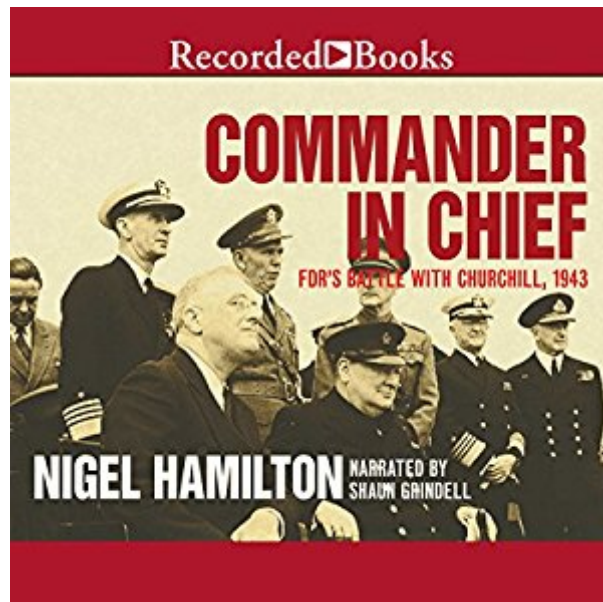


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Commander In Chief: FDR's Battle With Churchill, 1943



Synopsis

In the next installment of the "splendid memoir Roosevelt didn't get to write" (New York Times), Nigel Hamilton tells the astonishing story of FDR's yearlong defining battle with Churchill as the war raged in Africa and Italy. Nigel Hamilton's *Mantle of Command*, long-listed for the National Book Award, drew on years of archival research and interviews to portray FDR in a tight close-up as he determined Allied strategy in the crucial initial phases of World War II. Commander in Chief reveals the astonishing sequel - suppressed by Winston Churchill in his memoirs - of Roosevelt's battles with Churchill to maintain that strategy. Roosevelt knew that the Allies should take Sicily but avoid a wider battle in Southern Europe, building experience but saving strength to invade France in early 1944. Churchill seemed to agree at Casablanca - only to undermine his own generals and the Allied command, testing Roosevelt's patience to the limit. Churchill was afraid of the invasion planned for Normandy and pushed instead for disastrous fighting in Italy, thereby almost losing the war for the Allies. In a dramatic showdown, FDR finally set the ultimate course for victory by making the ultimate threat. *Commander in Chief* shows FDR in top form at a crucial time in the modern history of the West.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I took a little longer than I usually do to write a review for a Vine Program item because I felt I needed to read the first book in what will be, when completed, a multiple volume history of FDR as a military leader in WW II. I have to confess that I was sceptical that I would learn much from this

book. FDR is, after all, one of my passions in studying presidential history. I've read the standard biographies by Geoffrey Ward (including the wonder volume of letters that FDR wrote to his cousin and perhaps closest friend Daisy Suckley), Jean Edward Smith marvelous one-volume biography, James MacGregor Burns's marvelous two-volume one, the first three volumes of Kenneth Davis's five-volume one (something I intend to get back to), Doris Kearns Goodwin's elegantly written account of the White House in the war years, and Arthur Schlesinger's huge three-volume history of the New Deal as well as William Leuchtenburg's one-volume study of the same subject. I have read the memoirs/biographies by Frances Perkins, Grace Tully, Joseph Lash, and Robert Sherwood (the latter a gargantuan joint bio of FDR and Hopkins during WW II). I've read books by two different Brinkley's, Alan's brief and lackluster book for Oxford University Press and Douglas's huge book on FDR's influence on our park system.

Nigel Hamilton, master of the military biography, knows how to tell a story. How was Franklin D Roosevelt going to get American troops involved in the European war theatre and please allies like France and England, who also wanted to maintain their empires in Africa and Asia after the war? Hamilton explains that story here. The research alone for this book must have taken him years, and he admits in the Prologue that historians have to rely on documents, letters, diaries and interviews to write about Franklin D Roosevelt since he died while in office and never could write his memoirs. Thankfully, FDR was a prolific writer and was very detailed in his personal letters to his cousin and confidante Daisy Suckley, which were used in the research of this book, along with letters and diaries by other WWII key leaders. This book covers 1943 alone, and what a year that was for England, The US, and the Soviet Union. Hamilton covers it all by dividing the narrative into smaller chapters that focus then on larger themes that occurred chronologically in 1943: planning the Allied conference in Casablanca (and keeping it secret from the Nazis!), and the actual conference in Casablanca and its attendees and the conference's outcome (Absolute Surrender for Germany). While I have a good understanding of how WWII unfolded, the behind-the-scene details at Casablanca alone were quite impressive for someone like me who prefers to read social history over military history. Hamilton adds social and personal history into this narrative as well, pleasing the reader even more so.

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