ELEANOR ROOSEVELT AS A COLUMNIST

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Mass Communications
by
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ABSTRACT

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT AS A COLUMNIST

by

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Master of Arts in Mass Communications

Eleanor Roosevelt communicated with the American public more effectively than any other First Lady. Through her activities, lectures and writing, she advocated her causes, aired her views, and displayed the humanitarian qualities that made her a prominent figure of the 20th century. A massive amount of literature has been written on her wide range of activities, but she has been largely ignored as a columnist.

Eleanor Roosevelt wrote a column, "My Day" for 27 years, and through it she developed a personal relationship with the American public. This study focuses on the columns at seven different time periods. These periods include the first month of the column, the First Lady's involvement with the American Youth Congress, her trip to the South Pacific during World War II, her role as a delegate to the first UN assembly, her dispute with Cardinal Spellman over excluding Catholic schools from federal aid,
her second trip to Russia, and the column after 25 years.

The thesis shows that studying a prominent figure through his or her public writings is an effective method for gaining new insights into that person's concerns, attitudes, and personal interests. From her columns, Eleanor Roosevelt emerged as a publicist for her husband's policies, a champion of the underdog, an advocate of several unpopular causes, and, above all, a woman whose concern for the American public outweighed all other considerations.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Achieving a prominence unequaled by any other First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt became an institution in her own time. Her wide range of activities, her massive writings, and her lecture tours brought her in close touch with the American public. As one of her biographers wrote, "Her fellow Americans might love her or hate her but they could not ignore her."\(^1\)

Simplistic in her approach to her writings and speeches, ER* translated complicated issues into terms her audience could understand. While some of her critics viewed this approach as a sign of intellectual deficiency, others saw it as a key reason for her popularity.\(^2\)

ER's importance to American history rests in the struggles she fought for the oppressed. As a public figure for almost thirty years, she proved herself to be a champion of the underdog, an ardent advocate of human rights and above all a woman whose faith in humanity touched thousands of lives both in the United States and throughout the world.

*Eleanor Roosevelt will be referred to as ER in this study.
Her position as First Lady coupled with this intense involvement in a multitude of activities has made her the subject of a great many biographies. These studies focus on her as a social reformer, a friend to the needy, a UN delegate, and a goodwill ambassador. However, no one has done a careful study of ER as a journalist. From December of 1935 until her illness in September of 1962, she wrote a daily column, "My Day." (In 1960, she filed it three times a week, and during its last month it ran biweekly under the name, "By Eleanor Roosevelt."

"My Day" was syndicated by United Features which was notorious for offering a strong and varied group of columnists in the 1930s. Its contributors ranged from Raymond Clapper, an eminently recognized political writer to Westbrook Pegler, a caustic and sometimes vicious ex-sports columnist. By the end of "My Day's" first two months of publication, it appeared in 62 papers with a circulation of 4,034,522. While her circulation was not as large as some of her contemporaries such as Pegler who appeared in 110 papers and Dorothy Thompson whose column ran in 140 papers, ER outnumbered Heywood Broun who only appeared in 42 papers.

For the first few years of its existence, "My Day" dealt mainly with ER's activities as First Lady. But by 1940, the column had become a means for voicing her stand
on issues, and in some cases, she wrote of her husband's views before he revealed them to the public.\(^6\)

Several critics ridiculed the column for its grammatical errors, cliches, and trivial anecdotes.\(^7\). According to Alfred Steinberg, one of ER's biographers, the roughness of the columns may be attributed to the fact that they were dictated, not written.\(^8\) However, no matter how critical others were of the column, it was widely read.

A study of ER's column is important to the journalistic field in that it provides a model for studying a public figure through her journalistic publications. By the nature of the personal style of "My Day," ER revealed a part of herself through the column which has not yet been analyzed.

Her role as a First Lady made her career as a columnist unique. Never before had the American public been able to read a daily account of White House activities. Bringing her readers closer to the bureaucracy that governed them, the column must be looked at as a link between Washington and ER's audience.

In addition, as a daily account of ER's experiences and opinions, the column may shed some new light on how she evolved into a prominent personage. A marked difference appeared in "My Day" following the death of FDR. While its style and themes remained consistent, it was
obvious that her new freedom allowed her to replace her rather guarded opinions with strong and forceful ones.

As a columnist, ER naturally recorded her personal impressions of the activities in which she was involved. Through her choice of words and focus, she could portray an incident as she so desired. However, even with these limitations, "My Day" is a unique tool as it furnishes a record of a participant's view of an event as it is happening. And in addition, it allows an opportunity to better understand the evolution of ER for it can be used to compare ER's immediate reaction to an issue with her autobiographical account which was written much later.

Though ER was surrounded with wealth throughout her life and even made her debut into Washington society, she did not wish to portray herself as a member of the upper-crust of society. Her column, in its account of her daily life provides an important vehicle for understanding the image she wished to project. Dealing with everyday incidents and her sometimes blundering methods of coping with them, she was able to paint a picture of herself as a fallible human being not too different from the public she served.

Since the number of columns printed during the 27 years of its existence is so massive, I have chosen key events in ER's life to focus on. While one of my concerns involves the evolution of the column, I have included the
first month of "My Day" and for comparison, the month marking its 25th anniversary. I will study the following time periods:

1. First month of column--December 31-January 31, 1935-36
2. ER's involvement in the American Youth Congress--December-February, 1939-40
3. ER's trip to the South Pacific during World War II--September-October, 1943
5. Cardinal Spellman controversy--August, 1949
6. ER's trip to Russia--September, 1958
7. The column's 25th anniversary--January, 1960

Any researcher who carefully studies ER soon finds that her childhood and adolescence had a profound effect on her activities as a public figure. Thus, in a brief sketch, I will discuss the years leading up to ER's position as First Lady.

This study does not presume to be an all encompassing analysis of the 27 year existence of "My Day." Limited by available sources, I am not able to research the original manuscripts of the column nor can I make generalizations about the different papers' treatment of the column. I realize that each of the following chapters could be developed into a complete study by itself. However, in my attempt to study the evolution of the column, it is
necessary to deal with a range of time periods throughout the column's existence.

Each event that I have chosen to examine has a history of its own. I must emphasize that I have only given a brief historical sketch of the event in order to set the stage for a discussion of the columns written while the event was taking place.

In 1958, a reviewer, discussing ER's third volume of her autobiography, wrote, "... Eleanor Roosevelt is, and will challenge future generations as, an historic personality to be evaluated apart from, as well as together with, her husband." Looking at her columns, this study will attempt to enlighten not only journalism, but also gain a new perspective on this many-faceted woman.
FOOTNOTES


2 Ibid., p. 247.


7 Virginia Pasley, "First Lady to the Common Man," American Mercury 58 (March, 1944), p. 279.

8 Steinberg, Mrs. R., p. 257.


10 While I attempted to research the columns after 1960, they were not available.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In discussing the sources I reviewed for this study, I have divided them into three sections.* Part I deals with biographies and general background sources on ER and the era she lived in. Part II reviews ER's writings, and Part III discusses articles which are relevant to "My Day" and the events selected for this study.

PART I--GENERAL BACKGROUND

Eleanor and Franklin by Joseph P. Lash is an extremely useful source. Though it is intended to be a biography of both Roosevelts, it deals mainly with Eleanor. Covering the time period from her birth in October, 1884, to FDR's death in 1945, it is filled with references to letters and personal documents during this time period. Lash gives a detailed account of ER's childhood years, and frequently discusses the impact of her youth on her later development. The book is divided into chapters that deal with her major activities up to 1945. While these are carefully outlined, Lash does not omit her

*Footnotes and complete bibliography are included.
personal life. A brief history of "My Day" is included in this work. Depicting ER as a dedicated journalist who never missed a deadline, Lash portrays the column as a place where FDR's proposed actions could be tested on the public before the action was implemented. Though the book is an excellent source, it does have a drawback in that it is a bit biased in favor of ER. Lash was a personal friend of ER. He was an active member of the American Youth Congress which drew so much criticism, yet was so strongly defended by ER. Later he and his wife lived in a house adjacent to her's. Because of this close association, a hint of hero worship runs through the book. Though Lash points out criticisms of ER, he always defends her. But the book is interesting reading and a valuable source.

_Eleanor: The Years Alone_ is also by Joseph Lash. It deals with ER from 1945 until her death. Though it is also a bit biased, it does an excellent job of detailing her activities in the UN. Again the book is well documented. While most of the other biographies deal mainly with her activities while FDR was President, this is the only detailed account of her endeavors after that, and I used it for my primary source in researching events after 1945. In this work Lash's references to "My Day" are useful as they include discussions of how the column was
edited and what papers dropped and picked it up again. There are also several references to the biggest critic of her writing, Westbrook Porter.

Eleanor Roosevelt, A Biography by Ruby Black is based on material from Black's personal observations and interviews with ER. Several references are made to her part in the Youth Congress and the Women's Rights Movement. A brief history of "My Day" is also included. Though the work is a good background source, its use is limited because of its poor documentation.

Like Black's biography, Mrs. R., The Life of Eleanor Roosevelt by Alfred Steinberg is poorly documented but it does reveal some pertinent insights into ER's life as the chief source for the book comes from her personal papers, her record books, and her correspondence.

After reading the laudatory accounts of ER and her accomplishments, it was surprising to find that her son, Elliott, is highly critical of his mother. In An Untold Story and Rendezvous with Destiny he portrays his mother as a nitpicking person who was unable to communicate with her children and her husband. According to the author, "My Day" was a means of hiding her real self from the public. While other biographers praised her as an individual, her son saw her as riding on the coattails of her husband. The material in these two books is of little
use to this study in that it puts ER far into the background while FDR is made into a king.

Perhaps the most objective accounts of ER and her activities appear in books written by those who did not personally know her, but had studied her carefully.

An American Conscience by Tamara Hareven is an excellent work dealing primarily with ER's political development and her part in the Black struggle, New Deal, UN, and Arthurdale. The book paints her as a public servant, always concerned with the underdogs, and effectively helping them as she led many movements of social reform. Hareven sees "My Day" as a vehicle for ER's promotion of social reform. An excellent chapter on sources is included in this carefully documented work. Though the book paints a complimentary picture of ER, Hareven is not afraid to show her other sides.

Anna Eleanor Roosevelt, The Evolution of a Reformer by James Kearney is another unbiased account of ER. The work focuses on her as a reformer of what she thought were the injustices of the time. Though Kearney, like Hareven, views "My Day" as an effective means to promote reform, he feels that its main objective was to help FDR by bringing the public closer to him through anecdotes of his daily life. While the other biographies attribute her fight for the underdog to a miserable childhood where she felt abandoned, Kearney does not buy this
theory. He attributes her part in this struggle to an increased awareness of what was happening around her. The book is well documented and includes an excellent bibliography. However, the work only covers ER's activities up to 1941.

Included in the bibliography are several personal memoirs about ER such as *Eleanor Roosevelt, Her Day* by David Gurewitsch and *The Eleanor Roosevelt Story* by Archibald Mac Leish. While these books are useful in providing background, their poor documentation limits their use.

In studying the different events chosen for this study, it is necessary to study the history surrounding them. For a study of the Youth Congress, the following books contain valuable information: *The Age of Suspicion* by James A. Weclser and *A New Deal for Youth, The Story of the National Youth Administration* by Ernest and Betty Lindley. In studying ER's role as a journalist in the South Pacific during World War II, Frederick Irion's *Public Opinion and Propaganda* furnishes a helpful description of Elmer Davis' Office of War Information. For an understanding of the Catholic opinion of ER, *The Politics of the Vatican* by Peter Nichols is valuable. *American Foreign Policy Since World War II* by John Spanier and *The Origins of the Cold War* by John Gaddis supply a basis for understanding ER's dealing with the Russians.
In addition to studying ER's biographies, those about FDR contain important references. Two valuable sources in this field are The Lion and the Fox by James MacGregor Burns and Franklin D. Roosevelt, 3 vols, by Frank Friedel.

The Press and America by Edwin Emery is important to this study in that it provides an account of what was happening in journalism throughout the years of ER's column.

PART II--THE WRITING OF ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

One of the most important sources of information on ER's life and views can be found in her own writing. This Is My Story, the first of a three-volume autobiography, covers the first thirty years of her life. This I Remember, the second volume, covers her life in the White House. In this work, ER states that one of the most important uses of "My Day" was to be a sounding board for FDR's ideas. If the idea brought a negative reaction, he could say he had nothing to do with it. The third volume, On My Own, deals with the period after FDR's death. The volumes provide excellent background material and are important to this study in showing values and activities that influenced ER's writing. As Kearney points out in Evolution of a Reformer, there is virtually no record
of ER's childhood other than her own, so *This Is My Story* has become the primary source for this period of time. In 1960 ER compiled these three works into one volume, *The Autobiography* where she added a chapter of her experiences since the publication of *On My Own* which was published in 1958. *You Learn By Living* deals with what ER has learned from her varied experiences. Her insistence on learning from the past and applying this knowledge to the present is the theme of this work as it is much of her writing. Full of anecdotes, the writing in this book is similar to the writing in her column.

*U. N.: Today and Tomorrow* provides a short history of the UN and the daily workings of that organization. The purpose of the book is to simplify the workings of the UN so that the average person can understand it. As was always her purpose in writing, whether it be as a columnist or an author of a book, she wanted to simplify government so that it could easily be understood by the masses.

*Tomorrow Is Now*, ER's last book, focuses on the importance of the present in determining the future. In it, she offers advice on how the individual can cope with present day problems in order to insure a world of peace and understanding.
PART III--ARTICLES

In order to better understand the public reaction to ER and her columns, it is important to look at magazine articles written during the periods under study. While it must be remembered that these articles represent a journalistic opinion, the provide current views on the column and on ER as she emerged as a public figure. I have grouped the articles in five-year blocs to show the changing opinion towards ER and her column. The first two blocs cover the period while FDR was President, while the last two cover the years after his death.

1935-1940

Between 1935 and 1940, Americans were beginning to see that their First Lady was definitely different than her predecessors. An article in Literary Digest, printed a little over a year after FDR took office, lists several of ER's activities which defy convention. Among them is the fact that she was the first in her position to write a syndicated news column. As the column ran, reviewers took hold and began analyzing her writing.

Time carried a review of "My Day" just two weeks after its inception. The review was favorable, commenting that "After reading the first week of her columns journalists and historians had reason to regret that the U. S. had never before possessed a First Lady so zestful, so democratic, so gregarious, so inexhaustibly energetic,
so naively unselfconscious as Anna Eleanor Roosevelt.\textsuperscript{2}

At this time, the column was purely a diary of daily life at the White House, and it is interesting to note that the caption under a picture in this article read "Diarist Roosevelt and Friends!" Diarist, not journalist, was an appropriate adjective for ER during the first few years of her column.

Naive, unselfconscious, simple, and frank were the adjectives most used in describing the early writing of ER. While some reviewers praised her for these qualities, others saw her writing as perhaps too simple. In a review of \textit{This Is My Story}, the first volume of her autobiography, \textit{Newsweek}'s reviewer criticizes the simplicity of her writing. "Occasionally the very plainness of it all makes the reader restive. The style is unadornedly simple and often sounds like that of the famous "My Day' column in the Scripps Howard paper."\textsuperscript{3} However, \textit{Saturday Review}, in an article by Joseph W. Alsop, Jr., calls her writing "admirable stuff." Again reviewing \textit{This Is My Story}, Alsop sees it as "simple and frank to the point of naivete, but charming and true and valuable." Alsop does not see ER's writing as literary, but according to him, it has a style that brings her alive to her readers.\textsuperscript{4} ER felt a kinship to the common person. She did not stand aloof. Her writings are proof of this as she brought herself closer to the general public through them.
In a review of *My Days*, a book containing selections of the columns from January, 1936-May, 1938, Gladys Graham in *Saturday Review* accurately states that "Mrs. Roosevelt would be the last to claim any particular stylistic merits for these diurnal jottings often made on trains, aeroplanes or between-whiles of meetings." But, as Graham points out, "When she touches on certain scenes and subjects, the simple adequacy of the prose flashes into a natural rightness that leaves a picture in the mind."5

In view of the content and style that characterized the early years of "My Day," an important question arises. Was ER attempting to write a polished journalistic composition or did she just want to record what she thought were the most interesting incidents of her daily life? Based on the content of the early columns, it may be construed that she viewed it as the latter. However, in studying these columns, one cannot dismiss them because of their absence of lofty journalism. While several reviewers saw the merit of these diurnal accounts, many of her biographers have ignored them on account of their trivial content and simplistic writing. "My Day" never pretended to be a column akin to those written by eminent journalists of the time, but even so, it is important to examine. For, not only can it be used as a vehicle for studying ER, but it also creates a moving picture of the
27 years of its existence. In addition, the fact that ER was a prominent national and world figure gives it a unique element that no other column can boast of.

No matter how its critics viewed "My Day," it was widely read, and ER was given a place among columnists. "Columnists on Parade" by Margaret Marshall, (Nation), divides the columns of the late 1930s into categories such as "Freelance," "Mainly Political," and "Personal." "My Day" is in a category by itself which is headed "Unique." The article cites statistics showing that "My Day's" circulation in 1938 was over four million. It is noteworthy that ER's name appears beside such columnists as Walter Lippman and Heywood Broun. Yet, unlike her contemporaries, ER has not been taken seriously as a member of the journalistic profession.

Until 1939 the column was regarded as a diary. But a 1939 editorial in the Saturday Evening Post makes it evident that ER was beginning to be seen as "a dominant influence in a political partnership" with her husband. Evidently in a speech, FDR borrowed phrases from a "My Day" column. As the article points out, ER had been careful "not to disclose how direct and powerful was her intervention in politics. 'My Day' has been an innocuous report of her multifarious but presumable non-political affairs, so discreet that it has usually been dull." However, with FDR borrowing from it, the article states
that "Until or unless its author relapses into homolies, it is required political reading."  

Not only was her column now viewed as a political piece of writing, but she began using it as a place to defend herself. An advocate of unpopular causes throughout her life, she became involved in the American Youth Congress which, in 1939, was being investigated by the Dies Committee on Un-American Activities. ER was definitely not pro-Communist, but she defended the Youth Congress, believing that it was free of Communistic control, though later she was proven wrong. ER's gullibility and faith in human nature led her to this misconception. Some papers attacked her for her disregard of what was felt to be the seriousness of the Dies investigation. The New York Herald Tribune states that "The Dies Committee may have its faults. But for Mrs. Roosevelt to bring its hearing under this peculiarly direct sort of pressure is scarcely a public service." Other papers came to her defense, perhaps more accurately analyzing the facts of the case. The New York World Telegram which carried her column, states that "We strongly suspect that Mrs. Roosevelt, a person of great frankness who likes to give others credit for equal candor, has been deceived by devious minded followers of the party line." Throughout this ordeal, ER used her column as a forum for her position.
An excellent article in *Fortune* gives a brief history of the Youth Congress and defends ER's dealings with it. It even states that her handling of the members was much better than FDR's.\(^\text{11}\)

Though she used her column to defend the Youth organization, she later disassociated herself from it when she felt secure that it was under Communist leadership.\(^\text{12}\) As will be seen in later articles, ER's involvement with the Youth Congress was never forgotten by her critics who continued to link her with Communism throughout her life.

In 1940, a perceptive article on ER appeared in *Harper's Magazine*. "The Future of Eleanor Roosevelt" by Dorothy Bromley is a complimentary profile which portrays ER as an integral part of the Roosevelt administration. Based on an interview with her, it is one of the few works that takes her column seriously, providing a brief history of its beginnings and how it evolved. Now viewed as a journalist, not a diarist, Bromley defends her as a member of that profession stating that "It seems to me that her justification as a journalist is that she expresses herself directly and simply, and has a knack for sharing the big and little incidents of her life with her readers." The article continues by citing picturesque scenes described by ER in "My Day." Though Bromley's analysis of
the column is not lengthy, it is perhaps the best that exists and it was written only five years after the column began.13

During the first five years of its existence, "My Day" evolved from purely a diary to what some thought was a must for political reading. Though ER used it to defend herself and the Youth Congress, and though politics became a part of it, the anecdotes and the picturesque scenes still remained an integral part of it.

1941-1945

By 1941, ER was considered an influential Washington figure and as she became more important, so did her column. An article in Time, "Watch Mrs. Roosevelt," calls her a portent of what's to come. The article states that "Wall Streeters, already snowed under by dope-sheets, star gazing reports and the auguries of gloomy sibyls added 'My Day' to their long list of required reading."14

In 1943 ER made a trip to the South Seas to visit American troops. The tour came under severe public attack because of its expense during wartime. In response to this wave of criticism, a form letter, prepared by the Red Cross, made it clear that she was traveling at her own expense.15 Though criticism raged, Life gave the trip its approval. "First Lady's South Pacific Tour" reports in copy and pictures the five-week 25,000 mile trip. The article assures the reader that the tour was made at ER's
expense, and further states that her travel "reaped the greenest harvest of gratitude." Not only did ER promise to write the relatives of the troops, but she brought the United States to them. The article quotes one gratified soldier as saying, "Jeepers, she's just like your own mother." Throughout her travels, she wrote her column, attempting to make the war effort a reality in the United States.

While ER's influence in many sectors grew, people began to wonder just how much power she had in the White House. "First Lady to the Common Man," by Virginia Pasley, (American Mercury), takes a condescending attitude towards the First Lady. Comparing her to a homespun "Aunt Ella," Pasley assures her readers that ER is too naive to have an impact on Presidential decisions, and chuckles at those who think she does. Pasley's attitude is not to worry about ER. She is akin to the common people in the United States, but that's about all. This article is especially useful as Pasley includes an analysis of "My Day." She praises ER for her ability to observe, but criticizes her as a writer who "... lacks cohesion, conciseness and any sense of form." Though she praises her for her perceptive observations, she maintains her theme of common little Eleanor by stating that the human interest details of her column would escape a more "sophisticated woman." A valid criticism of the
column is that ER was too "fair" in her writing, hoping not to offend any of her readers. Pasley cites an extreme example of just this occurrence. "I think spring and autumn are my favorite seasons. There's beauty, of course, in every season." Pasley views "My Day" as a nice little column which appeals to the common sector of which the author is a member.

ER may have taken part of Pasley's criticism as a compliment. She wanted to communicate with the common sector. Never wanting to remain aloof, she used her column to bring the government closer to the public. Perhaps historians have passed over "My Day" for just the reasons that Pasley criticized. From their sophisticated perspectives, it may have seemed naive, simple, and trivial. Yet, its simplicity aided in its popularity and its importance as a reflection of the time.

As ER gained more recognition and became embroiled in controversial activities, she also became an easier target for criticism. Experience helped her deal with this criticism as she stated in the following article. "Meet the Roosevelts" by Mona Gardner, (Ladies' Home Journal), quotes ER on her growth. "I think the biggest change I've gone through personally is being conditioned to criticism. Whether it was deserved or not, it used to
wound dreadfully . . . . But now I've trained myself to ignore it completely. I don't even bother to read it anymore."

By 1945, the column had been in existence for ten years. While its format remained the same, it became more political. As ER took part in more activities and developed stands on certain issues, it became more of a forum for her opinions rather than an anecdotal account of White House activities.

1945-1949

On April 5, 1945, FDR died in office. But the United States had not seen the last of the First Lady. The following articles (written after his death) provide an understanding of public reaction to ER as she emerged as a public figure in her own right. Six months after she left Washington, she appeared at a bond rally, and as Newsweek reports, an announcer cried, "There goes one of the greatest ladies in America." In that same article, ER is hailed as an Administration critic via her column. Though the article cites her criticisms of her husband's successor, it does not admonish her for them.22

No matter how much she disagreed with President Truman, he respected her, still addressing her as "First Lady."23 His regard for her was manifested as he appointed her to serve as a United States delegate to the first
United Nations Assembly. It was during this era that she became extremely popular as a defender of human rights. Chairing Committee 3, she and her fellow delegates set about writing the Human Rights Covenant (sometimes called the Declaration of Human Rights). The purpose of the document was to set down in writing an International Bill of Rights. Several articles reporting the functions of the Human Rights Committee are printed in the United Nations Bulletin.

As Chairperson of Committee 3, ER played an integral part in the first United Nations Assembly. In an article, "An International Achievement" by Charles Malik, (United Nations Bulletin), Malik states that "Many people seem to think that the major achievement of the Paris session of the General Assembly was the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights . . . ." He then goes on to tell why indeed it was.

For two years ER took part in the creation of the Human Rights Document, and during those two years, she continued her column.

As the Declaration of Human Rights grew in fame, the admirers of ER became zealots. On August 5, 1946, The New Republic published a profile of ER titled "Number One World Citizen" by Ralph G. Martin. He refers to her as "the conscience of FDR . . . ." According to Martin,
she was the one who informed her husband of the "pulse of the people." While Pasley of the American Mercury condescendingly nodded to ER for her so-called "commonness," Martin praises her for her understanding of the general public.

As "My Day" evolved from a diary of White House experiences to a column dealing primarily with issues of the day, ER came out for and against pending legislation. Always concerned with education, she was an ardent supporter of any legislation which provided federal aid to education. The most controversial bill in this area was the Barden Bill providing $300 million in federal funds for U.S. education but excluding private and parochial schools from its benefits. From her support of this legislation, a bitter confrontation between she and Cardinal Spellman erupted. The articles concerning this controversy are especially useful in providing background information since the actual columns contained little mention of ER's previous dealings with the Catholic Church. Cardinal Spellman was bitterly opposed to the bill and ER noted this in her column, while at the same time she insisted on the separation of church and state. When her mail began accusing her of being anti-Catholic, Time quoted her response. "Sometimes I think church organizations are foolish because they do things that lead people to believe they are not interested mainly in the
spiritual side of the church but that they have a decided interest also in temporal affairs." This same article printed a caustic retort from Cardinal Spellman. Basing his attack on ER's columns dealing with the separation of church and state, he vowed, "I shall not again publicly acknowledge you . . . Your record of anti-Catholicism stands for all to see . . . documents of discrimination unworthy of an American mother." An editorial in The Christian Century chastised the Cardinal, "By this time even so arrogant an ecclesiast as the Cardinal Archbishop of New York must be aware of the disservice he has done his church, as well as his own reputation, by his intemperate attack on the widow of the late President." This same article printed ER's reply to Spellman's accusations which is perhaps one of her most quoted pieces of writing. "I assure you that I have no sense of being an 'unworthy American mother.' The final judgment, my dear Cardinal Spellman, of the worthiness of all human beings is in the hands of God." Though the bill was never passed, this confrontation won more ER admirers.

The significance of this head-to-head battle is apparent from the fact that it was still being reviewed in 1965. Seymour P. Lachman wrote a lengthy article in Journal of Church and State on the long-reaching effects of this confrontation. According to Lachman, it set a
trend for the difficulty in providing federal aid to public schools. Relating the Spellman-Roosevelt controversy to the present era, Lachman shows its direct effect on Catholic opposition to subsequent bills on the federal aid to education issue.34

Even before the Spellman confrontation, some Catholics were anti ER. The following article from Catholic World, printed two years before the Spellman attack, exemplifies this point of view. "Enlightenment from Eleanor," an editorial, is caustic and sarcastic. The article deals with the impending threat of Communism in America, and the author states, "I have neglected an important source--must I say the most important source--of information and illumination on current history."35 Continuing to dig at the First Lady, the article continues, "I have often been told (though now I admit I did not pay strict attention) of the depth of the riches of her own intelligence, the sure swift play of her mind ranging over the field of world events, and the penetrating judgment with which she evaluates the news of the day."36

However, her supporters outnumbered her critics. Less than a month after the Spellman confrontation, ER appeared on the cover of Newsweek. "Life With Eleanor," an interesting and perceptive article which heavily quotes ER, reports that she was receiving 300-400 letters a week on the controversy with 90% favorable. Commenting on the
change in "My Day," the profile states that it had become "far more outspoken than it formerly was. Mrs. Roosevelt says whatever comes to her mind without regard to its political implications." \(^{37}\) An important quote from ER shows just how much FDR inhibited her column writing during the White House days. "My husband never told me what to write and what not to write, but of course I was always conscious that whatever I wrote might have repercussions, so I censored myself. Nowadays, however, I don't feel any such inhibitions. I write as I please." \(^{38}\) The article is important in showing ER's popularity in 1949 as it not only asserts that she is still "front page news," but that "Every survey made has shown that she is the best known woman in the world, the best loved, and the most influential." \(^{39}\) Based on these facts, a study of her column is mandatory.

1950-1955

In her sixties, ER was still actively involved in many endeavors, and she was still in the news. Though the number of articles about her decreased in number, most of those that appeared were laudatory. A cover story on ER in *Time* is useful as it comments on the continued existence of "My Day." "Many an editor presumed that her newspaper column would die a natural death when it left Washington. But 'My Day' . . . is currently running in
75 newspapers. At its peak it averaged 90 in the U. S. and abroad. 40 The article remarks on the continual appearance of "I feel" not "I think" in her column but it does not criticize for this; instead it surmises that it might be her motto.

It is interesting to note that the American Mercury, which just ten years earlier had scoffed at ER's influence, published an article in 1954 titled "In Defense of Eleanor Roosevelt" by Nora deToledano, who stated that "In some places her statements wield more influence than Truman." 41 The theme of the article is a defense against those who feel that she lacks intelligence and sophistication but the manner in which it comes to her defense is amusing, for it states that "she makes no pretense at intellectual eminence." 42

Though it was evident that ER was an important person in her own right, she still remained humble, and almost naive in her self-evaluation. Writing in the New York Times, Elizabeth Janeway, author of "First Lady of the U. N.," states that ER still attributed her importance to the fact that her husband was President. 43 Though the article is useful in that it shows the favorable reaction toward ER as a UN delegate, it is also valuable in showing ER's opinion of herself.

"The Seven People Who Shaped My Life," by ER, carried in Look, provides an interesting self-profile that
focuses on the people the author felt influenced her most. FDR, her grandmother Hall, and her high school teacher, Mlle Souvestre, were among those she listed. Upon careful study, these are reflected in her column.

The Christian Century consistently defended and praised ER throughout her career, but in "The Continuing Education of Mrs. Roosevelt," the magazine seemingly slaps her on the rist for being naive. The article refers to the following statement made by ER in her column. "Now tell me, does the U. S. really want peace with Soviet Russia?" According to the article this question had been a recurring theme in American society for some time and the author is amazed that ER had just realized the importance of this issue. The author chides ER for her "seemingly unconscious revelations in her 'My Day' column."

Perhaps ER was naive and perhaps she did not know the impact of all that she said in her column, but as one reporter put it, "Her own countrymen are divided on the question of whether or not Mrs. Roosevelt is a woman of sense; but even the hardest shelled Republicans or deepest Southern Democrat would probably agree . . . she is a woman of sensibility."

Because of ER's support of the Black struggle, she was not a popular figure in the South. A bitterness towards ER was manifested in the South as she continually
defied their segregationist philosophy. Appearing in
public in the company of Blacks and inviting them to the
White House during the 1940s infuriated some
Southerners. But ER remained undaunted. Always fight-
ing for the oppressed, she was a friend and avid supporter
of the Blacks.

ER's "Some of My Best Friends are Negro," published
in Ebony, gives some background on how she came to know
Blacks such as Ralph Bunche and Channing Tobias, a fellow
UN delegate. Enumerating various achievements made by
Blacks, she attempts to prove her point of equality of the
two races. She also speaks on the alleged "Eleanor Clubs"
which were to have raged in the South while her husband
was in office. According to ER these "Clubs" were
supposedly made up of Blacks who "were supposed to push
white people on Thursdays or something really strange." Though ER asserts that these "Clubs" never existed, she
was aware of the White Southern animosity towards her as
she recounted an incident at a political meeting in
Georgia during one of FDR's campaigns. A drawing of
Eleanor and a Black, dancing, was placed on the back of
every seat at the meeting. The caption under the drawing
read "Nigger Lover-Eleanor."

Throughout her life, ER was concerned with the
racial discrimination that plagued the United States.
This American failing was constantly thrown at her by the
Russian delegates serving on Committee 3.\textsuperscript{50} Though she had a difficult time defending the United States on this issue, she constantly tried to do what she could to remedy the situation. Her article, "Some of My Best Friends are Negro" was an attempt at this. Her support was well received by the Blacks. \textit{The Negro History Bulletin} published a brief but laudatory article on ER's seventieth birthday calling her the "all time First Lady."\textsuperscript{51}

During the 1950s, fourteen years after the Dies Committee investigated the Youth Congress, the controversy again rose up. It erupted over statements made by Dies in an August, 1954, issue of \textit{U. S. News and World Report} where Dies accused ER of a faulty memory over the issue of Joseph Lash's affiliation with Communism.\textsuperscript{52} The next issue of that magazine published the correspondence between ER and Dies over this issue. In 1954 ER still maintains that Lash did not admit he was a Communist while Dies cites the Congressional record to prove that he did.\textsuperscript{53} From this article it is apparent that ER was as staunch a defender of Lash as he was of her as is evident in \textit{Eleanor and Franklin} and \textit{Eleanor: The Years Alone}.

\textit{The New York Times Magazine} published two very laudatory articles on ER during the 1950s. "First Lady of the Voice of America," said ER had done "more to create good will in the last few months than any other American."\textsuperscript{54} "Eleanor at a Youthful 70" also carried by
the New York Times Magazine, calls ER "a world figure in her own right." This article provides a cogent quote from ER about the freedom she felt upon leaving the White House. "It was almost as though I had erected someone a little outside myself who was the President's wife. I was lost somewhere deep down inside of myself."55 This article is useful in providing an insight into how ER's column changed after she left Washington.

The first five years of the 1950s indelibly stamped ER as a figure in her own right. With her work in the UN, she moved from being a national to a world figure.

1955-1962

In her middle to late seventies, ER worked closely with the American Association of the United Nations. And, in addition, made several worldwide trips, including two to Russia.

In 1959, at 75, the New York Times Magazine calls ER the "best known woman in the world."56 At that time, according to the article, the Standard Dictionary defined her as "U. S. diplomat and writer." The definition only parenthetically labeled her wife of FDR. This same work gives some insight into how ER had changed. "The years had strengthened and hardened her" and her "idealism had been tempered."57

"What Has Happened to the American Dream" by ER in Atlantic Monthly is a manifestation of this "tempered
idealism." For the first time ER seems disheartened as she writes of the Communist's successes in taking over underdeveloped countries while the United States sits back. She urges American youth to go to these countries and, through practical examples, shows them the value of democracy. So, though she still maintains her faith in youth, her disillusionment is evident.58 The article is useful in that it reveals a different ER which perhaps comes through in her columns during that time.

While she was being praised and lauded during her final years, her activities with the Youth Congress came back to haunt her. Once again she was the subject of an article in the American Mercury. Colonel Victor J. Fox authored "Very Strange Bedfellows." The article speaks of the upcoming 1960 November elections and calls ER's endorsement of any candidate "the kiss of death!" Fox states "Almost no other political figure can boast of as many Communist front activities as Eleanor Roosevelt."59 The article refers to a pocket-sized book containing her Communist affiliations. According to Fox the book contains 120 citations. This magazine, which once took a condescending attitude towards her, then defended her, was now calling her a Communist.

At 75 ER was still an active person and her column was still alive. By 1957, "My Day" ran in 78 newspapers.60 The Saturday Review perceptively comments on
her writing at this time. "She has a gift for sharing--simply and fully--her life of walking with kings but keeping the common touch." It was perhaps this "common touch" that appealed to the masses and allowed the column to endure for so many years.

On November 7, 1962, Eleanor Roosevelt died. Obituaries lauded her and enumerated her various achievements and contributions. The New Yorker published an excellent and very literate obituary comparing ER to a schoolteacher. Through the use of an extended metaphor, the praiseworthy account enumerates the various values that ER taught the world through her activities.

It was not until February of 1963 that Westbrook Pegler published his views on the life of ER. What might be termed viperous slander permeated the article as Pegler expounded on his loathing of the First Lady. Throughout, he refers to her as "La Boca Grande," (The Big Mouth), and among other things calls her a snob, a liar, a person out to take revenge for her miserable childhood, a Catholic hater, and "a scheming, cunning old woman who authored 'ungainly compositions.'" The article, which runs a full ten pages, embodies the bitterness and hatred that Pegler frequently hurled upon ER. It is interesting to note that Pegler waited almost a year after her death before he published this vicious attack.
CONCLUSION

Since ER was such a popular world figure and involved in so many activities, there is a mass of literature concerning her. However, as I have shown in this review, her column has only been touched on. No one has seriously studied it; instead, they have only made passing remarks on its style and content. Only when it sparked the Spellman controversy did reporters and biographers focus on it. By the mere fact of its wide appeal and the duration of its existence, it merits a closer analysis than it has been given.

With the lack of material on "My Day," this study will fill a gap by carefully studying a journalist and a column that have been long neglected. It will also analyze the column as a reflection of ER and thus gain a new insight into this many-faceted woman.
FOOTNOTES


10. New York World Telegram as cited in Kearney, Evolution of a Reformer, p. 35. (No footnote is given in Kearney's work.)


16 __________, "First Lady's South Pacific Tour," Life 15 (October 11, 1943), p. 27.


18 Ibid., p. 281.

19 Ibid.


28 Ibid.


30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.


33 Ibid.


36 Ibid.


38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 "Mrs. R.,” Time LIX (April 7, 1952), p. 43.


42 Ibid., p. 70.


47 Hareven, An American Conscience, p. 119.


49 Ibid.

50 Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, p. 59.


53 Ibid.


57 Ibid., p. 40.


60 "Mrs. Roosevelt's Whirl," Newsweek L (July 8, 1957), p. 82.


BIBLIOGRAPHY

PART I--GENERAL BACKGROUND


PART II--THE WRITING OF ELEANOR ROOSEVELT


PART III--ARTICLES

All article citations are included in the footnotes for that section.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study is a descriptive one which focuses on the contents of "My Day" and its evolution over the 27 years of its existence. The study also demonstrates the importance of the column as a means for understanding ER.

Since "My Day" ran for such an extensive period of time, a thorough study of all columns would take years to complete. Therefore, I have chosen certain time periods to study which reflect the development of the column.

From the research on ER's life, I have selected these time periods on the basis of her intense involvement in certain activities, most of which sparked controversy.

The selected events and a brief description of each follows:

1. First month of column--December 31-January 31, 1935-1936

   The first month is important in showing the early themes, style, and purpose of "My Day."

2. ER's involvement in the American Youth Congress--December-February, 1939

   Throughout her life ER was very concerned with youth. This time period not only reflects her involvement with
the younger generation, but it also provides an opportunity to view the column while ER was under attack because of her association with the AYC. It was during these two months that the Dies Committee was investigating the organization. Therefore, these columns exemplify ER's technique of defending herself and an organization in which she believed.

3. ER's trip to the South Pacific during World War II—September-October, 1943

ER made many goodwill missions as the First Lady, but her trip to the South Pacific is especially interesting in that she made it while the war was actually being fought in the area she visited. A study of this time period shows her boundless energy as she inspected numerous facilities. It is also important for revealing her attitudes on war.


ER acted as a UN delegate for several years. It would be interesting to trace the column through her entire career in the UN, but that would be a study in itself. Therefore, I have focused on only one aspect of her role as a delegate. I have chosen these two months for two reasons. First, this time period covers the first meeting of the UN and ER's first job as a public figure in her own right. In addition, with the death of FDR in
April of 1945, the columns here provide a basis for comparing "My Day" to those written before his death.

5. Cardinal Spellman controversy—July-August, 1949

The Cardinal Spellman dispute erupted over ER's stand that Catholic schools should not be included in bills providing federal aid to education. A study of the columns surrounding it is important because the event was provoked by comments ER made in her column and also evoked national and even worldwide reaction. It also is important, as it provides an example of ER's reaction to personal attacks.

6. ER's trip to Russia—September-October, 1958

ER first made a trip to Russia in 1957, but her columns concerning this trip were unavailable. Therefore, I chose to study her second trip in which she tested the impressions of the Soviet visit she had made a year earlier. The columns on this trip are important in understanding ER's philosophy on United States and Soviet relations.

7. The column after 25 years—January, 1960

The last month of "My Day," September 1962, was unavailable. In addition, the September columns may not have been truly representative of her later columns, as she wrote them under the strain of a serious illness.
Therefore, for comparative purposes, I chose to study the 25th anniversary of the column, which fell on January, 1966.

I will study the following aspects of the column:

1. Contents
2. Style
3. Recurrent themes
4. Treatment of issues ER is involved in during the writing of the column
5. Purpose, i.e., asking for money, clarifying views, defending her stand on an issue
6. Change of contents, style, and purpose as years progress
7. Since many of the issues dealt with brought criticism of ER, I will look at her reaction to this criticism as it is reflected in the column
8. Column as a reflection of her views or FDR's
9. Column as a reflection of the private ER

Since history is woven throughout ER's life, I will use historical references as well as her biographies in describing the historical setting for each chapter that deals with an activity in which ER was involved. ER's writing will be used to provide personal background and her views on issues under study. In order to better understand the personal ER, I have included a brief profile covering her life before she became First Lady.
Magazine articles will be used to evaluate the country's reaction to ER during the actual occurrences of events.

After analyzing the column over the years, I will draw conclusions about ER's style, treatment of issues, and evolution as a columnist. From a careful study of her personal life, I intend to relate the private ER to the public one as reflected in her column.
CHAPTER 4

PROFILE

ER was born in 1884 to wealthy parents who were active members of New York society. Though she described her mother, Anna, as "the most beautiful woman I've ever seen," most of her memories of this woman were clouded with pain. Distressed over ER's plain looks, Anna Roosevelt nicknamed her daughter "Granny," and when visitors came to call, she apologetically explained that "[ER] is such a funny child, so old-fashioned that we always call her 'Granny.'" In remembering these incidents, ER later wrote, "I wanted to sink through the floor with shame . . . ."3

But the coldness of her mother was offset by her father, Elliott, whom ER described as "charming, good looking, loved by all who came in contact with him." Describing her experiences with him, ER wrote, "With my father I was perfectly happy."5 But when ER was six years old this relationship suffered a crisis, as her father became ill and took to drinking. Soon after, he suffered a breakdown and was sent to a sanitarium for treatment.6 As the marriage broke up, his visits to ER became further and further apart. But through this ordeal ER remained
steadfast in her loyalty to him, as he was the only loving force in her life. Though he died before she was ten, ER regarded him as a major influence on her. As she later wrote, "He dominated my life as long as he lived and was the love of my life many years after he died."8

ER was eight years old when her mother died. Rejoicing at the prospect of spending all her time with her father, her hopes were soon dimmed. Because of her husband's health, Anna Roosevelt requested that after her death, her daughter and two sons were to spend the rest of their childhood under the supervision of ER's maternal grandmother, Ludlow Hall.9

Grandmother Hall's house was dominated by rules and regulations. She was a kindly woman, but she already had her hands full with her own teenage children. Thus, her grandchildren were starved for attention.10 During the first two years at her grandmother's, ER found consolation in her father's infrequent visits.11 His promise that they would have a home together gave ER the hope that her stay at the Halls would soon end.12 But again her hopes were dashed as he died less than two years after his wife. As one of her biographers, Joseph Lash, wrote,

When he died she took upon herself the burden of his vindication. By her life she would justify her father's faith in her, and by demonstrating strength of will and steadiness of purpose confute her mother's charges of unworthiness against both of them.13
For the next five years, ER's life was filled with tutors, ballet lessons, and piano lessons. As a rather shy and solemn child, she was beset with fears laboring under a sense of inferiority coupled with a desperate need for love and attention. But, an avid reader, she found solace in pouring over works by such authors as James Thackery and Charles Dickens.

At the age of 15, ER's life changed as her grandmother sent her to England to attend Allenswood, Mlle Souvestre's finishing school in South Fields. ER claimed that Mlle Souvestre was the major force in shaping the social philosophy that ER adhered to throughout her life. She taught her girls that "right should be right for right's sake" and not through fear or reward. But most importantly, ER's experience at Allenswood taught her that "the underdog was always to be championed." The three years ER spent at the school were among her most cherished. Traveling with Mlle Souvestre through Europe, and becoming aware of her own capabilities, she wrote, "I had been a solemn little girl, my years in England had given me my first real taste of being carefree and irresponsible." ER's formal education ended at Allenswood. Later in life she felt that her lack of a college education left her at a disadvantage in competing with her peers' intellectual claims.
Upon her return to New York in 1902, ER was filled with aspirations of entering the current stream of reform. But instead her family position demanded that she "come out" into society. Describing her first debutante party, she wrote, "I do not think I quite realized beforehand what utter agony it was going to be ... ."\(^{20}\) While ER's disdain for these social functions did not diminish, two important factors came out of this experience.

As a debutante, ER was required to perform a charitable service. Working with the children at the Rivington Settlement House, ER took her duties seriously and thoroughly enjoyed the experience.\(^ {21}\) This settlement house was part of a larger reform movement and included organizations such as the Consumers' League which Eleanor joined. As a member of that organization, she soon took on the duty of inspecting sweatshops.\(^ {22}\)

Her position as a debutante also led to her courtship with FDR who regularly attended these social functions making them much more endurable for ER. Soon, the romance became serious and on March 17, 1905, the two were married.\(^ {23}\)

From the beginning, FDR's mother, Sara Delano Roosevelt attempted to exercise complete authority over the young couple. Eager to please her husband and her mother-in-law, ER had trouble in asserting her own personality. For the first ten years of her marriage, she was
almost totally confined, caring for her small children. However, in 1913, when FDR became Assistant Secretary of the Navy, she began to assert herself outside the home. Her volunteer work during World War I had a lasting effect on her. As an active member of the Red Cross, one of her major duties was visiting the wounded. Looking back on these experiences she wrote,

I became a more tolerant person, far less sure of my own beliefs and methods of action, but I think more determined to try for certain ultimate objectives. I had gained a certain assurance as to my ability to run things, and the knowledge that there is joy in accomplishing a good job. I knew more about the human heart, which had been somewhat veiled in mystery up to now.

During these same years, her interest in politics manifested itself in the duties she performed as the wife of a public official. Yet, even in the minor roles she played, she found a sense of independence that she had lacked under the dominant supervision of her mother-in-law.

In 1918 ER suffered another crisis as she discovered that her husband was having an affair with Lucy Mercer, her social secretary. Describing the impact that this relationship had on ER, Lash wrote,

In the shaping of Eleanor Roosevelt the Lucy Mercer affair, while neither hammer nor anvil, was the flame whose heat hastened and fixed the change from private into public person.

Though ER offered FDR his freedom, he chose to stay with his wife. Yet for years she doubted that his love for her was the key factor in this decision. Instead she
attributed it to his realization that a divorce would end his political career. Fearing that her personal relationship with FDR had ended, she more vigorously worked in her public activities to fill this gap. But even under these circumstances, the two enjoyed a life of working together for mutual interests.

In 1920, FDR was stricken with polio and ER became the most important force in keeping his name alive during his convalescence. Between the years of 1920-1933 she developed the political training that she practiced throughout her life. Working mostly through social reform, ER maintained FDR's contact with politics. It was during this era that she began her more intensive work in such organizations as the Women's Trade Union, the Settlement House Movement, and the National Consumers' League.

Louis Howe, FDR's political advisor, offered her both technical and practical advice which she used throughout her career. Concerned with FDR's political future, he urged her to join the New York State Democratic Committee where she became an ardent campaigner for Al Smith.

By the time of her husband's Presidential election in 1933, ER had made a name for herself. She enjoyed her activities, but as Lash stated, "she feared that as a First Lady, she would become a prisoner of protocol and tradition." Though apprehensive about her role, her fears were unfounded about her new position. Instead of
confining her, it allowed her an opportunity to promote her causes and at the same time help strengthen the political career of her husband.
FOOTNOTES

7 *Ibid.*, p. 68
21 Lash, *Eleanor and Franklin*, p. 146-149.

22 Ibid.


24 Ibid., p. 260.


26 Ibid., p. 311.


28 Ibid., p. 21-25.


30 Ibid., p. 26;33.

31 Lash, *Eleanor and Franklin*, p. 466.
CHAPTER 5

THE DEBUT OF "MY DAY"

ER's descent upon Washington was without precedent. Looking back on her debut as the First Lady, Bess Furman of the Associated Press wrote, "Washington had never seen the like . . . ."¹ She not only held her own press conferences, but also gave sponsored radio talks, and soon became a sought after lecturer.² In addition to all these activities, after two years as the mistress of the White House, ER launched her career as a daily newspaper columnist.

In March of 1933, the United Features Syndicate asked her to write a 200-word daily column on "topics of general interest with particular emphasis on the home."³ Because she had other writing commitments, she turned the proposition down. However, in 1935, when United Features renewed their offer, and ER's other journalistic obligations had been met, she agreed to the idea.⁴ The column was to be a 400-500 word diary and was to run six times a week.⁵ ER had previously written a lengthy column for Women's Home Companion which became a burden to her. At first she thought that the type of column that Monte Bourjaily of United Features offered might become a
"dreadful chore" but since she was so dissatisfied with her current writing assignment, she decided to try it. Her decision to accept the offer was also influenced by the sharp tongued, anti-New Deal cousin, Alice Roosevelt Longworth. Alice had long been Eleanor's adversary, not only politically, but personally as well. Though she served as a bridesmaid at ER's wedding, she later encouraged FDR's affair with Lucy Mercer, frequently asking both of them to dine with her when ER was away. Aside from this, she was an ardent critic of the New Deal and a staunch Republican. "My Day" was originally set to begin publication in mid January, 1936, but when United Features found that Ms. Longworth's column was to be released at the same time, the first publication of "My Day" was moved up to December 31, 1935, when it appeared in 40 newspapers.

At first FDR objected to ER taking on another obligation, especially one that could make her the subject of attacks. Even before FDR took office, ER was criticized for commercializing her position by making money from the various activities she was engaged in. Some critics had even accused her of making statements that were embarrassing to her husband. But ER assured her husband that "My Day" would be devoid of politics and no more than a diary of family happenings and her daily experiences.
ER was a conscientious columnist. Filing "My Day" under the most adverse circumstances, usually dictating it to her secretary, but sometimes typing it herself, she never missed a deadline.13

Hoping to become an accepted member of the newspaper fraternity, she worked diligently, heeding the advice of her editors and her fellow columnists who frequently made their suggestions within their columns.14

ER's first column, appearing on December 31, described a restful night alone during the Christmas holidays. "The house was full of young people, my husband had a cold and was in bed with milk toast for his supper, so I said a polite goodnight to everyone at 7:30, closed my door, lit my fire and settled down to a nice long evening by myself." She then continued to describe what she read. Two out of the three publications dealt with youth, a topic frequently referred to during the first month of the column. Youth again appeared at the end of the column as ER quoted a young visitor who was staying at the White House.

'Every meal is different in this house. Yesterday we talked about philosophies of government. Today we talked about movies and puning,' I smiled to myself, for it would be very hard to be dull with only two people over 30 at the table, all the others bursting with youth and energy.

Nowhere in the column did ER explain that puning was a form of sleighing as perhaps a more astute reporter would have done.15
ER's neglect in defining terms again appeared in her January 15 column where she described a frustrating shopping expedition in New York for the purpose of buying a Chuddar shawl. Since she neglected to explain what a Chuddar shawl is, the column was followed by an editor's note which defined the shawl as a large sheet worn by females in Northern India.

Franklin P. Adams, who wrote a diary once a week for the Herald Tribune, criticized this particular column. Referring to ER's omission of names and places, he wrote, "In . . . yesterday's 'My Day,' she tells of having tried to get, though not where, a Chuddar shawl for Colonel Howe . . . . She tried in three places, unnamed, and at the fourth, also unnamed, found that an effort would be made to get the shawl . . . . We are not her editor, but if we were, we would say, 'Get names.'" When her editor pointed this criticism out to ER, her response was that she had not wanted to advertise the shops nor use people's names without their permission. However, she assured him that she would try to do better in the future. According to ER her problem was her training. "I fear I have been trained to be too careful."

As the month wore on, she was guilty several more times of omitting specifics. On January 20, she wrote extensively of exercises she had attended at the National History Museum. Yet, she neglected to tell what the
exercises were for. Perhaps her most critical error of the month occurred on January 21 when her column was almost wholly devoted to eulogizing a nameless man who headed the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in the state of Arkansas.

Avoiding controversial subjects, nature became a frequent topic during ER's first month as a columnist. On January 14, in a description of the country, she spoke of the "occasional creaking of a branch" and the "distant creaking of the ice." The weather was a frequent starting point for many of her columns. On December 31, she began with "I wonder if anyone else glories in cold and snow . . . ." and on January 20, she wrote, "Such a storm we are having! Everywhere streets, cars--everything is covered with snow and sliding around."

"My Day" was also a means for revealing to the masses the daily life of the First Family. Though ER wrote of White House receptions and teas, she never portrayed herself or her family as sovereign. She had a strong belief that the family occupying the White House was not that much different than any other family. Her January 9 column was devoted to just this topic. The column concerns ER's reaction to the following statement written in a New York daily. (She doesn't name the paper or the person who made the statement.) The paper had remarked, "The fact is that nobody can live in the White House today . . . and live a
usual American life.'" ER's response to this was negative. "If we do not allow our high American officials and their families to lead a 'usual American life,' I wonder how long we would have a really representative type of American official . . . . I still believe the people in this country want their representatives to be average American citizens leading 'usual American lives.'" The openness of the column seemed an attempt to show her readers that in fact the Roosevelts were leading a typical American life. However, this openness led to a lack of privacy.

Though ER was perhaps the most open First Lady that had ever resided in the White House, she was very concerned with maintaining a private side to her life. In fact when FDR became President, she feared that her personal life was over. On January 7, she wrote of a goldfish bowl that an anonymous doner had sent to her. ER found the present suggestive of her life in the White House, and spent the rest of the column expounding on the problems of maintaining personal privacy while living in the public eye.

I doubt if anyone living in the White House needs such a constant reminder whether they write themselves or just trust those who write about them, no goldfish could have less privacy, from the point of view of the daily happenings of their existence.

It's interesting that ER complained about her lack of privacy when she purposely took on "My Day" in order to relate the daily experiences of the First Family. In a
way, she helped to create her lack of privacy but her reasons for doing so may be rooted in her deep sense of duty. Though she feared losing her private life, her strong conviction of bringing the First Family closer to the American people perhaps led her to forsake the privacy that she desired.

As the January 7 column continued, ER described how she coped with her goldfish bowl existence, and offered consolation to others living in a similar position.

Thank God, few people are so poor that they do not have an inner life which feels the real springs of thought and action. If I may offer a thought in consolation to others who for a time have to live in the goldfish bowl, it is:

Don't worry because people know all that you do, for the really important thing about anyone is what they are and what they think and feel, and the more you live in a "goldfish bowl" the less people really know about you.

This last statement had more significance than her readers may have known. While she was offering advice to others, she revealed something important about herself. Though ER presented herself as a master of situations, a continuous struggle battled within her. Her life was devoted to what one biographer calls "self-mastery." "All her life she struggled to achieve it. Hers was a bout with fear and insecurity, an effort to overcome internal turmoil and to match with a true inward calm the composed image she projected to the outside." Discussing public appearances,
she once told a friend, "Sometime I am going to tell you how lonely I can be in a crowd."21

Though she masked this insecurity well, it did reveal itself in some of her columns. On January 15, she spoke of a luncheon she attended which was a weekly assemblage of writers. "I admit I was a bit nervous and it is lucky for me that I rarely eat lunch, for somehow I did not have much appetite." Another example of her insecurity appeared in her January 30 column. Describing murals painted by Reginald Marsh, she wrote, "I liked the one which gives a little glimpse of the New York city skyline in the distance best, but Mrs. Morgenthau, her companion, who is a better critic than I am, preferred the other ones." On January 23 she spent a good portion of the column disclosing her anxiety over serving cakes that she felt were not filling or satisfying to her Alaskan guests who had come to Washington to support a fishing bill. Because the cooks were preparing for a later tea for 1,000, ER "accepted whatever was brought without a murmur and tried to act as though the diminutive cakes were the fashion in Washington." Here was an example of how ER, though nervous on the inside, was a master at outwardly portraying grace and confidence.

Throughout the month, ER painted a picture of herself as extremely human and vulnerable to the embarrassment and nervousness that everyone feels. The most entertaining
example of this appeared on January 16 where she described a coughing fit that she and her companions had at a concert. Her predicament was one that her readers could empathize with.

We were horribly embarrassed, and I became acutely anxious, between gasps, of the annoyed glances from neighboring boxes. I found myself choking, as children with the whooping cough do, in my efforts to keep quiet. I should have left the hall, but I was afraid that might prove even more disturbing.

Her embarrassment ended when the concert did. It was this kind of column that helped make ER a person that the average American could relate to.

Though ER had promised her husband that her column would be non controversial—a mere diary of White House happenings—this did not stop her from referring to causes she believed in. Her interest in the plight of women and youth were frequent topics during that first month.

Always interested in getting more women into government, she praised those who were already there. On January 18, she wrote of a tea she held for women in executive positions. "Many of these women do very important work and are an indispensable part of their offices." On January 22, she reported on another White House assemblage of women who represented different states. "I found myself wondering if this lunch was not proof of the fact that women are more alive to government and all it implies than ever before."
Thus, though "My Day" was on the surface a recounting of White House functions, ER became deeply concerned with the plight of youth and especially young adults and these subjects appeared in her columns frequently.

As mentioned before, youth was a topic in her first column. Three days after that she spent an entire column on the "amusing" time she had taking her grandchildren to the Smithsonian Institute. On January 6 she devoted much of her column to a laudatory profile of a young man, Frank Diaz, whose father had died leaving him with the responsibility of his family while he attended college.

One could not wish for a more alert, bright looking youngster. There is no question in my mind that responsibility is a good thing, but it cannot be administered artificially, so we can only be grateful when our children have it thrust upon them naturally.

Perhaps ER felt a special empathy for this young man because her own father whom she admits she made a hero of had died when she was very young. Since her mother had already died, and she was the eldest in her family, she felt the responsibility for her younger brother, Hall. As she shouldered this responsibility in her youth, she could well admire others who were doing the same.

During January, ER attended a meeting of the Youth Congress and on January 27 she described her impression of that gathering. "I was deeply impressed . . . with the earnestness of these young people. They have a real desire to contribute to the solution of their own problems
and to try to think through the questions before them." By 1939, ER was a major adult leader for this group.

On January 29 she was again lauding the youth of the country. After speaking with a group of 33 supervisors of workers' education from various states, she wrote, "I was impressed by the bright and intelligent young men and women, and how sympathetic they were in the interpretations of the various communities that they had touched."

ER has been called the administration's best promoter for the New Deal and in her column she praised the work of several New Deal organizations. On January 10 she wrote of the Public Works Administration's (PWA) job in reconditioning an armory where the Baltimore National Home Show was held. She pointed out her excitement over the fact that relief people who worked on it received the same amount of money that they would have gotten from the government if they had done nothing. On January 21 she praised the work done by the head of the WPA in Arkansas, and on December 31, she mentioned a report on the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps.

Though the column was intended to be a diary, ER also used it indirectly to help her husband, and according to Anne Hare McCormick of the New York Times,

No one should underestimate the reassuring effect on public opinion of the figure of the many-sided father of a family who slips in and out of the diary of the accomplished White House character who manages to sublimate the typical American woman in the person of the First Lady of the land.
An example of this phenomenon appeared in the January 8 column. After the Supreme Court climaxed a series of rulings which almost obliterated a New Deal measure by declaring the Agriculture Adjustment Act (AAA) unconstitutional, she depicted FDR's reaction to this by painting a relaxed picture of him at the White House.25 Speaking of the Supreme Court's decision she said,

It seemed to me that after a long afternoon of reading and rereading and trying to thoroughly digest legal opinions we would have a rather quiet and subdued swim. ... My husband was already in the water and when I reached the door ... I inquired hesitatingly how they all were feeling.

To my complete surprise I was told that everyone was feeling fine, and on that note we finished our swim.

As for dinner that night, she said, "I prepared for some candid opinions on current events. Instead, I found that we were discussing history." The column ended on an optimistic note. "Midnight came and bed for all, and all that was said was 'Goodnight, sleep well, pleasant dreams.' With the new day comes new strength and new thoughts." The calm that ER depicted was one of assurance for her readers and the country. As Lash wrote, ER painted

a picture of grace under pressure and at that moment of constitutional crisis her portrait of a steady handed, non-vindictive president was worth more than a score of political pronouncements.26

Many flaws can be found in the writing in the first month of "My Day." Besides omitting names of people and places, ER overused words and phrases such as "amusing,"
"interesting," "impressed," and "it seems to me." And, in some columns, her subjects could be viewed as trivial. Yet, in this first month, the column served several functions. It brought the First Family and especially ER closer to the public. It showed the country their President's calm reaction to a decision he was unhappy with, and it promoted several New Deal agencies. Though ER's political views appeared in the background during this first month, she did voice her feelings and support for youth and women. Upon close analysis, "My Day" revealed glimpses into the private ER who battled with feelings of insecurity. But mostly, this first month showed ER as an unpretentious and very human First Lady.
FOOTNOTES


2 Lash, Eleanor and Franklin, pp. 472; 559.

3 Ibid., p. 559.

4 Ibid.


6 Ibid., p. 198.

7 Lash, Eleanor and Franklin, p. 202; 309.

8 Ibid., p. 562.


11 Lash, Eleanor and Franklin, p. 472.


14 Lash, Eleanor and Franklin, pp. 561-562.

15 Ibid., p. 559.


17 Ibid.


22 Roosevelt, *You Learn By Living*, p. 17.


TABLE

MAJOR SUBJECT MATTER OF FIRST MONTH OF "MY DAY"

December 31--A description of a restful night during the Christmas holidays

January 2--Description of New Year's Eve; emphasis on the "growing sense of responsibility amongst all our citizens"

January 3--Description of taking grandchildren to the Smithsonian Institute

January 4--Description of White House social dinner

January 6--Description of White House luncheon

January 7--Discussion of the lack of privacy in the White House

January 8--Allusions to FDR's reaction to Supreme Court decision on the New Deal

January 9--Discussion of why high ranking American families should be allowed to live normal lives

January 10--Promotes work of PWA

January 11--Description of ceremony of flags and a White House dinner

January 13--Description of her sorority's selection of outstanding women

January 14--Description of nature

January 15--Description of shopping spree in New York

January 16--Description of her coughing fit at a concert

January 17--Discussion of America's industrial problems

January 18--Discussion of women's work in homebuilding

January 20--Description of weather and Theodore Roosevelt
January 21--Obituary of a man (unnamed) who headed WPA in Arkansas

January 22--Description of a tea for outstanding women at the White House

January 23--Description of a meeting with representatives from Alaska; allusions to ER's worries over an insufficient amount of food for these guests

January 24--Description of weather; alludes to her father

January 25--Description of short excursions

January 27--Description of first meeting of AYC

January 28--Refers to Arthurdale

January 29--Description of favorable impressions of young adults
CHAPTER 6

A COLUMNIST FOR YOUTH

As an older woman, ER was asked what she considered her most important mistake. "Too much belief in discipline when my children were young," was her answer. ¹ With a live-in mother-in-law who continually spoiled her children, and a husband who neglected them and avoided doling out punishment, ER was left as the chief disciplinarian. ² Perhaps her guilt over this role influenced her later shift in attitude to almost total permissiveness in her relationships with the youth she was involved with in her public life. In 1933, when her children were grown, and she was soon to become the First Lady, she wrote, "I believe very strongly that it is better to allow children too much freedom than too little." ³ It was this attitude which brought her almost nothing but embarrassment in her association with the American Youth Congress.

As one of her biographers commented, no other activity during her first seven and a half years in the White House "brought more criticism upon her in the newspapers, in Congress, or in her enormous mail . . . than her patronage of the American Youth Congress." ⁴ Always concerned with the plight of youth, during the depression
years ER feared that the country was losing its younger generation.\textsuperscript{5} Approximately four and a half million Americans under the age of 21 were unemployed.\textsuperscript{6} The National Youth Administration, a program providing youth with jobs, and a chance to continue their schooling was the brain-child of ER, and with her influence on FDR, it was created by an executive order in June of 1935.\textsuperscript{7} Though it attained a degree of success, the youth unemployment problem still existed.

In the early 1930s, Communism was a popular movement among the American radical youth.\textsuperscript{8} While the depression remained a grim reality and war seemed imminent, American youth looked for a viable alternative to the existing government which they felt moved too slowly and was filled with leaders spewing hollow words.\textsuperscript{9} A former member of the Young Communist League pointed out a reason for the emergence of that group. "It was not merely what the Communists said that enthralled us; it was what other men failed to say."\textsuperscript{10} A distrust in FDR's New Deal measures and a cynicism towards traditional liberalism as well as government institutions made Communism a plausible option for the dissatisfied youth of the 30's.\textsuperscript{11} Of the youth groups the American Youth Congress (AYC) was the most radical. These youthful dissidents, who felt that the federal government owed them more opportunities, acted as the coordinate body for some sixty youth organizations.\textsuperscript{12} The AYC was organ-
ized in 1934 by Viola Ilma, who felt that youth needed a coordinate body which would allow them to more effectively bring their ideas to the attention of nationally influential leaders.13

ER, whose concern with youth had already been demonstrated in her creation of the NYA, and who had direct access to the most influential leader in the land, was the natural choice for the AYC sponsor. But, in 1934, when Ilma offered her the job, she turned it down, unsure of Ilma's reputation. Yet, she did show an interest in the proceedings of its first session asking for a report of this meeting.14 The AYC met that summer for the first time, and it was a disastrous affair, as Ilma was ousted and the Socialist and Communist groups took over.15

The AYC continued its tumultous existence, but it wasn't until 1936 that ER's name became associated with it. In that year, the group, now totally radical, asked ER to speak at its National Council. Though FDR's advisers warned her that this anti-government, anti-NYA group might ask some difficult questions, and advised her not to attend, she accepted the invitation, answering them that

We ought to be able to meet all young people and defend the things we believe in. It may not always turn out as we hope. We may find ourselves targets of criticism. I wonder if it does us much harm. The real thing that is harmful is the knowledge in our hearts that we are afraid to face any group of young people. Open discussion between the rising generation and the older generation is a really important thing.16
Though the afternoon was difficult, as one AYC delegate said, "She stood the gaff wonderfully." The group scoffed at the NYA policies and was eager to replace them with their creation, the American Youth Act, which they estimated would cost 3.5 billion but whose critics saw its expense running close to 20 billion. ER understood the impatience of the young group telling them, "I used to be awfully impatient when I was your age," but she asked them to put their faith in a free society for things would eventually get better. Unhappy that some of the AYC members believed that the democratic form of government was ineffective, she nevertheless came away from the group impressed with "the earnestness of these young people. They have a real desire to contribute to the solution of their own problems and try to think through the questions before them." 

By 1938, ER's name had become increasingly associated with the AYC. In August of that year the group hosted the World Youth Congress at Vassar College near ER's home in Hyde Park, and meeting often with its leaders, she became a defender for their group. With the fear of Communism spreading in America and the known Communistic influence in the AYC, it was frequently under attack, but ER consistently defended the group, maintaining that it was "quite obvious that a group with such varied organizations in it
could hardly be called a branch of the Communistic Party. 21

ER preferred youth who were nonconformists and willing to take risks to attain their goals. 22 This philosophy plus her permissive attitude supported her idea that youth needed "a confidence that they may try new things with the backing of their elders, that they may call upon the experience of their leaders, not to hold them back, but to help them . . . . We cannot expect to stand still and to find in the old conditions answers to the new problems." 23

The AYC looked to ER for guidance and advice, and after she had worked closely with them under a barrage of criticism, they sought her help when in November of 1939, the Dies Committee on Un-American Activities offered them a chance to prove that Communist accusations against the group were unfounded. 24 ER, perhaps naively, believed that Communist influence in the AYC was negligible, but to rid herself of any suspicion, she invited the AYC leaders to the White House to ask them directly if any of them espoused this belief. Her faith in them was verified as she said, "In every case they said they had no connection with the Communists, had never belonged to any Communist organizations and had no interest in Communist ideas." 25 With her confidence confirmed, she accompanied them to the Dies hearings which began on November 30, 1939. 26 Though she was a target for criticism, she stood by the AYC
leaders and reported a daily account of the proceedings in her column.

As a daily columnist, ER had an advantage that others in the public eye did not. In "My Day," she could daily answer criticisms leveled against her by the press, the Congress, or her mail, and during the turbulent era of the AYC, she did just that. Therefore, in late 1939 and early 1940, four years after its inception, "My Day" was no longer a mere diary, but instead it served as a forum for ER's views and a place for her defense.

Very shortly after the leaders of the AYC received notices to appear before the Dies Committee, ER made it publicly known that she would stand by them. Her first mention of the Dies Committee appeared in her December 1, 1939, column. Speaking of the short notice that they gave to the AYC leaders, she said,

It is usual, of course when one appears before as important a committee as a Congressional committee, to have information and all material that may be called for near at hand.

Praising these young people for their energy, she stated

Of necessity, this group of young people, none of whom is affluent, had to do some tall hustling to get anything together and be in Washington this morning.

She then explained her reasons for being involved with the AYC in these proceedings. Always a supporter of youth,
she stated that

as far as is humanly possible, I give to young people whom I know and trust, the feeling that in any situation particularly a difficult one, they may count on my assistance.

The second reason for her active support during the proceedings carried an unusual note of bitterness as she voiced some doubt as to the intent of the Dies Committee.

My second interest is a desire to observe to what extent the government is not only striving to uncover un-American activities but is giving to youth the assurance that their government does not look upon them with suspicion until they are proved guilty, and is anxious to help them in every way to build up the faith and trust in democracy which should be the heritage of every youngster in the United States.

The next day, December 2, "My Day" was devoted almost totally to the hearings. However, unlike her previous somewhat negative reference to the committee, ER praised the proceedings of the opening day.

Both the counsel of the committee, Mr. Rhea Whitley, who asked the majority of the questions, and the members of the committee, were courteous and helpful and in every way attempted to inspire confidence and bring out the truth. It was an extremely heartening exhibition of government operating helpfully.

Though there has been no evidence to document it, perhaps FDR asked ER not to take such a harsh stand against the committee for after all it was a part of government.

From that time forward, ER's criticism of the hearings was limited to only one member. This criticism was exemplified in that same December 2 column as she described the next day's hearings in which Joseph Lash, an AYC
leader, gave his testimony.

The majority of the questions today were asked by Mr. J. B. Matthews, and his whole attitude, tone of voice and phraseology made one feel that a prisoner, considered guilty, was being tried at the bar.

Matthews had once been an active member of the Socialist League and there he had served with many young people who were now leaders in the AYC. However, now a member of the Dies Committee, he had vacillated far to the right. And in the eyes of some of his former friends, it was obvious that he was out to "conduct the examination." However, in the midst of his interrogation he changed his tone. As ER wrote in her autobiography,

At one point, when the questioning seemed to me to be particularly harsh, I asked to go over and sit at the press table. I took a pencil and a piece of paper, and the tone of the questions changed immediately. Just what the questioner thought I was going to do I do not know, but my action had the effect I desired.

It was rather obvious, as stated by one of her biographers, that Matthews feared his tactics would be discussed in her column which indeed they were. It is interesting to note that though ER discussed her intent for her move later in her autobiography, in her December 2 column she made no mention of it and instead feigned innocence in the whole matter, attributing Matthews' change in tone to a warning given to him by an unnamed gentleman.

I surmised that his impression (the impression of Matthews' unjust questioning) was made on other people for in a little while a gentleman came around and whispered in Mr. Matthews' ear. I have no way of knowing what was said, and it may have
been entirely irrelevant to the matters in hand, but in any case it was soothing to Mr. Matthews for immediately the atmosphere changed. His voice was softer, his manners were more courteous.

It may be surmised that her autobiography gave a more accurate account of this incident than the description she used in her column. At the time of the investigation ER, very aware of her husband's position, may not have wanted to portray herself as meddling in the proceedings of this government committee. However, when her autobiography was published, four years after the death of FDR, she was free to reveal her motives for then, she was only responsible for herself.

Impressed by the testimony given by the AYC leaders, ER stated in that same column what she thought was the most important aspect of the hearing, the discovering "that what is said by people about other individuals is not half as important as discovering what the people themselves, working in these organizations, say and do."

In her concluding paragraph, she summed up her impressions of the two-day hearings.

The committee members are genuinely courteous and helpful in their attitude, however, the counsel of the committee more nearly carries out the attitude of the committee at least of those members whom I have had the pleasure of observing, than does the 'director of research.'

ER's demonstration of support for the AYC in her actions and her column brought reactions from the press and later in her mail, The New York World Telegram, which
carried her column attacked the methods of the Dies Committee but nevertheless stated:

There are many—and we are among them—who do not share Mrs. Roosevelt's conviction that the American Youth Congress is free from Communist control. We strongly suspect that Mrs. Roosevelt, a person of great frankness who likes to give others credit for equal candor, has been deceived by devious minded followers of the party line. 

And, indeed, this proved to be the case. The New York Herald Tribune was not quite as complimentary in its evaluation of ER's position, stating that "The Communists have made it impossible to tell who is a Communist and where Communist influence begins and ends." Therefore, according to this editorial,

... the public is compelled to draw inferences and has a right to demand that any suspect organization give some clearer account of the sources of its inspiration than mere proof that its hands do not hold Communist party cards.

Referring specifically to ER's public support of the AYC leaders, the article continued,

Any one of Mrs. Roosevelt's high position and influence has an obligation to use them in defense of such organizations with a caution that once would not have been necessary. The Dies Committee may have its faults. But for Mrs. Roosevelt to bring its hearings under this peculiarly direct sort of pressure is scarcely a public service.

ER did not use her column to respond specifically to these articles, nor did she directly refer to the Dies Committee for several weeks after the hearings. Yet, a number of her columns in that interval were devoted in part
or entirely to the subject of suspicion of Communistic influence in organizations.

On December 5, speaking of the existence of a multitude of organizations in America, ER stated that "a new element has entered into the question of how we decide on the propriety of joining an organization, whether patriotic, civic, or charitable," for "Any of these organizations may suddenly be declared Communist, or fronts for Communist or Fascist work." She then gave her opinion on where people stood who just contribute to an organization as opposed to those who are active members.

... if we find one or two names of people on the letterhead, we have reason to believe are reputable people, we are justified in contributing and are not really open to attack as part of a subversive organization ... .

However, ER saw a different situation for those who were active members. In the following, though she wrote in the third person, and did not specifically name the AYC, it is rather obvious that she was speaking of her relationship to the Youth Congress.

If, on the other hand, we give our names to appear on the letterhead of an organization, and work with it actively, it seems to me that we have a more serious obligation. A conscientious person reads all the publications put out by the organization which they are joining, attends as many meetings as possible, knows as many working in the organization as possible ... . It seems to me that something which was said many years ago applies in this instance: 'By their works ye shall know them.'

Though ER preached this philosophy, she would perhaps not have been such a strong defender of the AYC if
she had abided by it. She was present at most of their meetings, but she neglected to give a careful eye to the reports prepared by the FBI pertaining to AYC members. As she recalled later, when she read these reports and found so many people listed who were obviously not Communists but were listed as contributors to that front, she decided all the reports were worthless.

As her December 5 column continued, ER again implied her support of the AYC. Speaking generally, she wrote,

> When an organization stands up under this amount of investigation, I fail to see how there can be hidden either a Communist or Fascist program or a surreptitious control of any kind.

It cannot be determined whether ER purposely left out the relationship between the AYC's situation and the one she spoke of here but whatever her intent, she lapsed into rather sloppy writing as she neglected to explain what she meant by "this amount of investigation." In the column, she conceded that members of an organization could belong openly or secretly to a subversive group but she warned,

> "... you cannot fight shadows and you must wait until the objectives of an organization are being changed or interfered with."

On December 8, ER presented her philosophy on meeting troubled times. Though there was no mention of the AYC or the criticism brought upon her because of it, it
can be conjectured that this situation may have helped to bring about the following statement.

If you haven't a perspective, each event as it hits you seems the final stroke of fate. Occasionally you are elated at a step forward, but frequently you sink into black despair at what seems to be the endless stupidity of the human race.

The "black despair" that ER wrote of was something that had surfaced from time to time in her life. In meeting difficult situations, she sometimes withdrew into heavy silence. She called these periods her "Griselda moods." Though these usually occurred in personal situations, she may have experienced something similar to them in this instance, as it was rather unusual for ER to write in such a bleak tone.

The word fear often occurred in ER's writing. Fighting against it throughout her life, she was constantly aware of its presence, and during this era, when the fear of Communism was rampant, she advised her readers to fight against this scare. On December 13, speaking of the 148th anniversary of the Bill of Rights, she made it a basis of her argument that one should be free to join any organization one might choose without the anxiety of being labeled a Communist.

If you are not accused of being a Communist these days, you may be a Communist front and now you may be a Communist transmission belt, and these names apply both to individuals and organizations. I don't question that all three kinds of people exist, but I begin to wonder whether some perfectly innocent people may not be suffering because of the fears which are aroused.
Fearing that the Communist scare might prevent people from becoming actively involved in organizations, she concluded her column with the following statement.

Let's fight realities with all we have. Let's fight for our Democracy and our Bill of Rights, and wherever we find things in which we do not believe, let's be free to express ourselves, but let us pray not to be dominated by fears or disturbed nightmares.

Again, in this column she did not refer to the AYC, but it was apparent that it was on her mind.

A little over two weeks after the Dies hearings, the AYC held their convention in Madison, Wisconsin, where they decisively voted 322-49 not to condemn Russia for its invasion of Finland. ER was deluged with mail dealing with this vote, and in response to the clippings and letters sent to her, she again defended the youth group in her January 17 column.

I certainly hold no brief for their refusal to condemn Russia, but I should like to point out that the resolution which they actually adopted was practically identical with the resolution of the National Student Federation, which is a conservative student body and with one adopted by another student group, all with the aim of keeping us out of war.

Again ER needed names. What other student group was she speaking of? Without identifying this group, her argument was weakened. Not only was she incorrect in calling the National Student Federation conservative, but aside from this, her defense sounded like a mere rationalization of the facts. Avoiding the issue she hoped to convince her
readers that it was the AYC's pacifist philosophy rather than their support of Russia that influenced this resolution. Even Joseph Lash, who left the AYC following the convention, told ER soon after that it was the Communist influence that was responsible for this vote.\textsuperscript{38}

Yet, publicly, she remained steadfast in her support as in her concluding paragraph of her January 17 column she attributed the attitude of the AYC to the older members of their families and a lack of faith in the press.

Their attitude reflects that of the older members of their families. The fact that they will not condemn Russia, I think, arises more from a general distrust of all news and feeling that condemnation of any people should at present be withheld.

She then appealed to her readers to put the AYC's attitude into proper perspective, for as she stated,

You and I may think this attitude foolish, may even think it wrong, but I really do not think it is quite necessary to dignify it with the amount of notice and apprehension which it seems to have excited in the press and in the minds of certain individuals.

Though she still projected the image of an AYC supporter, privately she may have had some doubts concerning the group for in a letter to Lash, she called his decision to leave the Congress wise.\textsuperscript{39}

However, whether she entertained suspicions about the group or not, she consistently defended the right of the individual to express his/her beliefs without fear of repercussions. On January 23, she recounted her
impressions of the movie, Abe Lincoln in Illinois.

... Lincoln's words made a deep impression on me. Perhaps more of us today should begin to stand for the things in which we believe, even if it seems almost impossible that these beliefs would be accepted at the present time.

During this time, it did not seem to matter what ER dealt with in her column, she would always manage to relate it to the freedom of expression. These declarations sometimes brought antagonistic and bitter reactions, and on January 25, ER responded to a letter of just this nature. Attributing the letter to "someone's sense of humor and perhaps a little too much idle time," she related its contents.

From Los Angeles, California, the letter comes purporting to be from a young Communist organization which informs me that they are naming their branch for me and which gives me undeserved praise for doing things which I have not done!

In an angry tone, seldom found in ER's writing, she continued.

I appreciate the joke, but since my correspondent gave me no address, I must use this way of telling him that this is perhaps too serious a matter for joking. They [ER used the pronoun incorrectly] cannot use names without permission and, in addition, I am now and always will be opposed to the Communist form of government.

Though ER then conceded that Communists have a right to express their beliefs, she stated that in the United States, "We are interested in a true democracy and we work for the ultimate development of a way of life in our country which will make it possible for every individual
to fulfill his responsibility as a citizen in a
democracy."

While the above was an example of strong writing,
its force was diminished when without a transition, it was
followed by a description of a "beautiful snowstorm in
Texas" where ER hoped that the children "found tin trays
enough to use as sleds."

On January 30, ER devoted her entire column to an
explanation of the two major student groups affiliated
with the AYC. Her reason for doing this, she wrote, lay
in the confusion about these groups which had appeared in
her mail. Pointing out the different positions of the
organizations on the war issue, she wrote,

... the National Student Federation opposes United
States participation in any foreign war, while the
American Student Union opposes participation in the
present war because it is an 'imperialistic' war
caused by aggression and appeasement in the hope of
launching 'a war against the Soviet Union.'

After a more complete explanation of these positions, ER
concluded her column with a paragraph that rather confused
her stand concerning the youth groups.

While I think the stand of both groups shows a lack
of comprehensive knowledge of the entire situation
and is on the whole unimportant, it is valuable to
have the interest of youth and important that they
should discuss and gain greater knowledge.

Though her acknowledgement of the importance of
learning and discussing was consistent with her philosophy
of the necessity for youth to become an integral part of
government, her negation of the importance of their
positions was not. ER had been criticized for sometimes compromising her beliefs in order to appease her readers, and in this case she was perhaps guilty of doing just that. In previous columns she had reiterated the importance of standing up for one's beliefs no matter what they were; yet, here, though she does not totally deny that idea, she does label these student stands unimportant. Though there is no evidence that she cited the wrath of the youth groups she referred to, they must have been surprised when the person who had stood by them through so much, now called their positions unimportant.

In early February, ER was involved with the National Youth Administration Conference and her columns were filled with praise for the energy, concern, and idealism of the group. Appealing to the sympathy of her readers, on February 8, she wrote,

These young people, by their passionate desire to stir people to action are frightened by the fact that they cannot find answers to their problems and are in need of reassurance. I wonder if the older groups will be able to meet this challenge to their understanding and imagination.

This method of thinking aloud was common in ER's writing. It was as if she were letting her readers see a private part of herself while at the same time it allowed her to express her thoughts.

When the Citizenship Institute, sponsored by the AYC, met in Washington from February 9-12, the Youth Congress reached its peak of militancy. Their views were
written on placards that they carried around the Capital. Slogans such as "Jobs—Not Guns," "Keep America Out of War," and "The Yanks are NOT Coming" advertised their position. It was during this session that FDR had his first direct contact with the group. Under the advice of F', he spoke to the group on the evening of February 10 from the balcony of the White House. ER described this scene in her autobiography.

It rained that day, and a wet group stood out in the South grounds, expecting to be patted on the back. Instead, Franklin told them some truths which though they might be unpalatable, he thought it wise for them to hear. Of the "truths" ER spoke of, the ones which brought the most hisses and boos concerned the subjects of Finland and Communism. The President called the group's condemnation of a loan to Finland as an attempt to promote an imperialistic war, "unadulterated twaddle." And in reference to the Communists in the group, he stated that they had a right to their beliefs as long as their actions were confined "to the methods prescribed by the Constitution." Though ER later stated that at that time she felt "fairly sure that they [AYC] were becoming Communist dominated," she did not admit this either to the group or in her column. Instead, even in her disappointment over their performance at FDR's speech, she invited them to a question and answer session at the White House the next night. It is interesting to note that she made absolutely no mention in her column of her husband's speech,
the AYC's reaction to it, or her subsequent meeting with them. Though FDR's speech made headlines, ER chose not to speak of it. Instead, with this topic noticeably absent, her columns were filled with praise of the Institute. On February 13, she reported on its proceedings. Ignoring the verbal spanking that FDR had given them concerning their views on the war, she wrote of

... the determination of youths that, so far as they are able to influence the nation, they do not want to have the present problems settled by going to war. War seems to them not only a method of ending their lives, but a method by which we put off facing the fact that the economic questions of today have to be answered.

Though ER did not follow this statement with any comment, it may be construed that she did not view this stand with antagonism.

On February 14, she made her last reference to the AYC's conference in Washington. Still an active sponsor of the group, she had invited the leaders to tea, and her description of this meeting was filled with acclaim.

I have never seen a more appreciative group and was impressed by their interest in the White House and their admiration of the new Lincoln portrait. So many people pay no attention to their surroundings, and it was interesting to note how wide awake and appreciative these youngsters were.

Usually ER wrote with a frankness which was conspicuously absent in this description. But perhaps this was ER's way of trying to convince her readers of the innate goodness of
these young people. For after all, how could Communists be so awed by the White House and a portrait of Lincoln?

Her last mention of support for the AYC appeared in that same column as she voiced her impression of their American Youth Act which they were to propose to Congress.

I feel their program for work is good. It calls for councils to survey for jobs in different localities and to open up as many new opportunities as possible as well as for a method of keeping before communities the situations in which great numbers of young people find themselves.

Though ER had misgivings about the intent of the AYC even as she wrote of her support of their job proposal, it was not until the following summer that she parted company with them. For at their 1940 convention, they openly opposed FDR, voting 319-19 against the administration's armament measures. In addition, in a vote of 523-10 they voted down a declaration of opposition to being led by "a political dictator as are Germany, Italy, Russia, Japan, or Spain." 48

The AYC realized that after this action ER had withdrawn her support but their leaders nevertheless requested a meeting with her in the summer of 1941. She turned them down because as she explained,

I would feel that any delegation organized under the American Youth Congress auspices was probably more interested in what was being done for Russia than in what was being done for young people in the U. S.
Though the position of the AYC must have disappointed ER, she later wrote:

I wish to make it clear that I felt a great sympathy for these young people, even though they often annoyed me. It was impossible ever to forget the extraordinary difficulties under which they were growing up. I have never felt the slightest bitterness toward them. I learned from them what Communist tactics are . . . . These tactics are now all familiar to me. In fact I think my work with the American Youth Congress was of infinite value to me in understanding some of the tactics I had to meet later in the UN. 50

As shown above, ER's association with the AYC resulted in a barrage of criticism that forced her into a defensive position. While she originally had intended to use her column as a diary of White House activities, avoiding controversial subjects, her position had changed. 51 She frequently gave an account of the White House happenings, but she now also used her column to defend the AYC, and subsequently her support of it.

New at this technique, her position was sometimes confused. For example, in one paragraph, she attacked it. Throughout her columns, she praised youth for their involvement in their country's problems. Yet she weakened her position on this issue as she called their opinion on U. S. involvement in the war unimportant. Perhaps, as stated above, she tried to appease her readers by this technique, but as a result of it her writing seemed rather contradictory.
Throughout the three months discussed in this chapter ER devoted several columns to her defense of the AYC. Yet, after the hearings, as criticism of the group increased, the majority of them did not refer specifically to the group. Instead, ER referred indirectly to it, by strongly defending the right to join whatever organization one believed in without the fear of being labeled Communist. It cannot be determined why she used this avoidance technique, but perhaps she felt that the mere mention of the AYC carried with it so many negative connotations that without naming it, she could more easily argue her point. Aside from this, she did not want to alienate any of FDR's supporters. During the interval discussed in this chapter, ER made several references to the accomplishments of youth, touching on all areas from journalism to their part in solving the problems of rural youth. These references were constant reminders that youth was basically good. In this era, when criticism of the youth groups was prevalent, ER wanted to be sure that her readers did not lose faith in this young generation.

Her columns expressing her ardent support of the AYC showed ER's naive and gullible nature. With her genuine trust in youth, she believed their protestations that the Communist influence in the AYC was negligible. Even while evidence of this influence mounted, she continued to deny that it was true. As one biographer commented, "... her
professions of faith in youth groups, in contrast to what these groups were doing, were at times so uncompromising, so unqualifiedly positive, as to appear almost stupefying in their credulity."53

But gullible and naive as she was, she carried a power as a columnist that was evidenced at the Dies proceedings. As earlier stated, her mere move to the press table, pencil and paper in hand, caused the questioner, J. B. Matthews to soften his tactics as he interrogated ER's friend, Joseph Lash. It can easily be construed that her unique position as a columnist who was also a First Lady helped influence Matthews' change in manner. Four years after its inception, "My Day" was no longer limited to a mere account of White House happenings. Though ER's stylistic shortcomings were still apparent, by 1939, her column's tone had changed. As ER became involved in more controversial activities such as her support of the AYC, her column became a place where she could defend these activities. If criticism of her raged, her column provided her a place to daily answer these changes.
FOOTNOTES


2 Ibid., p. 15.


5 From a speech by Mrs. Roosevelt, quoted by the New York Times, excerpts of which were read by Senator Huey P. Long, Democrat of Louisiana into the Congressional Record, 73rd Congress, 2nd Session (May 8, 1934), pp. 20-29 cited in Kearney, Evolution of a Reformer, p. 23.


8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., p. 36.

10 Ibid., p. 58.


14 Lash, Eleanor and Franklin, p. 707.

No citation given except that one delegate reported this to the press cited in Lash, *Eleanor and Franklin*, p. 710.


Ibid.


Kearney, *Evolution of a Reformer*, p. 34.


47 *New York World Telegram* (February 10, 1940).


51 Steinberg, *Mrs. R.*, p. 258.

52 *Eleanor Roosevelt*, "My Day," (December 7, 1940 and January 12, 1940).

CHAPTER 7

"MY DAY" IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC

Though ER was repelled at the futility of war, she did not believe that it was never right to bear arms, especially when a democracy was threatened, and this was the case in World War II.¹ Never one to stand back and observe, she demonstrated her boundless energy and her sense of civic duty in her support of the war effort. Perhaps her most important contribution of this era was her numerous visits to the armed forces.²

Though she traveled extensively throughout the United States visiting hospitals and boosting the morale of the wounded, her services were not limited to this country. Making three war related trips overseas between 1940-1943, ER acted as a goodwill ambassador as well as FDR's eyes, ears, and legs.³ These trips were not only exhaustive, but they also drew a wave of public criticism. Perhaps her most extensive and tiring trip during this era was to the South Pacific in the late summer of 1943.

Though she was eager to visit the troops in the South Pacific, there were some disagreeable circumstances surrounding the trip. "Eleanor stories" had been circulating among the G. I.'s in the South Pacific. She had
been informed that a sergeant in New Guinea had been spreading stories that "dear Mrs. Roosevelt thinks it would be nice to keep us malaria-ridden forgotten men overseas until six months after the war." Though she never made this remark, she felt some apprehension about the G. I.'s eagerness to see her.

While this weighed on her mind, she also had to contend with the criticism in the United States over the supposed public expense and ER's financial benefits gained as a result of these goodwill tours. Hoping to avoid this censure on this trip, she traveled alone and arranged that all the money she earned from her column and any subsequent articles pertaining to the trip would be divided between the Red Cross and the American Friends Service.

During her mission she traveled on military planes and wore a Red Cross uniform. Wearing the uniform at the request of Norman Davis, Chairman of the American Red Cross, who asked her to inspect his organization's work in the South Pacific, she hoped to show the public that she "was doing a serious job and not just running around the war causing trouble." But despite her precautions, letters poured into the White House asking for explanations of her war time excursions. Finally a form letter was prepared that explained that she traveled at her own expense. Pointing out that her Red Cross work was voluntary, the letter emphasized its value.
Not everyone in the United States was critical. *Life* magazine printed a four-page cover story on ER's tour, emphasizing that the trip was made at her own expense and calling it a mission that "reaped the greenest harvest of gratitude."^9

The trip was an example of ER's extraordinary energy as she covered 23,000 miles in five weeks, stopping in seventeen islands.^10 She even visited the active war front, Guadalacanal, against the wishes of her husband. She talked him into granting his permission by telling him that she would not be able to face the wounded men in the United States if she did not see the place where they had been injured.^11

Wanting to mingle with the troops and live as they did, she slept on army cots, and ate her meals with them most of the time.^12 Though she inspected hospitals and Red Cross facilities with a keen eye that she had developed when her husband had sent her on inspections of state institutions, perhaps her most valuable time was spent talking to the troops, not as a First Lady, but as a warm friend. She chatted with them about their communities, girlfriends, and families and promised to get in touch with them upon her return.^13 Her activities and their value are best summed up in the following letter from an
officer who was present at one of her hospital inspections.

Indeed Mrs. Roosevelt was here, and don't think her trip was one of idle foolishness. She is a great morale builder and charmed everyone by her sincerity and utter simplicity. She arrived on the Island at two in the morning and was up and ready to go at six.

Amazed at her energy, the officer continued,

The Commanding General of the Island, a rough and hardy Marine Corps General, accompanied her on her tour. When they arrived at our hospital at one in the afternoon, he was so pooped out that he flopped in a chair while she made her rounds. The officers of the hospital and ambulatory patients were gathered out in front when she arrived. She insisted on meeting each of us officers. She then spoke to the entire group. After that she went through practically every ward, stopping to speak with every soldier patient.

Summing up his impressions, he wrote,

She wanted to know what was wrong with each patient, how they were progressing, and asked them where they were from and in what campaign they had participated and so on. And she was so sincere, human, and utterly charming, truly a great woman, doing a great job.

The trip was not without its amusing incidents as ER, with some tired officers accompanying her, surprised two privates wearing only underwear, warming their legs in front of an electric heater. ER, not taking notice of their attire held a serious conversation with the men and left them with expressions of paralyzed shock.

Since ER traveled without her secretary, Tommy, who typed "My Day" as ER dictated it, she had to relearn her typing skills. After grueling hours of visiting and
inspecting, she wrote and filed her column. Though her typewriter compounded her problem of a 44 pound baggage limitation, it was a necessity and ER would not travel without it. 

"My Day" was an important part of her trip. As one of her biographers commented, "her realistic descriptions . . . of war front experiences brought the people at home closer to the actual conditions." 

Through her columns, ER hoped to raise the consciousness of the American people to what she considered the realities of those who were serving them in the war.

Because of bad publicity concerning her previous war-related trip to Britain, ER's South Pacific tour was kept secret until her departure. Therefore, her readers must have been surprised when on August 28, 1943, her column was preceded with the following explanation.

Mrs. Roosevelt has arrived by transport plane in New Zealand. Prior to her departure from San Francisco on August 17, she wrote the following column, explaining the purposes of her trip. This column has been held pending her safe arrival. Mrs. Roosevelt on this trip is traveling as a representative of the American Red Cross, paying her own expenses. All of her receipts will be divided between the American Red Cross and the American Friends Service Committee.

Hereafter, each South Pacific column was preceded with the above explanation of the trip and how ER's profits from it would be spent.

On August 28, ER used her column to give the reasons for her trip. By keeping the trip a secret until after her departure, she had the advantage of using this first
column to defend the trip before any criticism could be levied against it. In it she explained that she hoped to "bring to many women a feeling that they have visited the places where I go and that they know more about the lives their boys are leading." She also wanted to show the women's contribution to the war effort explaining that "Now the world is a freer world and those with capacity, whether men or women, are in demand." Working as a representative of her husband, she hoped to bring the troops "a greeting from their Commander-in-Chief."

She also spoke to her readers of the "obligation to think of the post war period and the return of our boys to civilian life." In an optimistic tone, ER expressed her hope for a promising return for American troops. "A chance to train for the work they want to do in the world will be open to them, I am sure." Perhaps ER was speaking for FDR as she stated, "Both the administration and Congress will be anxious to give those who have fought so hard and given these years of their lives to their country's service an even better chance than they could otherwise have had to fulfill their highest ambitions."

Between August 28 and October 3 of 1943, each column was devoted to the South Pacific trip. One of the major purposes of the tour was to inspect the hospitals and Red Cross clubs throughout the South Pacific, so almost every column contained at least a paragraph on the
conditions of these facilities. Though she realized that these descriptions became repetitious, she felt that they were important. In an apology for the redundancy of her descriptions, she wrote of their necessity in her September 4 column. "... If I did not tell you about these things, I would not be giving you a picture of one part of the life I am seeing in this area."

In her description of these institutions, she concentrated on aspects that gave her readers a picture of the daily life of the men confined in them. One of those aspects was the food served to American troops. ER did not merely gather statistics from the dieticians, but instead took most of her meals with the men. On September 3, she printed a sample menu for as she said in that column, "I know that every woman wonders whether her son, husband, or sweetheart is getting good food and enough of it." Hereafter she gave a report on the food at each site she visited. Along with this September 3 report, she wrote of the fine medical care given to the wounded.

But food and care were not her only subjects. Throughout her public life, ER consistently stressed the importance of women in all fields, and she brought this idea home in her South Pacific columns as she constantly referred to the importance of women in the war effort. On August 30, in her third column of the trip, ER wrote, "Let me first tell you what a debt of gratitude every
woman at home owes to the Army and Navy nurses out here. They are not living very comfortably. They are seeing daily sights that must try their fortitude for they are women. But every one I saw was smiling." And on September 4, she stated that her "admiration for the Navy and Army nurses and for the Red Cross personnel grows daily."

ER felt the emptiness in Guadalacanal where women had not been allowed because of fears for their safety. However, she expressed a hope that women would soon be able to come to the island.

As she relayed her favorable impressions of the women's work in the South Pacific, she also included ways that women at home could help. On September 4, she recounted a conversation with one of the men. "... I asked if there was anything he would especially like to know about in the United States and he answered, 'Yes, I wish you could tell me about my girl. I think about her more than anything else out here.'" Since ER could not abide by his wishes, she made a direct request to her readers. "... I am telling you girls at home so you won't forget what your letters mean out here, and how hungry boys are for news from you." She reiterated this request on September 22. "Mail is one thing every man wants. They even have a song about it, so don't forget to write."

Her praise for the work of the allies appeared
throughout the trip. On September 9, she wrote of the many war related jobs done by the Australian women. "We must never forget how generous the women of the Australian Red Cross have been to us," and on September 16, she stated "One is conscious of the great sacrifice which the British people have made in the war whenever one talks to any of their public servants." On September 3, she described her amazement at all of the work done by New Zealand volunteers. ER emphasized how these countries and the United States were a cooperative unit in the war effort. On September 20, she thanked Australia for herself and FDR for the many gifts she had received, saying that they would give FDR "a great deal of pleasure as a sign of our warm cooperation in the war effort."

As always, ER was an admirer and supporter of youth and she did not neglect the opportunity to praise the courage of the young generation who served in the South Pacific. As she moved from bedside to bedside in the hospitals, chatting with the boys, she wrote of their ability to bear up under the pain of their wounds and the discomfort of their living conditions.21 Her overall impression of them was best summed up in her September 4 column.

Every now and then I have to smile when I think of people who thought that a younger generation was growing up at home and in fact, in many countries which could not meet physical hardships. Let me assure you that no pioneers ever were sturdier than
this generation. In addition, I must pay tribute to their fortitude in pain and discomfort.

Her pride in this young generation extended to all the men as she stressed the quality job they were doing as representatives of the United States. In New Zealand, she wrote on September 1 that "these Marines of ours have been good will ambassadors and made firm friends in this faraway country," and on September 16, while in Australia she talked of what "good will ambassadors our men are over here."

ER consistently held to the belief that one must prepare for the world of tomorrow, and on September 18, she urged her readers to think about and act on laws that would prepare the United States for the returning G. I.s. In that same column, she spelled out the existing New Zealand laws which took care of their returning veterans. These laws said that veterans were
to be paid by the Government while they finish their education along lines started before the war, or they may obtain other training by Government expense if they desire. They may obtain loans at a low interest rate to start a business of their own, or to build and stock a farm.

She also wrote of Australian laws which served the same purpose. In concluding her remarks on this subject, she wrote, "on the whole, it seems to me they [Australia and New Zealand], are further along in concrete planning than we are . . ." It's interesting to note that the laws ER
described here were the same ones that were passed later on for returning American veterans.

ER did not limit her ideas on domestic reform to war related subjects. On September 17, she described what she saw from her plane and related it to an American problem. "...as I look down from the plane, I recognize the familiar look of eroded land which we now have to try to stop in our own country."

However, ER did not dwell much on the faults of the United States, and she repeatedly stressed the pride she had in her country. Ever hopeful that Blacks would be treated as equals in the United States, she spoke of them on October 1.

Colored and white boys are on this island. As they stood before me on the parade ground and later sat and talked with them, they both looked like grand American soldiers doing their jobs as well as it can be done in these faraway places.

Only once did ER resort to what could be called pure war propaganda when on September 13, she stated that "Human life to a Japanese seems to have no value." However, the rest of her war rhetoric was aimed at the superiority of the United States over the enemy. Speaking of American guns, on September 2, she told of a man who showed his weapon to her and "knew quite well why his own gun was a superior weapon." In that same column she spoke of training exercises she had observed. "I saw the training in hand to hand fighting, in shooting and reconnaissance work
and I felt that these men had confidence in themselves to meet the enemy and to win." So, while ER was boosting the morale of the soldiers in the South Pacific, she used her column as a forum for keeping her readers' morale up. At the same time she strengthened their confidence that the United States and its allies would win the war.

FDR was intent on winning a military victory,24 and in her column ER argued for the necessity of doing just that. Interweaving her philosophy on the ugliness and waste of war with FDR's passion for winning it, she stated on August 30,

I rebel at the horrible waste of war. We must fight and win this war and it must be such a victory that we can enforce the peace. This involves years of work in the future and I find a prayer in my heart, 'God keep us remembering.' Human beings forget so fast and if the generation that fights today is to lay the foundations on which a peaceful world can be built, all of us who have seen the war at close range must remember what we see and carry a crusading spirit into all of our work.

This quote not only showed ER's concern for the future, but it also illustrated her belief that Americans at home had to continue to work for the war effort. This plea was again reiterated on September 28 when ER stated, "Yes the war is only too real and we must not forget it, for its speedy ending largely depends on our never letting up our efforts till the last gun is fired."

In Guadalacanal, she despaired over the graves she saw. She stated in her September 23 column, because of the thousands of lives lost there, "When history is
written, it will rank with the greatest and proudest battles and victories from the past." She lamented over the rows and rows of crosses in the cemeteries. Identifying with the women who loved those that had been killed, she spoke of "the women's hearts buried here as well."

She described the gravestones decorated with "drawings which, with the rough tools at hand represent hours of work done so that the particular boy should lie there with all the love and respect one could give him." Some of the crosses, inscribed with messages from friends, read "'a swell pal, a good guy, rest in peace.'" Pointing out that all religions and nationalities lay side by side, ER wrote, "As you read what their buddies have written, it brings home forcibly that the important thing is neither your nationality nor the religion you professed, but how your faith itself translated itself in your life."

ER's columns from Guadalacanal served a special purpose. They provided a means for a United States official to publicly honor the dead, not in a formal, stilted way, but in a warm human manner that could comfort those at home who were friends and relatives of the dead.

As always, ER was not a complainer on her trip. Though she slept on cots, endured mosquitoes, and even was present during an air raid, she did not bemoan her fate. Though she returned home exhausted and emotionally spent, she left the South Pacific with "a sense of pride in the
young people of this generation which I can never express
and a sense of obligation which I feel I can never
discharge." 25

Though ER's series of columns from the South Pacific
were in the truest sense a diary of her daily experiences
on the trip, their content had evolved far from the daily
accounts of her shopping sprees and White House
entertaining.

Undoubtedly the publicity distributed by Elmer
Davis' Office of War Information had some effect on ER's
descriptions in her South Pacific columns. However, there
is little evidence that her writing was directed or super­
vised by this office. 26

At times the OWI recommended that its programs be
based on PDR's speeches. 27 While ER's columns dealt with
some of these same themes, it is conceivable that she did
so in support of her husband's programs, and not under
supervision of the OWI. As a political consort and part­
ner to her husband, it is highly unlikely that she would
write anything that might hurt his war programs. 28

If ER's South Pacific columns had been under close
supervision by the OWI, it is probable that a marked
difference in their style or tone could be detected.
However, like those columns preceding it, the South
Pacific columns contained the familiar anecdotes and cliches that were characteristic of the First Lady.

By 1943, ER had demonstrated herself in "My Day" as a person that often concentrated on the good aspects of whatever she was discussing. Therefore, while ER did emphasize the favorable conditions of the war, it would have been inconsistent with her previous columns if she hadn't.

Certainly as a journalist ER cannot be excused for her sometimes awkward writing, grammatical errors, and the ever appearing phrase, "it seems to me." Yet these South Pacific columns seemed like informal letters to a personal friend instead of journalistic compositions. An indication of this personal quality was her frequent use of the word, "you." Always keeping her readers in mind, she openly directed her writing toward them. This is illustrated by a few lines which appeared in her August 30 column. "Now I have given you a day's itinerary and I can begin to tell you some of the things you must want to know." A good example of the letter quality of these columns appeared on September 16, when she ended her column with something like a P. S. in a letter. "Incidentally, I have never told you that, sometime ago, Mrs. MacArthur came to welcome me and it was a pleasure to see her. I wonder how she could live through so much danger and still be so serene."
This informal quality of her writing must have given her readers a feeling that they knew her. On September 15, she said that "The Red Cross girls, who run the officers' rest home where we spent the night, said that in discussing plans for our reception tonight they found themselves feeling sure that they knew my likes and dislikes because they had read my column and felt they knew me." This familiarity between ER and her readers may have been an effective means for gaining their trust when ER had serious matters to discuss in "My Day."

And in her South Pacific columns she did speak of important issues. Her stress on winning the war for an everlasting peace was similar to a pep talk; in this case the desired result was to give her readers in the United States an incentive to continue their work towards victory. Her continual references to the horrors of war supported her hope for the absence of war in the future.

ER's repeated references to the work done and sacrifices made by American allies reflected her ideals of bringing the United States closer to foreign democracies. Her view that the world was indeed a small one kept creeping into her column during this trip. The descriptions of the landscape allowed those at home to see where their friends and relatives were stationed, but these descriptions also made these countries realities that the common people could understand and thus feel closer to.
Though ER has condescendingly been spoken of as a First Lady to the common man, she had a feeling for what this so-called common man cared about. Thus, her descriptions of what she saw, what she ate, and the places she visited made the South Pacific a reality to her readers.

ER also used her column to promote domestic reform by speaking of the erosion problem and the backwardness of the United States in preparing for its returning veterans. As one of her biographers commented, "... she used her war-front experiences to drive home the interrelationship between national defense and domestic reform."  

ER strongly believed in being an active participant in public life. She once said, "To be useful is in a way, to justify one's existence." Therefore, she continually praised those who had displayed their usefulness in the war effort whether it had been through blood donations, volunteer work, or mail. This brought home her idea that everyone's job was a necessity if the war was to be won.

Through her South Pacific columns, ER brought the war home to her readers. Her descriptions of the places she visited and the reports on the facilities she inspected made up a large part of her writing. Yet she
still left room to voice her ideas on women, youth, domestic reform, and a sincere hope for a victory that would insure an everlasting peace.
FOOTNOTES


Ibid.


Lash, Eleanor and Franklin, p. 290.


Lash, Eleanor and Franklin, pp. 863-878.


Letter from Eleanor Roosevelt to Doris Fleeson, October 4, 1943 cited in Lash, Eleanor and Franklin, p. 890.


Lash, Eleanor and Franklin, p. 600.


Ibid., September 2, 1943; September 15, 1943; September 18, 1943; September 22, 1943.


FDR's death in April of 1945 left ER with a deep sense of loneliness and insecurity, but she presented herself publicly in a characteristic calm, dignified manner. Ever mindful of her sense of duty, she refused assistance from her husband's successor, Harry Truman, and instead asked him, "Is there anything I can do for you? For you are the one in trouble now."  

While she amazed the world with her stoic reaction to her husband's death, and went through her private agony, she was unable to fully use the powers she possessed. In a letter to Walter Nash, New Zealand's prime minister, she wrote, "I shall hope to continue to do what I can to be useful, although without my husband's advice and guidance I feel very inadequate." Though she remained ambivalent about her future, she decided to carry on two of her existing jobs. One was her question and answer page in the Ladies' Home Journal and the other, her daily column, which she resumed four days after the funeral.

Always striving to be a respected member of the newspaper fraternity, she felt that her new independence
from government might allow her a better opportunity to achieve this status. "Because I was the wife of the President," she told her audience, "certain restrictions were imposed upon me. Now I am on my own and I hope to write as a newspaperwoman." Though ER did not specify what these restrictions were, she later stated that the fear of political repercussions sometimes forced her to censor herself. But now, free of these restrictions, her position as a columnist changed. No longer stifled by her role as the First Lady, she could openly criticize the different sectors of government if she so desired.

Her new status as a private citizen also altered the nature of "My Day," in both the tone and the contents. Originally created to describe White House happenings, its function became more diversified as ER moved out of the role of First Lady. After the sadness over her husband's death subsided, she began to enjoy her new found freedom as evidenced by her statement at a press conference where she confessed, "For the first time in my life, I can say what I want. For your information, it is wonderful to feel free."

Though the freshness of her new position invigorated her, she did have doubts about the public acceptance of her new role. On the funeral train, when Henry Morgenthau, Jr. urged her to make plans to speak to the world as a public figure in her own right, she questioned
whether anyone would want to hear her now that she was the widow of the President. She realistically assessed the rise in the number of papers that subscribed to her column immediately after FDR's death. "Of course, it is curiosity as to how I handle this period and will soon wear off." The curiosity did wane, and by the end of 1945, editor Lee Wood of the New York World Telegram, who never had held ER in high esteem, moved her column to the rear of the paper except on occasions when she made news, which turned out to be quite often.

ER sometimes openly criticized her husband's successor, but she was the only woman in politics Truman took seriously. In November of 1945, he advised his Secretary of State, James Byrnes, that there were two people he wanted on his political team and one was ER. Byrnes was told to find her a position, and she appeared at the top of his list of recommendations for delegates to the first meeting of the United Nations Assembly. The next month, when Truman offered her the job, she was reluctant to take it, fearing that her lack of experience in foreign affairs, and her ignorance of parliamentary procedures made her inadequate for the job. Yet, she felt a sense of responsibility to serve since FDR had placed so much emphasis on the creation of the UN before he died. Finally, with the urging of her family and friends, she accepted the President's offer assuring him
that, "I shall do the best I can." Still maintaining that her importance lay in her connection with her husband, she felt that her presence in London at this first meeting would serve to remind the delegates of FDR's hopes for this new organization.

Though most of Congress reacted favorably to her nomination, some senators protested it because of her previous activities with youth and Blacks. However, only one senator, Theodore G. Bilbo of Mississippi, actually voted against her, voicing his disapproval of her support of Black rights. But ER had her defenders both in and out of Congress. Thomas Stokes, a Scripps Howard columnist, praised her appointment stating that, "she, better than any other person, can represent the little people of this country, indeed of the world."

ER's calling as a U. S. delegate provided an opportunity for her emergence as a public figure in her own right, and while she felt insecure about her abilities to function in this role, her work in the UN eventually brought her world fame. No matter how doubtful she was about her capacity as a diplomat, she did see the UN as a place where she could apply her ideals on a worldwide scale, while at the same time carry on her husband's unfinished business.

The post war period leading up to the opening of the UN saw the emergence of Russia and the United States as
leading powers of the world. Above all, the two countries hoped for an everlasting peace; however, their contradictory methods of achieving this goal resulted in a philosophical clash between the two nations. Whereas the United States held to the ideal of self-determination where countries could choose their own government, the USSR saw security in widening their territorial claims and instituting the Communistic regime in their acquisitions. For a time, under FDR, Washington felt that above all, friendly relations with Russia must be maintained even if this meant sacrificing some of the American ideals. However, when compromise became too costly, the new get tough policy was developed under Truman. Though this new President fostered the same goals as FDR, his methods of achieving them were much sterner, as he dealt with Russia using a firmer hand.

Shortly before FDR's death, members of Congress bickered over the UN Charter. However, the President's death brought martyrdom, and his goals for the UN and the organization itself became sacrosanct. The UN was viewed as a place where democracy could be practiced on a worldwide scale, open to public scrutiny. Washington was hopeful that the Russians would realize that through their dealings in this organization, there was no need for territorial domination. In short, the UN was seen as a
place which would keep the world from dividing into two armed camps. 30

ER, deploring the get tough policy, went to the UN with the hopes of gaining an understanding of the Russians. 31 While she was not afraid to stand up for her beliefs, even if they clashed with the Russian point of view, she hoped that cooperation and compromise would prevail. 32

With the knowledge of the grave responsibility of her new position, in late December of 1945, she embarked on her voyage to London. Though she was accompanied by the other members of the delegation, she felt the pangs of loneliness. But she alleviated this feeling by delving into the work at hand. Eager to understand the workings of this organization where she would serve, she buried herself in the massive briefings that the State Department had issued to the delegates. 33 Even though some of her colleagues had not accepted her nomination enthusiastically, James Reston cabled the New York Times that even they were impressed "by her industry in studying the technical details of the upcoming Assembly." 34

She was steeped in UN related work, but she still found time to write "My Day," and while en route to London, she devoted these columns almost entirely to her hopes for the new organization. In her January 3 column, she responded to the deluge of mail she had received which
expressed an optimistic tone; yet, she cautioned her readers that the task at hand would be difficult.

The old fears, the old type of diplomatic and political thinking will have to be changed, but they will not change overnight. The old type of economic thinking which has often led to certain types of political action, will also have to be changed and subordinated to the main objective before us—peace and a better life for the people of the world as a whole.

Always a believer in the responsibility that citizens shared in the functions of government, she insisted on the necessity of their active part in the workings of the UN, for as she explained, the "ultimate objectives" of the organization could not be achieved without "the necessary vigor on the part of the people in every nation to make their desires known . . . ." Reaffirming the importance of what she called, "the little people," she stated that they "are the ones who fight the wars, they are the ones who work their hearts out in production, they are the ones who suffer most during the wars and afterwards." As she continued, ER described how these "little people" could act as the primary promoters of change.

They are the ones who will be willing to adventure in new ways because they have less to lose, and yet they are the ones who create stability for those who have had much in the past and hope for more in the future.

Hopeful that the nations could work as a unit, she concluded her January 3 column with the following ideal.

Day by day we must be reminded that our world is one world. Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas,
bound together in an indissoluble union, can spell security for all. But with division and war they can bring destruction.

On January 5, she devoted her column largely to the grave responsibility of the UN. "On the success or failure of the United Nations Organization," she wrote, "may depend the preservation and continuance of our civilization." Elaborating on this concept, she stated,

The building of this organization is the greatest challenge that civilized man ever has faced. From earliest days he has fought for self-preservation, but always through destruction. Now for the first time, he has reached a point where destruction can be so complete that he must find new ways to fight for self-preservation.

And, according to ER, the UN provided a means in which this fight could be won.

As is evidenced from the above columns, ER approached the UN not as a place where public figures, isolated from the rest of the world, met to solve the world problems, but as a limb of the people. Portraying it as a place that represented the hopes and aspirations of the populace, no matter what their class or status, she wrote, "... all peoples throughout the world must know there is an organization where their interests can be considered and where justice and security will be sought for all." 35

More than other delegates, ER was involved in concerns outside the UN, and one of these involved the post war reconstruction in London. 36 Even before she arrived
there, her January 4 column referred to the scarcity in England of so many things Americans took for granted. A consistent theme in her discussions of the war torn city of London was pointing out how much more the British suffered than the Americans during the war. In her January 4 column, she stated that "War conditions reached down into individual lives to a far greater extent than we experienced." And in subsequent columns, she painted scenes of war torn areas, elaborating on the lack of money to rebuild these sites. On January 8, the following description exemplified ER's disdain for the waste of war.

Nature has a way of covering up very quickly the scars made by man in the woods and fields, but if you look carefully you will see where exploding bombs have left their marks in regions far from military objectives.

Continuing her discussion of these disastrous conditions, she placed a heavy responsibility on the United States because it was spared this destruction. Suggesting that her country had perhaps been singled out by some higher force, ER stated that its avoidance of physical destruction "must mean that our country is destined for a very high service of some kind." ER did not state the reasons for her consistent portrayals of the destruction that war left behind, but her motives behind these descriptions can be surmised. Embarking on her career as a delegate, her major objective was to carry out FDR's as well as her desire for an ever
lasting peace. Since the United States had fought its war in foreign territories, the American civilians did not experience the suffering that other countries felt. Thus, ER used her columns to bring this suffering home to her readers, making sure they realized that the hardships they had endured were mild compared to the countries where the war was at their doorstep. By making the war a reality, she could better enforce the importance of the UN's function of preserving peace. So, though these descriptions might seem rather like an interruption to her UN activities, they were, in fact, an integral part of them.

Always a fighter for the underdog, her job at the UN did not prevent her from fighting for those who were in some way lonely or oppressed, and while in London she singled out the British wives of American soldiers who, because of government confusion, still remained separated from their husbands. Receiving several letters on the plight of these women, ER not only sympathetically spoke of them in her January 11 column, but she provided detailed information on how these wives could be reunited with their husbands. Continuing with this topic, on February 1 she wrote of the loneliness that these women might face in a new country. Speaking of American women who viewed these war brides "as interlopers who had taken from them the men they might have married," she advised
them to gratefully welcome these British women, for they too provided a service to the American men during the hard times of war.

Already familiar with ER from her wartime visits, crowds of Londoners turned out to catch a glimpse of her. In fact, the New York Times called her the Britishers' most popular delegate. Her importance in this city was evidenced by the fact that many British papers carried her column during her stay. Perhaps this helps to explain why she devoted a good part of several of her columns to the problems of this city.

Her popularity resulted in a crowd of photographers flocking about her, but ER put them off as long as possible. Always sensitive about her appearance, she resignedly wrote on January 15,

Sooner or later I imagine I'll have to see a number of them photographers, and feel sure they are going to ask me what my wardrobe is and that is going to be an embarrassing question. For when you wear black, you soon lose much interest in a variety of garments. However, I shall try to use my imagination.

While she discouraged the photographers, she graciously accepted every other hospitality from her host country. Attending several prestigious gatherings, one where she was the only woman ever invited, and another where she was made a member of the Women's Press Club, she rather enjoyed her popularity.
Although ER was involved with social functions and concerns outside the UN, she in no way neglected her duties as a delegate. Winning acclaim from the United Press men in London for her January 12 column which carried a lengthy description of the opening day ceremonies, "My Day" now became her personal record of the actions of the first UN Assembly.\footnote{43} In this column, she first thanked all those men and women behind the delegations who had worked so hard but had received no public acknowledgement. Then, in a detailed description she wrote of the "blue and gold background on which a symbolic world map appeared with two great olive branches crossed below it." Of the delegates, she chose to describe the Arabs, who impressed her with their "fine features and dignified bearing."

Concentrating on the cohesiveness rather than the divisiveness of this first Assembly, she spoke of the rather passive reaction of the opponents to the election of Paul Henri Spaaks as president of the Assembly. "There was a feeling that whoever was elected was going to do a very big job and that he would require the backing and help of every nation and there must be no hard feelings left over by defeat."

ER wrote of the presence of FDR's spirit in Westminster Hall, and on January 14 she mentioned that the president of the Assembly welcomed her, yet she failed to
elaborate on this speech, which was one of the most solemn of the day. Speaking of the delegates and their work for peace, Spaak said:

Among them there is one delegate to whom I wish to extend particular sympathy and tribute. I refer to her who bears the most illustrious and respected of all names. I do not think it would be possible to begin at this Assembly without mentioning her and the name of the late President Roosevelt and expressing our conviction that his disappearance was a great grief to us all and an irreparable loss.

ER's presence was felt.

The only rather disappointing note in ER's observation of the opening day concerned the noticeable lack of women in the delegations. What would become a consistent theme in these UN columns began January 12, as she expressed her desire to see more women delegates.

I would like to feel that women will be represented in the future in greater numbers in the assembly, particularly from the countries where they participated so fully in fighting the war as well as enduring the hardships as civilians.

Ending her column on a rather awesome note, she quoted a woman standing in a crowd outside the Hall.

"'It's a big undertaking, they must succeed, the future depends on it.'" And, according to ER, that was "the thought of every delegate as he wended his way homeward."

It is interesting to note that ER chose a woman in the crowd rather than a delegate to voice the thought that permeated the Assembly. This choice sheds some light on the importance she placed on the masses.
As the month wore on, several themes crept into "My Day." The underrepresentation of women was one. And on January 25, ER again voiced her disappointment over the small number of women delegates in attendance.

I think we should make a great effort to live up to the sections in the charter which provide for complete equality. I am sorry that governments in all parts of the world have not seen fit to send more women as delegates, alternates or advisers to the assembly, and I think it is in these positions that the women of every nation should work to see that equality exists.

Though she fought for female representation, she was dubious about a proposal allowing a special commission composed solely of women which would act as a special agency. In her January 25 column, she promised to look into this idea, but warned that she opposed it on the basis that,

Business, labor and the professions have a great contribution to make to the questions that come up before the assembly. In every field today there are competent women who could be chosen as individuals outstanding in their field and not merely as women.

On January 30, she wrote that she had discovered two more women who were full delegates, making the total four. Though she was encouraged by this revelation, she confessed, "I can't say it completely does away with my feeling that there are not enough women present here."
She then thanked the nations who sent women delegates and advised more to follow suit, as she wrote, "When you are planning for things which will affect the lives of people on an international scale, the point of view of both men and women are important."

Near the end of the Assembly, ER and the eighteen women involved either as full delegates, alternates, or advisers, met in ER's office and discussed how the role of women might be enlarged at the UN. In her February 8 column, she recorded the group's recommendations.

We hope their participation in the U. N. organization may increase in insight and skill. To this end, we call on the governments of the world to encourage women everywhere to take a more conscious part in national and international affairs, and on women to come forward and share in the work of peace and reconstruction as they did in the war and resistance.

Further on, ER cited four points agreed on by the group that showed the necessity for better female representation in the UN. The last of the four was perhaps most indicative of the group's philosophy. It stated that women need

To recognize that the goal of full participation in the life and responsibilities of their countries and of the world community is a common objective toward which the women of the world should assist one another.

As a columnist, ER was able to disseminate to thousands of readers the underrepresentation of women delegates at this first Assembly. With only eighteen
women in attendance, it was fortunate that one was a columnist, for without ER, it is doubtful that the under-representation of women delegates would have been so highly publicized.

While ER was supporting the cause of women, she took rather a negative view of some of the men who acted as delegates. Being the only woman on the United States delegation, she found herself in continual and close contact with her male colleagues. Before the Assembly began, the American delegation held a rather divisive meeting over whether the delegation should speak to the press with one voice. She was appalled at her colleagues partisan behavior and this reaction no doubt influenced her attitude during the rest of the Assembly. After seeing the United States delegation work for a time, she wrote of one member, "He is able, but so many foibles! All these men have them, however. I'm glad I never feel important, it does complicate life!"

It was the men she spoke of here that assigned her to Committee 3. When asked if she would serve, she wrote in her autobiography, she questioned "... why, since I was a delegate had I not been consulted about committee assignments?" Furthermore, she realized she had no idea what Committee 3 was. She found later that her committee dealt with humanitarian, educational, and cultural questions. Though she never mentioned in her
columns why she thought she was assigned to this particular committee, in her autobiography she described what she thought were the real motives behind the appointment.

There were many committees dealing with the budgetary, legal, political and other questions, and I could just see the gentlemen of our delegation puzzling over the list and saying: 'Oh no! We can't put Mrs. Roosevelt on the political committee. What could she do on the budget committee? Does she know anything about legal questions? Ah, here's the safe spot for her--Committee J. She can't do much harm there!'

She also wrote that she felt the same way, but a note of antagonism can easily be detected in the above quote. While the delegation viewed Committee J as a rather safe uncontroversial spot for ER, it is ironic that her committee entered into one of the Assembly's most controversial subjects, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

While ER did not dwell on her disappointment in her male colleagues on the United States delegation, she frequently mentioned her aversion to the consistent wrangling over rules and procedures which occurred both at the Assembly and in the delegation meetings. For the most part, she blamed this arguing on the men. Bored with the tedious discussions over rules and regulations at the Assembly's first business meeting, she wrote in her January 14 column:

I notice that men always feel passionately about
these rules and on our own delegation Congressman
Bloom keeps impressing upon us how important it is
to get the rules just as you want them . . . .
Not having had vast experience with parliamentary
procedure, this never seemed to me quite as
important a question as it appears to those who
are experienced . . . .

An active and energetic person, ER tired of sitting and
doing nothing while these endless discussions continued,
so she nonchalantly asked some of her colleagues if she
could bring her knitting to the meetings. But the
response was less than enthusiastic, and ER was forced to
bear with the tiresome discourses.51

Though ER admitted in her January 14 column that
perhaps it was "a help to have your rules well thought
out in advance," by the end of the Assembly, her patience
was waning. On February 14, after relating that a three-
hour argument had ensued over rules, she wrote,

I found it hard to grow excited about them when I
was unable to see that they affected the substance
of our future action one way or another . . . .
While legal advice and procedure are essential,
it must be kept within reasonable bounds since
it's human needs that must be paramount.

Throughout the month, she had pushed for women
delegates and criticized the men for what she called their
wasted words on regulations. In her February 13 column,
she compared men and women, showing how women might act
with more efficiency than their male counterparts. "I
find that, if anything, the men here take more words to
express their thoughts than the women," she wrote.
Anticipating a reaction to that statement, she continued,

The answer will doubtless be that they have more thoughts to express. I'm quite willing to grant that men, on the whole, have accomplished more in the art of oratory than women, but if you want to get work done quickly, oratory is not half as important as putting your thoughts clearly, taking up as little time as possible, and never speaking unless you have something that really needs to be said.

Though ER waited until the major business of the session had been completed to make this statement, she was still rather courageous to voice these views. Her forceful writing here is an example of a columnist free from the restrictions of the White House. For while FDR was presiding over the nation with ER's support, it would have been inconceivable for her to write such a thing. But free of those restraints, if she held to a position, controversial or not, she could assert it.

While the themes of the lack of women delegates and the wasted oratory of the male representatives often appeared in her UN column, she also emphasized the positive aspects of this first Assembly. Eager to make her readers an integral part of this organization, she wrote that

Perhaps the biggest job to be done is to make the people at home feel this is their machinery which they may use to build peace, but they will have to keep it oiled to make it run.
Convinced that the public needed an understanding of the workings of the UN, she devoted a good part of her columns to explanations of the functions of different agencies within the UN. On January 15, in a lengthy account, she described the election of Security Council members and how this agency functioned, and on February 13, in order to give her readers a feel for the Assembly, she wrote a long column entitled "Notes About the Delegates at the UNO meeting."53

But the most pervasive point of her columns, as she served in London, dealt with the necessity for nations to cooperate and compromise. In order to achieve these goals, ER felt that open and frank discussion was imperative. On January 24, she expressed both her hopes and her doubts on this subject.

It has not been the habit of the nations to deal with each other on the basis of complete frankness. And yet I have a conviction that only if we come to understand the fears of other people . . . will we be able to make each nation face its own situation in relation to similar situations in other nations. . . . A forum is provided here, but whether men long accustomed to leave much unsaid can now realize the success of this undertaking depends on complete understanding and frankness, is something that remains to be seen.

She made a point to praise those nations that engaged in compromise, as she did on January 16, applauding Canada for giving up its proposed seat on the Security Council to Australia, since that smaller country could represent a wider geographical area than Canada.
However, ER had very few kind words for countries who held fast to their positions, and remained immovable. In most instances, according to ER, Russia was the nation most guilty of this. On the question of British troops remaining in Greece, Russia wanted them out and Greece wanted them to stay. Andrei Vishinski, who has been called "the Soviet Union's wiliest and most formidable debater," spoke for the Russians. The issue which concerned British troops in Greece was the first debate that ER discussed in her column. The Russians had been trying to exert their influence in this war torn country, but Greece, in its devastated condition, did not have the manpower nor the money to defend itself, and without British support, the country might have collapsed. In her column, ER wrote little of the heated debate on this subject, but instead dwelled on her hope for compromise between the two points of view. Though ER supported the Greek position, she hoped that a compromise could be reached, as in her February 4 column she wrote, "cooperation is the test of our ability to stay together as 51 nations trying in good faith to keep peace in the world." While ER opposed the Russians on this issue, as she did in subsequent matters, she held to her belief that compromise was a requisite. Yet, she also felt that each nation must have the willingness to defend its beliefs. Critical of her own delegation for its lack of initiative, she exemplified
a determination in the following head-to-head battle with the Russians that her American colleagues had heretofore not shown. 57

This dispute stemmed from Committee 3's dealings with the subject of war refugees. While the UN worked on the creation of a new organization which would continue the work of the United National Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNNRRA), after its demise at the end of 1946, several speeches on that subject were presented in the committee meetings where ER served. 58 Among these speeches, Russian delegate, A. A. Arutiunian, brought up a resolution which ER, in her February 7 column, wrote, "brought out the cleavage between our point of view and the thinking of the Russians and Yugoslavs." Then, in an explanation of how ER perceived these nations' point of view, she continued,

They consider that there are only two main categories of refugees: first, those who wish to be repatriated, and secondly, those who do not wish to return to their homelands because they are "quislings, traitors, war criminals or collaborators."

And, in reference to the Jewish question, ER wrote,

They acknowledge that there may be a small group of Jewish refugees who have unpleasant memories of their homelands that they no longer wish to return, but they consider that a relatively small problem.

ER stood up for her beliefs, and in her column she detailed the shortcomings of Arutiunian's resolution.

... if all the European governments had been stable for years past and if all of them were so
secure that they had no fear of opposition, the matter might be as simple as the Russians make it sound.

Then in a rather evasive way, without actually naming the Communist regime, she criticized that government's restrictions on the freedom of belief.

If people holding different views from the present government's in their countries could live unscathed and unhampered, just as we do in the United States, waiting and working for the achievement of their particular point of view but meanwhile abiding by the will of the majority, the problem would be easy.

To further prove this point she used the examples of the Republicans and Democrats fighting to get their parties into office while staying within the limits of the law. As ER stated, "... our force is exerted by the ballot under a basic constitution."

Though it is evident that ER's position was far removed from the Russian stand, in her February 8 column she expressed her relief over the fact that these differing opinions could be aired because, as she wrote, "Difficulties between people or nations that are not talked out create a potential bitter feeling of injustice on all sides."

The discussion over the refugee problem continued, and ER emerged as a leader in this debate. Compromise became a difficult ideal. In her diary, ER wrote, "I have spent 9 hours to try to frame a resolution on refugees to which the Russians and ourselves can agree."59 In an
exasperated tone, she continued, "Everything must be in terms to cover their point of view, their needs, no one else's situation is ever considered! I've learned so much, I'm not sure what they are learning!" Yet, after endless debate, the Committee reached an agreement, defeating the Russians on three points. It was ER who led the fight against one of these points which concerned the Soviet demand to curb what they termed propaganda in refugee camps. ER did not mention in her column that she was instrumental in convincingly influencing Committee 3 to vote against the Russians, but her role in this debate made front page news. The New York Times called this confrontation the most important debate of the Assembly, and an article in the St. Louis Post Dispatch carried the headline, "Mrs. Roosevelt Wins in Free Speech Dispute with Russians in U. N. O." The paper stated that in a Committee 3 session dealing with the examination of Soviet amendments to the proposal of turning over the questions of refugees to the UN Economics and Security Council, the Russians aimed to add the following clause:

'No propaganda should be permitted in refugee camps against the interest of the organization of the United Nations or her members, nor propaganda against returning to their native countries.'

According to the article, ER responded to this amendment by stating, "Nobody wants to see refugee camps turned into centers of political activity but who is to say what propaganda is?" In addition, she said the UN should not
"'do anything which under any circumstances might pre­
vent the refugee from speaking his mind.'" The Committee
supported her argument and voted down the Russian amend­
ment 7-10.63

It was this debate that set the stage for her ensu­
ing battle with Russian delegate Andrei Vishinski who
challenged Committee 3's recommendations on the refugee
question and announced he would speak to the matter before
the entire Assembly.64 While the British representative
from Committee 3 spoke twice before the Assembly support­
ing the existing recommendations, it was apparent that in
view of the importance of the matter, someone would have
to speak for the United States delegation.65 According to
ER,

The question of who this was to be threw the dele­
gation into a veritable dither. There was a
hurried and rather uncomfortable consultation
among the male members and when the huddle broke
up John Foster Dulles approached me rather uncer­
tainly.66

Insinuating that perhaps she was the last resort, he said,

'Mrs. Roosevelt, the United States must speak in
this debate. Since you are the one who has carried
on for us in this controversy in the Committee, do
you think you could say a few words to the
Assembly? I'm afraid nobody else is really familiar
with the subject.'67

ER agreed to do so, and was delighted with the pro­
spect of showing her male colleagues the powers she
possessed as evidenced by her later admission that "I saw
all the heads in our delegation come together because
nobody was ready to speak except the woman in Committee 3
whom they had put there, thinking she would be harmless."68
Whatever her male colleagues thought of her, the debate
between ER and Vishinski erased any doubts they may have
had about her abilities to function as a delegate. With
little preparation ER fought Vishinski point by point, and
in the end, the Soviet amendments were again voted down.69
ER maintained that forced repatriation from refugee camps
might mean forcing Spanish Republican refugees to return
to Spain. She agreed with Vishinski that the camps should
not be centers of political activity, but she supported
the right of refugees to hear both good and bad concerning
any United Nation's member for according to ER, these
refugees had the right to make their own decisions.70 The
debate made front page news as ER won acclaim for her
presentation.71 Her chief adviser, Durward Standifer,
later called her remarks "the most important speech ever
given by an American delegate without a prepared text" and
Dulles now viewed her as "One of the most solid members of
the delegation."72

It is important to note that in her column ER did
speak of the heated words between the Russians and the
United States. While she did devote one other column to
the differences between the two countries' stands on the
refugee problem, she made no mention of the Vishinski
debate which brought her so much acclaim. She chose not
to describe her presentation, but she was nevertheless pleased with her performance, for in a letter to Joseph Lash, she wrote,

... you will be amused that when Mr. Dulles said good bye to me this morning he said, 'I feel I must tell you that when you were appointed I thought it terrible & now I think your work here has been fine!' So—against odds the women inch forward, but I'm rather old to be carrying on this fight. 73

Though ER rather enjoyed amazing the men, and felt that her performance furthered the fight for female equality, she did not portray this attitude in "My Day." Instead, her columns emphasized that these heated debates led to a better understanding of different countries, and that they were not personal. Self-effacing as always, she was not concerned with world fame, but instead wanted to portray the UN as a place where unity was the key factor. On February 12 she spoke of the fear that "the plain speaking which has gone on in these Security Council meetings would create such rifts that the representatives of the nations involved could not go on working together." But according to ER "that fear was soon set at rest." To support her point she cited the following example: "At the end of the dispute over Greece, Bevin and Vishinski shook hands warmly." On February 13, the same day that news of her debate with Vishinski was in the news, she dwelled on a possible friendship between she and Arutiunian. As she wrote, "Neither Professor Arutiunian nor I has questioned the sincerity of the convictions held
by the other, and that is the basis on which understanding can be built, I believe." So, while personally she was at times exasperated with the Russian tactics, she presented her readers with a positive element on this issue. With the power of her column, she was able to present a picture of the UN that would give her readers a trust in the organization.

$\textbf{E\textsc{r}'s work at the UN}$ was her first major accomplishment as the former First Lady, and while there were doubts about her appointment, she emerged as a prominent public figure in her own right. Out of her columns, a rather different woman appeared than the one who served in the White House. Though her emphasis on the positive aspects of the UN, such as the frank discussions, the cooperation, and the friendship among the delegates, permeated her columns, a more forceful and slightly more critical woman emerged.

While this forceful writing had earlier been seen in $\text{E\textsc{r}'s defense of the Youth Congress}$, in her $\text{United Nations' columns}$, she more strongly asserted her personal self, and she did so in a rather daring manner, criticizing her male associates for their inefficiency and chastizing countries for their underrepresentation of women delegates. During her White House years, $\text{E\textsc{r} felt that she must compromise some of her beliefs for the sake of F\textsc{r}'s career. However, with his death, the weight of this obligation disappeared.}$
For the first time in her public life, ER was only responsible for herself. With ten years of public service behind her, she possessed a self-confidence that was apparent in her United Nations' columns. No longer fearful of offending her husband's supporters and no longer compromising her beliefs in order to be fair to all segments of the population, she could now fight for her beliefs with no restraints attached.

In her new found freedom, ER was now in complete control of her column, and though the style remained informal, with an anecdote appearing now and then, these UN columns reflected a woman who could now more adamantly present her views on issues that concerned her.
FOOTNOTES


10. Lash, The Years Alone, p. 17, (no citation given).

11. Ibid.


17 Lash, *The Years Alone*, p. 27.


21 Ibid.


23 Ibid., p. 3.

24 Ibid., pp. 133-173.

25 Ibid., p. 139.

26 Ibid., p. 198.

27 Ibid., p. 171.


30 Lash, *The Years Alone*, p. 73.

31 Ibid., pp. 78, 73.

32 Ibid., p. 41.


38 Ibid., January 18, 1946.


42 Steinberg, *Mrs. R.*, p. 119.

43 Lash, *The Years Alone*, p. 36.


46 Ibid., p. 40, (no citation given).


48 Ibid., p. 43.

49 Ibid., p. 43-44.

50 Ibid., p. 44.


53 Though this article, titled "Notes About Delegates at UNO Meeting" appeared on the same page of the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* where "My Day" usually appeared, it did not carry the familiar kicker above the column. Since its style and format was the same as ER's other columns, I am discussing it as if it was a column.

54 Lash, *The Years Alone*, p. 44.

56 Ibid., p. 41.

57 Ibid.


60 Ibid.

61 Eleanor Roosevelt, Diary, February 8, 1946 cited in Lash, *The Years Alone*, p. 43.


63 *St. Louis Post Dispatch* February 9, 1946, p. 7A.

64 Lash, *The Years Alone*, p. 43.


66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid., and Letter from ER to James Green, February 26, 1954 cited in Lash, *The Years Alone*, p. 44.

69 Lash, *The Years Alone*, p. 43.

70 Ibid., p. 44.

72. Interview with Durward Sandifer and interview with Benjamin V. Cohen cited in Lash, The Years Alone, p. 44.

CHAPTER 9

THE COLUMNS OF CONTROVERSY

Though ER's work in public life brought her such titles as "Number One World Citizen,"\(^1\) and "First Lady of the World,"\(^2\) she was not exempt from criticism. In her consistent struggle for the underdog she expected some resistance; however, some of this anti-Eleanor propaganda was vicious. One woman wrote a letter to FDR stating that the day Eleanor died would be a national holiday of rejoicing.\(^3\) But perhaps her most consistent and vehement attacker was fellow columnist Westbrook Pegler who not only called her a "coddler of Communists," a "Catholic hater," and "a cunning old woman who authored ungainly compositions," but also included vicious attacks on her private life.\(^4\) Though ER admitted that this kind of unwarranted criticism "used to wound dreadfully," by 1949 she said, "After so many years, I've learned not to let this sort of thing get me down."\(^5\)

However, in the summer of 1949, even ER was stunned by the violence of Archbishop of New York, Cardinal Spellman's attack on her concerning her stand on federal aid to education. During that summer, a bill authored by Congressman Graham Barden, was under discussion in
Congress. This proposed legislation provided 300 million dollars in federal funds for public education, but excluded private and parochial schools from its benefits. A short background of this Bill is helpful in understanding why emotions ran so high in the controversy that erupted over it. In May, 1949, when the Senate passed the Thomas Taft Bill on federal aid to education, prospects for its implementation looked bright. However, when it was sent to the House of Representatives and Congressman Barden was selected to hold hearing on it, promise of its passage grew dim. Six days after the Senate vote, Barden introduced another federal aid to education bill, which rapidly gained support from several leading educators. Though the two bills were dissimilar in several respects, there was one major difference that incensed the Catholics, and that was its exclusion of federal spending for transportation and health services in parochial schools. Cardinal Spellman, in an address to 15,000 people at the commencement exercises at Fordham University publicly opened up the Church's campaign against the Bill. Asking his audience to pray for the souls of Congressman Barden and his "disciples of discrimination," he accused the Bill's supporters of committing "a sin shocking as it is incomprehensible" in their promotion of an "irrational un-American, discriminatory thesis that the public school is the only true
American school." The speech made front page news in the following day's issue of the New York Times, and thus the battle began. In Catholic Churches, priests gave sermons on the evil of the Bill, and, in addition, the Catholic press attacked it. Soon thousands of angry letters from Catholic voters inundated legislators' offices, as Protestants and Catholics divided into two camps, even forming organizations that were for or against the Bill. It was in the midst of this controversy that ER publicly came out in defense of federal aid to education, and while she did not explicitly confirm that she supported the Barden Bill, she did voice her philosophy on the necessity of the separation of church and state and made it known that she supported any bill which helped education.

Though ER was careful not to take a definite stand on issues while FDR was in office, her column had become far more outspoken after his death. As she said in 1949, "My husband never told me what to write and what not to write, but of course I was always conscious that whatever I wrote might have repercussions, so I censored myself. Nowadays, however, I write as I please." It was in this uncensored fashion that in her June 23 column she came out in support of federal aid to education excluding private and parochial schools. In
this same column, she referred specifically to Cardinal Spellman's attack on the Barden Bill because of this omission.

ER had been in disfavor with many Catholics throughout her public life. Though she was not the Catholic hater that Westbrook Pegler called her, an anti-Catholic prejudice was apparent in her upbringing. Joseph Lash, one of her biographers commented,

Somewhere deep in her subconscious was an anti-Catholicism which was a part of her Protestant heritage. In her great grandmother Ludlow's Sunday school books, there were lessons on the dangers of the popery.15 Though Lash pointed out that she was an ardent supporter of a Catholic Presidential nominee, Al Smith, he also stated that "her fear of the church as a temporal institution was reawakened from time to time by its political operation."17 In an account of a conversation Lash had with her in 1941, he wrote,

... I was struck by her hostility to the Catholic Church, not as a matter of faith or religious doctrine, but because of its political activities. ... because of what she had learned of Church interference with measures and public activities she thought necessary, try as she would, if a presidential candidate were a Catholic, she would have to say honestly that would influence her attitude toward him.18

Previous to the Cardinal Spellman controversy, ER had undertaken several causes which had angered the Catholic hierarchy. In late 1948, New York city schools, under pressure from the Catholic hierarchy, banned the
magazine, *Nation*, because of an article it carried on Catholic power in America. ER opposed the ban, thus infuriating those Catholics that had asked for it. Their ire was evidenced in their warning to Herbert Lehman who was told that if he ran for the Senate, he would not have the Catholic vote, because he had signed a letter written by ER requesting a public hearing on the ban. 19

Though ER knew that Catholics were displeased with her over such actions as her sponsorship of the AYC and other groups which had some Communist members, and they cringed over her support of birth control, she felt that the real basis of their anger lay elsewhere. 20 The Vatican was a strong supporter of Franco's regime in Spain. 21 ER, an ardent critic of this dictator was instrumental in severing UN relations with this country, and in a personal letter, she suggested that the Catholics' "real count against her" was that they had heard she "was responsible for not returning Ambassadors to Spain in the last meeting of the General Assembly." 22

Though it is difficult to determine whether this was the real reason for the subsequent Spellman controversy, it is apparent that this stand, combined with ER's previous actions, helped to ignite the fiery remarks that the Cardinal leveled against her.

As earlier stated, ER never referred specifically to her support of the Barden Bill; yet, in a published
newspaper article, she explicitly made it known that she supported federal aid to public education, and expressed a desire for bills to be passed which would provide this aid.\(^{23}\) Cardinal Spellman, in his strong opposition to the Bill, requested that it be amended so that parochial schools could also benefit from its aid. In her June 23 column, ER responded to this request.

The controversy brought about by the request made by Cardinal Spellman that Catholic schools should share in federal aid funds forces upon the citizens of the country the kind of decision that is going to be very difficult to make.

Perhaps fearing that her apprehension over the Cardinal's request might bring accusations of anti-Catholicism, she defended herself in her next paragraph.

Those of us who believe in the right of any human being to belong to whatever church he sees fit, and to worship God in his own way, cannot be accused of prejudice when we do not want to see public education connected with religious control of the schools, which are paid for by taxpayers' money.

She then continued, pointing out the history of free education in America.

Many years ago it was decided that the public schools of our country should be entirely separated from any kind of denominational control, and these are the schools that are free. The greatest number of children attend these schools.

After commenting that private and religious schools might serve as "yardsticks" for other schools because "they are somewhat freer" and can "develop new methods" and "try
experiments," she pointed to these items as the very reasons why they should not receive federal or any tax funds.

Her concluding paragraph emphasized her belief in the separation of church and state.

The separation of church and state is extremely important to any of us who hold to the original traditions of our nation. To change these traditions by changing our traditional attitude toward public education would be harmful, I think, to our whole attitude of tolerance in the religious area. If we look at situations which have arisen in the past in Europe and other world areas, I think we will see the reasons why it is wise to hold to our early traditions.

ER held to the philosophy that one cannot live in the past, holding on to meaningless traditions; yet, she was also a strong believer in using the past as a textbook. And in the Barden Bill case stated above, she asked her readers to do just that. Though she may have been apprehensive about repercussions, she could have strengthened her argument by being more specific and naming the situations she wanted her readers to look at.

While Cardinal Spellman and the rest of the Catholic hierarchy probably had no trouble in understanding her lesson, her average readers may have.

ER received several letters in response to her statements in her June 22 column, and her July 8 "My Day" was devoted largely to answering them. She stated that some of the letters indicated "that if one does not approve of any schools other than public schools,
receiving aid from taxpayers' money, one is without question, a biased anti-Catholic," but ER pointed out that "there are a surprising number of Protestant and Jewish schools that would be benefited also" and that "All of the people whose children attend these schools are taxpayers as well as the members of the Catholic Church."

Hoping to wipe out any accusations of religious prejudice, she again presented her defense.

I would like to make it clear once and for all that I believe in the right of any human being to worship God according to his conviction, and I would not want that right taken away from anyone.

However, immediately after this statement, she made a remark that must have been repugnant to the Catholic hierarchy.

Sometimes, however, I think church organizations are foolish because they do things that lead people to believe they are not interested mainly in the spiritual side of the church, but that they have a decided interest also in temporal affairs. This may be harmful to the church's spiritual influence.

Though ER did not point directly at the Catholic Church in this charge, it is easily inferred that this was her target.

While the above quote is an example of fairly strong writing, where ER definitely makes her point, as the column continued, she seemed to soften her stand. On June 23 she hit hard on the separation of church and state, and she concluded her July 8 column by asserting that she
wanted neither the federal government nor any church in control of the public schools. However, in that same column, perhaps in an effort to appease some of her readers, she advocated the creation of a non-denominational prayer in the public schools. Answering those who wrote complaining that public schools were nonreligious, in her July 8 column, she wrote: "... I have no feeling against the use of a prayer which all denominations could say in the public schools." Continuing even further in this vein, she said:

In fact, I think there should be a great effort made to stress that education is not purely for material purposes, but is directed toward moral and spiritual aims and that religion plays a distinct part in achieving these aims.

However, her softened arguments did not soften the accusations against her, and in her July 15 column, she again devoted a significant portion of it to responding to anti-Catholicism accusations.

I am still getting letters from a few people who seem to think that in opposing aid from the taxpayers' money to any but public schools, I must have a particular bias against the Catholic Church. This must be because the parochial schools are more numerous than the schools of any other denomination.

Perhaps here, ER was attempting to rationalize any feelings of bias that she might have had against Catholics. Though she hadn't made any direct derogatory statements that could be termed anti-Catholic, she had specifically named and responded to Cardinal Spellman's
request for an amendment to the Barden Bill, and as stated above it could have easily been construed that she referred to the Catholic Church when she spoke of some churches who were foolish in their attempt to extend their control to areas outside the spiritual arena.

As her July 15 column continued, ER made a statement which was to be picked out by Cardinal Spellman in his attack. In reference to a letter which accused the Barden Bill of discriminating against Negroes in the South, she made a most revealing statement. "I have not read the bill carefully, and I have been rather careful not to say if I am for or against any particular bill or bills."

Perhaps here, she was trying to take an objective viewpoint, but the fact remains that she definitely had taken a stand on the issues of the Bill. Under those circumstances, it was a bit unwise to admit that she hadn't even thoroughly read it.

Her next two paragraphs contained a hint of a political speech or even a sermon as she began each with the two words, "I believe." Using her column as a forum for her beliefs, she wrote:

I believe in Federal aid to public education and I think it should be particularly valuable to the States of the South that do not have the income to spend as much per capita on all children, white and Negro, as should be spent . . . . I believe that all children should have an equal opportunity for education in whatever community they live and this holds good for the whole of the United States.
ER concluded her July 15 column by again softening her argument on the separation of church and state as she reiterated her hope for a non-denominational prayer and went even further to say that "it ought to be possible to read certain verses from the Bible every day." In addition, she felt that "It probably would do children no harm to know some of the writings of other great religious leaders who had led other great religious movements."

Though in these three columns it might be construed that ER displayed an anti-Catholic bias, the tone of her writing could not be called insidious or vile, and by no means did it warrant the violence of the attack hurled at her by Cardinal Spellman.

In an open letter, delivered to ER the day before its public release, the Cardinal attacked her on the basis of her statements concerning the issue of parochial schools and federal aid to education. 25

His letter began with the following statement:

When on June 23 in your column MY DAY, you aligned yourself with the author and other proponents of the Barden Bill and condemned me for defending Catholic children against those who would deny them their Constitutional rights of equality with other American children, you could have acted only from misinformation, ignorance, or prejudice, not from knowledge and understanding.

After this accusation, he cleverly picked up on ER's statement that she had not carefully read the Barden Bill.
It is apparent that you did not take the time to
read my address . . . and in your column of July 15
you admitted that you did not even carefully read
and acquaint yourself with the facts of the Barden
Bill, the now famous, infamous Barden Bill.

According to the Cardinal, "health and safety benefits
and providing standard non-religious textbooks for all
American children have nothing to do with the question of
separation of Church and State."

The Cardinal asked ER why she "repeatedly pleads
causes that are anti-Catholic," and begging her to "have
the charity not to cast upon them [Catholic children],
still another stone." In an emotional plea, he asked ER
how she could deny the educational rights of the children
of those who fought in the war. And becoming even more
impassioned, he asked why her "heart was not purged of all
prejudices" when she saw "Catholics, Protestants, and Jews
alike--young battered, scarred, torn and mutilated, dying
in agony that we might learn to live in charity with one
another."

He concluded with the following statement:

Now my case is closed. This letter will be released
to the public tomorrow after it has been delivered
to you by special delivery today. And even though
you may again use your columns to attack me and
again accuse me of starting a controversy, I shall
not again publicly acknowledge you. . . .

For, whatever you may say in the future, your
record of anti-Catholicism stands for all to
see--a record which you yourself wrote on the
pages of history which cannot be recalled--documents
of discrimination unworthy of an American mother.
Five days later ER answered the Cardinal in a lengthy New York Times letter. Though it was couched with kindly words, parts of the letter were devastating. Addressing the Cardinal as "Your Eminence," she began:

Your letter of July 21 surprised me considerably... I have never advocated the Barden Bill nor any other specific bill on education before Congress. I believe, however, in Federal aid to education.

She continued, again looking back into the nation's history.

As we have developed in this country we have done more and more for our public schools. They are open to all children and it has been decided that there should be no particular religious belief taught in them.

In his letter, the Cardinal merely referred to ER's June 23 column which contained perhaps the strongest writing concerning ER's belief in the separation of church and state. However, he ignored her July 8 and July 15 columns which were definitely more conciliatory, referring to non-denominational prayers and readings from the Bible in the public schools. So, in her letter, ER re-emphasized her wish that these items might be included in the public school curriculum. However, she stated that, "The real religious training of any child must be done by his own church and in his own home."

Once again asking the Cardinal to learn a lesson from history, she stated

Anyone who knows history, particularly the history of Europe, will, I think recognize that the domination of education or of government by one
particular religious faith is never a happy arrangement for the people. Spiritual leadership and the Temporal power should remain spiritual leadership and the Temporal power should not become too important in any church.

In response to the Cardinal's accusation that ER was anti-Catholic, she explained:

I can assure you that I have no prejudice. I understand the beliefs of the Roman Catholic church very well. I happen to be a Protestant and I prefer my own church, but that does not make me feel that anyone has any less right to believe as his own convictions guide him.

Stating that she would not give up her freedom to take a stand on issues, she said, "I have no intention of attacking you personally nor of attacking the Roman Catholic church, but I shall, of course, continue to stand for the things in our government which I think are right." She wrote, "If you carefully studied my record, I think you would not find it one of anti-Catholic or anti-any-religious group." However, it was her concluding paragraph that was the most devastating to the Cardinal and his superiors. In probably one of her most quoted pieces of writing, she stated,

I assure you that I have no sense of being an 'unworthy American mother.' The final judgment, my dear Cardinal Spellman, of the worthiness of all human beings is in the hands of God.

In light of the controversy, ER maintained her equilibrium far better than the rest of the world, where feelings ran high on the issue as it became front page news throughout the nation and even evoked comment around
the world. The remarks in Spain, where ER's UN decision made her an unpopular figure were especially abusive. An article in a Spanish journal, Arriba, stated that "In Eleanor Roosevelt you have one of those cases which in Spain we would call mannish woman or 'macherreras';" while a Madrid radio commentator asked if ER was "a sort of Stalin in petticoats." While this abuse was running rampant in Spain, ER had her share of it at home. As a friend from Washington wrote, "I suppose you know that you were attacked by Catholic priests in pulpits here last Sunday, so it is Church policy."

However, the former First Lady was not without support. Of the four thousand letters she received on the controversy, nine out of ten were favorable, and much of the press came to her defense.

The Raleigh News and Observer commented that,

Not in a long time has America been presented with a spectacle of a man behaving with less tolerance, less Christian humility, and more readiness to damn and malign those who disagree with him than that shown by Cardinal Spellman of New York.

It was soon evident that ER was winning this battle. Even before her letter of response, the New York Times printed an editorial supporting her. Several other papers followed suit, almost all of which served Catholic populations.

Along with the press and the majority of those who wrote to her, public officials also expressed support.
Even President Truman came to her aid. Because ER felt that her renomination to the General Assembly might be divisive, she told Truman and Secretary of State Acheson not to feel "the slightest embarrassment" in dropping her name from the 1949 delegation. But Truman responded immediately in support of her, refusing to even consider her absence from this group.33

Herbert Lehman, who before had supported ER against the Catholic hierarchy in the ban of Nation, also spoke out in her defense. Though he feared he would lose any Catholic votes he had left for his imminent Senate election, he nevertheless publicly came out for ER stating that the issue was

not whether one agrees or disagrees with Mrs. Roosevelt on this or any other public questions. The issue is whether Americans are entitled to express their views on public questions without being vilified or accused of religious bias.

Though six weeks after this statement Lehman came out against the Barden Bill, perhaps to gain Catholic votes, he nevertheless supported ER even though it was detrimental to his campaign.35

Like Lehman, other Democrats up for reelection were afraid that the controversy would split their supporters into two camps.36 Therefore, they were eager for a reconciliation. ER also thought it was detrimental to have the country split "on an emotional religious issue," and agreed that a compromise was in order.37
In the end, it was New York's Democratic party boss, Ed Flynn, who brought this compromise about. Making a secret flight to Rome, he presented the facts to Pope Pius XII, and again secretly, Cardinal Spellman was ordered to make a public gesture of friendship to ER. When Flynn asked her if she would talk to the Cardinal, she replied, "Why Ed, I'm not the one who said I would have nothing to do with the Cardinal." 

Two weeks after his letter to ER, Spellman called her, asking her to look over a revised statement. The next day, a Monsignor brought it to her, and together, they worked on statements by both ER and the Cardinal that would clarify their views.

An agreement was reached and in her August 6 "My Day," ER quoted the Cardinal's statement, saying that his proposed use of funds for parochial schools be only for "auxiliary services," such as transportation. According to ER, he added that "We are not asking for general public support of religious schools . . . . Under the Constitution, we do not ask, nor can we expect, public funds to pay for their construction, or repair of parochial schools, or for the support of teachers or for other maintenance costs." Though he did not deny that ER might be anti-Catholic, he did refer to "the great confusion and regrettable misunderstandings" that had occurred, and
also emphasized that he too supported "the American right of free speech which not only permits but encourages differences of opinion."

In her column, ER called this statement "clarifying and fair." However, she still showed her fear of Catholic power in a private letter when she stated, "I am more convinced than ever that they will never help us to get federal aid for education unless they think they are going to get it too for parochial schools."

Though ER may still have had misgivings, the Pope declared the controversy over, as he told visiting newsmen that the revised statements from ER and the Cardinal were satisfactory to both parties. Not long after this settlement, Spellman dropped in at Hyde Park for tea. Not once was the dispute mentioned during his visit, but the purpose of the call soon became apparent when a few days later a Monsignor dropped in on ER asking her to mention the visit in her column. Agreeing to do so, in her August 24 column, she wrote, "The Cardinal had dropped in on his way to dedicating a chapel in Peekskill. We had a pleasant chat and I hope the country proved as much of a tonic for him as it always is for me."

While the heat of the controversy was over, ER wrote a friend that her meeting with the Cardinal left her with a horrible feeling of insincerity. In his visit he never once mentioned the fact that he had written me that letter and you would think I was one of his most cherished friend. That
does not give me any explanation of the letter nor much sense of security in his sincerity. I think the Barden Bill was something through which they hoped to hurt my influence which has been exerted on the UN delegation against returning Ambassadors to Spain. That is the real crux of the attack. 45

In the midst of this debate, the Barden Bill was declared dead on July 28 by Representative John Lesinski. As he said, with the division in Congress, the Bill had "no chance at this session . . . ." 46

The far reaching effects of the Spellman-Roosevelt dispute are presented in a lengthy article by Seymour P. Lachman. Describing the period between 1940-1965, Lachman stated that during these twenty years, the populace's reaction to this Church state issue became so emotional that many Congressmen felt that it was too politically dangerous to be considered for open debate on the floor. 47 Pointing to the Roosevelt-Spellman controversy as the most discordant note in this emotional issue, Lachman suggested that it set the trend for the subsequent difficulty in providing aid to public schools because of Catholic opposition. 48

More personally, the dispute left its scars on ER, for it may have been a contributing factor to her ardent opposition to the Presidential nomination of John Kennedy. 49

ER had always been a strong advocate of the separation of church and state and had always been wary of the
Catholic influence in what she called "temporal affairs." As a journalist, she openly expressed her views on the importance of keeping these two institutions apart. Cardinal Spellman's violent reaction to her statements on this issue only confirmed her belief that Catholics did want a hand in government affairs.

The former First Lady more forcefully expressed her opinions on this issue than she did during the AYC controversy. No longer restricted by her position in the White House, she now directly attacked the problem instead of writing evasively, as she did in her defense of the Youth Congress. But still, she did not openly express the anger and distrust that was so apparent in her personal letters. Anger was not an emotion that often appeared in "My Day." Always presenting the favorable aspects of a situation, ER portrayed herself as the eternal optimist who never lost faith in the individual. Based on her previous columns under study, it would have been truly out of character for ER to wage a public personal attack on the Cardinal.

As previously seen in her debate with the Russians at the UN London Assembly, ER was not one to back down in an argument. Yet, in this dispute, she seemed to compromise her beliefs by agreeing to paint a picture of reconciliation between her and the Cardinal while privately she expressed a total mistrust of the man. In seeking an
explanation for this move, one must look at ER's unique position as a journalist and her steadfast sense of obligation.

Unlike other columnists whose major profession was writing, ER was also a national and world political figure. Thus, what she wrote had the potential for evoking more reaction than was customary. Therefore, though she now claimed that in her position as a private citizen, she was free to say whatever she pleased, in the Spellman case she was disturbed that her statements ultimately affected the political standing of her supporters. She feared that those politicians that had publicly come out for her in this dispute were losing their Catholic constituency, and with elections less than three months away, she felt obligated to settle the dispute. With the exposure of her column, she hoped to convince the public that the controversy was indeed over.
FOOTNOTES


8 Ibid., p. 38.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., pp. 37-40.

11 Ibid., p. 41.


14 Ibid., p. 42.


17 Lash, *The Years Alone*, p. 278.


33 Letter from ER to Dean Acheson, July 31, 1949; Letter from Harry S. Truman to ER, August 2, 1949 both cited in Lash, The Years Alone, p. 156.

34 Interview with Mrs. Herbert Lehman (No date given) cited in Lash, The Years Alone, p. 157.


39 Lash Diaries, August 8, 1949 cited in Lash, The Years Alone, p. 156.


41 Ibid. (No citation given)

42 Letter from ER to Agnes Meyer, August 8, 1949 cited in Lash, The Years Alone, p. 158.

43 Newsweek, August 22, 1949 cited in Lash, The Years Alone, p. 158.


CHAPTER 10

A COLUMNIST FOR WORLD PEACE

While ER played only a peripheral role in the 1952
Presidential campaign, her avid support of Adlai Stevenson
in 1956 made her a central figure in the fight for the
Presidency.1 Actively involved in fund raising and
lecture tours on his behalf, ER emerged as a tough poli-
tician, making statements that other public figures
wouldn't have dared to.2 But after the election ER paid
the price for her outspokenness when the papers subscrib-
ing to her column dropped from eighty to almost forty.3
Worried about her declining readership, she wrote pleadingly to a friend,

The Scripps Howard people have cancelled my column
since the election in all of their papers, which
leaves me with a reduced number of papers. Perhaps,
if you and others who really miss the column would
write in, individual papers might take it again
but they will not do so without pressure. This
is the result of my political activity but I am

glad I did it just the same.4

Discouraged, ER momentarily thought of giving up the col-
umn altogether, but she liked the platform it allowed her.
Thus, in 1957 when United Features urged her to continue
it, she acquiesced.5
In 1956, her column was twenty years old, and as always, ER took her role as a journalist seriously. This was evidenced by her refusal to be a member of the advisory committee of the Democratic party, for as she claimed,

They [the United Features Syndicate] fear that the feeling would spread that whatever I said on political subjects would not represent my own thinking but the thinking of a political party group . . . . I think the column people are right in feeling that my influence will be greater, as I write a daily column, if I am not a full­fledged member of the Committee.

Though the New York World Telegram, a Scripps Howard paper, had dropped her column, the New York Post picked it up, which offset this loss. There is no evidence to prove that it was impossible for ER to run her column in both New York papers, but perhaps ER's contract with the Scripps Howard paper carried a clause which made it the exclusive subscriber in that city. Nonetheless, when Post editor, Dorothy Schiff, who had begged ER to come over to her paper since 1939, renewed her offer, the former First Lady gladly accepted.7 The change was a pleasant one for both parties. Whereas the Telegram had heavily edited the column and moved it from page to page, sometimes omitting it altogether, the Post gave it more prominent display and printed all that she wrote.8 Not only did her new subscriber treat her material with more regard, but perhaps more importantly, Schiff offered her a chance to travel as a correspondent.9
ER's first assignment was a trip to Red China, but when her visa was denied, alternate plans were made for Russia.\textsuperscript{10} In the mid to late 1950s, Russia attempted to ease the tensions of the Cold War.\textsuperscript{11} Aside from mentioning a possible increase in trade and troop reductions, in January, 1958, Moscow signed a United States-Soviet agreement which aimed to strengthen cultural, scientific, and other exchanges and contacts.\textsuperscript{12} Visas were more easily granted to foreign visitors, and between 1956-1960, a number of correspondents made their way to Russia.\textsuperscript{13} Among them were Walter Lippman and John Gunther.\textsuperscript{14} And in 1956, the Pulitzer Prize was awarded to William Randolph Hearst, Frank Conniff, and J. Kingsbury Smith for their stories from Russia.\textsuperscript{15}

ER had been considering a Russian trip for over ten years, but because of factors such as difficulties with visas for her traveling companions who spoke Russian, the trip had been postponed a number of times.\textsuperscript{16} But now in 1957 at age 72, ER's hopes were realized. Not only did a visa come through for her secretary, but the Russians also allowed her friend and doctor, David Gurewitsch, who spoke Russian, to accompany her.\textsuperscript{17}

Her dealings with the Russians in the UN had left her with the feeling that communication with them was in most instances virtually impossible.\textsuperscript{18} Therefore, she hoped that on this trip, she could gain some insight into
why this communication was so difficult. To achieve this understanding, she set two goals for the trip. One was to attempt to look at Russia through Russian eyes and the other was to interview Premier Khrushchev.\textsuperscript{19}

In assessing her impressions of this trip, she found that Lenin and Pavlov were the major forces in shaping the Russian outlook on life, and this philosophy embodied hostility toward the West.\textsuperscript{20} She also saw that the Russian living conditions had greatly improved in the last forty years, and she warned that in order to understand the Russians, Americans had to be aware of this progress.\textsuperscript{21} She found the American discussions of democracy meaningless in regards to the Soviets, for as she said, they were more interested in the freedom to eat than the choice of a new government.\textsuperscript{22} Her fears on this trip did not concern the Communist regime or hydrogen bombs, but as she wrote in her autobiography, "What I feared was that we would not understand the nature of the Russian Revolution that is still going on and what it means to the world."\textsuperscript{23}

The Russian government was evasive as to when she would be able to meet with Khrushchev, but finally the day before she left the country, the interview took place.\textsuperscript{24} ER wished to make it clear to the Soviets that she was traveling not as a guest of the government, but as a reporter.\textsuperscript{25} However, the fact that she was granted this interview showed that the Russians viewed her more as a
dignitary than a newspaper correspondent, for this was the first frank discussion that Khrushchev had given to someone from the West.26 The interview, which ER tape recorded, lasted two and a half hours.27 Both parties remained firm in their ideas concerning who started the cold war, the violations of the Yalta agreement, and tensions in the Middle East, while they battled over the conflict of self-determination vs. territorial expansion.28 However, at the conclusion of the debate, when the Premier asked ER, "Can I tell our papers that we had a friendly conversation?", she replied, "You can say that we had a friendly conversation but that we differ." Grinning broadly, Khrushchev made his final statement. "At least we didn't shoot each other."29

Though ER felt that she had gained an understanding of the USSR from this first trip, she feared that "Americans and the rest of the free world will not understand the nature of the struggle against Communism as exemplified by the Soviet Union."30 "What seemed most frightening about the conditions in Russia, the trends I discerned, the possibilities I envisioned," she wrote, "was that the people of the United States appeared not to have the slightest grasp of their meaning in terms of our own future."31 By this, ER meant that for a future peaceful co-existence to be maintained, the citizens of the United States must gain an awareness and an understanding of the
Russians and their priorities which were so different than those held by Americans.

At the age of 73, ER was still involved in a myriad of activities. Her family and friends warned her to slow down, but as she said, "... I just don't know how." Though she felt that she was too old to embark on any foreign travel unless she was convinced that in some way her journey would be useful, it did not take her long to find a trip that met this requirement. Her friend and companion, Dr. Gurewitsch wanted to return to the Soviet Union in the fall of 1958 to study its medical methods, and when he invited ER to accompany him, she eagerly accepted, wanting to test her first impressions of the Soviet Union to see if they were sound.

Whereas ER usually wrote her columns concerning the country she was visiting while she was traveling, she strayed from this method during her Russian trip. It lasted more than three weeks, but only five columns on Russia appeared during her visit. Instead, she chose to describe the Brussels World Fair which she visited on the way to the Soviet Union. Perhaps there were two reasons for ER's delayed description of her travels. One may be the importance she attached to these columns. Since she was determined that the American people understand the Russian point of view, she may have waited until her return to write these columns so that she could give them
more careful attention. Secondly, she may have wanted some time to elapse so that she could gain a clearer perspective on the trip as a whole, and thus she could better relate her impressions to her readers. Another difference between these columns and her previous ones was that they were no longer preceded with the familiar "My Day" kicker, but instead carried headlines. Though headlines had occasionally appeared below this kicker, earlier columns frequently ran without them.36

While in Russia, ER and the other members of the delegation from the American Association for the United Nations (AAUN) met with the Soviet Association. ER did not make this trip specifically for this meeting, but it was conveniently held upon her arrival, and her first column dealing with Russia concerned this assemblage. On September 25, she wrote that many Russian citizens came to listen to the discussion. Always one to dwell on the rights of American citizens, ER wrote that at the meeting she assured the Soviets that the AAUN was not interested in influencing legislation in any way. "This role," she said, "is up to the members in their capacity as American citizens, a right that all citizens have." Though the AAUN was questioned at length, she pointed out that, "Not a single controversial question was raised ...."

In describing her accommodations, she pointed out that her room was decorated with "a beautiful Chinese
embroidered screen," and she added, "I like the atmosphere very much." She continued the column by mentioning a woman doctor who was soon to visit New York. In a rather trite style, which was sometimes typical of ER, she wrote, "I explained that from the weather angle November is not the best month in the year to visit us . . ., but that we should try to make up for it by the warmth of our welcome."

Throughout her Russian columns, the theme of Soviet friendliness permeated ER's writing. No matter how and why she disagreed with the Russians, it is evident that she hoped to present them to her readers as warm and amiable people. It may be construed that she was presenting an unrealistic picture of a feigned friendliness between the two nations. However, she deplored the view that there was no conflict between the two countries. As Lash pointed out, her experience with the Russians at the UN made for realism.37 So, perhaps this theme of friendliness in her Russian columns was used to emphasize the fact that though ideologies clashed, the common denominator of humanness made some kind of communication possible. It is also probable that through these columns, ER hoped to make Russia a country that her readers could understand and relate to.

In her September 23 column, she wrote of her distress over a New York Post editorial she had just received
concerning America's need for "a diplomatic counter offensive based on a new China policy." In response to this editorial and news bulletins she had read on a Truman press conference, she angrily wrote, "For a long time we tried to make believe that Russia did not exist because we hoped something we did not like would miraculously disappear." ER then claimed that we were making this same mistake with China. She adamantly continued, "We must accept realities: Do we just talk about peaceful coexistence or do we mean to try it?"

In attempting to make Russia a reality for her readers, she described its historical sites. Since the AAUN meetings left she and Gurewitsch only two weeks to accomplish their aims for the trip, they concentrated on Moscow and Leningrad. After describing the log cabin that Peter the Great built, she summed up her first impressions of Leningrad in her September 23 column.

I think this is one of the really beautiful cities of the world . . . French influence is very evident. It is a more sophisticated, cosmopolitan city than is Moscow, and yet I think Moscow is more interesting . . . because in Moscow one feels more keenly the changes that are taking place from day to day in so many lives.

In concluding her September 23 column, she mentioned an article she had received on building up trade between the United States and the Communist countries. Though she found it interesting, she hoped it would be read by Americans "who are in a position to evaluate this article"
better than I can." Her hope for an increase in trade between the two countries became a frequent topic in her later Russian columns.

On September 25, the theme of congeniality between the two countries continued. Describing the dinner given by the Leningrad chapter of the UN association for the American chapter, she wrote that "speeches on both sides were warm and reflected much appreciation of our meetings." In a lighter tone, she added,

I tried to explain to my neighbors at the dinner table the intricacies of American party politics, and after a long discussion, I think they felt that their one party system was better.

One of the objectives of ER's second visit to Russia was to study the medical facilities for children and as soon as her meetings were over, she began her visitations. On September 25, she wrote that she and Dr. Gurewitsch spent three hours at a pediatric institute where she was impressed with the treatment of premature babies. Concerned with Pavlov's influence in Russia, which she noted on her first trip, she mentioned that the institute followed Pavlov's theory in a modified form. Following her visit to the institute, she joined in the activities of the Central Youth Palace, a recreational facility for youth.

This entire column presented a view of Russia which dwelled on aspects of Soviet life which Americans did not usually hear about. These descriptions helped to fulfill
ER's goal of getting her readers more in touch with the human side of Russia.

Ever interested in the struggle of the unfortunate and handicapped, ER spent part of her October 1 column describing her visit to a club for the deaf and dumb. She praised the work being done there and concluded that "all those present seemed happy."

This October 1 column continued with two anecdotes, a form familiar to ER's writing. One concerned a Russian woman who came to see her off on the train, bringing gifts from her children to ER's grandchildren. Though the anecdote was no doubt an example of an attempt to show the warm side of the Russian people, it is difficult to discern why ER included the second story which involved a child who did not want to split the cost of a puppy with her mother because, as the little girl said, "... then you would own an ear or a leg and he wouldn't be all mine. And I want him all mine." With no comment, ER immediately followed this rather aimless story with two paragraphs lamenting the death of her friend, Margaret Faverweather, who wrote children's books. Then, with no transition, she launched into a discussion of United States policy in the Far East. Tagged on to the end of the column was a congratulatory note to Charles Malik on his election of president of the UN.
Her October 3 column continued to exemplify this rather chatty and informal style of writing so reminiscent of her South-Pacific columns. They were more like personal letters than organized columns.

In this column, she mentioned her visit to the Minister of Education and later her stop at an Institute for Defectology. However, most of this column was devoted to her second visit to Lenin's apartment. As she wrote,

It impressed me again as much as it did last year with its appearance of simple and Spartan like living—no rugs on the floors, shades at the windows but no curtains. There are a few photographs but no pictures.

After stating that Lenin preached that there must be rest and enjoyment as well as work, ER concluded that this was "a precept he must have obeyed only rarely." In summing up her impressions of the apartment, ER pensively stated, "Out of all this simplicity has come our complicated world of today—and I wonder would Lenin be surprised at developments in his own country." ER ended this column in a style again reminiscent of a personal letter. "I feel that you might like to know how the beds are made up in Russia, so I am going to tell you." Then, in a lengthy description, she did just that, concluding that she would try using this Russian method during the winter months at Hyde Park.

With this October 3 column, ER ended her second visit to Russia. Yet, after she returned to the United
States, her next six columns dealt with the trip. Unlike the columns she sent back from the Soviet Union, which were like personal letters that haphazardly recorded impressions, these six columns developed themes. The first of these, titled "Time to Deal With Reds as Our Equals" appeared on October 6, and ran more than three times the length of her typical column.\(^{39}\)

She began her discussion with a word of caution about the fear of Communism. ER once wrote that "Fear has always seemed to be the worst stumbling block which anyone has to face."\(^{40}\) According to ER's philosophy, a major cause of fear was lack of knowledge concerning the very thing that is frightening, and the only way to free oneself from this fear was knowledge. In her October 6 column, she related this philosophy to the American attitude toward Communism.

Only a few people in America can tell you even today what Communism really is. But fear of Communism has taken hold among us. And fear without knowledge is dangerous.

To exemplify this ignorance of the Soviet form of government, she wrote of American businessmen who equated democracy with free enterprise and then pointed out that there were governments which were not democracies, yet they still operated within a free enterprise system. "It is evident, therefore," she wrote, "that one must separate belief in a form of government from one's economic beliefs." Continuing, she claimed that "... it is well to look at the
realities of every situation and not to deal in generalities or blind prejudices."

This theme of facing the realities of the world situation permeated this column. Again suggesting that Americans sometimes negated the existence of the Soviet Union, she wrote, "It is time that as a people we woke up to the fact that it has not disappeared." Then she proceeded to explain her impressions of the Russian way of life. Again, the word fear crept into her writing. Though she described the Soviet people as "well-disciplined, amenable to direction, healthy and determined," she maintained that they had achieved these qualities through self-sacrifice, and she wrote that this sacrifice was made out of "fear of war and under compulsion . . . ." She reminded her readers that "We are judging people who 40 years ago under the czars had no freedom, practically speaking." According to ER, the Russian government shaped the lives of the people and they accepted this direction, since it made for better living conditions. After recording these impressions, ER again reasserted her position that "The United States as a nation, I think, should face the realities of the world situation." She then pointed to American's ignorance of the Communist China which, according to her perception, was on its way to becoming a power just as strong or stronger than their mother country,
Russia. "We know little or nothing of what goes on in China, but perhaps it is time to realize this is a dangerous ignorance."

Throughout the years of her column, ER consistently asked her readers to learn from history so that the same mistakes were not repeated. Again in this column, she reiterated this request.

Look back on the historical picture and try to decide whether the time has not come to make some kind of arrangements with both the Communist Chinese and the Soviet Union. By refusing to trade we are forcing them to build up their own ability to produce the very things they might buy from us. By coming to no agreements we and they have a growing apprehension of war.

Distressed over the American refusal to face realities, she concluded her column with a solution to the problem of the cold war.

The sooner we stop talking about war as though it were a possibility, the sooner will we face the realities of this situation before us and begin to find solutions to the problems of today.

This October 6 column reemphasized ER's purpose for her second Russian trip. She wanted to educate the American public about the way of life in a Communist country, and her columns provided the vehicle for this goal. While she continued to emphasize the friendliness of the Russian people she dealt with, she did not deny the reality of the conflict that existed between the two countries. But, she tried to better educate the public so that they could
REPLACE FEAR OF THIS NATION WITH UNDERSTANDING OF ITS PEOPLE AND SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT.

On October 7, "Russia Revisited After Year" headlined the column. Here, ER compared her two trips, noting the changes that had taken place within the year. She began by paying tribute to Soviets she associated with during this visit. She claimed that "... they never showed us the slightest personal antagonism and always refrained from asking questions which would have been embarrassing for us and would have inevitably led to fruitless arguments."

In describing the differences she perceived on this visit, she spoke of the increased number of cars on the road. After this statement, she cleverly added that "all of them [were] of Russian make." ER may have included this comment to arouse the interest of American car manufacturers who might pressure the government into trading with the Soviets. Continuing, ER noted the Soviet progress in housing and clothing. "On the whole," she wrote, "there is a readier response to a smile and I think this means the average Soviet citizen feels himself moving forward."

In the midst of her descriptions of Soviet progress, she paused to record a revelation that she experienced concerning the state of Red China. Stylistically, this interruption was awkward, but its importance to ER was
obvious. This perception concerned the fact "that the progress made in the Soviet Union might be paralleled by the progress in Communist China or that it might be even greater in China." Noting that in 1957, Khrushchev's notes on Yalta were gone over by the Chinese ambassador, she surmised that this might indicate a rise in power for the Chinese and this power might be a threat to Russia. ER claimed that "six hundred million Chinese may give pause to Mr. Khrushchev." And if this was the case, she warned negotiators that "At the moment a settlement with the West may have some attraction for even in the Communist world balance of power must be considered." ER maintained that the Soviets may well feel that they are in a position of a bridge between various races and nationalities and they may be more anxious than ever to have amicable relations in the West, as well as in the East.

While ER pushed for an end to the cold war, she was aware of the difficulties in achieving this goal. And as she concluded this column, she pointed to what she perceived as an obstacle that must be overcome, and that stumbling block concerned the "oversensitiveness of either side [which] will often lead to misunderstanding and misinterpretations." In order to solve this problem and achieve better personal relations, ER claimed that "...we must try never to forget to think of the reaction of the Russians even to careless words and deeds."
Though ER's October 8 column began as a discussion of Russia as a nation of contrasts, she only briefly mentioned the juxtapositions of old and new houses and old and new methods in farming. Instead, the majority of the column dealt with her perception of how Russians dealt with their youth. Always concerned with the young, she spent a good deal of time observing them on her visit. Since a major reason for her trip was to observe the medical care for children in the Soviet Union, she was especially interested in their treatment of emotionally disturbed children and juvenile delinquency. She found that the Russians practiced the preventive theory in regard to both of these problems, and their practice apparently worked. ER attributed this Soviet success to the constant extracurricular activities provided for youth. She described these various programs at length. For the most part, she praised the facilities and concluded that "Of course, these activities would not take care of a really sick child, but apparently this planning does a great deal as a preventative in certain emotional situations."

Restricted travel was a topic that ER had discussed with Khrushchev on her first visit, and again on this trip it was a topic that she spoke on in an interview she had with an official from VOK, an organization which ER described as dealing with non governmental, cultural exchanges.
between Russia and other countries. On October 9, ER recounted this discussion, but before she began, she noted her reasons for not requesting an interview with Khrushchev on this trip. In a rather resigned fashion, atypical of ER's usual optimistic tone, she wrote that a further meeting with the Premier was useless, since ER felt that both of them would know that she had no power to change what the United States government was doing, and according to ER, "the head of state naturally is interested in talking only to people who have authority." Her second reason, however, was perhaps more important in that it showed ER's exasperation with the Soviets.

I have learned that certain facts that are accepted by the Russians are so diametrically opposed to what we consider as true in the world of today that conversations with the Soviets are almost fruitless. Unless both of us are ready to discuss frankly these differences and perhaps on both sides make certain concessions, there is very little to be gained by argument.

This ER was a different woman than the one who went to the UN in 1946, optimistic that mere communication could bring the Russians to a point of view akin to hers. She was now more aware of the harsh realities of the conflict between the two countries. This was further exemplified in her account of the discussion she had with VOK's chief, Nina Popova. Sounding more like ER than an uncompromising Russian, Popova immediately "launched forth into a statement on the importance of our finding points of
agreement." Though ER agreed that this was important, she took a strong line, adding that

... since basically each of us accepted an opposing set of facts in the world situation and considered what the other nation accepted were not facts but lies, it was somewhat difficult to talk on any subject that would make a contribution to the basic changes of opinion on either side.

Ignoring ER's statement, Popova turned the conversation to non-controversial topics and only later stressed that Russia attempted to meet the interests of their visitors and even open restricted areas if the traveler so desired. ER agreed that this was so and then she launched into a discussion of the necessity for the United States to lift "all restrictions to tourists purely as a demonstration of what it means to live in a free country." She assured her readers that this did not mean letting foreigners see areas that United States citizens could not, but instead allowing tourists access to any area where an American could go. Just as she wanted Americans to face the reality of Russia, she felt that Soviets could benefit by learning more about America. As ER once wrote, "Learning to be at home in the world is, I believe, the surest way of reducing our fears." And travel was a means of achieving this goal.

In this column, she criticized the American government for lifting restrictions for travel in retaliation for earlier Soviet barring of visitors from certain areas.
ER maintained that

This tit-for-tat business ... leaves out of consideration the fact that we are an older and more mature country that boasts of its freedom. And if we want to demonstrate that freedom to the world we cannot copy the methods of dictatorship.

On October 10, ER reasserted the importance of Pavlov in the formation of the Russian way of life. According to ER, the conditioning began at the age of two months, and in ER's view it was this conditioned discipline that made communications with the Russians so difficult in the UN. She claimed that unless governmental instruction was given to modify a point, the Russian delegate would stick to his point, ignoring any dissenting opinions. On a world scale, ER viewed this Pavlov influence as a frustrating factor that made open communication almost impossible, but ER maintained that "words, even when they seem to fail to communicate, are better than bombs." 43

Continuing her impressions on October 9, she answered a question often asked of her on whether religion existed in the Soviet Union. "... the only answer I can give," she stated, "is that the effort is obviously made in a Communist nation to substitute the state for religious beliefs."

In concluding this column, ER spoke of what must be done to promote world peace. Again, a rather different ER emerged. She had always stressed the importance of the
individual in being an active participant in politics because, as she wrote, ". . . we can have a prodigious effect upon what they [politicians] do." Perhaps her disillusionment with the existing administration's cold war policy and a feeling that as a private citizen her influence was diminished caused her to make the following statement.

As simple citizens of our countries without any power really to make the decisions or even affect the decisions on the part of governments in our countries, we devote ourselves to trying to get to know one another and to create good feeling.

However, ER avowed that "We have a little more power as citizens of a democracy to demand that those who seek our support should give us a clear understanding of how they hope to bring about changes in the world atmosphere which may give us hope for peaceful world settlements." While ER placed a heavy responsibility on the shoulders of world leaders, she did seem to approve of how they were currently handling the problem of world peace. She gave her opinions on what should be done:

". . . we had better act while we still have strength on our side. I am convinced that we should begin to talk within the United Nations and in any other way that is possible . . . . The leaders of the world must talk to one another or no agreements can be made.

ER's last column on her Russian trip ran on October 13 and dealt with her visit with Yekatrine A. Furtseva, a member of the Supreme Soviet, whom ER called the highest
ranking woman in Russia. The status of women was always important to ER, and in the subjects she was required to submit before the interview, she expressed her desire to discuss the comparative status of women in Russia and the United States.

In the interview, ER wrote that she was eager to discuss Khrushchev's recent statement that women in Russia were working double the amount of men, since they had two jobs, one inside and one outside the home. Rather sarcastically, ER wrote, "Almost any of us could have told Mr. Khrushchev this long ago, but I did not mention it." Khrushchev had ruled out heavy labor for women, and as ER pointed out, this opened up more jobs for young people. As the interview continued, Furtseva stressed the influence of women in positions of government and mentioned that several of these women were very young.

Rather surprisingly, ER made no comment on her impressions of the Russian status of women, but instead described the physical appearance of Furtseva, noting that "She had charm and poise and any of our own women legislators would have had trouble finding fault with her appearance." Perhaps the formality of the interview did not allow ER a chance to really get to the heart of the condition of Russian women. As ER wrote, "I really would have liked to have an off-the-record, honest talk on a wide range of subjects with this important woman." ER's
description of the interview indicated that it carried the
tone of a political talk in which Furtseva tried to
impress ER with the status that Russian women enjoyed
rather than an open discussion.

With the last paragraph of this column, ER concluded
her Russian report:

This ends my report on further observations and
experiences on this last trip to Russia. I feel
that all possible contacts between people of this
country and those of the Soviet Union should be
encouraged and I would like to see more Russian
citizens visiting the United States.

During her association with the AYC, ER was duped by
its Communist leaders. Almost ignoring their existence,
she shrugged off their Soviet allegience, and instead chose
to concentrate on the AYC's accomplishments. However, by
1958, ER's attitude toward Communism had changed. Now,
experienced through her dealings with the Soviets in the
United Nations, she saw a real need for the American
public to come to grips with the Communist people and their
philosophy of life. Thus, it is apparent that her Russian
columns were written with the purpose of educating the
American public. It was ER's conviction that Americans'
ignorance of the Soviet Union was not only one of the key
factors in the continuance of the cold war, but that it
created a fear that could only be dissipated with knowledge.

Like her South Pacific columns, those which she
wrote while traveling were more like personal letters than
columns. However, upon her return, the tone became much more serious. Her writing became stronger and carried a persuasive and sometimes pleading tone.

Stylistically, the column had not undergone a perceptible change. Anecdotes were still scattered throughout, and her familiar phrases of "I feel" and "I think" still frequently appeared, but aside from these stylistic shortcomings, forceful and at the same time thoughtful writing emerged. She combined her sensitivity of the Russian people with an urgency for Americans to recognize the Soviets as human beings. She conveyed a friendliness of the Russians, but at the same time did not neglect to point out the conflicting ideologies of the two countries.

ER hoped that her readers would be able to see Russia through her columns, and thus gain a better understanding of that country. She once wrote that a requirement for a continuing education is to "know what you see and to understand what it means." On her Russian trip, she set out to gain this understanding, and convey what she learned to her readers.
FOOTNOTES


2 Ibid., p. 240; 251.

3 Ibid., p. 262.


5 Lash, *The Years Alone*, p. 262.


7 Lash, *The Years Alone*, p. 263.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.


Columns were not available for this trip, but it is important to summarize since ER traveled as a newspaper correspondent and in addition she used this trip as a basis for comparison in discussing her second trip, which will be discussed in this chapter.

Lash, The Years Alone, p. 266; Roosevelt, On My Own, p. 207.


Ibid., p. 232.

Ibid., p. 194.

Ibid., pp. 216-217.

Ibid., p. 195.

Steinberg, Mrs. R., p. 353.

Lash, The Years Alone, p. 267.

Roosevelt, On My Own, pp. 226-229.

Ibid., p. 230.

Ibid., p. 231.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid., p. 390.

In the newspaper available for research, the St. Louis Post Dispatch, the column no longer appeared daily nor was there any fixed pattern as to when it ran.

It is interesting to note here that in the St. Louis Post Dispatch, the column was moved from the editorial section to the women's pages.
37 Lash, The Years Alone, p. 80.


39 Though ER referred to these next six columns as articles, they appeared on the same page that her column did, so they will be treated as columns.


42 Roosevelt, You Learn by Living, p. 116.

43 Ibid., p. 117.

44 Ibid., p. 184.

45 Roosevelt, You Learn by Living, p. 21.
As ER reached her mid-seventies, her friends and relatives repeatedly advised her to slow down. But in 1960, at age 76, ER was not about to retire. "... how can I" she said,

when the world is so challenging in its problems and so terribly interesting. I must have a good deal of my uncle Theodore Roosevelt in me because I enjoy a good fight and I could not, at any age, really be contented to take my place in a warm corner by the fireside and simply look on.

ER never retreated from public life. As each year passed, her activities seemed to increase in scope and intensity. Still actively involved in lecturing, writing, and making television appearances, in 1959 she launched a new career as a visiting professor at Brandeis University. Aside from these obligations, she continued to travel. In September of 1960, ER attended a meeting of the World Federation of the UN which was held in Warsaw. And in February, 1962, eight months before her death, she traveled to Europe to do some tapes for her television series on "Europe: Rival or Partners."

But all her professional duties did not take her away from the political arena. Though she had vowed that after her grueling 1956 experience of working for
Adlai Stevenson she would not again take part in a Presidential campaign, without even realizing it, she was swept into the draft Stevenson movement in 1960 and embarked on a strenuous campaign tour through California, the Midwest, and West Virginia.  

During the last years of her life, ER continued to support the causes and organizations of her early years. While much of her effort was directed towards the AAUN, she still had time to concern herself with the plight of the private citizen.

In January of 1960, her column, now twenty five years old, still remained a vehicle for her advocacy of causes. Extremely consistent throughout the years in her choices of the groups she chose to support, her column in large part reflected the same views that ER had been voicing since her emergence into public life. Though her freedom as a private citizen allowed her to more strongly present her opinions and freely discuss controversial topics, the early 1960 columns were highly reminiscent of those she wrote in 1935.

On January 4 ER reacted to a recent transit strike threat in New York City which through negotiations had been averted. Discussing the implications of strikes by organizations that affect the daily lives of many people, she wrote, "In a situation of this kind, one comes up
against the question of public welfare versus private interests." Always an advocate of the private citizens' rights, ER continued:

... to cut off the means of transportation by which people reach their daily employment, to cut off the flow of milk or food into a big city, to cut off power from a big city—all these things adversely affect the daily lives of masses of people not involved in the controversy.

ER had consistently been supportive of workers' rights, and in this column she did not forget to refer to their well being. "The workers employed in such industries should, on the one hand have special protection and special consideration." But returning to her advocacy of the private citizens' rights, she stated, "... they should also have special obligations, because the welfare of the people as a whole dominates the welfare of any special group."

ER concluded the column by commending Anna M. Rosenberg, who headed the Mayor's Mediation Panel in the transit dispute. Praising her role on this panel, ER wrote, "We, as women, should be proud of her accomplishments and New York City generally should be proud of her as one of its distinguished citizens."

On January 5 ER's column, titled "Kindness in a Big City," resembled her earlier columns. In three separate anecdotes she described how three different people offered her a ride while she was waiting for a taxi in New York City. With no apprehension, she accepted the ride on all
three occasions. Evidently quite impressed with the thoughtfulness of her rescuers, she wanted to convey her thanks in her column. Immediately following her accounts of these three experiences, she wrote:

I record, therefore, these few incidents out of a goodly number to testify to the kindness of the people of our city, to the essential friendliness that ties us all together and makes us willing to help others when we happen to be in a position to do so.

In her concluding sentences, she wrote what could have been an ad from New York City's Chamber of Commerce.

I am glad I live in New York City. I am glad I have so many kindly people to live among, and I wish I could do more than pay the small tribute in recognition of the warmth and the kindness which has been shown not only to me, but, I am sure, to many others in different situations.

After twenty five years, ER continued to describe, through anecdotes, what some called trivial accounts of her daily activities. While this type of writing made her an easy prey for her critics, it also may have been the thing that endeared her to a large segment of her readers.

On January 6 ER congratulated two public officials. She first praised New York's Mayor Robert Wagner for his appointment of Florence Delly as the Presiding Justice of the Court of Domestic Relations. As ER pointed out, she was "the first woman ever to hold the position." Continuing, she commended the Shah of Iran for "moving forward to a more democratic system in [Iran's] land tenure." As
shown in this column, twenty five years had not made a difference in ER's advocacy of either democracy or opportunity for women.

While ER's preceding columns were filled with praise of both the public and private sector of New York City, her January 7 column carried a different picture of that metropolis. There she expressed her disdain for a recent show of anti-Semitism which had appeared in the form of swasticas painted on three synagogues. In her earlier years, ER had harbored a prejudice against Jews. But by the early 1940s, this prejudice dissipated. Through her experience in public life, her attitude about all ethnic, racial and religious groups had made a marked change. In an interview in 1954, she said, "When a person holds a deep prejudice, he gets to dislike the object of his prejudice. He uses it as an excuse for the fact that there is something unworthy in himself." In her January 7 column she wrote,

"...it is discouraging to realize that we still have to learn to be Americans and not interfere with the religious worship of others. What difference can it make to anyone what particular church another person attends so long as the other person is a good citizen and ready to meet the calls for co-operation that come to one in a democracy?"

Again on January 11, she expressed her disillusionment over prejudice, but in this instance, she spoke of the plight of Blacks. In a column titled, "A Negro's
Search for Work," she published a letter written by a Black who was a licensed beautician, but because of discriminatory practices, could not find work. At the conclusion of the letter, ER commented, "... it seems to me unfair that an American citizen trained in a certain kind of work cannot find employment in this profession because of the color of his skin." Hoping that this column might have some effect on her readers, she wrote, "I hope a great many people will think this over, because this is distinct discrimination in employment."

Throughout most of her life, ER had been a city dweller. Perhaps this is why Needles, California, a small rural railroad town, made such an impression on her. In her January 14 column, she described her visit there. Impressed by the family of "railroad people" she stayed with, ER wrote, "This is the kind of family that is the backbone of our country, and I somehow gain added confidence in our country from people like Mr. and Mrs. Bender and their children." It was typical of ER to be as impressed by a rural family as much as by an important official, and it was not uncommon for these private citizens to appear in her column.

On January 19 ER again based her column on a letter. As she stated, it had come from "One of our senior citizens in California, who is afflicted by blindness ... ." Concerned with voter apathy, the writer of the letter
suggested that election day should become a national holiday. Supporting this idea, ER wrote, "... a democracy is not a democracy if the people do not take the trouble to vote ... ." While this column again exemplifies ER's ardent belief in the importance of democracy, it also shows her to be concerned with the private citizen's effect on government. Here, she takes a letter from an unknown man in California, and proposes that his suggestion might be implemented. By responding to letters in her column, she could assure her readers that someone in a prominent position was listening to their appeals.

On January 25 ER concentrated on the nuclear test talks. She began, "I am increasingly troubled about the situation of our government on nuclear testing." She explained,

Disarmament negotiations have resumed in Geneva and I feel sure that our representative, James J. Wadsworth is genuinely hoping for a treaty. But I am not at all sure that the Pentagon and the Atomic Energy Commission in Washington are not going to make it impossible to come to an agreement on one.

Stating that "a continuance of nuclear tests is a danger that may harm the whole human race," she urged her readers who felt the same way to write their representatives in Washington "from the President on down." This column contained the most forceful writing of the month. ER felt strongly on the matter of disarmament and she was not afraid to criticize government agencies if they hindered
negotiations concerning this goal.

After chastizing the Pentagon and the AEC, the next day, ER wrote of her displeasure at the possibility of Adam Clayton Powell becoming chairman of the House Committee on Education and Labor. With the resignation of Graham Barden, author of the 1949 federal aid to education bill, Powell was next in line. As ER wrote,

I would be the last person to oppose Representative Powell's desire to get better civil rights legislation through Congress, but I feel he would not be the happiest choice for this committee. This is an important committee, and many people would feel that its chairman should not be a man who is under indictment on income tax charges in New York State.

It is interesting to note that in this column, ER described Barden as "one of the highly conservative citizens of [North Carolina] and, as such, has not supported in his Committee much forward looking legislation." As discussed in an earlier chapter, the 1949 Barden Bill was the basis of ER's controversy with Cardinal Spellman. However, Barden had later lost ER's support when, after the Spellman controversy had apparently subsided, he waged a personal attack on Spellman and the Roman Catholic Church.11

In her January 27 column, which was very much like the diary she wrote in 1935, she recounted a board meeting at Brandeis University, a celebration to honor a labor leader, A. Philip Randolph, and her visit to an elementary school. Typically, there were no transitions between these descriptions.
On January 28, ER dealt with the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial in Washington. In a tribute to him, she wrote,

Theodore Roosevelt is my uncle. And although he was a Republican and not a Democrat, I think our citizens, both Republicans and Democrats, feel that he is one of our greatest and most colorful Presidents . . . .

The hackneyed phrases, the redundancy, and the awkwardness in the above quote showed ER's writing at its worst.

In her last column of the month, on January 29, ER hoped that "before long the Congress will proclaim one day in the year a 'National Teachers' Day." Explaining her reasons for this suggestion, she wrote, "A national teachers' day would make us think about the importance of the teacher to the children." A bit naively, she added, "It might make a great difference in the delinquency problem of our country." Once a teacher herself, and now acting as a university lecturer, ER had always held a great respect for the teaching profession. This, coupled with her interest in youth, made her a persistent advocate of improving education.

After twenty five years as a columnist, ER's writing style had not significantly changed. Trite phrases, overused words, and non sequiters still appeared. While the diary form that she used usually disappeared when she was in the midst of some controversial issue, she often returned to this form when her life was relatively calm. Not embroiled in any dispute or controversy during January
of 1960, her writing appeared to be less forceful than during the other periods described in this thesis. However, as evidenced in her discussion of the nuclear test talks, she showed that she still had the capacity to strongly voice her views when an issue was dear to her.

Not only was ER consistent in her style of writing, but her subject matter hadn't markedly changed either. Still hoping to influence her readers, she advocated the causes which she had supported throughout her public life. Opportunity for women, education, human rights, the working of democracy, and youth could be seen in 1960 as well as 1940.

She also continued her fight for the underprivileged and the oppressed, promoting the March of Dimes on January 15 and the Red Cross on January 28. In her support of the Blacks, she attempted to raise the consciousness of her readers and make them aware of the discriminatory practices that were daily occurring.

Anecdotes were still interspersed throughout her columns, and often the private citizen appeared in these accounts. As in her earlier columns, she never forgot to mention those who made an impression on her whether it was the Shah of Iran or a family in Needles, California.

In early 1960 ER contracted a bone marrow disease which made the last two years of her life a struggle. In her 75th year she wrote, "When you cease to make a
contribution, you begin to die."12 Up to her death on November 7, 1962, ER adhered to this philosophy by carrying on her career as a lecturer and writer. Not only did she actively continue her work in the AAUN, but she completed two books. In addition, she still filed her column, which ran three times a week in approximately forty newspapers.13

ER tried to ignore her illness as she carried on her busy schedule, but it inevitably began to affect her work. In July of 1962 her condition worsened. At this time, in the midst of working on her last book, she held up a shaking hand and said, "I can't work, I just don't understand it."14 But even this setback did not stop ER. The following fall, she knew that death was near but was obsessed with carrying on her daily activities, fearing that if she stopped her illness would prevent her from ever returning to them.15 Working under a tremendous amount of pain and fatigue, she continued to file her column. The last one appeared on September 21, less than two months before her death.16
FOOTNOTES


3. Ibid.


15 Lash, The Years Alone, p. 324.

16 Information obtained from the reference librarian at Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library in Hyde Park, New York.
### TABLE

**MAJOR SUBJECT MATTER OF JANUARY, 1960 COLUMNS***

January 4--Discussion of implications of strikes in agencies that serve the daily needs of the people

January 5--An account of three incidents in which ER was helped by her fellow citizens in New York City

January 6--Congratulations to a woman appointed to a government position and to the Shah of Iran for instituting a democratic policy in that country

January 7--Reaction to a proposed steel price increase and disdain over recent wave of anti-Semitism

January 11--Discussion of discrimination against Blacks

January 14--Description of Needles, California

January 15--Promotion for the March of Dimes campaign

January 18--Advice to readers to exercise for the purpose of self-improvement

January 19--Proposal that election day be declared a national holiday

January 21--Support for airline pilots in their request for more safety protection for air travelers

January 25--Discussion of nuclear test talks

January 26--Discusses her opinion of Adam Clayton Powell

January 27--A tribute to a labor leader

January 28--A tribute to Theodore Roosevelt

January 29--Proposal for a national teachers' day

*The column did not appear in the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* on the days omitted from the above list.
CHAPTER 12
ELEANOR ROOSEVELT: THE COLUMNIST

SUMMARY

Throughout her life ER was burdened with a tremendous sense of duty. Suffering through a lonely childhood where she was constantly reminded of her plain looks, she turned to other methods to gain attention and love. At age fourteen, she wrote an essay on loyalty and friendship which exemplified the ideals that she adhered to throughout her career.

... no matter how plain a woman may be if truth & loyalty are stamped upon her face all will be attracted to her & she will do good to all who come near her and those who know her will always love her ....

As she matured, she gained the self-confidence that she had lacked as a child, but her sense of duty and service to others were trademarks that characterized her throughout her public career. Recalling her years in the White House, she once said, "... I had this horrible sense of obligation which was bred in me. It was nothing to be proud of, it was just something I couldn't help."}

As the First Lady, she acted as a political consort to her husband. Though it cannot be said that she was "the power behind the throne," she was perhaps the most
politically active First Lady in American history. In 1933, just three years after her husband took office, the New York World Telegram, commenting on the massive letter writing campaign she carried on with the American public, referred to her political partnership with FDR.

Not in the history of the American democracy of the Presidency has a mistress of the White House spoken to the public in this extensive way, and so far as we know, not in the history of democracies anywhere has the wife of a President, in alluding to the performance of the Presidential duties, used the first person plural 'we' or 'us.'

In this political association with her husband, ER functioned as a publicist for his policies while at the same time, through her writing and lecturing, she added a human touch which brought the people closer to their government. Yet ER was not merely a mouthpiece for the President. As political columnist Arthur Krock of the New York Times observed, she had stronger convictions than FDR on the subjects of social welfare and social progress, and she did not miss any opportunity to pressure him in this direction. Rexford Tugwell, who had worked closely with ER as head of the Subsistence Homestead Division in 1935, commented in 1963 on ER's influence on her husband.

It would be impossible to say how often and to what extent American governmental processes have been turned in new directions because of her determination that people should be hurt as little as possible and that as much should be done for them as could be managed, the whole, if it could be totaled would be formidable.
As ER's position as the First Lady took on new dimensions, it wasn't long before she emerged as a public figure in her own right, promoting her own causes as well as those of her husband which many times were conveniently one in the same. Her daily column best exemplifies the enlargement of her role as it evolved from a diary of White House happenings to a forum where she could present her own views to the American public. Perhaps more than any other aspect of her career, "My Day" made ER one of the most well-known figures in American history by allowing her the opportunity to daily communicate with a large segment of the population.

In 1935 when ER launched her career as a columnist she promised FDR that she would stay away from controversial topics. And for the first month she abided by her promise. Filled with trivial accounts of weather and shopping sprees, "My Day" provoked a great deal of ridicule. Answering a critic who felt she should deal with serious matters more often, she responded,

I simply tell small happenings which may interest or amuse the average reader ... Daily happenings are trivial, certainly ... but it may help some people to feel that lives they think must be important are after all filled with homey little things.

However, even in this early stage, the column served a political function. Sometimes resorting to partisan propaganda, ER openly praised New Deal measures while at the
same time she brought the President closer to the American public through anecdotal accounts of his daily activities.\textsuperscript{12}

With the emergence of ER as a columnist, it was obvious that she was not a polished writer. Grammatical mistakes, awkward sentences, and cliches were interspersed throughout her work. In addition, her columns often lacked a unified theme. She might begin with an account of a shopping escapade, then eulogize a friend and conclude by promoting some cause in which she was involved. Providing no transitional words or phrases between these topics, the column frequently resembled a hurriedly written letter to a friend. This disjointed quality of her writing may have been partly attributed to the fact that she dictated the column instead of writing it. Also, she sometimes filed it under adverse circumstances. On one occasion she dictated it to her secretary who was balancing the typewriter on her lap while they drove from Denton to Fort Worth, Texas. In another instance, FDR offered to write it for her as she was suffering from a high fever. As ER wrote in her column, "His offer was deeply appreciated," but she added, "We want to pass it on to you so that you will realize what you missed, but we \[ER and secretary\] refused courteously and rapidly knowing that if it once became the President's column we would lose our readers and that would be very sad."\textsuperscript{13}
While the stylistic shortcomings of the column drew criticism and ridicule from some of the sophisticated segment of society, this lack of polish may have been the one thing that endeared ER to the bulk of her readers, allowing them to trust her motives and believe in her honesty. More interested in speaking to the common sector than the elite, ER's simplistic writing may have been a boon to her motives of promoting reform.

At first ER primarily used "My Day" to advocate FDR's policies, but the nature of the column changed as she became more involved in activities outside the White House. She still supported administrative measures and promoted her husband's image, but by 1940 the content of "My Day" was devoted almost solely to ER's own activities, which sometimes involved unpopular causes. According to Alfred Steinberg, one of ER's biographers, ER's United Features managers hoped to keep the column non-controversial in its early years by carefully editing out any such items that might provoke her readers. However, when ER became personally involved in controversial organizations and causes United Features' battle was lost as some of the content of "My Day" began to deal with highly explosive topics. This was precisely the case in her advocacy of the AYC. Her association with this group brought a wave of criticism, but ER fought for the youthful dissidents claiming that "We must know what we think and speak out, even
at the risk of unpopularity." Criticism of the AYC reached its peak during the Dies investigation of its leaders. Embroiled in this controversy, ER used her column to defend her belief in the right of an individual to join an organization without fear of being labeled a Communist. ER's writing took on a serious tone as she reported on the hearings. However, she was still cognizant of her husband's position, and though she disapproved of the Dies Committee, she was aware that it was a part of the government that FDR presided over. So, instead of directly attacking it, she consistently reiterated her argument concerning an individual's right to join any organization that did not jeopardize the government. She also repeatedly presented anecdotes concerning the accomplishments of youth in columns that immediately followed those concerning the hearings. Thus, ER defended her support of the AYC while, at the same time, she tried not to estrange any of her husband's supporters.

If ER alienated any Roosevelt constituents in her AYC columns, she most likely won them back in those dealing with her South Pacific trip in 1943. By reporting on the medical facilities in this area she helped her husband promote the war effort. Most war correspondents dealt with the actual fighting and strategy of the war, but ER, traveling as a representative of the Red Cross, concentrated on the wounded soldiers and the facilities provided
for them. In columns that resembled personal letters, ER described her visits with the soldiers as well as the food they ate and the treatment they received. In a reassuring tone, ER aimed to comfort the soldiers' relatives and loved ones in the United States. Her views on the waste of war were apparent in these columns, but she also advocated FDR's intent of winning a strong military victory in order to insure an everlasting peace. While ER's warmth and humanitarian qualities were an important part of the South Pacific columns, it was evident that she was still acting as a publicist for her husband's policies.

With FDR's death in 1945, ER no longer had to censor her writing. As stated in Chapter 8, she explained to her readers on April 18, six days after his death, "Because I was the wife of the President certain restrictions were imposed on me. Now I am on my own and I hope to write as a newspaperwoman." With her move out of the White House, the column's function as an account of the First Family's activities dissolved. Though "My Day" continued to be informal and anecdotes were still interspersed through her writing, a new more outspoken ER emerged.

It wasn't long after her husband's death that she launched her career as a UN delegate, and for the first time she could report on an activity in which she was involved without fear of hurting her husband's political
image. And, perhaps in reaction to the repression she wrote under during the White House years, her UN columns contained sharp criticism of her UN male colleagues for their inefficiency. These columns hinted at the frustration she felt in working with men whose seemingly endless discourses wearied her. As she wrote on September 13, 1946, "... oratory is not half as important as putting your thoughts clearly, taking up as little time as possible, and never speaking unless you have something that really needs to be said." ER's attitude toward the male delegates, so well reflected in her columns, was succinctly described by an observer who said,

She simply moved in as super mother presiding over a large family of often noisy, sometimes unruly, but basically good-hearted boys who now and then needed firmly to be put in their places.

Not only did the UN columns reflect her frustrations with her male colleagues but she spent a good part of them on her disappointment over the underrepresentation of female delegates. She consistently used her column to advocate the need for more women in government positions, and she forcefully presented this theme in her description of this first Assembly.

But her paramount concern in the UN columns was to promote the UN organization itself. Feeling that it was the last hope for world peace, she tried to convince her readers of the necessity of its success, dwelling
especially on the importance of cooperation and compromise between the nations represented there. She did mention the bickering and arguments that made up a large part of this Assembly, but she chose not to emphasize this aspect. Instead, typical of ER, she presented the organization in an optimistic light. Wanting her readers to believe in the UN as she did, she referred to the disputes between delegates as open and frank discussions which were far more palatable than war.

Through her association with many unpopular causes ER learned to live with the criticism hurled at her, but even she was surprised at Cardinal Spellman's attack on her because of her support of the exclusion of federal aid to public schools. During the AYC controversy, because of her position as First Lady, ER could not be as outspoken as perhaps she would have liked, but in 1949, when the Spellman dispute erupted, she was free to say what she pleased. Based on her columns advocating the separation of church and state and what Spellman alleged to be her anti-Catholic record, he wrote in an open letter that he would not again publicly acknowledge her. He asserted that her "record of anti-Catholicism" contained "documents unworthy of an American mother."

The personal nature of the attack brought forth a forceful response from ER. Again in an open letter, she skillfully disarmed the Cardinal as she made a statement
that has become one of her most quoted pieces of writing. Referring to his accusations on her qualifications for motherhood, she wrote, "The final judgment, my dear Cardinal Spellman, of the worthiness of all human beings is in the hands of God." A *Newsweek* profile published not long after the Spellman controversy described ER's response to the Cardinal as containing "words that are silken, but the silk sheathes cold steel." The Spellman incident exemplified ER's importance as a columnist, for the controversy which erupted because of statements made in "My Day" made front page news and even involved the Pope who ordered Spellman to settle the argument.

Seven years after this dispute, ER headed straight into another controversial area. Her avid support of Adlai Stevenson alienated several of her subscribers. Reluctantly, she thought of giving up the column altogether, but she enjoyed its forum and gladly accepted an offer to run her columns in the *New York Post*. Her association with the *Post* was a pleasant one, as the paper offered her a chance to travel to Russia as a correspondent. In 1958, one year after her first visit, she returned to the Soviet Union to test the impressions that she had formed in 1957. Like her South Pacific columns, those she sent back from Russia resembled personal letters. Yet, unlike those she wrote during World War II, which carried a reassuring tone, the Russian columns were characterized by a tone of
urgency as she hoped to increase her readers' awareness of the country which they feared.

The late 1950s brought a strengthening in negotiations between Russia and the United States, and ER, always the advocate of peace, hoped to bring her American readers closer to the Russian people while the leaders of the two countries worked for peace. ER did not deny that the two countries had conflicting ideologies, but in her column she chose to stress the common human denominator that existed between the two countries. Advanced for her time, she felt that understanding Russia rather than fearing it was the only way that peace would be preserved and she attempted to convey this message through her columns.

In 1960, ER, now 73 years old, continued to use her column to further the causes she believed in. After 24 years as a columnist, her writing was almost solely devoted to her views on issues and her continual struggle to help the oppressed. While trivia was not as prevalent as it had been in the early years of the column, ER still included anecdotes which reminded her readers that her concern and appreciation of the average citizen had not diminished.
CONCLUSIONS

As this thesis has pointed out, ER was not an accomplished writer. Trivia and non sequiters were frequent characteristics of "My Day." Cliches dotted the column, while phrases such as "I think" and "it seems to me" preceded numerous statements. In addition, ER's descriptive vocabulary never seemed to develop beyond such words as "interesting," "amusing," and "lovely." Aside from these stylistic shortcomings, it was evident that ER lacked the eye of a good journalist as she sometimes omitted the names of people and places. Often devoid of a central theme, "My Day" was frequently a haphazard report of ER's views and her daily activities.

The technique she most frequently used to communicate her ideas was the anecdote. While many have dismissed these anecdotal accounts as trivia, they are an important characteristic of the column that ER included for a specific reason. Through them, she hoped to reach the common sector of her audience. Describing what she thought made her husband's fireside chats so successful, she wrote that

he had learned to state complicated questions in a clear and simple way so that no one could fail to understand him. Often he would illustrate his point by citing conversations he had during his brief visits to Hyde Park with his farmer neighbors. These were human incidents on a local scale, but he used them frequently to clarify complicated questions of government.
Like her husband, ER utilized this method of simplicity and anecdotal accounts to communicate with her readers. It is ironic that her columns have often been ignored because of their simplicity when it was just that aspect that ER attempted to so carefully create.

While her writing style must not be overlooked, it was not the most important part of the column. As a columnist who was also a First Lady, ER was in a unique position. Most public officials had to speak to their constituents through reporters but ER had daily access to the public. This channel of communication increased her influence by keeping her readers constantly aware of her presence. Through her column she became more than a resident of the White House; instead, she evolved as a humanitarian whose concerns, values, and foibles resembled those of her audience.

Throughout her public career, ER's main concern was with the private citizen. An ardent advocate of democracy, she felt that the general public must be involved in and aware of the government that served it. "My Day" provided the link between the government and the public. As the First Lady ER represented the bureaucracy that often seemed far removed from the general public. But through her column, she hoped to bring her readers closer to the machinery that governed them. She attempted to educate the American public and make them aware of the problems
that needed solving and the causes that were worth fighting for. In short, ER wanted her readers to become integral forces in American democracy.

A major function of "My Day" was to advocate the causes that ER was involved in. From the early stages of her career until her death, she was consistently zealous in her defense of youth and women. And throughout the existence of the column, these two topics frequently appeared.

ER's obsession with her lonely childhood and her disappointment over the handling of her own children may have been deciding factors in her involvement with the plight of youth. In her column, she constantly described youth's accomplishments while she reminded her readers to preserve their faith in the young generation which carried an enthusiasm adults lacked. It was in her dealings with youth that she most often demonstrated her maternal instinct. Yet, at times she mothered all her readers, young and old. In her South Pacific columns, she acted as the reassuring parent, while in some instances she mildly scolded her audience for their apathy of their exhibitions of unkindness. Her informal and chatty style of writing allowed her to become so intimate with her readers that they perhaps did not even realize that they were being mothered.
Always a defender of the underdog, ER took it upon herself to fight for those whom she felt were oppressed, and in her eyes women fell into this category. After her return from Allenswood in the early 1900s ER was not an advocate of women's rights, but she changed her views as she became more involved with governmental activities and learned of the underrepresentation of women in government. In 1924, in the early stages of her career, she summed up what she felt was the real masculine attitude toward the female segment of the population.

You are wonderful. I love and honor you . . . . Lead your own life, attend to your charities, cultivate yourself, travel when you wish, bring up your children, run your house, I'll give you all the freedom you wish and all the money I can but--leave me my business and politics.ER framed her answer to that problem in her message to the women: "Get into the game and stay in it. Throwing mud from the outside won't help. Building up from the inside will." She constantly praised the women who held governmental positions and also urged more women to take an active part. In her South Pacific and Russian columns she made a special point of describing the women in these areas, while her UN columns presented her disappointment with the underrepresentation of female delegates.

ER dealt with all the causes she promoted in a manner similar to that used in her writing about youth and women. The eternal optimist, she chose a group she wanted to
promote and praised its achievements. Through these descriptions, she hoped that her readers would be impressed by the group's activities and thus they too would come to support it. This tactic was best exemplified in her AYC columns where she constantly praised the organization's achievements, and when criticism of it reached its peak, she turned to laudatory accounts of youth in any area. She also used this technique in her UN columns as she wrote optimistically about the organization's activities.

Aside from promoting causes, ER used "My Day" as a forum for her defense. Her association with the AYC brought accusations that she was affiliated with the Communist Party, while the Cardinal Spellman incident evoked charges that she was a Catholic hater. Using her column as a place to defend herself, ER had a way of disarming her critics without attacking them. Under seige she had the advantage of having a daily vehicle for her defense which she was not afraid to use for just that purpose.

While ER used her column to advocate her causes and sometimes defend herself, she also consistently employed it as an educational tool. If one had asked ER to state her profession in 1932, she would have said she was a teacher. For four years she had engaged in this profession which, as a close friend stated, "gave her some of the happiest moments of her life." ER practiced this vocation for the rest of her life. In her writing, she
was always a teacher who hoped to raise the awareness of her readers. "My Day" was her classroom, her readers were students. Like an experienced teacher, she had to gain the trust of her students before they would listen to and believe her. She was successful in achieving this through the public image she created in her column. Her descriptions of herself as a fallible human being and her simplistic writing helped her persuade her readers that in no way was she talking down to them. After gaining their confidence that she was not just another public figure, but instead a human being not very different from themselves, ER could then effectively proceed with her lesson.

Through her column, ER attempted to make her readers more cognizant of government institutions and free them of their ignorance of other countries such as Russia. Fear was an obstacle that ER fought all of her life, and she felt that education was the best tool for alleviating it. She carried this theme into her writing and hoped that the fear of Russia would be dispelled by an understanding that could only be gained through awareness. It may be construed that ER, in setting herself up as a teacher of the American public, harbored a condescending attitude toward her readers. But based on her preoccupation with service to others and her background of selflessness, it is inconceivable that her method of education through her column was indicative of an egocentric moralist. In
addition, the informality of her writing plus her consistent use of "we" in referring to herself and her readers resulted in the feeling that she was speaking to them as their equal.

By studying the content of "My Day," one may trace the evolution of ER's philosophies and attitudes as she wrote of her concerns, frustrations, anger, and her never-ending involvement in organizations and activities. Her changing attitude toward Communism was an important theme that can be followed through her writing. As shown in her AYC columns, she almost totally disregarded the Youth Congress' Communist leaders, viewing them as disturbing but in no way menacing, while the UN columns saw a shift in attitude as she engaged in a head-to-head battle with Andrei Vishinski. Yet, another change appeared in the Russian columns as she tried to understand the Russian philosophy and used the column to attempt to create an understanding between her readers and the Soviets.

Her concern for world peace permeated her South Pacific, UN, and Russian columns. During her South Pacific trip, while she promoted the war effort, she constantly reminded her readers of the waste of war. Her UN columns were filled with hope that through cooperation and compromise war could be averted, while her Russian columns
carried a warning that the United States and Russia must learn to live together in the world or war would be inevitable.

By comparing the columns written before and after FDR's death, one may assess the influence that his position had on ER's writing. For the most part, ER was consistent in her concerns for the plight of the underdog, her advocacy of democracy, and her interest in maintaining world peace. However, she did deal with more controversial issues after the death of FDR, as shown in her discussions of the separation of church and state in the Cardinal Spellman dispute. Also, she was now free to openly criticize governmental policies which she did in regard to nuclear testing and foreign policy. After she left the White House, her writing became more forceful, indicating that her position as wife of the President may have had a repressive effect on the column.

Aside from tracing ER's growth and development through her column, it can also be used as an important tool in assessing her immediate reactions to current issues and the activities in which she was involved. Though her autobiography provides an account of her activities, these descriptions were written long after the event took place and thus are clouded by time and memory.

Studying public figures through their public writing is a technique that needs more attention. Several people
in high positions write memoirs and autobiographical accounts of their lives, but these are usually written after their public careers have ended. A column, especially a daily one, provides an opportunity to gain insights into public figures as they are developing and growing.

In 1940 ER was included among one estimate of "The Ten Most Powerful People in Washington" and was called "the most influential woman of our time." In 1949, four years after FDR's death, Newsweek wrote that "every survey made has shown that she is the best known woman in the world, the best loved, and the most influential." Whether she admitted it or not, she was a powerful figure and she wielded a large part of her influence through her column. It is ironic that this most important aspect of her career, which acted as a reflection of its writer, has so long been ignored. For not only did it serve many functions, but perhaps most importantly, it allowed the American public to develop a personal relationship with this unique First Lady.
FOOTNOTES


19 Steinberg, Mrs. R., p. 322.


25 Ibid., p. 388. (No footnote given)

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid., p. 551.

28 Ibid., p. 411. (No footnote given)

29 Ibid., p. 533.
