



Eleanor Roosevelt : Volume 2 , The Defining Years, 1933-1938

By *Blanche Wiesen Cook*

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The central volume in the definitive biography of America's most important First Lady. "Engrossing" (Boston Globe).

Eleanor Roosevelt: Volume Three, 1938-1962, will be published in November. **Volume Two** covers tumultuous era of the Great Depression, the New Deal, and the gathering storms of World War II, the years of the Roosevelts' greatest challenges and finest achievements. In her remarkably engaging narrative, Cook gives us the complete Eleanor Roosevelt—an adventurous, romantic woman, a devoted wife and mother, and a visionary policymaker and social activist who often took unpopular stands, counter to her husband's policies, especially on issues such as racial justice and women's rights. A biography of scholarship and daring, it is a book for all readers of American history.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

With its gripping tale of a privileged ugly duckling turned socially conscious swan with the help of strong female friends--many of whom were lesbians and one of whom was probably her lover--the first volume of Blanche Wiesen Cook's biography of Eleanor Roosevelt won awards and made headlines. That book followed its subject from her birth in 1884 through her husband Franklin's election to the presidency in 1933. *Volume 2*, which chronicles Roosevelt's first six years as America's most controversial first lady (Hillary Clinton doesn't even come close), maps her contributions to the New Deal, which Cook convincingly argues was primarily the fulfillment of a political agenda promoted by female reformers as early as 1912. Eleanor's turbulent relationship with journalist Lorena Hickok gets more space here than it probably deserves, and the story isn't as inherently exciting as the first volume's drama of a woman's coming of age. Nonetheless, Cook's subtle analyses of everything from Roosevelt's exceedingly complex marriage to her role as warm-up act for the New Deal's most radical programs are bracingly intelligent, her evocation of a remarkable personality rivetingly vivid. Eleanor emerges as neither the liberals' saint nor the conservatives' Satan, but an entirely human bundle of contradictions: warm-hearted, yet ice-cold when hurt; happiest in the public arena, yet needing the comfort of private relationships. --Wendy Smith

From [Booklist](#)

Readers who enjoyed the award-winning first volume of Cook's biography of Eleanor Roosevelt may have expected just one other volume after all these years (the first published in 1992); if so, they underestimated both Cook, a City University of New York history professor, and her remarkable subject. *Volume 2* covers just six years: the first years of FDR's presidency. At this rate, one can easily imagine at least two more volumes: one on the war years, ending with Franklin's death in 1945, and a second on Eleanor's very active life after the White House. ER went to Washington with doubts and concerns: Would she be able to play a role in the critical issues that had given her life meaning, or would she be forced to serve simply as hostess and housekeeper? Cook traces the ways Roosevelt continued to exercise influence: on housing, race, and women's issues, for example. A major concern here is why both Roosevelts were largely silent about Germany's treatment of its Jewish citizens; Cook examines what the Roosevelts knew and when, and she notes that FDR and his staff did not object to Eleanor expressing her views on domestic matters that conflicted with administration policy, but they severely restricted her speeches and articles on foreign policy subjects. Full of fascinating details; expect requests. *Mary Carroll*

From Kirkus Reviews

In this second volume of her outstanding biography, Cook (History and Womens Studies/CUNY) continues her feminist celebration of Eleanor Roosevelt as the woman who was the conscience of both her husband and country in these seminal years. These are the years that vindicate Mrs. Roosevelt's activism (by 1938 she was more popular than FDR) but also mark the further deterioration of their marriage as she became increasingly isolated from the president and his inner circle. Cook again details the remarkable energy and dedication Eleanor brought to fighting for her ideals, as well as the heartaches her family caused her. Her long and close relationship with journalist Lorena Hickok was also strained by her busy schedule and multiple commitments. Though much of her communication with FDR was via notes she dropped in the basket kept next to his bed, they were all thoughtful, researched, and, when he saw fit, used by him. She fought for Social Security, for the WPA programs, for women to play a greater role in government and in the Democratic Party, for racial integration, for peace, and then, as war seemed inevitable in Europe, for ways of resisting Hitler and helping the Jews. Cook is particularly devastating on FDR's long silence on the plight of

European Jews: he actually sent a celebratory message to a 1934 Nazi rally at Madison Square Garden at which swastikas flew alongside the Stars and Stripes. And right up to 1938 he remained silent about Hitler's human rights abuses and did not end trade with Germany. He was as reluctant to support an antilynching bill Eleanor supported. The volume ends as FDR begins re-arming, while Eleanor, working with youth and black organizations, accelerates the fight against fascism and racism. A masterful assemblage of facts and insights that illuminate a great woman's life but sometimes at the expense of the great man who was her husband and whose political instinctsdespite his inherent cautionwere sometimes more sure. (16 pages photos) (Book-of-the-Month Club and History Book Club selection) -- *Copyright ©1999, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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Eleanor Roosevelt : Volume 2 , The Defining Years, 1933-1938 can be one of your beginning books that are good idea. All of us recommend that straight away because this book has good vocabulary that could increase your knowledge in vocabulary, easy to understand, bit entertaining but nonetheless delivering the information. The article writer giving his/her effort to set every word into enjoyment arrangement in writing Eleanor Roosevelt : Volume 2 , The Defining Years, 1933-1938 nevertheless doesn't forget the main stage, giving the reader the hottest along with based confirm resource data that maybe you can be one of it. This great information can certainly drawn you into brand new stage of crucial contemplating.

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