

Guide to
the Microfilm Edition
of the

FBI File on Eleanor Roosevelt

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Introduction

Born into one of the oldest families in New York state, Eleanor Roosevelt (1884–1962) grew up in a wealthy home, surrounded by politically active family members, not the least of whom was her uncle, President Theodore Roosevelt. Eleanor learned early the value of community service and believed that she had a duty to help those less fortunate than herself. Because of her upbringing, she naturally became involved in social causes as a young woman, and she remained active until marrying Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a distant cousin, in 1905. Eleanor's interest in social improvement remained high during the early years of her marriage but took a back seat to her husband and the rearing of their five children.

When polio confined Franklin to a wheel chair in 1921, Eleanor's public activity picked up once again. To maintain and strengthen her husband's political connections and to fight for their shared causes, Eleanor became her husband's legs. She traveled and spoke where he could not. The team proved a success, and Franklin won the governorship of New York, and in 1932 the presidency of the United States.

During Franklin's terms as president, Eleanor became the most active First Lady in American history. Her position provided her with the opportunity to become deeply involved in issues long close to her heart, ranging from women's organizations and youth movements to consumer welfare and civil rights for minorities. Roosevelt's unofficial office also allowed her access to the national media to promote causes that only her husband could command. In 1933 she held the first press conference ever by a First Lady. Already an accomplished writer, she penned a nationally syndicated newspaper column called "My Day" and also conducted a radio program. All of this fit around her extensive traveling on the behalf of the president, who never regained the use of his legs.

Franklin's death in 1945 freed her from the necessity of watching her words for his political career. Roosevelt

became even more active in liberal and human rights causes. As a presidential widow, she remained a major national figure, easily attracting media attention. She was twice appointed U.S. delegate to the United Nations, serving a total of nine years. She became chairman of the Human Rights Commission and a leader of the Democratic Party's liberal wing during the 1950s. Eleanor Roosevelt worked tirelessly for greater human rights until her death in 1962.

All of this activity came at a price. During Franklin's administration, criticism was heaped upon her, and she became widely known derisively as "that woman." Eleanor deflected much of the criticism directed toward her husband and his policies. She was vilified as much as she was honored. The public's polarized opinion of the former First Lady continued until her death.

Eleanor Roosevelt's activities and public opinions made her a natural target for the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Her chosen causes, especially her work with the young and support for minorities' civil rights, convinced many that she was radical, subversive, and perhaps un-American. Director Herbert Hoover shared the suspicions of much of the public. The FBI began to collect material on Eleanor immediately after Franklin Roosevelt's election. She was under continuous surveillance until her death.

This FBI file contains the usual letters, memorandum and newspapers clippings that the Bureau routinely collected on suspect citizens. There are also a great number of letters from citizens protesting Eleanor's activities and her newspaper columns. Many letters pleaded with Hoover to do something to stop "that woman." Some of the most interesting material is the correspondence between Roosevelt and Hoover. The organization of this file is chronological. Its contents will interest scholars and students in a number of fields of history, including but not limited to twentieth-century U.S., social, women's, radical, and civil rights.

The documents reproduced here were drawn from the Washington files of the FBI and have been released under

the Freedom of Information Act; certain documents or portion of documents have been deleted by the FBI pursuant to provisions of that legislation. The material has been filmed in the exact order and condition in which it was released, and every effort has been made to publish the most legible copies available.

This file is in approximate chronological order, and the FBI did not index documents. The Roll Notes is not a complete inventory of the file; however, it gives an indication of the types of material or specific documents that may be particularly worthwhile for research.

Paul R. Beezley

Roll Notes

FBI File 62-62735

SECTION 1

Roll 1, 0002-0167

Apr. 1941–Sep. 1957

Criticism of Eleanor Roosevelt comment: “Don’t be afraid of radicalism,” made in a speech she delivered in 1943

News article:

Providence Evening Bulletin (Dec. 1941)

“My Day: Hope for Democracy Rests with U.S.” by Eleanor Roosevelt

The Washington Post (Feb. 1942)

“Fair Enough: Mrs. Roosevelt’s Public Life” by Westbrook Pegler

Security Matter: Information concerning Eleanor Roosevelt

News article:

Washington Daily News (Aug. 1948)

“My Day: Isn’t Spy Ring Inquiry Really a Job for the FBI?”

Transcript of Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt’s “Question and Answer” radio program (Apr. 1951)

Correspondence between Eleanor Roosevelt and J. Edgar Hoover

Christmas Amnesty Petition for Imprisoned Communists (Dec. 1955)

SECTION 2

Roll 1, 0168-0257

Sep. 1957–May 1965

Information Concerning Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt (Central Research Matter)

Eleanor Roosevelt’s newspaper column projecting a favorable view of the Soviet Union during her recent visit to that country

Investigation of allegations that Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt is a Communist

SECTION 3

Roll 1, 0260-0406

Dec. 1962–Sep. 1942

(File filmed in reverse chronological order.)

Numerous newspaper clippings and articles written by Eleanor Roosevelt include:

- Drew Pearson article "Mrs. Roosevelt Showed the Way" (Dec. 1962)
- Drew Pearson article "Some Tributes to Mrs. Roosevelt" (Dec. 1962)
- "Communist Plague Worse than Cancer" by Westbrook Pegler (Oct. 1960)
- The N.Y. Post* (Oct. 1960):
- "Two Faces of Mr. K" by Eleanor Roosevelt (Oct. 1960)
- The Washington Post* (Sep. 1960):
- "Isolation of K at U.N. Irks Soviet"
- Washington Daily News* (Mar. 1959):
- "Are the Reds Set to Strike?" by Eleanor Roosevelt
- The N.Y. Post* (Mar. 1958):
- "The Life of Eleanor Roosevelt" (Article X) by Carl T. Rowan
- The Washington Daily News* (Oct. 1947):
- "Mrs. Roosevelt vs. Vishinsky"
- The Daily Worker* (Mar. 1947):
- "Mrs. Roosevelt Opposes Ban on Communist Party"

Cross References

ENCLOSURE 4

Roll 1, 0407-0620

Nov. 1942–Mar. 1947

Investigation into the existence of "Eleanor Roosevelt Clubs" among black Americans and the purpose for such organizations

Picketing of Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt at United Nations Convention (Oct. 1961)

Pamphlet: "Eleanor's Red Record" by the Citizen's Committee to Combat Communism

Eleanor Roosevelt article: "I'm Glad Over Recent High Court Decisions" (Jun. 1957)

Petition to the President of the United States on Amnesty for Smith Act Victims (Dec. 1955)

Internal Security, Registration Act

American Committee for Yugoslavia Relief, Inc.

Excerpts from the Report of the Joint Fact-Finding Committee to the Fifty-Seventh California Legislature:
Third Report Un-American Activities in California,
1947

Internal Security: Southern Conference for Human Welfare
News article:

The Nashville Banner (Apr. 1942):

“Group Asks Dies Funds be Withheld”

“Defeat of Axis Said Paramount at Welfare Meet”

“Mrs. Roosevelt Says TVA Should Not be Hampered”

Internal Security: Highlander Folk School

Internal Security: West Indian Negro Activity

Internal Security: Misc. Yugoslavian Activities in the
United States

Internal Security: Communist Infiltration of the American
Newspaper Guild, CIO

ENCLOSURE 5

Roll 1, 0623-0781

Jan. 1956–Jun. 1957

Communist Infiltration of the NAACP

Pamphlet: “The Ugly Truth About the NAACP”

News article:

The N.Y. World Telegram (Dec. 1947):

“Reds Scrap Negro Front, Turn Sights on Another Group”

The Daily Worker (Sep. 1948):

“Marshall Plan for the NAACP”

Washington Daily News (Jul. 1949):

“The NAACP has Accomplished Much for Democracy”

State Times, Baton Rouge, LA (Mar. 1957):

“Negro Groups are Infiltrated”

Communist Infiltration of the Women’s International
League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)

News article:

The N.Y. World Telegram (May 1956):

“Mrs. Roosevelt Puts Case for Integration”

The N.Y. Times (May 1956):

“Civil Rights Lag Scored at Rally”

Prosecution of Communist Party Functionaries Under the
Smith Act

News article:

Washington News (Nov. 1956)

“Election Hints Democrats Will Become Stronger” by
Eleanor Roosevelt

Washington Star (Apr. 1955)

“47 Liberals Urge U.S. to Avoid War Over Matsu”

Investigation of an alleged Nazi, Mr. Andrew J. Hercha, Jr.
(Jun. 1957)

ENCLOSURE 6
1940-1955

Roll 1, 0782-0995

Security Matter: Perjury of Maxwell S. Stewart
Office of the Provost Marshall General to Expand (Mar. 1942)

Espionage:

Adventress held on impersonation charge (Mar. 1943)

Internal Security: Southern Conference for Human Welfare

Women's Action Committee for Lasting Peace

Internal Security: COMPIC

Internal Security: Communist Activities

Excerpt from the Hearings before the Committee on Un-
American Activities House of Representatives (1948)

Internal Security: Communist Party, USA

ENCLOSURE 7

Roll 1, 0998-1274

Jan. 1941-Dec. 1953

Internal Security: American Rescue Ship Mission

Internal Security: International Students Service

Internal Security: Communist Infiltration of the United
Federal Workers of America, CIO

Excerpt from the Report of the Joint Fact-Finding Commit-
tee to the 1948 Regular California Legislature: 4th

Report Un-American Activities in California

Internal Security: American Relief for Greek Democracy

Excerpt from *Newsweek* Magazine (Jan. 7, 1946)

“What Labor Wants from ‘The Books’” by Ralph Robey

Internal Security: Communist Party, USA

Civil Rights and Domestic Violence

Detroit Race Riots

Internal Security: Foreign Inspired Agitation Among
American Negroes
Internal Security: Registration Act
Excerpt from the Subcommittee to Investigate the Adminis-
tration of the Internal Security Act and other Internal
Security Laws: Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate
(1953)

ENCLOSURE 8

Roll 1, 1277-END

Dec. 1943-Mar. 1961

Roll 2, 0001-0041

Dismemberment of Counter Intelligence Corps, G-2

Scope of Soviet Activity in the United States

News article:

The Standard Star, New Rochelle, NY (Nov. 1955):

“County Writer, Mrs. FDR Puts U.N.’s Story into
Book”

The Washington Post (Mar. 1958):

“Mrs. Roosevelt Scores U.S. Immigration Ban”

The Washington Post (Sep. 1953):

“Mrs. Roosevelt Starts Group to Fight ‘Reactionary
Trend’ ”

“Issues Group Asks Support of all Parties”

The Daily Worker (Mar. 1947):

“Mrs. FDR Hits Sending U.S. Troops to Greece”

“Greeks Sing: ‘English Go From Our Land’ ”

The Washington News (Mar. 1950):

“Sen. McCarthy’s Charges are Music to the Kremlin”

Loyalty of Government Employees: Alleged Communists
in the U.S. Mission to the U.N.

Excerpt from: Current Biography, (Jan. 1949)

biography of Eleanor Roosevelt

News article:

The Houston Post (Mar. 1961):

“Three Texans Appointed to Peace Corps Panel”

ENCLOSURE 9

Roll 2, 0044-0333

Oct. 1947-Apr. 1961

Internal Security: Sedition, America first Party

Internal Security: Joint anti-Fascist Refugee Committee
Internal Security: Foreign inspired agitation among the
American Negroes; Activities of the Ku Klux Klan;
Protest against Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt during a speech
at the Highlander Folk School
Internal Security: Communist Party, USA
Internal Security: Southern Conference Educational Fund,
Inc. (SCEF)
American Veterans Committee
News article:
The Shreveport Journal (Apr. 1961)
“Veterans Group Demands Probe in Mississippi”

Enclosure 10 **Roll 0336-0627**
Dec. 1940-Apr. 1958
Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt’s alleged Communist activities
Internal Security files
Investigation of Personnel of the Advisory Commission to
the Council of National Defense (Jan. 1941)
Internal Security: Selective Service, Sedition
Internal Security: Negro Youth Council for Victory and
Democracy
Internal Security: Communist Party USA
News article:
The Philadelphia Inquirer (Sep. 1945)
“Drive for College Youth Conducted Under Cover of
‘United Front’ Group”
“Browder a Scapegoat, ‘Finished’ as Leader”
“Reds Seek to Control Union Through Unrest”
“Foster Admits Real Goal is a Soviet America”
Internal Security: Christian Nationalist Party of America
Gerald L. K. Smith states, “Mrs. Roosevelt has done
more to encourage Communism in America than
either Earl Browder or W. Z. Foster.”
Internal Security: Southern Conference Educational Fund,
Inc. (SCEF)
Espionage in the White House, 1934–1942

ENCLOSURE 11
1940-1957

Roll 2, 0630-0933

News article:

The N.Y. World-Telegram (Jan. 1948)
"Anti-UMT Reds Draft Sucker List"

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt's trip to Russia (1958)

Excerpt from:

Democratie Nouvelle (Nov. 1948)

"The Trial of the Twelve is our Trial" by Georges Cogniot

Excerpts from: *Counterattack* (1948-1957)

Allegedly tying Mrs. Roosevelt to Communist
organizations

News article:

The Washington Post

"Negro Women Hear Plea to Feed Hungry" (Nov. 1947)

"ADA Adopts Constitution Barring Communist Mem-
bers (Mar. 1947)

The Times-Herald (Feb. 1950)

"U.S. Aides Kept on Jobs Though Suspected as
Commies"

The N.Y. Sun (Sep. 1949)

"Mrs. Roosevelt Named in Ex-Red's Testimony"

Internal Security: Americans for Traditional Liberties

News article:

The Evening Sun, Baltimore, MD (Jan. 1949)

"Mrs. Roosevelt Plugs U.N., Doesn't Fear Reds"

Internal Security: Communist Infiltration of the Negro

American Labor Council

News article:

The N.Y. World-Telegram (May 1956)

"Mrs. Roosevelt Puts Case for Integration"

The N.Y. Times (May 1956)

"Civil Rights Lag Scored at Rally"

N.Y. Journal-American (May 1956)

"Powell Rips Ike: Charges Army Restores Bias"

Information on Earl Browder, Communist Party leader

News article:

Journal America (Jul. 1948)

"Reveal FDR Let Mrs. Browder in to Please Stalin"

Internal Security: Selective Service

News article:

Memphis Press Scimitar (Jun. 1944)

“Discussing Place of Conscientious Objectors in War”

by Eleanor Roosevelt

News article: (Uncredited, c.1943)

“Mrs. Roosevelt’s Plan to Train War Objectors Abandoned”

Civil Rights Activities

News article:

The Daily Worker (Oct. 1957)

“Nat King Cole Supports NAACP Freedom Dinner”

Chattanooga News-Free Press (Apr. 1958)

“Mrs. Roosevelt and Highlander”

ENCLOSURE 12

Roll 2, 0936-END

1946-

American Committee for Yugoslav Relief

Father Edmund F. Brophy and “The Christian Front”

News article:

People’s Voice (May 1943)

“First Lady Makes Poll Tax Appeal”

“A Plea From Africa’s Combat Zone”

N.Y. Daily News (Feb 1957)

“Probe Airs FDR-Browder Link During War”

Communist Party, USA

News article:

The N.Y. World Telegram (Dec. 1949)

“Mrs. Roosevelt Defends Dr. Jessup’s Record”

Firing Line (Jan. 1956)

“Christmas Amnesty Petition for Imprisoned Communists”

Internal Security: Agitation Among Negroes

News article:

People’s Voice (May 1945)

“Mrs. FDR to Honor Mary Bethune”

Report on the “Crusading Mothers of Pennsylvania”

Excerpt from the Joint Legislative Committee on Segregation, State of Louisiana (May 1958)

American Friends of German Freedom
Internal Security: Communist Party, USA
Excerpt from *McCall's Magazine*: "If You Ask Me" by
Eleanor Roosevelt (c.1950)

Investigation of a threat against Mrs. Roosevelt
News article:

The N.Y. Post (Feb. 1962)

"Adlai Finds a Crack in the Right"

Washington News (Nov. 1956)

"Election Hints Democrats Will Become Stronger" by
Eleanor Roosevelt

Washington Star (Apr. 1955)

"47 Liberals Urge U.S. to Avoid War over Matsu"

"ADA Blasts McCarthy Again" (May 1953)

"ADA Caught Between Truman, Wallace" (Apr. 1948)

Enquirer & News, Battle Creek, MI (Feb. 1961)

Letter to the Editor

Washington News (Sep. 1958)

"Faubus Seems to Lack Scruples" by Eleanor Roosevelt

ENCLOSURE 13

Roll 3, 0001-0224

1940-1959

Civil Rights and Domestic Violence

Internal Security: NAACP

Internal Security: Communist Party, USA

The National Committee for Justice in Columbia, TN

Pamphlet: "Terror in Tennessee: The Truth about the
Columbia Outrages"

Internal Security: Foreign Inspired Agitation Among
American Negroes

Internal Security: Alien Enemy Control, Conspiracy

ENCLOSURE 14

Roll 3, 0225-END

1940-1959

Numerous newspaper articles include:

Washington Times Herald:

"Start at Home" (1947)

"Eleanor Set Right" (1949)

The Daily Worker:

“Mrs. Roosevelt Voices Fears on Smith Act Ruling”
(1951)

“Defiling the Bill of Rights” (1956)

“Negro People Won’t Fall for Dem, GOP Bait” (1948)

Washington Times Herald (Aug. 1949):

“Mrs. F. D. Admits Work With Reds”

The N.Y. Times (Aug. 1942):

“Mrs. Roosevelt Repudiates ‘Red’ Labor Party Faction”

The Washington Daily News (Jun. 1945):

“I am Not Afraid of Communist Party or Soviet Union”
by Eleanor Roosevelt

“I Can’t get Refugees Off My Mind” (May 1957) by
Eleanor Roosevelt

The N.Y. Post (Sep. 1959):

“My Day With Mr. Khrushchev” by Eleanor Roosevelt

The Washington Daily News (Jan. 1949):

“Communists are Silly to Antagonize Religious
Groups” by Eleanor Roosevelt