

THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

May 24th, 1951

Description: This recording was produced while ER was in London, England. In the opening segment, ER and Elliott Roosevelt respond to a listener's question regarding British trade with communist China. In the interview segment, ER discusses American-Anglo relations with Louise Cochrane, an American ex-pat who lived in London during World War II.

Participants: ER, Elliott Roosevelt, Louise Cochrane

[ER:] How do you do? This is Eleanor Roosevelt speaking to you from Europe where I am attending a meeting of the United Nation's Human Rights Commission.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] When one is abroad, uh there is a very special delight in getting together with someone from home to compare notes. So today we've been invited Mrs. Peter Cochrane to join us on the program for this recorded interview. As an American, Mrs. Cochrane knows about our lives at home, but as the wife of an Englishman, she also knows first-hand about the English way of life. Mrs. Roosevelt will introduce Mrs. Cochrane in a later part of the program. Now though, we are going to talk about something that has the English as concerned as it does the Americans--shipments to China from Great Britain. Let's take a few minutes to hear from our sponsors before we commence the discussion.

[Break: 0:59-1:09]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mother, the question that has come in today uh comes from an American who is lived abroad for quite a long while, who is quite concerned uh over the fact uh that there has been a continual shipping of materials by the British, through Hong Kong, to the red uh government of communist China. That is continued even though the British have a regiment fighting in Korea alongside of our troops. They have continued to ship vital goods uh to communist China and this person asks "How does the government of Great Britain uh make that uh distinction between the shipment of goods to communist China, the recognition of communist China by having eh uh--recognize them formally and offer to exchange ambassadors with the fact that they are actually attacking British troops as well as American troops in Korea?"

[ER:] Well, you know, just a little while ago, I saw, if I am not mistaken, that uh Great Britain has ceased to ship uh war--oh goods could be used for war purposes into communist China. But I think to um take into consideration that Great Britain is against the aggression in Korea, but Great Britain has for years carried on trade and uh relationships of a very close nature with China. And when the government of China became a communist government, Great Britain made up its mind. I don't know whether it decided that they would never be the same kind of communist as the Moscow communist, and that they were on the whole um--that realistically, they were the government of the main Chinese people. And that they had to go on dealing with them. Uh and wishfully hope that they would never be completely under Moscow domination. Or whether they felt that this was the way, in which-- and the only way in which they could to have any influence on them. And therefore, they had to try it whether they were going to become completely Moscow-dominated or not. In any case, they made up their minds that they were going to recognize uh communist China as a government that was actually in power in the country. And you have to also remember, that for generations--many generations, um the British people, and some of them have practically become uh Chinese almost because, as families, they've lived in China for a long, long time--
[Elliott Roosevelt: That's one of the point I wanted to--] and they go right on--[Elliott Roosevelt: That's

one of the point I wanted to--] trading, and they will uh--there're-there are people of traders and-and um-- [Elliott Roosevelt: But more--] they really have great difficulties in stopping uh people like that from carrying on their business. (4:45)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well more than that, I felt that uh-uh you and I have had opportunity in England to talk to some people who have uh had a great deal of experience with the Chinese people. In fact, they uh know a great many of the leaders of the communist government in China today. And uh they have a--they have quite strong feelings that [Elliott Roosevelt coughs] the present government is slightly different from say the-the communist government that exist in uh -in the Soviet Union.

[ER:] Well, they have a very strong hope um because they think it's ingrained in the Chinese people uh to be-to be liberty-loving. They have a very strong hope that they can keep um influence by keeping contact with Chi-China. [Elliott Roosevelt coughs] And-and they may be right no one can tell--there is absolutely no one who could prophesize what is going to happen in China. And um I think we are no better equipped to do it than anybody else. And so for that reason, uh while I am very glad that the government has decided not to ship any materials that in the future that can be war materials. I-I do understand the division: they are opposed to aggression in Korea, but they have accepted the fact that there is a government that does control the major part of China. Of course, incidentally, that government has not accepted the ambassadors from Great Britain as yet, so there is no ambassador in-in communist China. But um they still hope, through their trading, and through their contacts, to keep an influence over the government.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] I-I recognize uh that-that is their hope, but doesn't that sound a little bit like uh [ER: Wishful thinking?] the--no, the thinking of Chamberlain when he went to see Hitler at Munich before the last war?

[ER:] No. I don't think it's exactly appeasement um in that sense because they are not being threatened, really, at the present time. Um if um--

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, actually Great Britain wasn't being threatened at the time of Munich, uh it was just that Hitler was threatening uh other countries in Europe, not Great Britain. (7:29)

[ER:] That's quite true. And Chamberlain um made a very serious mistake. I have no idea whether um Great Britain is making a serious mistake in its estimate of uh what the Chinese people will do. Oh I have um--I am not well enough uh acquainted with the-the people of China to know. I would feel very strongly eh that-at if-- um if it was a question of widening the area of war um in Far East. Uh we had better pay attention to the fact that um there is treaty between China and Russia. Uh and that we have been warned uh that um they--if-if they are--if the Chinese uh um actually on their own land are attacked that Russia will, by her treaty, be obliged to come in, and that [Elliott Roosevelt: Well, now--] of course would be the beginning of World War III. But um I think this-this particular thing of-of the attitude of Great Britain is more an economic attitude probably as yet.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, let's going to the whole economic pro uh--picture again. Uh the United States quite long while ago took steps to cease the shipment of-of war materials and many other materials uh to communist uh China as well as the Soviet Union. And uh Great Britain has lagged far behind in-in uh following suit. Uh and in fact that it has taking representations on the part of our government to-to bring Great Britain to even stop the shipment of war materials to China. Uh Don't you feel that where the economy of uh of Great Britain is so much tied to the economy of the United States in our whole eco--uh our--not only our economic pictures but our military security, the Western European nations depend on working together in--as a single team uh with us, that we can't afford to go off in different directions and not take action in concert. (10:05)

[ER:] I wonder whether we consulted Great Britain before we took action. I think perhaps one of our difficulties is that we don't consult soon enough and then when we take actions we're surprised that Great Britain doesn't join us immediately. Now Great Britain has always gone slowly eh-uh in the past, and sometimes, uh we think unwisely. But nevertheless, I think perhaps a little more consultation before either of us took action might be wise. Um for this reason: it takes a shorter time to fly from Moscow to Great Britain than it does from Moscow to Washington. Now it's true that there are ways of flying to other parts of our country that don't take quite so long, but still, Moscow to Washington is a little further away than Moscow to Great Britain. And Great Britain uh--there was time you know, when we shipped uh war goods far longer uh than we should have probably, or um than we--um than some people thought we should of uh to Japan--[Elliott Roosevelt: Well, in actuality--] really to ward off the attack as we thought of, the Japanese saw the declaration of war of the Japanese. Now, um uh these things are awfully hard to evaluate; they're very difficult to pin down in time. And I am very glad that now um they have taken action they have. And I hope it will lead to greater consultation together before we announce policies or before we take action because I think very often we might do it together. But I think that would strengthen the whole um picture of solidarity among the free nations of world. (12:09)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, that's the point that I hope that you would make at this time. And I see that our time is run out, and we must go onto another part of the program. And after message from our sponsor, we will hear from our guest of today.

[Break: 12:23-12:34]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Today, Mrs. Roosevelt and I are in London having arrived from Geneva last evening after stopping over in Paris to have dinner. We are now in the studios of the British Broadcasting Cooperation. And with Mrs. Roosevelt, there is a very special guest who has some pertinent things to tell us about Anglo-American relations. Mother, will you introduce your guest?

[ER:] With great pleasure, Elliott. Um it sounds very formal to say "Anglo-American relations." [Elliott Roosevelt and ER both laugh] After all, um I'm-I am just going to talk to a good friend whose have a good deal of experience um both in the United States and in Great Britain because uh she's Mrs. Peter Cochrane, daughter of Christopher Morley [1890-1957], eh so she was brought up in the United States [ER laughs] though she did visit countries abroad, I imagine, before she was grown up. Now she's the wife of Peter Cochrane [1919-2015], who's a British publisher. And during the war, you worked here, didn't you Louise? In the Embassy?

[Louise Cochrane:] Yes, I did, Mrs. Roosevelt.

[ER:] And uh then, I remember when I came over, you were working with BBC on educational programs for children.

[Louise Cochrane:] Um that's [Louise Cochrane clears the throat] that's right. I had um--I worked for three years uh interpreting the news for young people in English schools.

[ER:] Well, now you've had eight years living here. Um, and, uh, I know that you came home this uh--not such a very long time ago, how long is it since you have been back?

[Louise Cochrane:] Oh, just a couple of months.

[ER:] Well, I have a feeling that you have some um uh rather uh fresh um uh impressions of both countries that you might give us that--it's horrid to make comparisons, so I am not going to ask you to

make comparisons. But um Mrs. Peter Cochrane, living in London, with a husband and two children, having spent all her youth in the United States, and come--just having been back to stay with her family, eh must of had some rather strong impressions of what different kinds of lives are being lived in the two countries. Suppose you tell me a little bit what-what struck you? Um you used to be active in the youth movement, that must been things in contacts with your friends, that uh-that struck you. But first of all, I'd like to know what struck you in the daily living in the two countries? (15:41)

[Louise Cochrane:] Well, first- [Louise Cochrane coughs] first of all, you just can't talk about it without saying that-- I don't think I'd realized living over here, just how difficult conditions were for the-for the housewife, and the-the people at home in Britain. That is by comparison with the tourists whom we welcome with open arms because they bring us dollars. But just how difficult conditions are for the housewife as it against the housewife in the United States. You see, the last time I was home in-in the States, it was in the middle of the war. And everything was-was rather grim. Although Americans hadn't been bombed, the houses hadn't been painted, and life was tough, and there were shortages. And everybody knew extremely well just what uh--how much had to be sacrificed to get a job done. Uh and same thing is true, now. But in between, the States is made a remarkable recovery. I mean there is no question about it. There are new roads, new bridges, new cars, new washing machines, [Louise Cochrane laughs] new refrigerators, new--

[ER:] And the houses are painted, and there are great many new ones aren't there.

[Louise Cochrane:] Yes, we hear about--well we heard about housing shortages in the States. But we had such housing shortages here and people living in--well it's terribly difficult to find a place to live. And I heard that this was true in-in the States. Now I got home, and of course all around New York these wonderful new ranch houses, and really I felt quite jealous. (17:08)

[ER and Louise Cochrane laugh]

[ER:] Well, that's the kind of thing that-that I want you to tell us, because I want you to tell us too um--I am a--I come-I come to London as a tourist and I live in a hotel, and I'm here only for short time, so I have plenty--uh no difficulty in finding enough to eat on a hotel menu and so forth. But I am told by some of my friends here, for instance, I dined with a gentleman the other night, who um uh receive-has received and is most grateful for what he receives from one of our former diplomats in the United States. And He tells me he couldn't have anyone to dine with him if it wasn't for the packages that he gets um, how-how-how about that?

[Louise Cochrane:] [Louise Cochrane clears her throat] Well, there is no question about it. Um uh shopping is-is um is a real job. I mean you've got to find, if you have a-a limited budget and [Louise Cochrane laughs] practically everybody has a limited budget, you've got to work rather hard to get the things that you need to uh to keep going. The meat situation has been difficult, but we um we manage just by-by scraping. I did noticed, though, that when I was uh in America, that the diet is quite different from the two peoples. The British lived on a different kind of diet, so you can't make exact comparisons. My sister had two little boys about the same age as my two little girls. And they had two meat meals a day. And uh we just couldn't possibly give our children two meat meals a day, it's just im--

[ER:] What do you give your children?

[Louise Cochrane:] Well, we get fish, which is more available and less expensive uh by our standards here, than in the States. And that's protein. And with the--well we get two eggs per person a week, now that Janet doesn't get a priority egg anymore. [Louise Cochrane laughs]and we make do on that, we just do the best we can.

[ER:] Just have two eggs a week for the children. That's all?

[Louise Cochrane:] Yes, two eggs each and they get ours of course. [Louise Cochrane laughs]

[ER:] And they get yours too. So you're-you're uh--means the grown-ups don't have any eggs a week.

[Louise Cochrane:] Well, it's uh--however we just don't want uh--it's terribly difficult to talk about this for me because I know about the economics of the country. And I know that it's-it's-it's vital to the whole future of Britain, for the British people, and the people who living here to make these sacrifices. We've got to make these sacrifices to recover from the fact that one out of the four houses was bombed during the war, and-and to make our way again. Marshall Aid did a tremendous lot, but people here need to--need the feeling that they've done it for themselves. And we're willing to go without the refrigerators and the washing machines and all these things. We-we envy them. I mean we are only human. But we are willing to go without them in order to have uh in the long run, a-a balanced economy with-with um the dollar situation. So when Americans come over, we put down the red carpet and do the very best we can; you only [Louise Cochrane laughs] know what it means, just be sure that we get those dollars that will help us to buy more things in the future. (20:31)

[ER:] Well, now you see um you have people uh in this country who are discontented just as we have in the United States. And I seem to be the target of a great many um letters which people write uh when I am at home on the things that are all wrong at home. They don't always sign their name to these letters and this morning, I got a letter from um a woman living in London, and unsigned, just saying she was sorry she couldn't sign because she um realized that what she said wouldn't be popular, but complaining bitterly about the fact that um all these sacrifices had to be made by the British people. And um they were being asked to do it by their government and one thing and another. What did the government really realize about the daily sacrifices? What uh-what did it all um what did it all mean? Why couldn't they have enough to eat? And that's what--we're-we're um after--well, now it sounded so like what I would get it home on certain things that I thought well this is just uh one of the same kind of people that I uh frequently hear from. And yet, it made me feel that possibly there were personal things that might be done between our two countries that we hadn't done. Now you know um villages and towns in the United States have adopted places in other parts of the world. And I think that could be more done though, on the level of um family to family or person to person. And--but um one has to know all the regulations when has to be--I supposed go through the regular organizations to-to do a really helpful job. Um do you find that care um packages come-coming into this country have things that the people really want? (22:45)

[Louise Cochrane:] Well, it-it's-it's hard to say because different people want different things. Now some people are terribly short of tea because they like nice strong cup and other people are not so short of tea because they drink coffee, and coffee's not rationed. [ER: I--] And some people are short of sugar because uh they make jam at home, because they can get hold of fruit to get the jam. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] I don't make the jam at home because uh-uh--[ER: You can't get hold of fruit.] I can't get a hold of the fruit. [Both ER and Louise Cochrane laugh.] [ER: So--] But if you do need--I do feel that food parcels are an enormous help to people over here, and they're very welcome. And on-on the other hand, I also known having been back to the States quite recently, just how much people pay out when they do give these food parcels to people here, because it-it's--takes a lot of sacrifices--

[ER:] Well you recognize the prices.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mother, I hope you don't mind my interrupting at this point for just a few seconds-- In your interview with Mrs. Cochrane. But um I am afraid we must in order to hear from our sponsors, and then we'll return to the interview immediately.

[Break: 23:49-23:54]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] And now we can return to this very interesting comparison of uh living conditions is being uh-uh explained to us by Mrs. Peter Cochrane and her interview with Mother here in the BBC in London.

[ER:] Uh Louise, I want ask you something. Your husband's in publishing. I notice how the papers over here are still as they were when I was here uh in the war, on a very restricted basis, you have very few pages. I am astounded at what you put into the pages of the papers. But even your magazines are on poorer paper, I think, than um uh they used to be, if I remember rightly. Eh um and it must be hard for a publisher to get paper to uh publish books. Uh are you res--is-is he restricted? Eh does he find it difficult to publish books?

[Louise Cochrane:] Yes, he uh--I know that the--the paper problem. I am not in on-- not in on all the uh the business side of-of Peter's work. But I know that um the price of paper for one thing has gone up, something like sixty percent since January--

[ER:] Now that-that in itself uh shows how hard it must be. Well I was--um I-I was interested in that and thought there must be difficulty. Now I want ask you something. You uh used to be very active in um youth groups and with young people. Um what are the differences that you see that have been brought about by the war both in the United States and here? Among young people?

[Louise Cochrane:] Among young people themselves? [ER: Mhm.] Well I do notice one thing, and that is uh thinking back to the-to uh the days when I was a-- say an adolescent-- that youngsters now-a-days don't have the-the fear of insecurity, uh the fear of unemployment, that uh [ER: Well, you--] ah was always there in our youth--

[ER:] Well, of course you-you grew up in the days almost of the Depression, didn't you? [Louise Cochrane: Yes, and they--] So that was the thing that dogged your steps. (26:12)

[Louise Cochrane:] But I-I remark on that because I think that's-that's an important thing. I think young people today have got a different kind of insecurity hanging over them, and that's the threat of war, which wasn't so real to us in the thirties uh because the depression was--was ever close. They don't seem to have any-any fears of uh-any fear about whether they'll be able to get a job because education has adjusted to new situations. And there's better job training on the whole--I think in the school systems of both countries. I noticed that when I went back to the States that is--there seemed to be more uh vocational training and uh it's-it's better geared to the industry of the country than it was when um -when I was first--

[ER:] When you were growing up?

[Louise Cochrane:] Yes.

[ER:] Uh, that's interesting because you've done a good deal of-of work uh on educational radio programs in this country. Uh do you think that that uh has helped very much? Uh and do you think there is more of it here than there is in the United States?

[Louise Cochrane:] Yes, it's um--it's on a much um bigger scale in this country because after all, there is public service broadcasting in Britain. And uh it's a-it's a small country by comparison with United States. Therefore, it's possible to broadcast to all the schools in the country that have receiving sets at a given time in the day. And it's also possible because it's only one network so to speak, to have a whole series of

people working on-on radio and education uh without there being any competition about it. The competition is to get the best possible programs for the schools. (28:02)

[ER:] Well now we've never, really, used all the radio facilities in the United States. And now the question's come up of course about television. Are you using television here in Great Britain to a great extent in education?

[Louise Cochrane:] Not yet.

[ER:] Not yet?

[Louise Cochrane:] Not yet.

[ER:] And um do you think it will be developed?

[Louise Cochrane:] Oh I am quite sure--this is personal opinion of course, but I am quite sure that it-it will be developed in certainly a great deal of research and care and planning is going into it right now. Because television is having a tremendous impact on the families that have it in their homes, and especially on the children. And therefore, it's-it's going to be very important to see that it--

[ER:] And do you find that uh television sets are becoming more popular in the United States, and are they owned by people of small incomes as they are in the United States--I mean in Great Britain? Uh in the United States, I think almost more people um in the lower income brackets own television sets than in higher income brackets.

[Louise Cochrane:] I-I think that's uh-I think that's true here too. I-I don't know anything about the figures, but you get that impression going around. Uh it's the--why [Louise Cochrane laughs] it's so, one can't tell, but uh certainly television sets are very expensive here. But the people who have them are the people who seemed to be farther from other sources of-of entertainment. They're-they're people who perhaps haven't read quite so many books as-as the uh as we like to read in our house. And they're are people who in the country district around London as far as television would stretch. You see--I mean you can see television aerials on the thatched roofs of England that farther on the hillside--

[ER:] Well, now that's-that is similar then--and one of the things that I've been interested in-in the United States that they buy television sets and they don't think of the cost as being cost in one year. They think, "Well now I have--I-I will stay home and see these things and I won't be going to the movies, and I won't be using gas or my car," or so forth. And they spread the cost over a number of years and they say, "Why in three years I will have paid for my television set." And um I don't know of course, what's the difference in the prices between here and-and at home. But I found that because I've asked people um around where we live in the country and I--because so many aerials you see, eh and on small houses. And I find that's invariably the answer: "we stay at home."

[Louise Cochrane:] And that saves up the money for it.

[ER:] What?

[Louise Cochrane:] That saves up the money for it.

[Elliott Roosevelt coughs]

[ER:] That saves up the money to pay for it. And that has interested me very much because of course your-your cry is too that the children use it to excess. Do you remember when the radio first came in, how the children were always said to "Never going to be able to read a book again" and "Never going to be able to do this and that" because they listened to the radio? Well the same thing is going on now on television, and yet I find that um like everything else, if you use it in moderation, I think probably it's going to be of great value.

[Louise Cochrane:] Oh yes. And I-and I feel too that-that um with guidance. After all you don't let young children--I don't let my children listen to any old radio program and I make sure they are-are listening to something that's suitable to them for their age. Or else, we don't have the radio on. But um uh--and I think you have to do that in television too. But television is a form of entertainment [ER: In other words--] and you can't expect everybody to not have the sort of shows they enjoy just because [Louise Cochrane laughs] they're not educational.

[ER:] Well, in the other words, it's really a question, as far as the children are concerned, of discipline [Elliott Roosevelt coughs] Isn't it? Of what you do in the home. What the older people are willing to-to do with their children on it? (32:13)

[Louise Cochrane:] And the radio in the schools here has certainly--I think had--made a contribution to the raising of the standard of taste in radio listening. And if television can do the same thing in school systems, well I think that would be serving a good cause because there are very good television plays, and all sorts of things which people have been enjoyed, which they-they probably wouldn't have known about otherwise.

[ER:] I-I was amused the other day, in Switzerland, to find that in a tiny paper because they--only having six or-or eight pages at most--uh it's-- um they were publishing *Tom Sawyer* in French--[ER and Louise Cochrane both laugh] [Elliott Roosevelt: Wonderful.] I thought that was really quite amusing yet. And I suppose that um we don't realize how-how much um-um of the old uh classics, as we would call them, um are got over in one way or another, and probably will be by radio and by television to children who might never uh have much interest otherwise.

[Louise Cochrane:] Yes, I'm-I'm sure that's true.

[ER:] What is difference between your-your children's uh actual um-um activities uh and those in the United States? Do you think they get very much the same opportunities of both for health and for fun that the children of their ages in the United States would have?

[Louise Cochrane:] Well, I certainly hope so. Becau--[Louise Cochrane laughs] children are you know--the answer to the future and uh our children have--

[ER:] Whatever else you suffer here, you don't let the children suffer.

[Louise Cochrane:] Oh no, and you--I think you'll notice that yourself, Mrs. Roosevelt, going around the children are really here as the children in the-in the States. They're-they're well turned out, and they look quite healthy in spite of what they--

[ER:] Do you have trouble in-in buying clothes?

[Louise Cochrane:] Well, uh all young parents have trouble buying clothes.

[ER, Elliott Roosevelt and Louise Cochrane all laugh.]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] I-I'd like to ask one question: on your last visit to the United States, did you get any uh impression as to the amount of interest on the part of the average person, the average family uh with uh--and understanding of world affairs in comparison to the average person in this country?

[Louise Cochrane:] Oh. [Louise Cochrane laughs] Now there is a question. [Elliott Roosevelt and Louise Cochrane both laugh] I--on the whole the-the um-the angle of interest is different. Here it's European; uh naturally I mean Britain is just across the channel from Europe. Western Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the whole uh situation on the continent is the closest to uh us here. In the States um there-- it's always been true even before the war with-with Japan that uh the situation in the Far East was--seems much closer than any situation in Europe. And that being so, you have to weigh them in the balance. But I think on the whole, my friends in-in America and my friends here both are-are very well aware that--of-of the dangers in the present situation and uh anxious to do anything they can to-to help the United Nations.

[ER:] and get on, thank you. Now I'm sorry we come to the end of our time, and I want to thank you very much, Mrs. Cochrane, for coming on today.

[Louise Cochrane:] Thank you, Mrs. Roosevelt.

[Break 35:52-36:15]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] A truly good citizen was William Allen White, [1868-1944] who remembered his mother as a devoted teacher and heroine. Children, do listen to mothers. Surely yours listen to you and watch you proudly when you teach them by words and by deeds that freedom is everybody's job. This is Elliott Roosevelt speaking and reminding you that you have been listening to the *Eleanor Roosevelt Program*, which comes to you each Monday through Friday at the same time. Today's program was recorded in London, and we wish to thank the BBC for making their facilities available to us.

[Break 36:58-37:02]

Transcribed from holdings at Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (FDRL)
File(s): 72-30(162)

Transcription: by Ming Sun
First Edit: Natalie Hall
Final Edit: Andreas Meyris