

THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

January 4, 1951

Description: In the opening segment, ER and Elliott Roosevelt respond to a listener's question about the fear's that Russia may have regarding expansion from the West, and what influence Karl Marx's *The Communist Manifesto* has on the USSR. In the interview segment, ER discusses education and child raising with the Vicomtesse Antoinette de Bellaigue.

Participants: ER, Elliot Roosevelt, Vicomtesse Antoinette de Bellaigue

[ER:] Elliott, it looks to me as though the--that letter was a book and not a letter.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Now this is a very interesting letter. It's from uh Mrs. Norton Bellmap of New Brunswick, New Jersey. And she has uh written in and says that she has just reread the book about father, *As He Saw It*. And because of the tide of events, many questions popped up into her mind. Two of these questions are: do you think Russia's fear of British, French, and or American expansion has caused her to make the moves she has in the last few years? And the second question is: What, if any, influence do you think Marx's Communist Manifesto has on Stalin's decisions? [ER: Let's begin with that last uh question.] Question number one. Oh, the last one first?

[ER:] I like the last one first because I think we can dispose of that. [Elliott Roosevelt: Alright.] I think that um originally, probably, um Marx had considerable influence but the present, actual way of uh living um has changed completely. Eh and what is today the USSR as a-as a state uh is not at all what Marx envisioned. Um and I--while I think there was a basis of influence, I think it has developed under um the present day leadership into something quite different. (1:44)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, I-I'd like to break in to just state that in my opinion, for whatever it's worth uh, Stalin today makes no decisions and the Soviet Union actions of the moment and uh I believe that-that Stalin is more of a figurehead [ER: Well so do I, so do I.] of-of the day. I think that his influence is gone I think he's a sick man who's probably kept alive uh in cotton wool just because he's sort of a rallying point for the people.

[ER:] Well, he's-he's the father of the people. [Elliott Roosevelt: Yes.] A figurehead.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] But uh don't you think that—

[ER:] And he always--when he talks he says things that are really things you couldn't really object to a great deal and give you hope that things will change but they never do change.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, he has--uh for instance, when I interviewed him in 1946, he stated very clearly that in his opinion uh capitalistic uh democracy of the United States could live at peace with the communistic Soviet Union. And uh, of course, you read in uh *Izvestia*, and *Pravda* all of the statements of the present leadership of the government, and- and in even some of Stalin's speeches which are made to his people in which he says there must be a downfall of the capitalistic system [ER: Well, now--] if we are to be safe in this world.

[ER:] Well now, of course, uh they openly talk about world communism and that of course he never did uh before and I--

[Elliott Roosevelt:] As a matter of fact, didn't he abolish the international uh-uh communistic organization? (3:34)

[ER:] He did but it's been revived. I don't believe it ever really was abolished, I think it was always uh underground uh existing as a-as a sort of uh skeleton organization in case of need and I think it was revived when they thought it could safely could be revived.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, in other words, do you feel that today Marx's uh Communist Manifesto is definitely in the limbo and has no effect or and is actually in no way a guide to the uh actions as they are practiced by the present leadership of the Soviet government?

[ER:] Absolutely. I don't feel it really has any influence presently. Now—

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Would you say that Marx's Communist Manifesto uh was more socialistic and uh and applied almost more to governments like uh the Danish government and the Norwegian government [ER: Yes. Much more.] than uh-uh, for instance, the communist form of government?

[ER:] Much more. After all, what we object to in the present communist state is the police state part of it and the playing down of the rights of the individual and making the state all powerful and um uh--

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Do you see any difference between uh communist Soviet Union uh government as it exists today and the government of uh Hitler's Nazism? (5:14)

[ER:] I don't see very much! It seems to me to be very similar and the --certainly the ideas that lie back of it are very similar.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yeah. Alright, well then uh—

[ER:] Now we come to the first question.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] The first part is: do you think Russia's fear of British, French, and or American expansion has caused her to make the moves she has in the last few years?

[ER:] Well, I think you have to go back a little and realize that Russia has always been cut off a little bit from the rest of the world. It's nothing--it was so in the Tsar's days just as much as it is today. Um there was always a certain amount of- of um aloofness, um I think that is in the people probably to a certain extent. Um now um I don't believe it was fear really, it was a natural trend to feel that um they didn't trust other people, they never had trusted other people completely. Um there were alliances and there was an exchange among certain top people from one country to the other uh but they never really between the People of Russia and people of the outside world. Um they looked upon their country as so vast and guarded by geographic situations. I mean, Napoleon's invasion uh came to an end because he couldn't meet the- the difficulties of- of living with an army in Russia in-in winter and um and that same spirit of - of being cut off um is there today as it was before. That can't be just communism. That's something that has always existed. Now um, therefore, the fear and the suspicion was always there. It was a question of whether you could, by building a world organization, bring uh the peoples of the world enough in contact and the leaders um to build greater understanding, do away with some of the aloofness, and live in peace together. Uh the world organization came into being, and very soon after the suspicions began to grow and instead of having an open world in which cooperation could exist, they cut themselves off again in the way, curiously enough, the way they had objected to being cut off before by the other parts of the world, when they were not recognized by all of us they felt we were doing them a great harm and they were constantly trying to um say how dreadful it was that the rest of the world would have nothing to do with them. Today, uh when the recognition had been granted to them and the rest of the world was

hoping that there would be that interchange, they have voluntarily cut themselves off because they were afraid of what would happen to them if this modern world came into their world and, therefore, they've cut themselves off again. It couldn't be more really cut off of um if we were refusing to recognize them, do you see? It's in reverse, the same thing that went on before. Now um that you might say it came because of fear of us I think probably fear has a great deal to do with it. (9:18)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, I think that uh today if we talk about the Russian people, the Russian people have a definite fear of British, French, and or American expansion. That is brought on by a constant hammering of propaganda that we intend to do something of an aggressive nature against the Russian people which the Russian leaders are feeding to them, and uh I feel that there is a real reason why the Russian leaders do that and why they keep all influences out.

[ER:] Well, they do that to make it possible to make their--to go on with their own aggression [Elliott Roosevelt coughs] because they couldn't justify to their people the um sending uh – the taking over practically the guidance of all these other nations on the rims of their nation um unless there was a reason and the reason is that this expansion is-is going to be against them and this is just um defense against what they tell their own people is going to happen to them. Um and if you read any of their newspapers, you know that they're never allowed to think for a minute that they're not in danger of being taken over tomorrow. And uh you hammer that in to people long enough uh they finally think it's going to happen, and they're ready to stand the hardships and the sacrifices that uh they think they have to stand to preserve their freedom. Now the freedom of the Russians doesn't seem to mean worth very much but I suppose what it is, is worth something.

(Break 11:01 to 11:16)

[ER:] Today I have a very special guest with me: Vicomtesse Antoinette de Bellaigue, who has some interesting ideas on modern education. Vicomtesse, during the war, was tutored to the British royal princesses and is now settled in New York and is on the faculty of Spence School. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you Vicomtesse Antoinette- Antoinette de Bellaigue.

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] Mrs. Roosevelt, it's equally a great pleasure for me to be here and I acknowledge the privilege and to have been asked by you to be your guest. Uh I think I would have met you perhaps sooner if by some kind of chance I hadn't been having a cold when I was at Windsor Castle and you came over during the war!

[ER:] Oh-oh really, were you there when we came and—

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] Yes, I was and I- I missed your visit because I had a cold!

[ER:] Well, that uh--I just drove out to Windsor at the end of my visit to report on what I had seen and I'm so sorry that you were [ER laughs] not there that day.

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] Yes. I know there was a great deal of concern on the uncomfortable way in which you had to do the crossing during the wartime conditions.

[ER:] Oh, I didn't mind at all. It was very-- it was not difficult at all. Well first, Madame, I would like you to tell our listeners a little bit about yourself. You're Belgian, I believe. (12:45)

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] Yes! I am Belgian and I belong to that really little country which uh is a mixture of races and I always say that there is a slight similarity between us in a very small way and Americans because I have some blood practically of every other country.

[ER:] [ER laughs] That's just like most Americans. Most of us have blood of many different uh countries.

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] Yes, and uh I was very fortunate because my parents were very broadminded and wanted me, before everything, to be able to travel, and this I must thank them for it. And uh I from very early age was able to go and see many various uh forms uh of life and in the same time go to different schools in different countries which has helped me greatly. And has perhaps promoted the goal I have in mind, to create always a link of thought between people wherever they come from. (13:51)

[ER:] Well now, is that really what uh gave you the idea of making education a career, more or less?

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] Uh well, not so much that that the desire to create the links--at the time when I was quite young I had no thought of a career. And then, as time went by and circumstances changed, well then it became uh something which I thought might be very useful uh in all ways. And that is how that interest, which was just an interest, became part of my life as time went by.

[ER:] Well now, I understand that during the war you tut--you tutored in England those little princesses? How did that come about?

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] Well that was just a question of wartime conditions and shall I say practically that it was a hunch of mine which brought it along. I was asked to take the head and the lead of the Fighting French Club for the naval offices. I accepted. In the meantime, somebody asked me if I knew someone who would go for two months at Lady [Helen] Hardinge's who had three daughters and wanted someone to look after the daughters during the time of uh-uh certain amount of uh travel she had to make for her husband. Well, I don't know why but I didn't take on the Fighting French Club and I took on that job and suddenly I found myself at uh Windsor Castle itself.

[ER:] And um, it must have been interesting, I think, to um be with those uh two young girls because the elder seems to me to be such a thoughtful child and to have recognized her responsibilities very young. The young one always seems to me to be trying to get all the fun out of life that she can get! [ER laughs] (15:47)

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] Well, I'm afraid this is perhaps slightly well uh overstated by some of the press people because fundamentally they both are very similar.

[ER:] Well, they probably both have a sense of responsibility.

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] Both have a sense of responsibility, but obviously uh the older daughter has had to face some responsibilities that the other one has not had to face yet but the foundation is there for both and they both share a sense of humor.

[ER:] Yes, well they both have a sense of humor.

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] Oh greatly.

[ER:] I think they're very sweet, um young things whenever I have met them but—

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] But what uh--I admire the whole family so much for and they have been an inspiration to me and I think they ought to be to many--and they are-- that even during the hard times of war, even under duress, they managed to retain serenity to give their children harmony, to create uh no fear. Well that word, fear, which just now perhaps might uh take uh bigger proportions for us, they managed by their inner strength never to give way to it.

[ER:] Well I- I thought that was really a very remarkable achievement. And I admire another thing during the war. I did spend um two days with them in Buckingham Palace, and-and they took me around to see a good deal of it to happen in London and um I thought the fact that they lived up to the restrictions to a really remarkable extent. It was true that certain things they had which perhaps everyone couldn't have because they had a country place and they did have certain things there. But um on the whole, they had the same kind of bread and they had the same restrictions that all the rest of the people had. You don't always find people who could have life very different doing that voluntarily. (18:01)

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] No, it's the rectitude of their mind, their integrity which uh, as I see, has meant a great deal to many people around them, and I'm afraid that we do need so many people like that and I hope that people are going to be an influence on those lines. And the younger generation too because Princess Elizabeth and-and her form of uh life can be a leader and to youth.

[ER:] Yes, I think she can and so can Margaret Rose.

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] And both of them too.

[ER:] Um tell me you have the comparison you must have seen now, how long have you been here? I didn't ask that.

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] I have been here since 1948.

[ER:] So you've had quite a little time working with our American children. And what do you find um is is the characteristic in them that strikes you most?

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] A great straightforwardness to discuss any problem and uh I think that basically all children are really very much the same, and that if they are uh-uh I should say dealt with with common sense, with vision, whether they are English, French, or American, I think they all respond in the same way.

[ER:] They all respond to the same thing.

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] Yes, to the same dealing. And they give warmth and they give affection. And many people told me, oh "Well, you'll find it perhaps difficult to adjust yourself?" Well, I found that on the whole, I just found that they responded to whatever demand I made if it was on a fair basis. And that's where I think if children are considered with respect as individuals they can all uh give the result which we all want them to-to give [ER: Achieve?] and to achieve.(20:09)

[ER:] Well, um I understand that you've had a good deal of experience with different kinds of educational systems. Different, that is, from the standpoint of the nations you've lived in. Can you uh tell me just in a word something about them?

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] Well, I should say that between the English and the French system, there is a difference, and uh Harold Nicholson did uh rather cleverly sum it up in a few words when he said that a boy of uh seventeen in France had been told from the start uh to uh put himself forward. And uh the English boy, on the other hand, had been told from cradle to--not to boast.

[ER:] Not to boast? [ER laughs] Yes, that is true. And um I think there is a power of understatement in the British youngster, which is sometimes a little appalling [ER laughs]. They'll say -- and it sticks to them right through life. They'll say the most astonishing things in a way that you don't really realize what they've said for some little time [ER Laughs].

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] Yes, there's such a fear of uh vices – sticking their necks out if it's not too, col- well I should say, colloquial! [Antoinette de Bellaigue laughs]

[ER:] Yes, but now we have to stop for a minute but we'll come right back again.

(Break 21:34- 21:43)

[ER:] I don't know whether you've been teaching on progressive methods or more or less uh a mixture of the old fashioned and the new, uh but I would like to know whether you find that our American system of education anything that you think is um better than in other systems?

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] Yes. I certainly think there is an approach, for instance, to current- current events which uh is uh very beneficial to the judgement of a child and to give him that civic spirit which is so necessary in these times. We have a tendency uh in Europe to dwell very much on the past and perhaps uh not enough on what is happening at the time. And uh I think after all it's like a triumvirate. It's like faith, hope, and charity. Uh past, present, and future are uh-uh linked together and uh one cannot just forget about any of them. (22:55)

[ER:] Well, I sometimes think that we don't give quite enough background to our children.

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] Well, that is uh why I said that there was a triumvirate, Mrs. Roosevelt, [Antoinette de Bellaigue laughs] because uh that background helps them then to be able to deal with the uh actions of the present moment.

[ER:] Uh what do you think of our co-educational system?

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] Well, that is a most interesting question. And if uh you allow me, I shall quote one of my boys who was sent from an English public school to Arizona University. And he uh he wrote to me his impressions on this.

[ER:] Oh, I'd love to hear what he said!

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] He said that co-education in high schools brings girls to be refreshingly natural [Antoinette de Bellaigue laughs]. It has always been argued, he adds that "the systems of education is detrimental to the standards of work. But it may be true in some case. But for my personal experience it had the opposite effect. I'm certain that had there not been several pretty girls in my Spanish class I should not have been so careful to my attendance!"

[ER:] [ER laughs] That's--well that's an amusing um reaction but—

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] But he had another reaction which is on the lines of work. He was very impressed in the way the uh average American child works his way through college, and he said I never realized up to the time I came to Arizona how much some of those boys and girls put in in order to be able to [ER: In order to have--]educate themselves.

[ER:] In order to have an education [Antoinette de Bellaigue: Yes.] they put in a tremendous amount of real hard work and besides [Antoinette de Bellaigue: And--] the work they put in to get uh on the education. (24:52)

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] Yes, and uh that thirst for knowledge is so commendable and I was all the pleased to see that my own boy after afortnight began to sell hot dogs at football matches.

[ER:] That is rather good.

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] And with his British accent he made pounds of money, not pounds but uh dollars, I should say. [ER and Antoinette de Bellaigue Laugh.]

[ER:] Well, I think that was—was very interesting. And uh, in a way, probably a very good thing for him because many boys um who are not accustomed to it would have turned their noses up and said uh they were above uh earning their way through but here they get right down to doing it.

[ER and Antoinette de Bellaigue overlap]

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] Oh no. I do think you know in the English public school there's a form of uh uh bringing up, which makes them adapt themselves, and uh not everybody believes what I am saying there but I can speak by the experience of my own two children so I've got two examples there.

[ER:] Well did you have two [Antoinette de Bellaigue: Yes.] boys, or—

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] Yes, I have twin boys.

[ER:] Twin boys? And they were uh both started in an English Public School?

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] Yes. And they were both went through an English public school and one went to Arizona and now is at McGill University. [ER: Where is the other one?] The other one is uh in the Grenadier Guards in Tripoli, [ER: Oh.] so it's quite a difference.

[ER:] Quite a difference.

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] Quite a different aspect. But I find that if they both maintain the basic values and have the basic ideas uh which I should think are the main thing to try to create in uh children and youth actually. And that was my form of experience in trying a system which was not really a system but a combination of various uh ideas taken from various countries with a basic foundation of keeping to true values. (26:47)

[ER:] Well, that's a very good system, I think. I know that you're giving a series of lectures on education for life. Does this include only school education?

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] No, it's mainly uh on the question of relationships between parents and children, and of the repercussions they can have later on, and the approach that children have to other people, and there are-- the path they take as a group and later on the path they take as citizens of their country and of the world. In fact, I am supposed to give a lecture at town hall in uh two days' time so—

[ER:] That will be very interesting, I think.

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] It's a great privilege uh and uh I'm looking forward to it tremendously.

[ER:] I think that will be very interesting. What would you give as advice to young people going abroad for the first time, whether they're Americans going to Europe or Europeans coming to America, what would you say to them? (27:52)

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] Well, I think I should say first and foremost that they must be ambassadors to their own country, that they must never keep uh-uh that out of their minds. Secondly, that comparison is

not reason. In fact, perhaps they ought to-- once they have studied the characteristics of the various countries they visit, that they ought to dwell very much more on the similarities, than see too much the differences.

[ER:] I think that's a very good idea because um-- and also what you say about comparisons is um a very good thing because if you always look for something you already know you lose a great deal. [Antoinette de Bellaigue: Yes. It is so.] Well, I think that is very good advice. Well, I want to thank you very much for being here today. You were very kind to come.

[Antoinette de Bellaigue:] Well, it was a very great pleasure and I enjoyed it tremendously and thank you very much indeed.

Transcribed from holdings at Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (FDRL)
File(s): 72-30(62)

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