a general international organization to maintain peace and security. These provisions were widely applauded in America.

But other conference decisions provoked sharp controversy—specifically, the USSR's stipulation that it would enter the war against Japan after Germany's surrender in return for the Kurile Islands, the southern half of Sakhalin, and the lease of Port Arthur. In addition, the Chinese Eastern and South Manchurian railroads were to be under joint Soviet-Chinese operations.

Volume 15: Coal Strikes, Labor, and the Smith-Connally Act, 1943

Less than a week after America entered the war, a labor-management conference met and agreed to refrain from strikes and lockouts affecting essential industries, to settle all labor differences by peaceful means, and to accept the jurisdiction of a war labor board—officially established in January 1942 as the National War Labor Board (NWLB). The NWLB and collective bargaining worked quite effectively throughout 1941 and 1942, but began to fail in 1943 as economic distress led to escalating labor protest. Congressional concern resulted in the passage of the controversial Smith-Connally War Labor Disputes Act.



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It must believe in the past.

It must believe in the future.

It must, above all, believe in the capacity of its own people so to learn from the past that they can gain in judgment in creating their own future."

—Franklin D. Roosevelt,

Remarks at the dedication of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, June 30, 1941

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