

THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

December 28, 1950

Description: In the opening segment, ER and Elliott Roosevelt respond to a listener's question about a comment from Bertrand Russell who called Great Britain a U.S. satellite. In the interview segment, ER discusses United Nations programs for children with editor Helen Ferris. ER and Ferris collaborated on the book *Partners: The United Nations and Youth*.

Participants: Eleanor Roosevelt, Elliott Roosevelt, Helen Ferris

[Unknown speaker in background:] Somebody's talking outside.

[ER:] Elliott, what's in the mail today?

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, there's a very interesting question here. It's a question uh concerning a recent newspaper article about Bertrand Russell, and the statement that he made that today "there are two sovereign states in the world, Russia and the United States, each with satellites." Asked whether he included Great Britain amongst U.S satellites, Lord Russell replied, "Of course." Do you, Mother, agree with that?

[ER:] Did Bertrand Russell become a lord? I didn't know that.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Oh yes. I think so.

[ER:] Do you really? That's new. [ER laughs] I didn't realize that. Um do I agree with what?

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Do you agree with his statement that Great Britain today is among the US satellites?

[ER:] I think Great Britain would be a little astounded at that idea. I hardly think that uh Great Britain feels that she's anybody's satellite. And certainly, um I have seen no signs of it.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, uh, of course, [ER: I don't know who else is a satellite though.] the opinion of the people of Great Britain might vary from the p--the opinion of people of the other parts of the world.

[ER:] I doubt very much whether there's anyone in Great Britain who would consider themselves the satellite uh their country a satellite of the United States, nor do I think you'd find that belief was held by the Commonwealth as a whole, by the um different parts of the Commonwealth. And I don't like Mr. Russell's statement for the reason that I don't think the United States has satellites, and I think all he need do would be to come and sit in the United Nations for a day. That--what he is done is to take the statements made by Russia, by the USSR delegates, who are always saying that the United State has satellites, uh primarily because um they say all of the South American countries are uh ruled practically by the United States, and that's not true! The South American countries are not. And they show their independence frequently! And they hold caucuses of their own. A few there--quite naturally, we're in the same hemisphere, so to speak, we-we have a chance to consult, and we do depend on each other more now than we ever have before. But to say that they're satellite is nothing more than USSR propaganda.
(2:57)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, uh there are a lot of people here in the United States who wouldn't agree with you. They feel that the economy of Great Britain is completely supported by the aid which we give to Great Britain, and by the preferential treatment which we have given under import and export agreements. Uh and there are people in the Canada who today feel that the economy of Great Britain uh completely depends upon the United States, and most Canadian businessmen state that their economy is tied up with the United States, and that they are one of the supporters today of British economy. The British economy is in a state of--

[ER:] Well, I'd like to ask you something. Are you calling uh--are you counting that being a satellite is being economically dependent more or less on another country? Of course, that is not what being a satellite means in the definition of the USSR.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Uh no, not in the definition of the USSR, although I think that probably they would be only too delighted to use it in that definition, and then have an entirely different meaning with the word satellite when it comes to their own puppet states.

[ER:] Oh, quite likely. But as the matter of fact, um a nation uh um--you might say that practically every nation uh today that is not in the Soviet orbit um is a satellite then of the United States, because from the economic point of view, [Elliott Roosevelt: That's what Lord Russel said.] um nearly all of them have to turn for help to the United States, but I don't consider that makes them satellites.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, I am inclined to agree with you that [ER: Because you are accepting--] under definition of the word--term satellite, that you could not state that the United States has any satellites. But it is true, is it not, that a certain amount of economic dependence upon another country will color the decisions of that country in international affairs.

[ER:] Not necessarily. Uh that depends on how--uh what we really mean. Now we have giving assurances to every country that asked us for economic aid that we would not try to control their economy. Now, if we do try to control their economy, then we are trying to transform them into satellites, and then we are doing something which I highly disapprove of. And which I should be very much grieved to think we were really doing.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, let me ask you a question then on the control of economy. Uh supposing the communist government, uh I mean the Communist Party in France were to come into power, would we cut off economic aid to France?

[ER:] Well, I thinking in our present temper, we probably would. (6:06)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, then is that--is that not then trying to influence the -- uh through the economy, that control of the policies of the country.

[ER:] That is a little different, because there is a great struggle going on in the world between um communist countries and our own. Communist countries dominated by Russia, by the USSR. And um as long as that struggle is going on, and as long as there is no cooperation, and we are living under the fear of having a war with the USSR, then of necessity, whatever countries fall under the USSR yoke must be considered uh more or less as our antagonist. The day that the USSR uh becomes a cooperative country that antagonism would cease, and then there would be no reason for cutting off any economic aid. But just as long as the present situation is forced upon us by the USSR and every country eh professing communism or coming under the full sway of communism is directed by Moscow, just as long as that is the case, then we must cut off all economic aid.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] On that ground, does it not mean that in the world today there are two forces at work: one is gui-guided by the Soviet Union, which is a-which is a power of force, the force of arms, and the force of the conqueror, who either through moving from within or through active invasion from without, takes over and controls uh via a police state, all of peoples of a country. And we are trying to struggle against that power of force with the power of money. Is that correct?

[ER:] Not entirely the power of money, the power of-of money is only one of the ways which we struggle against it. We struggle against it in uh-in an economic way, we struggle against it in military way. But we also, if we have uh what I hope we have, struggle against it with the full devotion to democratic principles and liberty which should give us the power of spiritual leadership in the world.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] On that basis, how can we reconcile support of Yugoslavia, which is a police state?

[ER:] We are recognizing I think, uh in a very practical way the fact that Yugoslavia, though a communist country, is trying to live uh with the democratic countries in a cooperative-- um in a cooperative way. It is not a present trying-- it's a small state, perhaps it can't--but it's not trying to interfere with other nations and it has has the courage to tell the USSR that first the people were Yugoslavs before they were anything else, and that the USSR could not control them. That makes a great difference. Because we are not telling people they can't have the government they want in their own country, and that we can't live in the same world with them. We are telling them that we cannot have Moscow controlling the whole world.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] All right, well then in summing up and in answer to this question: You would not agree with Bertrand Russel, under my interpretation of what you've said that the United States has any satellites at all, even though [ER: No.] to certain extent they may be economically dependent upon us, and the only country in the world that has established satellites is the Soviet Union, is that correct?

[ER:] That's right.

(Break 10:21-10:37)

[ER:] With me today in my living room is a very good friend of mine, Miss. Helen Ferris, editor-in-chief of Junior Literary Guild. Miss. Ferris and I worked together on the book *Partners: United Nations and Youth*, which was recently published by Doubleday and Company. It gives me great pleasure to introduce Miss. Helen Ferris.

[Silence]

[ER:] I hope you are glad to be here.

[Helen Ferris:] Yes, indeed. And I remember so well, Mrs. Roosevelt, the day that-that we got the idea for doing *Partners*. Do you remember for so long we wanted a United Nations book that was real and human, and the ones that we had uh submitted to us were very good, but they were more how the United Nations were too bloated and wan, do you remember?

[ER:] Yes. I remember that very well, and I remembered that we [ER coughs] had a feeling that um a book that would bring the human side of the work um to children would be a-a very important achievement to young people, really--would be an important achievement because so many of them had um different conceptions of what the United Nations really was. And I think, of course, I did very little on this book, and you know you did a great deal, though the idea was a sort of joint one. And I--as I look back, all I really contributed to you was the chapter on human rights, and then I did read all the chapters.

But you did all the real work. Will you tell uh our friends a little bit about how you got the material together? (12:34)

[Helen Ferris:] Before I uh tell that, Mrs. Roosevelt, uh I would like our listeners to know that uh there is more to the work--that there was more the work on *Partners* than Mrs. Roosevelt has described, because her wide knowledge of the United Nations, the many friends that she has among all of the Secretariat, the General Assembly, the Security Council, uh everyone was so eager to help in the book because of their very warm friendship for you, Mrs. Roosevelt. [ER: That's nice to hear.] We don't quite realize how you open doors. [ER: That's nice to hear.] [ER laughs] But uh when I did do the research of the wor--research for the book with Mrs. Kay Rainey Gray who helped us -- when I started on it, I wondered why no one had done this kind of book before. Very shortly I saw why, because finding the stories uh was fascinating but sometimes a very long task. For instance, we wanted some stories of teenagers who actually helped in some of the children's clinics that had been started by the United Nations in the various countries of Europe, in partnership always with the various governments. We knew they had helped; we knew they were helping in Asia. But where were the stories? Well, I was sitting out in the country one day, I live fifty miles out from New York, and I got phone call. They said, "If you can come in fast, you can see Patricia Palmer who is here for a very short visit." But she is in charge of the public relations for the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. She has been over in Europe for four years; this is her first visit back. But she can stay only briefly in New York City, because she's on her way to Canada. Well, I got onto the first train, and had delightful lunch time with Pat Palmer, I soon called her Pat. She was a very lovely, uh vital person, and I said, "Didn't any--haven't you see any teenage girls at work in a children's clinic?" And she said, "Oh yes! And we got a fine picture of them." I don't know whether I can pronounce the names, Mrs. Roosevelt, but the woman doctor in charge of this clinic who had taken a course in Copenhagen, a United Nations fellowship course, was Dr. Kristini Stankovic. And she lives--I don't know whether this is correct-- in Kragujevac, Serbia. [ER: Goodness.] And she-[ER laugh] she's doing a remarkable piece of work over there, and some of her best help comes from teenage girls. And you remember the picture in the book of the cute little child sitting on table, and the doctor leaning over and four or five teenage girls? Well, then we set out to find some teenage boys who were helping, and we knew they help, but where were they? Well, we found our boys as some United Nations uh photographers had taken pictures of them, and they were having a wonderful time in a feeding center - - United Nations feeding center. And this--we just never did know how to pronounce in our office -- is Ja-Jakarta, Indonesia. And here the boys are cleaning up bottles after the uh food time, doing all sorts of things, teenage boys, so we had their picture, and we had their stories. (16:25)

[ER:] I wondering one of their--one of the reasons for their being so anxious to do it wasn't they could steal a little extra food.

[Helen Ferris:] I think undoubtedly. Probably they had their reward in that.

[ER:] I always thought, I always thought of that. But now that was getting the stories, but then I remember very well sending you back one chapter and telling you that I didn't think there were enough stories in it, that there was too much uh sort of factual materials. [ER and Helen Ferris both laugh]

[Helen Ferris:] I came across that copy, that first copy the other day, Mrs. Roosevelt, and I thought how right Mrs. Roosevelt was. It was a very barren chapter in the beginning. You see there is so much about the United Nations that is so vital. That was the chapter on the Children's Fund, do you remember? [ER: Yes, that was the chapter.] And the feeding stations. And how to get the material. Well after you wrote me that I went over to the headquarters of UNICEF, as it's called, and Miss. Ruth Crawford there, who is head of publications, said, "Well give me a little time and I think I can find some things in our file." And a few weeks later, it took a while, you see, she called me up and here was a pile of field reports, written by the people right out in remote sections, and that was where we found the little poem, do you

remember? [ER: Yes, I remember it.] From the mountaineer. Let's see they were in Czechoslovakia, weren't they? The mountaineers. And one of them had written a poem of appreciation. And that was just in a field report written by one of the workers.

[ER:] Well, I think that's wonderful -- you-you don't remember that poem, I don't remember it. [ER and Helen Ferris overlap] Could you say it?

[Helen Ferris:] I am afraid I can't. Except that it begins: um "Honored," uh no, "Distinguished ladies," I think, "and honored gentlemen," and then um one um-- two lines that amused Miss Crawford and me very much said that "On Thursdays, we hurry to school, there must be a reason, I will give you the reason on that day we have goulash soup." [ER and Helen Ferris both laugh] And then the last two lines--two verses are an invitation to the friends in the United Nations to come to visit them, and they described the song of the lark, the young poet describes it, and very sweet and very moving. (18:58)

[ER:] I- I think that uh there would be -- of course, you'd expect to find in the Children's Emergency Fund a lot of stories, but now we covered many more things than the Children's Emergency Fund, and things that I don't think most people would think you'd find so many stories in of interest of children.

[Helen Ferris:] Yes, I think the food and agriculture chapter is an inter--is an instance of that. [ER: Very.] Uh you think of that of the work they do in increasing the food supply, uh but two of the most interesting stories there I think are again about teenagers, and they came from the nutrition -- the work of the nutritionist, [ER: The work of the nutritionist.] and-and—

[ER:] Well that's interesting. Um I um I think that um, of course, food and agriculture, from my point of view, would have um most interesting stories but you'd expect them to be with older people. Now, what—

[Helen Ferris:] Well, the -- one of the stories that is quite striking is about three boys in the Philippines, um of course, one thing that I hope every reader, and I know you do too Ms. Roosevelt, of *Partners* gets is that the uh-uh United Nations helps people to help themselves.

[ER:] But that I think is one of the things that we really should try in every possible ways to drive home because too many people um don't realize that this is an organization that teaches people how to grow, and that in working in the United Nations, you grow.

[Helen Ferris:] Well, the Philippine story is an instance of that.

[ER:] Well, we have to wait a minute now.

(Break 20:56- 21:01)

[ER:] Now, Miss Ferris, you were just about to tell a story, will you go on with it?

[Helen Ferris:] These three boys in the Philippines, they were in their early teens, uh were students in the mathematical school at Pangasinan in the-there. The nutritionists of the Food and Agriculture Organization uh quickly discovered, when they went to the Philippines at the invitation of the government, that um the diet of, well, all of the people was very lacking in certain vitamins. It wasn't the case of their not being able to grow the food; they weren't growing enough of the right kind, so they at once set to work on that. Well, these three boys, Jose Santas and his two friends, suffered from night blindness from the wrong food. So, the nutritionists and the other FAO workers, first of all had them--with the Children's Fund--had demonstration vegetable gardens, and the school where these three boys

went grew those vegetables and they were used in the lunches. They were giving a balanced diet, and within a very short while they had normal sight again, and it was due to the diet.

[ER:] Oh, that- that's a very exciting thing. Now you have-[ER cough] you have um other stories on world health, haven't you, that are interesting?

[Helen Ferris:] Uh well, I-- the uh one thing that uh people are interested here in this country, young and old -- of course, I've been full of these stories for six months, wherever I go, I tell United Nations stories. And um the feeling on the part of some people, young and older, is that the United Nations is a fine thing but what is it doing for us right here in the United States? As they are-- [ER: "It's just a big charity," I find people saying.] [Helen Ferris laughs] Yes, yes, they're-they're fascinated over the epidemic control. Uh and we have a very-- to me it was a very interesting story, I got that uh in the world health chapter not from the United Nations uh person but from a friend who as actually in Cairo when the cholera epidemic broke out. And cholera is one of the most rapidly spreading of the epidemic diseases. Um of course, all this work for epidemic control around the world was started under the League of Nations, but the World Health Organization took it up, and today right this minute outside of Geneva, there are ten powerful transmitters that are receiving messages and sending them out, and when the two boys uh heard-- the two boys of the story -- heard the cholera had come to Egypt, there was this terrific fear. They ran; everybody was running. That night the radio told them to stay home, and but that time world had--word had literally gone around the world. Um compared with the epidemic of forty-five years before, it was uh stopped in, oh, uh less than half the time, and the number of fatalities uh in that epidemic of 1947 in Egypt, the number of fatalities had cut down from 85 percent to 48 percent. [ER: That's--] And our doctor right here in New York said he thinks--he says, "If the United Nations didn't do anything else than specialized agencies, that would be remarkable." And we're protected just right in this room by the United Nations and that remarkable World Health Organization [ER: And in-in epidemic control.] in epidemic control--in epidemic control. (24:53)

[ER:] And also um--doesn't matter so much to us, because we do pretty well on tuberculosis. But I-I know that tuberculosis control among children in Europe, and also I think in some cases in South America has been remarkably good.

[Helen Ferris:] Yes, uh they uh have-have sent out teams they call them BCG, Bacillus Calmette-Guerin, uh with the vaccine uh that is a protection against tuberculosis. They gave the tuberculin test literally to millions of children in Europe, Northern Africa, Asia, and Latin America. It is still going on. The tuberculosis--tuberculin test reveals whether um or not you are immune or have active tuberculosis, and then the work on streptomycin. And, of course, streptomycin was discovered right down at Rutgers University by Dr. Selman Waksman [1888-1973]. Um one of my classmates at Vassar Dr. Edith Maas Lincoln [1899-1971] recently went over to Paris for an international conference on streptomycin, uh that was called by World Health and UNICEF. And, of course, they -- with these new drugs uh to have the doctors from any number of countries specialists--[ER: Come together.] come together and exchange their knowledge and their experience, it just a great contribution to youth.

[ER:] But now, in-in finding these stories um when you'd written them, did you show them to any young people, so as to get an idea of whether they were going to be interested?

[Helen Ferris:] Uh- uh, yes, Mrs. Roosevelt, uh starting with the chapter that you felt didn't have enough stories. Uh in my work in the Junior Literary Guild, I have an--oh a number of teenagers who are my assistant editors, as a reward for reading galleys or a manuscript, they get a book. [ER and Helen both laugh] [ER: That's wonderful!] And um my young friend Barbara Gowen read that chapter, and uh she said that I--her report was so like yours only in teenager phraseology. She said, "Uh this has a great deal

of worthwhile information, but I think it should have a few nice accessories." [ER and Helen Ferris both laugh]

[ER:] Oh, I think that's wonderful! That was a good criticism for a youngster. I can remember uh seeing my daughter, Anna, uh when she was in the White House, sitting up in bed with a child on either side of her, reading them the story that she was going to publish, which was *Scamper*. I don't know whether you remember [Helen Ferris: Oh, yes I do, yes.] *Scamper's Christmas*? [Helen Ferris: Yes.] Well, I think they're both out of the print now, but the children were the ones who really helped her to write those stories. They were--they were the judges.

[Helen Ferris:] Well, up in the country, where I live--I'm very much interested in our library, and in the libraries in the schools. And uh I talked um a great deal uh and read various passages of the book with the young people up there. (28:07)

[ER:] What did you find uh--you meet so many of the young people, what do you find are the questions they usually ask about the United Nations?

[Helen Ferris:] Well, of course, they--they do want to know about those their own age, and how the United Nations work does help them. Uh but I find-- and this is very poignant to me--uh these teenagers have such a feeling of friendliness to young people around the world. And they are bewildered; they can't understand why those of us who are adult can't get together and have a peaceful world. [ER: Yes, I--] They just can't--can't see why we can't be friends.

[ER:] Do they really ask you that when--when you talk to them?

[Helen Ferris:] They uh--that comes in, yes, as we talk, and particularly those who are seventeen or eighteen, the boys who are faced with uh what they're going to do in the next few years.

[ER:] Well, I can--I can understand that. I have always thought that it was a-- must be to young people, um who make friends easily, such a difficult thing to understand what happens to older people.

[Helen Ferris:] And, of course, through uh various of the activities, the UNESCO activities, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization. Um UNESCO which brings together and works with organizations such as The Junior Red Cross [ER: You must have found some good stories on UNESCO.] and so on. And um UNCESCO is a such a--it, well, the key note of UNESCO is friendliness, and the schools uh that have adopted schools abroad, and have written letters, and exchanged gifts--it's just so easy to be friends, and they feel such deep friendship. (30:05)

[ER:] Tell me one more story, which is your favorite story?

[Helen Ferris:] Well, my favorite--my own favorite story is the Kyria story about the young girl who was such a remarkable worker in the resistance movement in Greece. And she never could go to the schools that were held under cover because she was carrying messages. She was most valuable. But when the war was over, she was behind in school. She was the heroine during the war, but all of the young people in her village had to go to school, and she was put in with what she considered the babies. And she was a rebel. She wouldn't mind anybody, she was just a terror, and then the story of how the teacher won her, and how Kyria got interested in school by looking after the little children, [ER: I--] it was very for me.

[ER:] I remember that story. I think that story is one of my favorite in the book. I think that--that's one of the most touching of all the stories.

[Helen Ferris:] And, of course, UNESCO helped her school, [ER: I think you would be interested--] that is where the United Nations came in--

[ER:] Before uh you go, for me just to tell you that I sent a copy of *Partners* for Christmas by his parents to young Prince Herald in Norway. [Helen Ferris: Oh that is-that's very nice.] So he will have that for Christmas. And now, I am sorry, but I can only have time to thank you very much for being with me.

[Helen Ferris:] It's been a great pleasure [ER: Thanks.], Mrs. Roosevelt.

(31:39)

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