



Political Woman: The Big Little Life of Jeane Kirkpatrick

Peter Collier

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This is the first and only biography of Jeane Kirkpatrick, who became an iconic figure in the 1980s as Ronald Reagan's UN ambassador and the most forceful presence in the administration, outside of the President himself, in shaping the Reagan Doctrine and fighting the Cold War to a victorious conclusion.

Political Woman traces the complex interlock between Kirkpatrick's personal and professional lives using her as yet unarchived private papers and extensive interviews with her and her family and with dozens of friends and associates. The portrait that emerges, filled with character and anecdote, is of an ambitious woman from the epicenter of middle America determined to break through the multi dimensional glass ceilings of her time and place.

A pioneering feminist who would be hated by the feminist movement because of her association with Reagan and neo conservatism, she began her career in the post war period as an academic focusing on the subject of totalitarianism. She fell in love with a married man, Evron Kirkpatrick, who had been a close aide to "Wild Bill" Donovan in the wartime OSS and who would help form the CIA after the war.

A leading professor at Georgetown, she also became an important Democratic Party activist. Dismayed by what she saw as McGovern's trashing of the Roosevelt coalition and by Carter's capitulation to Soviet advances, she led a group of Democratic liberals who felt homeless in the radicalized and "Blame America First" (a phrase from her famous 1984 Republican convention speech) Party into the Reagan administration. As Reagan's UN representative, Jeanette sharpened the spearpoint of a rearmed America ready to join the final battle of the Cold War, in the process staging dramatic battles with figures like Alexander Haig and George Schultz over policy toward the Soviets, the Cubans, and the Contras.

This book tells this parallel story--the flight of centrist liberals out of the Democratic Party and into neoconservatism and the complex chess match of the end game of the Cold War--through the intimate story of a woman who was at the center of these interconnected dramas and who kept resurfacing until her death in 2006, most notably for posthumously breaking ranks with her fellow neoconservatives on the war in Iraq. It also shows the price she paid for her achievements in a private life filled with sorrow and loss as profound as her epic personal achievements.

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