Troubles overseas faced FDR soon after his election to the U.S. Presidency in 1932: German Nazism, Italian Fascism, Japanese militarism. Yet, during the Great Depression of the 1930s, isolationist sentiment dominated Congress and the electorate. Roosevelt, always a believer in a strong U.S. role in world politics, was ultimately successful in convincing the American people that freedom and democracy at home were inevitably linked to their fate abroad. He moved cautiously as he prepared the country for World War II—artfully exploiting Americans' sympathies and cultural affinities for embattled Britain. During the 1940 presidential campaign, while pledging to keep the U.S. out of a foreign war, he and Winston Churchill boldly closed a deal that traded 50 overage U.S. destroyers for naval and air bases in seven of Britain's Western Hemisphere possessions.

Dallek, a U.C.L.A. historian, argues that FDR's latter-day critics have underestimated his dilemma before Pearl Harbor as he contemplated both the people's desire to avoid war and their hopes for an Axis defeat. Dallek's balanced analysis leads to a disturbing question: If so masterful a politician as Roosevelt had such difficulty persuading Americans to accept uncomfortable truths, what can we expect from less skillful leaders?

—Stephen Pelz (79)

Most books about war stress battles and military heroics; this World War II diary focuses on the messy side effects. Lewis, a British intelligence officer attached to the U.S. Fifth Army, arrived in Naples a month after the Italian surrender in September 1943. As the fight against the Germans went on to the north, liberated Naples was plagued by
thievery, starvation, prostitution, and perhaps history’s biggest black market operation. After years of Fascist rule, city politics underwent a revival, although a corrupt one. It was a Beggars’ Opera world in which small criminals sometimes got caught, but big ones usually prospered, with the complicity of local administrators or the Allied troops, who brought much-needed food, clothing, and other essentials. There was no systematic allocation of these supplies among the Neapolitans, giving ample incentive to local politicians and crooks to traffic in stolen goods. War often deposits this sort of chaos in its wake, but rarely does it find so thoughtful a reporter. At one point, Lewis, dining in a restaurant, observes that all the Italian patrons’ overcoats were made from stolen U.S. army blankets. His writing is precise and evocative: “Ragged, hawk-eyed boys... wandered among the tables ready to dive on any crust... to snatch up left-overs... I couldn’t help noticing the intelligence—almost the intellectuality—of their expressions. No attempt was made to chase them away. They were simply treated as nonexistent.”

—Geoffrey Best (79)

In March 1954, more than 200 Marshall Islanders and the 23-man crew of the Japanese fishing trawler Lucky Dragon suffered classic symptoms of radiation poisoning (nausea, fever, bleeding gums) as a result of a U.S. nuclear bomb test on Bikini Atoll. The blast was part of a U.S. effort to stay ahead in the nuclear arms race, which had accelerated when the Soviet Union detonated its first hydrogen bomb in August 1953. After the Lucky Dragon incident, public debate over atmospheric testing intensified. Divine, a University of Texas historian, gives us a well-documented account. Proponents of an atmospheric test ban included prominent scientists (Linus Pauling) and politicians (Adlai Stevenson). Senior U.S. military men opposed a ban, but they played a minor role in the Washington debate; far more influential in arguing against a ban were Atomic Energy Commis-
He effectively answers recent critics who have attacked Roosevelt for producing Pearl Harbor, for ‘giving away’ Eastern Europe to Stalin at Yalta, and for abandoning European Jews during the Holocaust. Dallek reaffirms the strength and effectiveness of Roosevelt's diplomacy and wartime leadership. Robert Dallek, Professor Emeritus of History, University of California, Los Angeles. Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945. With a New Afterword. Robert Dallek. (Redirected from President Franklin Delano Roosevelt). Franklin Delano Roosevelt (/ˈroʊzəvəlt/, /-vɛlt/; January 30, 1882 – April 12, 1945), often referred to by his initials FDR, was an American politician who served as the 32nd president of the United States from 1933 until his death in 1945. A member of the Democratic Party, he won a record four presidential elections and became a central figure in world events during the first half of the 20th century. Roosevelt directed the federal government. He emphasizes how Roosevelt operated as a master politician in maintaining a national consensus for his foreign policy throughout his presidency and how he brilliantly achieved his policy and military goals. See all Editorial Reviews. Product details. Roosevelt was a very clever leader. He understood the importance of public opinion and balanced American idealism with realistic pragmatism. This book covers FDR’s foreign policy - his aims, means, and results. Some of the highlights include the fact that FDR had to govern in an isolationist nation, which forced FDR to tactfully manage public opinion to deftly lead America out of isolationism and confront Hitler.