

## THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

February 14, 1951

Description: In the opening segment, ER and Elliott Roosevelt respond to young listener's question regarding why Russia should be a participant in the United Nations. In the interview segment, ER discusses women's role in the Korean War and President Truman's loyalty commission with Senator Margaret Chase Smith.

Participants: ER, Elliott Roosevelt, Senator Margaret Chase Smith

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[ER:] Good afternoon, this is Eleanor Roosevelt speaking. I'm happy for the opportunity of visiting with you each day and I am grateful for the many helpful suggestions which you, of my listening audience, send in. And now, Elliott, won't you take over for a few minutes?

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yes, mother. I think uh you are particularly fortunate [chuckles] in being able to have the very distinguished Senator [Margaret Chase] Smith, Republican from Maine, as a guest for today's broadcast. Perhaps I shouldn't tease you at this time because it is possible a majority of our listening audience are members of the female sex. And I know full-well women politicians are able, if not more able, than many of the opposite sex, in that they have a sincerity of purpose and are less likely to be influenced by party politics. So, it is with extreme pleasure that we'll hear from Mrs. Margaret Chase Smith of the State of Maine. But before mother's chat with Senator Smith, I have a letter from uh a Miss Jacqueline Friedman of Patterson, New Jersey. Miss Friedman is aged 10 and a half and she's written a very thoughtful and mature letter regarding Russia's participation in the UN. I think a lot of Jacqueline's seniors are equally interested in this matter, and therefore, I'm going to ask mother how she feels this problem should be solved. But before we get on with the program, a word from our announcer for the people who make this recorded program possible.

(Break 1:47-1:53)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mother, today we have an especially interesting correspondent with a question. She is Jacqueline Friedman of Patterson, New Jersey, and her letter reads as follows: I am ten and a half years of age and very interested in world affairs. Now, my question is this: why do we need Russian communists in the United Nations? It seems to me they get all the information from the UN about this country and our allies. After they get all that is necessary, they report back to Russia, then Russia knows all our plans. Why don't we put them out of the UN? I hope you will find time to answer this question.

[ER:] Well, that question is asked by a good many people who are older than you are, Jacqueline, [ER laughs] but the answer is that uh one Russ—the USSR, the Soviets, were among the founders of the United Nations. And during the war they had been our allies and, um, they were among those who agreed to all the principles laid down in the Charter of the United Nations. Um They have not, we think, lived up to all the things that they agreed to. But nevertheless, there is a machinery provided in the United Nations for expelling anyone and it would be impossible to um expel anyone of the great powers who founded the United Nations because they have a veto power and uh they can refuse to have a question considered. Therefore, while now I think you could bring it up in the General Assembly under the new Acheson plan and um it would be very difficult uh to do it and you would have to get a two thirds vote in the General Assembly, which I think would be extremely difficult for a number of reasons. But the most um the most important reason would be that I think a great many people would feel that it was advisable to keep the great power which is the USSR within the United Nations because the minute you put them out, their satellites would go to any other area where they could bring influence to bear, would be joined to them,

and you would have a divided world. That would mean that immediately two worlds would be building up power against each other and the eventual end uh would be war. Therefore, if you have, as we still have, a hope that we can avoid war in the future by holding together within the UN, by gradually working together on other things and gaining better understanding, and becoming educated ourselves. Why then you want to keep the Soviets in because you hope that um they may gradually become possible to live with, and they may find it possible to live with other people. And at the same time, they may be observing us, they may be learning something. Though I don't think what they learn is very helpful to their uh plans. Uh but we also are able to contact them, we're able to see how they're thinking, and that's important for us, because we need education, we need knowledge, just as much as they do. So it seems to me that, by and large, it's better for us to stay together [Elliott Roosevelt coughs] in one organization and not to be divided up. (6:07)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Alright, but in actuality uh we have a situation where there are two world building: the communist world and the non-communist world. And there are certain groups ah of powers that are trying to make up their minds today as to which one, which of these uh two worlds they'll side with.

[ER:] Well that's exactly it. Within the United Nations you are today trying, number one to find a way whereby eh nations that disagree, that are either one thing or the other, can live together. And then, finally, when that uh is found to be possible, you go on to the very gradual development of which will eventually be found to be the best way of government and of life. But first of all, you've got to learn to live in the same world!

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Alright now, you feel that it is best to have the leadership of these countries endeavoring to find answers in the United Nations and that what little uh the Russian communists, as uh the young lady has called them, gain from participating in these endless round table discussions uh about our intentions and our plans, uh is more than offset by the constant open contact that we have between each other through the means of the UN.

[ER:] I, I think we ought to make it very clear that what you actually uh learn with by your meetings and uh from attendance on different groups in the UN is nothing harmful. What is harmful, what you um fear, is real espionage, real effort to find things which are secret things. Now, those are things which our FBI is constantly on the watch for, and those wouldn't cease if we put people out of the UN because espionage is carried on among peoples that have no relationship on any other basis at all. They get people within a country, who are vulnerable, who will be paid. um They send in people that they are able to disguise in various ways and uh while there is-- there is on the part of some people a complaint that because there are foreign people in the UN, those people act as um agents. I-- you would never be afraid of those people, because those people are all known and the FBI can watch everything they do. (9:06)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well that's a very interesting point right there uh do we uh um, prescribe that these people stay within certain areas and certain limits, or do we allow them access to the whole United States while they're over here on official business?

[ER:] Oh no, under the uh new law um ah you come in with certain limitations uh on what you do, unless you are a-- an actual, accredited diplomatic representative, when you have certain diplomatic privileges and immunities. But some people are strictly uh for instance there are certain newspaper people who can't move outside of Lake Success or New York City, the place where you are living --

[ER and Elliott Roosevelt overlap]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] That's true but there are many of the people in this country who feel that we are allowing uh the Soviet Union to use its diplomatic privileges to get many agents around in our country --

[ER:] Yes, the minute, the minute that is suspected, I read an article by Mr. Fulton Lewis the other day which interested me very much, in which he said that there was 32 um actual spies um belonging to the satellites, or the uh-- in the UN, well uh that it seems-- and that they were listed in the FBI. Well, that's just all to the good, I don't know what worries Mr. Lewis or anybody else, cause if the FBI has them listed and is alerted and knows, what are we afraid of? uh It's the people we don't know about and that are not known to the FBI and I-- simply um get anything uh they want and find out anything they want, those are the people to be afraid of, they can do the harm. The people the FBI knows and watches and the people that we know are in the United Nations and that they can see all the time, those aren't people we need be afraid of. (11:07)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well don't you think it would be helpful then uh for the American public to know, to have a clear-cut statement by someone like J. Edgar Hoover, as head of the FBI, stating that he's not worried about the people that are here accredited to the UN in one capacity or another, because uh we keep a good watch on them, but we're a darn sight more uh worried about the uh people who uh uh come in as actual spies and that they have no knowledge of. uh I think that we could straighten out a lot of the hocus pocus that's given to us in-- by people who say the UN is a very dreadful thing because it is uh it is endangering the safety of the United States by having it here.

[ER:] That's all nonsense, of course, perfect nonsense. [Elliott Roosevelt: Well, it-it would]. I do agree with you that it would be a very good thing if uh J. Edgar Hoover would make a statement of that kind. I have an idea that I saw one once by him but um I'd have to find out um and uh it would be a good thing if he'd do it again, I think.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mhm. Well, I think that uh that is as far as we can go in clearing up the question from Miss Jacqueline Friedman of Patterson, New Jersey. Tomorrow we'll have another question. I find that this is one is particularly interesting, because at 10 and a half it shows that she's taking an early interest in the affairs of her country—

[ER:] [Laughs]She certainly is! And she's certainly listening to her elder's conversations!

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yes, that's right!

(Break 12:50-12:54)

[ER:] When we think in terms of congressmen we're prone to forget that we also have congresswomen whose voice in our government is gaining increasing importance. I'm very happy, therefore, due to a recent trip to Washington to be able to present to you that very able Republican Senator from Maine, Mrs. Margaret Chase Smith.

[Margaret Smith:] Well, Mrs. Roosevelt I'm delighted that-that you are here and you're so very kind in int-- my introduction. We wish you'd come back more often.

[ER:] [ER and Margaret Smith laugh] Well that's very kind of you to say. And now, I'm anxious to talk about a number of things. But I think the first thing I'd like to talk to you about is woman power in our defense mobilization effort, what do you think about it?

[Margaret Smith:] Well, Mrs. Roosevelt that's a-a-a firmly a present question, a timely question. I've been trying for several weeks to find out just what we have uh for plans uh concerning uh woman power. Um, there is a suggestion that there be the draft, there's a suggestion that they be used in civi- civil defense, as you know. Um, but I can't seem to get much, I'm told each time when inquiring that there is a review of the plans, or a re-vamping of the plans. But I can't find what the original plans were!

[ER:] Well that's very interesting. Because I-I think it's really essential that we have plans for the use of women and um I think, personally of course, have always felt that if we had universal drafts for young men, and it um would not be at all harmful to ask that girls also had uh some kind of training during the same period of time. Because, I believe that while universal draft of um young men may be primarily for war preparation, it also uh can be a great training in responsibilities of citizenship and I think if we could do the same for women who today carry the same responsibility it would be a help. What do you think is happening? (15:13)

[Margaret Smith:] Well, Mrs. Roosevelt we're going to be so dependent upon the women before we're ah through. I wonder, I- I made a statement yesterday that I thought drafting women should be the last resort. I think women should first be given a chance to show what they can do. And I've wondered if that couldn't come through national registration. If we couldn't place the women, if we couldn't know what we have and where they are [ER: mhm]. I wish I could just go back for a minute, do you remember, of course you do, the ref-conference that you called several years ago--

[ER:] Oh well, very well, [unclear]—

[Margaret Smith:] that was one of the greatest contributions to women that's ever been done. And I have so hoped that someone would take it up from here-- from there and go on with something of the kind.

[ER:] Well you see we furnished from that conference to the State Department and to other departments, I think, um a list of women who were capable of doing various things. And I've always felt that um I don't know how much those lists were ever used, but I've always felt that the mere fact that women were listed and that so many were found who could do such a great variety of things on a very high level um was really a very uh good thing and um uh proved what we had to draw on.

[Margaret Smith:] Well, of course, Mrs. Roosevelt, the general uh thought is that women are stenographers [ER laughs] and is there any greater profession than the nursing [ER: No.] profession? Is there anything more necessary than the efficient secretary, the efficient receptionist? There are a hundred and one things in the offices that the men could be relieved of by women and then back in the field I think there are so many things that women at home can do if they're only given something to do and uh-uh something is done to take care of their own- own uh responsibilities in the home. I made a suggestion, I might just uh say right there that I made a suggestion, it was not original, it came in uh from a letter, uh that maybe they could farm out some work to the homes. That was in Maine, you know, in the more rural uh sections, so many women have to stay home, but there are a lot of things that they could do.

[ER:] They could do [Margaret Smith: yes.] in-in time that they could save from- from their homework. I think that is true, it's a little difficult, and you meet with little trouble, in um--where the unions are concerned, because we've talked about that very often. You have to meet union standards um and if you do that in the home, and it's quite difficult to work out. But I think that uh it could be worked out um to meet an emergency.

[Margaret Smith:] Yes I wouldn't want to go back into the home work that we used to-- [ER: No.] we knew too much about, you remember. I don't mean that, I mean in the emergency. (18:08)

[ER:] I think so. And then I think there is a point which was brought to me in a letter not long ago, um, I do believe that many women, if they can be relieved of some of their um household tasks um have special skills that can be used in special ways but, uh because they have to provide someone to uh, look after the children at home or to uh keep the home fires burning during the hours that they are at work. And they cannot deduct the price of that from their income tax where a man who is the head of the family or who is um can- can deduct his secretary or his uh whatever it may be in the line of business. Now it's just as

much, it seems to me a legitimate expense if the woman has skills she can use outside and is needed-ed, for her to be able to deduct what she has to pay in the home [unclear].

[Margaret Smith:] I'd like to present that thought to the committees uh for consideration, because I certainly think that-that uh babysitters, so called, uh should be-- that women should be given--[ER: deductible] yes, they should be deductible.

[ER:] Now, there is a difference uh I think, that um there was a-- um there was a distinction made in even in the letter I had between a woman uh being able to deduct, um just because she doesn't want to do the work at home [Margaret Smith: No.] and the woman being able to deduct because she is really doing a working job, do you see?

[Margaret Smith:] Yes, I do.

[ER:] It's um it's if--you can't uh, just say if the woman does nothing but sit with folded hands and rock or go out and play bridge that she's entitled to deduct her homework uh expenses, but if she does a job, I think she should be allowed to deduct it.

[Margaret Smith:] Well, I'm glad to hear you say that because I feel it very strongly. And in the smaller areas, where we can't have the daycare centers, of course I am of supporter of daycare centers in the emergencies --

[ER:] So am I!

[Margaret Smith:] -- but we have a hard fight on it as you know!

[ER:] Well I am a great supporter of uh daycare centers. But daycare centers, of course, um have to be so organized that they meet um a great variety of--of needs to be really useful to a woman who's going to do, um um, some kind of a war job because her hours may be different, or, her uh her uh hours might be on certain days much longer than others. So there has to be an elasticity about a daycare center when you are meeting an emergency which is not ordinarily necessary. (20:53)

[Margaret Smith and ER overlap]

[Margaret Smith:] Now of course, it could go on a 24-hour basis and I—

[ER:] It really has to I feel.

[Margaret Smith:] and I think, Mrs. Roosevelt, it uh-it uh could well be explained to people who feel that they oppose such a-a program that the mother's pay, the mothers take care of that expense. It's not-not anything that they ask as charity, it simply gives them a chance to go out and earn their own living or help in the emergency.

[ER:] Well, yes, that's-- but sometimes, some of these daycare centers have to have, um uh cannot be entirely supported by the pay apparently of the mothers. I've had that said to me on a number of times. um I don't think it should be that way. I think it should be possible for a woman to earn an adequate amount so that she can pay uh the-the amount that is needed. But it-it-- I'm told that isn't always possible in some places.

[Margaret Smith:] We've had so much difficulty in the District of Columbia, I was on that committee last year, and it was not easy.

[ER:] Well, um I-I find, for instance, just as this has nothing to do with wartime, but I find, for instance, that um wages sometimes that are paid will not cover that, [Margaret Smith: That's right] and um that uh doesn't seem quite right to me. Because a woman has to work to support her children, she ought to be able to get the proper wages to cover it. (22:17)

[Margaret Smith:] I'd like to continue that just a second, because I asked a man uh who was opposing the uh program here in Washington what he would do with a little woman with four children who was left alone. She would go home-- she would prefer to go home and take care of her children, perhaps. But wouldn't it cost him as a taxpayer a great deal more for her to do it in that way than it would if she went out and earned her own living?

[ER:] Well, I think that's- that's a [Margaret Smith laughs] very interesting question, I'm sorry to tell you but we have to have a station break and a few words from our sponsors so uh we'll come right back on the air in just a few minutes.

(Break 22:55-23:30)

[ER:] And now, Senator Margaret Chase Smith, [laughter] uh we would um like to begin again uh and I would particularly like to ask you what your feeling is about the loyalty commission which has just been appointed and which is to be headed by Admiral [Chester W.] Nimitz.

[Margaret Smith:] Well, that strikes a very soft spot in my heart, Mrs. Roosevelt, because I have a very, very great admiration for Admiral Nimitz. I think he is one of our—

[ER:] So have I! So do I! [Margaret Smith and ER laugh]

[Margaret Smith:] I think Admiral Nimitz [ER: Isn't that nice.] is one of our greatest citizens and will go down in our history as such. And I was very pleased to see the President name uh that commission headed by such an able man, and I was most interested to read the other-- the names of the other members today. [ER: I was too.] And it seems to me that it puts it on a non-partisan basis. Now, as I understand it there is some uh disagreement or some um criticism, because of the thought that Congress should do the investigating, and I think Congress should continue to investigate. I think this doesn't in any way interfere with uh the congressional investigations —

[ER:] No, it didn't seem so to me [unclear]—

[Margaret Smith:] No, indeed. I think those people can go in there and seek out subversives and most especially, Mrs. Roosevelt, may I say, I think this commission can protect innocent organizations and people.

[ER:] Well I am particularly glad to hear you say that because the only thing that has ever troubled me about um congressional action in this field I, like many other people, am most anxious to see us protected from spies and treason and [Margaret Smith laughs] that type of thing and I've always wanted to strengthen the FBI in every possible way. But I have been a little troubled that in our fear of communism we might lose some of our freedoms because so many people don't really understand what communism is. And they get a feeling that anything which they don't happen to like, they can call communism. (25:40)

[Margaret Smith:] Well, of course, Mrs. Roosevelt, that has come about in these last uh this last campaign, even back as far as 1948 when I was a candidate. If you don't like anything you say he's a communist, which is a dangerous, dangerous thing.

[ER:] I think it's very dangerous! [Margaret Smith: mhm.] Because um, it-it means that when everybody is-is really struggling against communism, it means, though, that we might stymie new ideas and, after all, this nation was built on the free flow of ideas. And we certainly have had many changes in our thinking, over the years. [ER laughs] When we-when we look back to um the actual um things about which Karl Marx wrote as original books as he watched the, um, uh, abuses of industry-- industrial power, at his period. We realize we met a great many of those things in this country and done away with them! And um I think it should be stressed uh that, if we know a little more, perhaps um we would be more anxious to preserve our own freedoms, while we um did not for a moment tolerate uh the thing we were watching for is espionage and sabotage and uh the type of treason which infiltration um which has been communist weapon right along, will bring about. And uh I- I don't see any reason why um this new commission should interfere and I'm very glad to have you uh say that it can do the two things. It can be helpful and it can um also protect.

[Margaret Smith:] I wonder if out of this commission, Mrs. Roosevelt, we can't, perhaps get a more uh information and uh explanation of what communism really is. So as to put on guard the people outside uh in infi— uh infiltration [ER: Infiltration]. I wonder if-- uh of course the fact is our greatest security can come through freedom. And if we lose the freedom of speech, the freedom of action, the freedom uh of feeling that we can say and do what we want to so long as it's within the uh government um structure-- [ER: unclear] Constitution-- yes. Seems to me we have to guard that and I wonder if Admiral Nimitz we can't get something of that over the country.

[ER:] Well, I hope very much we can and I have, as you have, a great respect for Admiral Nimitz, so I'm delighted [ER laughs] that he's going to be in the position that he is to be in.

[Margaret Smith:] Well, uh Mrs. Roosevelt, I'd like to go back to Admiral Nimitz, a minute. I wonder if you ah got a feeling of that when you were out in the Pacific. Do you remember? [ER: Yes I did, yes.] I followed you out there. [ER: Yes] I went around and—

[ER:] I got the feeling of um what a tremendous job he had accomplished, [Margaret Smith: yes, he--] really had accomplished.

[Margaret Smith:] Yes. One of the most understanding, thoroughly competent men.

[ER:] And, uh, the, the, he began and with uh, less than nothing, really, and he built up his tremendous power um and I- I think perhaps sometimes we forget too quickly in this country what we owe to certain public servants because um he did one of the most remarkable jobs for us in the last war.

[Margaret Smith:] I like to remember it while he's still living, too, rather than waiting for history to write it [Margaret Smith laughs].

[ER:] I do too, and now I want to ask you a little about your feeling on the United Nations, because there's a great deal of-of talk now, I get a great many letters on it and I'd like to ask you what you feel. (29:30)

[Margaret Smith:] Well I have been one of the supporters of the United Nations, Mrs. Roosevelt, as you know. It has seemed to me through the years that if there's any possible road to peace it's through the machinery that's been set up. Now we hear about its failure, and it's--but uh, but it's a great change. And we hear about it being only a debating forum, what could be better if we can get people to sit around a table like you and I are? We don't agree on everything, but certainly—

[ER:] But at least we can sit and talk about it!

[Margaret Smith:] Yes, and that is exactly what it should be between nations. And I think that we-we have to have patience. I think we have to be uh I think we have to be very firm as you do. I think we can't uh can't allow-- I was awfully disappointed in the failure of the other members of the United Nations to stand with the United States in opposing the appeasement of Red China. It makes it difficult for those of us who have supported the United Nations. Especially when the vote comes out as it did. But all altogether, I-I think we want to be pretty careful about what we do about the United Nations.

[ER:] Well I-I feel that it's enormously important in the long-run to strengthen the United Nations. And as it gets strengthened, I think um perhaps, we can part some of our individual responsibilities uh over to the United Nations. I do think we have to have an understanding of why some of the other nations are not as strong as we are, [Margaret Smith: yes.] and I think you have a feeling that, as a nation, uh we need to know a little more about other nations, don't you?

[Margaret Smith:] Yes I do, Mrs. Roosevelt and I, I don't know, I may have told you before, but a long time ago I spoke to Speaker [Sam] Rayburn about a little plan that I had. I didn't get too much attention, but I thought that if- if small groups from Congress and from various professions could be set up and sent out over the world. Now we say we have the bad and the good, I think we could mix them together and send them out. eh You-- uh I have been out, and I've seen what you have done, you've seen what some other members have done in bringing about a better understanding. The people over in other countries can't know, I spy some of the movies they see, they think you and I must be glamorous because the movies show such glamorous people. And they think that we must uh do a lot of things that actually aren't included in our everyday life of public officials. (32:03)

[ER:] That's perfectly true, I think greater knowledge and I think intercourse on every level. We are doing better on that I will say, that we're doing better but we're bringing over people from working groups and sending over people and we are doing it not only now on student level, we're doing it with authors and professionals. But I-I think it could be done even more. And sometimes I think our press could do more, how do you feel about the press at the present moment?

[Margaret Smith:] Well uh Mrs. Roosevelt, there's been so much talk about the press lately. About the treatment the press has been giving some of our public officials. You remember that President Truman and others have complained that the press has misquoted them or given only a part of their statement in a twisted manner. Ha-Have you had any of this going on?

[ER:] No, I don't have much trouble. But, I did once, in the White House, with one girl who wrote up something that um she wasn't entitled to. How about you? [laughter]

[Margaret Smith:] Well, I had an experience, a recent experience about a little speech that I made at the Sulgrave Club and you know Sulgrave Club doesn't have publicity. And I had a press release that I was told it was not to go out. But, uh there were two or three of the women of the press, our very good friend May Craig and friend Doris Fleeson were there. They respected the rules of the club but there was one there that went out and gave such a distorted report of my speech that I really didn't-- I didn't understand the speech myself when I read about it [ER and Margaret Smith laugh]

[ER:] Well, but that is not a regular thing [Margaret Smith: No indeed] I had something like that happen to me once, but um though we had a press association and the girls dealt with it themselves and I'm sure the girls in this case who were um would have uh been pretty harsh with any woman who did that. And I on the whole find that the press has pretty good ethics. My only criticism would be that sometimes um there is a lack of background which makes some interpretation difficult for some people.



[Margaret Smith:] Well Mrs. Roosevelt like Congress I think the President is-- uh the press is very much misunderstood. I think the press as a whole is very fair. I think they are a hardworking group, they want to get the truth across to the people. Of course back of it is something that we might just as well recognize and that is that there are those papers who fight certain public officials con-constantly. And this girl I speak of represented one of those papers, so naturally.

[ER:] That of course is asking to learn unwarranted things for a paper to do but many of them do it. And we can't do anything about it. Now I'm sorry, but we have to draw to an end. I want to thank you for coming and being with me today, it's always a pleasure to see you.

[Margaret Smith:] Well thank you, Mrs. Roosevelt, come back often!

ER: Goodnight [unclear].

[Margaret Smith:] Good bye.

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