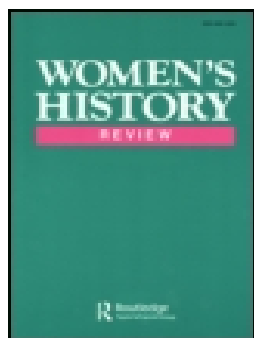

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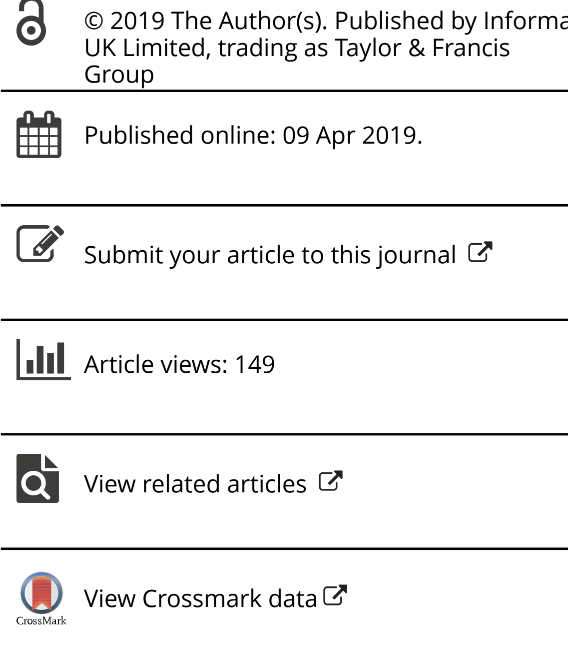

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Eleanor Roosevelt and radio in early Cold War France

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ABSTRACT
The American First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt was a prolific writer, public speaker and broadcaster. She appeared on her own radio programs in the 1930s, 40s and 50s and those of others, both in the US and abroad. In many of her daily newspaper columns over the years, Mrs. Roosevelt spoke of the importance of international radio and seemed to suggest there was a unique role for the medium as a way to reach ordinary men and women. Of the Voice of America, she said it played a vital role in spreading understanding of the American way of life and American democracy. This paper looks at American broadcasting to France in the early Cold War and considers two broadcasts Mrs. Roosevelt made while in France with the United Nations: a 1948 episode of the program Changement de Decors and a series of weekly talks about the UN for the French service in 1951–52.

Introduction

In the first of her weekly radio talks aired on French radio and the Voice of America in November 1951, Eleanor Roosevelt—the former US first lady and at that time US delegate to the United Nations—explained why the United States Delegation to the United Nations had come to Paris: 'to work at building peace'.[1] Each week she would urge her listeners to not only believe that she and the US were doing their utmost to bring about peace and disarmament, but that ordinary citizens ought to take an interest in the goings-on at the Palais de Chaillot where the General Assembly was meeting. The broadcasts had been the brainchild of Fernande Auberjonois, the head of the VOA's French service. He had argued that there was no one better than Mrs. Roosevelt to reach the women of Europe.[2] By 1951, Mrs. Roosevelt had been a frequent radio broadcaster for more than 25 years, including hosting her own radio programs in the USA and appearing as a guest on those of others. On several occasions she had also appeared on international radio, most notably the Voice of America. Indeed, she was a staunch supporter of the VOA, frequently paying attention to the broadcaster in her speeches and writings, such as in the *My Day* column of May 9, 1947 when she called on Congress to make appropriations for cultural diplomacy to complement military and economic actions:

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> [I]f we do not want to see our sons go off to war again, we must spread the understanding of the value of our way of life and of our type of government … We take it for granted that the world as a whole believes in our good intentions. I sincerely hope they do, for unless the Senate restores the State Department's funds for cultural and informational activities, the world is going to have to take us on faith—and we may find that faith in the world today is at a low ebb.[3]

As Tona Hangen argues, studying both radio programs and listener reactions in archives can contribute to our understanding of the particular historical, social and cultural context in which listeners and broadcasters find themselves.[4] This is particularly appropriate for the period of the Cold War, when as Linda Risso says, radio was 'one of the weapons of choice' of governments trying to influence the hearts and minds of listeners.[5] In the early part of the Cold War radio was the dominant broadcast medium in both the USA and Europe. Despite increasing competition from television, virtually all US households in 1950 owned a radio.[6] The number of radio receivers continued to increase: from 620 per 1000 inhabitants in 1951 to 948 per 1000 inhabitants at the end of the decade.[7] The number of radio receivers in European countries was significantly lower than in the USA, e.g. 176 receivers per 1000 inhabitants in France in 1951 and 207 per 1000 inhabitants in the Federal Republic of Germany.[8] Nevertheless, it was believed that the vast majority of the population in Western Europe at the time did have access to news, information and entertainment through the wireless.[9]

While many scholars have turned their attention to Cold War broadcasting, the story of women broadcasters and listeners has been mainly overlooked.[10] One such female broadcaster is Eleanor Roosevelt, and while the literature on the former First Lady is extensive, her radio career has received comparatively little attention.[11] This paper aims to add to both the scholarship on international radio broadcasting and that on the former first lady, 'one of the most influential citizens' of the twentieth century.[12]

The post-war period was a time of contradictions for women in the Western world. Many scholars, such as Susan Ware, Helen Laville and Joanne Meyerowitz have pointed out the differing demands on women in the US.[13] Those who had gone out to work, including in previously considered masculine jobs which were aimed at sustaining the war effort, felt the pressure to return to the home. While a reversion to traditional value families and domesticity was apparent in for example a drop in the age of marriage and an increase in the birth rate, many women nevertheless continued to join the work force, partly to help finance their new consumer lifestyle.[14] With respect to women's political engagement, this period was for US women 'characterized by [both] political activism and conformity' and increasing numbers of women became involved in the developing civil rights movement or the peace movement against nuclear testing.[15] Maurine Beasley argues that Eleanor Roosevelt acted as a role model during this confusing era:

> Mrs. Roosevelt provided an example of a woman who combined feminine qualities with the influence usually reserved for men. It was a time when American women were engulfed by social change that few understood … In 1952, some 10.4 million wives held jobs—two million more than during the war and about three times the number in 1940. At the same time, the press, particularly women's magazines, featured innumerable articles asserting that women had ventured too far from their accustomed roles. Mrs. Roosevelt, it appeared, was one of the few individuals who had solved what *Life* magazine called the 'woman's dilemma'—the conflict between traditional notions of a woman's role and the new reality of her activity outside the home.[16]

Adopting a case study approach, I use examples from two different broadcasts involving Eleanor Roosevelt, *Changement de Decors* from 1948 and the 1951–52 commentaries for the Voice of America, to explore the way she tried to reach directly into the homes of audiences in France, particularly women. In addition, US State Department records and other primary sources of the time offer an insight into how effective Mrs. Roosevelt was in communicating with those audiences.[17] As an accomplished broadcaster, Mrs. Roosevelt understood how to capitalize on the medium of radio, her celebrity status as the widow of the popular Franklin D. Roosevelt, and her reputation as a social reformer and highly respected diplomat, to explain complex international issues to ordinary citizens.[18]

Eleanor Roosevelt: activism, diplomacy and radio

Eleanor Roosevelt, born in 1884 into an upper-class New York family, was a product of the Victorian age, but throughout her life showed a keen spirit of rebellion and pioneering instinct, coupled with sincere empathy for others. Her father, Elliott, (the younger brother of President Theodore Roosevelt) died when she was nine; her mother Anna had passed away a year earlier. Timid Eleanor went to live with her maternal grandmother and it was only when she was sent to boarding school in England that, under the guidance of headmistress Marie Souvestre, she developed confidence in her abilities. During the First World War she worked energetically outside the home for Navy Relief and the Red Cross and, fluent in French, briefly worked as a translator for the 1919 International Congress of Working Women when it convened in Washington.[19] She campaigned vigorously for a Democratic victory in the 1920 elections in which her husband Franklin was nominated for the Vice-Presidency, and when that did not materialize, she threw herself into other political activities. She joined several organizations including the Women's City Club, the National Consumers League, the Women's Division of the Democratic State Committee, and the New York chapters of the League of Women Voters and the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL). The latter, led by Rose Schneiderman, fought successfully for legislation on issues such as an eight-hour workday, a minimum wage, and the abolition of child labor.[20]

Eleanor Roosevelt saw in the new medium of radio the perfect means for promoting the causes she believed in and in 1925 she took to the airwaves on behalf of the women's City Club of New York.[21] As she became increasingly involved in politics, she also developed her career as a writer and broadcaster. Before becoming First Lady, she had her own commercial radio show and, despite her suggestion when FDR became President that she would cease broadcasting, she took on another program in 1934 earning her $500 per minute and making her one of the most highly paid presenters at the time.[22] Most of the earnings from the radio work went to the American Friends Service Committee and other charities. According to Paul Belgrade, the radio career was more a matter of helping to 'establish a woman's right to comment on substantive issues. She herself saw her radio career as important because of its potential for educating women about issues beyond the confine of the home.'[23]

FDR was elected President an unprecedented four times and while his wife pursued her own activities during his presidency, these were always in service of her role of First Lady. Only after leaving the White House in April 1945 could she start to pursue a career in her own right and, despite her own concerns about her abilities, she took to international

statesmanship as a duck to water. Her influence became world-wide and her audience an international one when President Truman asked her to become a US delegate to the newly formed United Nations. Not long after, she was elected Chair of the UN Human Rights Commission and together with the other members of this body drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which was adopted unanimously by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948. In her work for the UN, Eleanor Roosevelt could help bring about in other parts of the world much of her reformist agenda, including women's rights and social and economic rights. In addition, she believed a strong and effective UN was the only way to achieve world peace. Throughout her tenure as UN delegate she continued to write columns, give speeches, travel the world and speak on radio to educate people about a series of issues. She was a member of both the American Federation of Radio Artists and the Association of Women in Radio and Television.[24] Mrs. Roosevelt frequently emphasized the instrumental role she felt the medium could play as a social force, in particular its importance as a means of cultural diplomacy. She regularly appeared as a guest on foreign radio programs, such as the BBC, and broadcast messages on behalf of the Voice of America and United Nations Radio, but also tried to convince domestic audiences that international broadcasting was beneficial to American interests. Many members of Congress, who had agreed to financing of international broadcasting during the War, were now concerned about making substantial appropriations for what they felt was propaganda. In the 26 January 1949 episode of the *Eleanor & Anna Roosevelt Program* on ABC, however, Mrs. Roosevelt urged her listeners to think of VOA broadcasts as a type advertising, a chance to make people elsewhere understand the American way of life:

> [T]he more we can get across the truth, the better it will be for the real things that have to be done in diplomacy and in our economics with other countries, practically even in military questions it's necessary that other countries get to know us better.[25]

In her *My Day* columns too Mrs. Roosevelt wrote on several occasions about the Voice of America and its role in helping peace. For example, in *My Day* of September 1, 1951, she linked the VOA to that which American women were writing to her about:

> HYDE PARK, Friday—In the last few weeks I have had a number of letters from women who want to reach all the women of the world and pledge them to do whatever is necessary to preserve peace in the world.
>
> I have to answer that it is practically impossible to reach the women behind the Iron Curtain and that to reach women in other countries would have little value unless one could also get the acceptance of women in the Soviet Union and its satellite countries.
>
> The fact that there is a sincere desire among the women of the United States for peace would be accepted anywhere, I'm sure, and I think the same would be believed of women in any other country. However, to accomplish anything really constructive one would have to have unrestricted discussion and a binding agreement among all the women of the world as to what steps should be taken to try to keep the peace of the world.
>
> …
>
> Whatever is done in the field of communication is just a drop in the bucket. But drops in the bucket are important, and therefore we must support the Voice of America, for one thing.[26]

Mrs. Roosevelt's opinions on the necessity for international broadcasting echoed and supported the views stated in several government reports. Indeed, according to Cull, the State Department worried about the emphasis on US military strength, because 'military power dissociated from a persuasive idea [might] neither deter an enemy nor persuade an ally'.[27] The US Under-Secretary of State, James Webb, proposed that $130 million should be spent on new operators and transmitters and President Truman launched his 'Campaign of Truth', which included the creation of Radio Free Europe (RFE) that broadcasted to Eastern Europe.[28] The Soviets, according to Nelson, thought Western radio propaganda was an incredibly effective weapon.'[29] Using broadcasting to shore up the morale of audiences in Western Europe was considered just as important by the United States Information Service, as communicating with those beyond the Iron Curtain.[30]

American broadcasting to France

France was one of the Western European countries where morale was lowest. Traumatised by the Nazi occupation and devastated by war (in France alone one fifth of all housing had been damaged or destroyed), western European countries needed to rebuild themselves, battle inflation, cope with rationing and simultaneously establish a 'durable balance of power in Europe' that could counter growing pressure from the Soviet Union.[31] 'The breakdown of Four Power control in Germany [the Berlin Blockade] … and the Soviet-sponsored Prague Coup in early 1948' were signs of such mounting pressure.[32] Under the Marshall plan billions of dollars of aid was poured into the economies of Western Europe in an attempt to raise levels of production and standards of living.[33] It became apparent, however, that the US would have to do more than just help the people fill their bellies and rebuild their homes and infrastructure. It would have to persuade Europeans, who did not necessarily share their belief in capitalism and free enterprise, that the US way of life was better than the Soviet one and that it was worth embracing.[34] There was particular concern that France might be tempted to support Communism and the Soviets: the Communist party in France had many supporters who, together with intellectuals and conservative groups, saw American efforts in France as 'capitalist imperialism'.[35] A May 1950 analysis by James Webb of which nations should be targeted by the VOA stressed France was in the 'Danger Zone'.[36]

A desire to return to traditional values in which family life was the cornerstone was more apparent in many European countries after World War II than in the USA. In France, this was no more evident than in De Gaulle's call for 'twelve million beautiful babies', a call largely answered.[37] Kelly R. Colvin argues that French women 'needed to conform to a particular vision of femininity, one that emphasized [their] aesthetics and fragility, all while propping up male virility.'[38] Women in France only gained the right to vote and stand for office in 1944, significantly later than in the USA and many other European countries.[39] In the National Assembly elections of 1945, a mere 5.6% of seats was won by women, dropping to 3.5% in 1951.[40] Interest in political matters thus seemed low. Yet, Rebecca Pulju believes that political representation is just one way to look at the impact that French women had in political and social life. Instead, she says, we also need to take into account the way French women exploited the opportunities afforded them by membership of consumer organizations which focused attention on consumption and were supported by the French government.[41] The goals of post-war French

government planners to increase productivity and create a greater demand for consumer goods coincided

> with the renegotiation of women's place in the polity and civil society […] a multitude of voices in French society seized on women's power as the consumers for the nation, vaunting the responsibility inherent in this role and creating a gendered form of citizenship which was essential to the national economy, but did not upset the gendered structure of home, workplace and polity.[42]

In addition, she asserts that this view allies with the US government's plans for France as laid out in the Marshall Plan funding for creating financial stabilization and mass consumerism.[43]

Changement de Decors

In 1948, a few months after her well-received speech at the Sorbonne, Mrs. Roosevelt was interviewed for the program *Changement de Decors* (Change of Scenery).[44] For the program on October 24, 1948, on the Paris Network, she was asked what American women could learn from French women and vice versa.[45] She praised the way French women run their household and the French cuisine, but said she felt they could learn from American women to be freer and move beyond the home:

MRS ROOSEVELT	I think that there is one thing that the French woman, in another field, perhaps does better than we do: she knows how to make her entire home center around her husband. However she requires certain things that bring their lives closer together …
INTERVIEWER (M. Sven Sainderichin)	Yes, you mean that there is a conception of the fire-side, of the family inside their own home, which is perhaps stronger. The woman has less outside interests, perhaps?
R	Yes, I think that's true.
I	Then, on the other hand, do you believe that the French women have something to learn from their American sisters?
R	I think that the French women could learn from American women that they could have a little more freedom, and not remain so attached to their family. With us, we demand that our merchants and other people concerned provide commodities in order to make life easier for women. For example, we have many articles for children and for the house that you do not have here. I understand that at present these things would cost too much. But our women demand that they become less expensive so that everyone can afford them and life becomes less complicated.
…	
R	For example, there are many Americans women who have to work as well as raise a family—professional women who go to work every day, and I think that maybe this makes them, in a certain way, organize their life a little better.
I	I hope that many industrialists and merchants will think of this material side of family life and will help French women to 'get organized.' One other question …[46]

Derek W. Vaillant points out that 'cultural conservatism' was central to French postwar state radio's identity, so asserting that women's lives should revolve around the family fits within that view.[47] Additionally, however, the implication in this episode of

Changement de Decors appears to be that an increased focus on the material aspects of family life, i.e. consumer products, could help French women become a little more like their American counterparts; this 'Americanisation' of European life, therefore, would make them happier and France more economically prosperous. Both Eleanor Roosevelt and the French public network thus seem to be suggesting that French women and the French economy as a whole would be better off if they emulated the United States, rather than be tempted to heed the Soviet message of communism. In doing so, this radio program appears to adopt a similar strategy as the advertisements in women's magazines in France, such as *Marie-France*, which Colvin says stressed the Americanness to 'emphasize superiority' and 'reflect[ed] a sense of anxiety that French women were not keeping up with their American counterparts aesthetically'.[48] Mrs. Roosevelt far from encouraging women to be more politically active citizens because of the importance of equal rights, appears here—as a public diplomat—to be using her radio interview to propound both gendered French national policy and American economic strategies.

Eleanor Roosevelt commentaries for French Service/VOA 1951–2

Towards the end of 1951, the head of the VOA's French service, Fernande Auberjonois asked Mrs. Roosevelt to broadcast weekly commentaries on her work at the United Nations, whom he felt was the 'only logical choice'.[49] Gardner writes that Auberjonois thought

> Mrs. Roosevelt had assets possessed in Europe by no one else—a beloved and respected name, a reputation in her own right as a diplomat and a fighter for social justice, and a simple feminine manner which would appeal to the average listener.[50]

This simple feminine manner was most likely evident in Eleanor Roosevelt's 'warm, persuasive voice' and 'kind, restful words' commented on by listeners, as 'soft and well-modulated' female voices were considered appropriate for women at the time.[51]

The commentaries were broadcast over the French National Network on Sunday evenings, 8pm Paris time, from 18 November 1951 to 3 February 1952, and could also be heard in Belgium, Switzerland, Eastern Europe and North Africa through the facilities of the Voice of America.[52] In the first of the commentaries, Mrs. Roosevelt singled out women in her audience by saying: 'I think that what you want to know—especially you the women of post-war Europe … '[53] However, archives show as many letters reacting to the broadcasts written by men as by women. Given the time slot of peak early-evening listening, it is reasonable to think that both men and women, indeed whole families, would have tuned in to hear ER.[54] The commentaries, delivered in French, were approximately 1000 words each and aimed to explain what Mrs. Roosevelt and her fellow delegates had been doing at the Palais de Chaillot that week. Information and opinions about the UN and the issues being discussed were interspersed with personal stories of people she had met, places she had visited, and comments and questions she had received about the broadcasts.

The language she used was simple and frequently employed the stylistic device of repetition to emphasize her message. In addition, she used first and second person pronouns (I, we, you) throughout to lower the distance between herself and her audience, something particularly suited to the intimate nature of radio communication. She often employed

metaphors to clarify abstract concepts for her audience. A vivid and effective example of that is in her first commentary, where she compared peace to a vulnerable plant:

> I believe that peace is something you must cultivate with great care and tenderness. Like certain delicate plants and flowers peace needs warmth and love. Cynicism and abuse will harm it. However, if those who wish it well do something to protect peace, it can and it will grow.

Eleanor Roosevelt went on to extend the metaphor by talking about her personal experience of gardening, showing her ability to simplify and domesticate the international, complex issue of achieving peace, as well as her familiarity and expertise with the subject (both peace and gardening):

> Like most Americans, I have a garden. I know that nothing can really grow if the soil has not been cultivated, ploughed, and fertilized. Nothing grows in a poor soil. After the war, Europe's soil was poor. We know then that a lasting peace could not grow from the acrid soil of human misery, among the shambles of war, in the cold shade of despair.

In the second radio commentary of November 23, 1951, she expressed her admiration for the people of Paris. Almost sounding as if she were a tourist guide, she encouraged listeners in the vicinity of the Palais de Chaillot to attend the UN meetings.

> It is not at all difficult to get into the United Nations meetings. All you have to do is telephone the ticket office, give your name and they will reserve a place for you the next day. There are many theatres where it is much harder to get tickets and where the performance they are presenting is not as important for us all.
>
> I am sure that the newspapers have given this information, but I think it is worthwhile to repeat it nevertheless. In the United States we have encouraged our citizens, **including women and children**, to come often to these meetings. The schools send them in carloads on days when they have no classes and even sometimes during class-room time.

By stressing that citizens included women and children she pointed out that politics was not merely the domain of men. Throughout the subsequent weeks recurring themes included the hard work needed to achieve peace, the constant hope that it could be achieved, the acknowledgement that people were scared and distrusted each other, and the responsibility that everyone had to sustain progress.

The final commentary on February 3, 1952, was rather less sweet than the others. In this broadcast which summarized the developments at the UN of the previous three months, Mrs. Roosevelt responded to what she called suggestions that she had 'taken advantage unduly of the hospitality of the French [radio] network' by saying that as she had regularly had foreign guest speakers on her radio and television programs in the US, she did not hesitate to now address a foreign radio audience 'in [their] own homes … on [their] network'. Whereas up until that point her commentaries had predominantly subtly criticized the Soviet Union, this time she launched a blistering attack on the Soviets and their delegate Andrey Vishinsky.

> It is complicated to say the least to reach some basis of understanding on Atomic control … , with men whose principle concern is to prevent any passage across their frontiers … .
>
> It is very difficult indeed, to clasp hands through barbed wire.
>
> It is virtually impossible to discuss control with people …

> …
>
> Nevertheless, we must not allow ourselves to be too discouraged by these difficulties. We must persevere … .
>
> My country has been selected by destiny to carry at this time a heavy burden of responsibility …
>
> It is **our duty** to inspire confidence and assist the peoples of the world to recovery.

Eleanor Roosevelt knew what doing one's duty meant, she had done little else throughout her personal and professional career. She was as much saying it was her personal duty to keep inspiring confidence as her civic duty as a representative of the American government to do so. As a farewell gesture, she was making it clear to her French audience that she felt the Russians did not inspire confidence and did not assist the peoples of the world.

Reactions to VOA commentaries

The French communist newspaper, L'Humanité, was highly critical of Mrs. Roosevelt's commentaries. On December 17, 1951 it fulminated about the previous day's broadcast, accusing France of being partial to the US by not offering airtime to other delegations:

> [A]n excellent initiative on the part of France, […] to place the radio at the disposal of members of the principal delegations; an initiative which honors the radio, don't you think? Yes. But the American delegation is the only one to benefit from it, and you can keep on waiting for the objectivity of Radio Paris to offer you a weekly broadcast by Malik or Vychinski.[55]

L'Humanité, furthermore accused Mrs. Roosevelt of hypocrisy:

> Mrs. Roosevelt continues by insinuating that those who write to ask for an understanding with the East are speaking 'for a party' or 'for a foreign power' (as if she has a right to complain about that!) […]As a matter of fact, there is not one word in all her sermon about the five-power pact.

USIS argued such attacks in the Communist press were evidence of the effectiveness of Mrs. Roosevelt's broadcasts.[56] An estimated five million people tuned in to the commentaries, at least twice as many as listened to other VOA programs broadcast over the French National Network, such as the daily *Ici New York*.[57]

As Risso cautions, surveys and statistical data and anecdotal information from listeners, all provided by the broadcasters themselves, cannot always be trusted, therefore scholars can only make educated guesses as to the impact of the broadcasts.[58] Letters from listeners available in the archives afford an additional, interesting—if only partial—insight into what people at the time were thinking. It is hard to imagine the fear people must have felt about the possibility of a Third World War so soon after the Second devastating one had finished. A first survey from the VOA in December 1951 mentions several hundred letters that have been received by the Radio Diffusion Français offices. A second survey of reactions to Mrs. Roosevelt's VOA broadcasts, dated 5 January 1952 reports an increase in the volume of letters, with two thirds comings from listeners with a relatively low standard of living.[59] Letters are divided by the VOA into those

'vehemently favorable [and those] vociferously opposed to the views of Mrs. Roosevelt.' Favorable include comments such as:

> Thank you for strengthening our morals … (Mrs. L.C. Paris)
>
> Every time I listen to you I feel more deeply moved by your sincerity and your ardent desire to convince your listeners. No Frenchman can listen to you without expressing his deep gratitude. (Mr. F.L. retired)
>
> A young French girl wishes to express her admiration … you should know that France, the France you and I love, is not only represented by her 'officials' but by all her children, young and old … (Miss I.H. Villeneuve la Guyard, Yonne)

A poem 'Hommage' translated as:

> When over the airwaves, your voice reaches us,
> The whole country hastens to hear your words,
> For you are so able to rid us of our doubts. (Mr. A.B. Marseille)

Unfavorable remarks such as:

> I have listened to you and I am sadly disillusioned … You know full well, Madame, that the USSR does not intend to attack us … (A group of listeners … Rhone)
>
> We live under a black cloud because of your presence here, because of American occupation. True Frenchmen will soon tell you their last word … (Signed: La Resistance)
>
> Although I am getting used to the cynical lies of the Voice of America I never would have believed that a woman, even an American woman, would dare side with the American warmongers … You dare speak of the Rights of Man while you emprison Communists and lynch negroes. (P.B. Sete, Harault)

The reactions to the French Network/VOA commentaries show a similar pattern to those which Mrs. Roosevelt had received in response to broadcasts in the USA in previous decades. There were listeners then too who adored her and others who felt she should not interfere in political matters. In the case of the VOA, as Mrs. Roosevelt was representing the US delegation to the United Nations, there were similarly listeners that complained that the US ought to stop meddling in French affairs. The US embassy in Paris, though, was unequivocally positive about the role Mrs. Roosevelt had played. USIE Regional Representative Charles Hulten wrote in a letter to Edward W. Barratt, the Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs:

> One of the blessings of having had Mrs. Roosevelt in Paris for the last several months is that she has cut through the 'footnote psychology' which besets people who write guidances and has said, simply and straightforwardly, that the United States wants peace. In doing that, she has not only had a terrific affirmative effect, but she has also provoked the communists and their fellow-travellers to exceptional counter-activity.[60]

The French broadcasts in 1951–52 were thus viewed by the VOA as a great success as a means to reach its intended audiences and in helping build a stable France. Soon after, Mrs. Roosevelt was asked to record messages in Italian, German and Spanish for broadcast to Italy, Germany and Spanish-speaking countries across the globe.

Conclusion

Paramount to women having a role in creating peace in the early post-war period was the need for them to have a 'deep understanding of world affairs'.[61] Eleanor Roosevelt recognized this and realized that one of the best ways to educate them was by means of the media, particularly radio. She already saw in the 1920s the unique role radio could play in reaching citizens by addressing them directly in their homes. Gaining entrance into the homes meant she was also more easily able to reach the women.[62] She saw that especially during the Cold War, radio was an essential ingredient of diplomacy to help ensure ordinary men and women could be part of an imagined community of global citizens, interconnected in their daily lives, with a common purpose of finding peace and understanding.

While Eleanor Roosevelt often addressed women directly in her programs, she was also listened to by men and those who held the positions of power. As a delegate to the United Nations, she was an official US diplomat, one of the few women of her time to hold such a post. More interestingly, however, is how she was also an actor of cultural diplomacy who used radio to great effect. She was convinced that America was an honest and vital force behind moves to achieve peace and that programs such as the Marshall plan were essential to rebuilding peace in Europe. On French radio, she played her part to convince the public that 'Americanization', including its belief in consumerism, was something worth striving for, rather than to be scared of. As such, she was the perfect role model of an American woman, and a perfect role model for the United States' efforts in France. That does not mean that she necessarily agreed with everything the US said and did. Although representing the US government, she was very much her own woman, frequently pushing the State Department on social and economic rights; she also criticized the Truman Doctrine and the Truman administration's record on civil and political rights.[63] Moreover, she encouraged critique of her opinions, believing that open, free debate was essential to democracy. Reactions to Mrs. Roosevelt's Paris talks suggest listeners were certainly not passive in the way they listened to and thought about what she said. Her performance appeared to have impact. VOA memos confirm the success of her broadcasts, praising her simple style and ability to explain complex ideas in words that everyone would understand. 'It is a voice, Europeans will tell you, that in recent months "has done more to create goodwill for the United States in Western Europe" than that of any other American.'[64] As a stateswoman, therefore, she was someone to be reckoned with. Both the US and the other nations of the world admired her for her leadership, without which 'the Declaration [of Human Rights] would not have been adopted and the Covenants on both civil and political rights as well as social and economic rights would not have been initiated'.[65] Without her books, columns, speeches, radio and TV appearances, ordinary citizens would not have been as knowledgeable about the UN and political and social issues. Without the broadcasts in Europe, many Europeans might have felt a little less hopeful about their future in a post-war world.

Notes

1. Press Release No. 1295, November 16, 1951. United States Delegation to the General Assembly of the United Nations. Eleanor Roosevelt Correspondence. UN Part I. Reel 26. 522–543. Middelburg: Roosevelt Study Center Collection.

2. Richard Gardner, ‘First Lady of the Voice of America’. *The New York Times*, February 3, 1952. Retrieved from ProQuest Historical Newspapers database.
3. The United Features syndicated almost-daily *My Day* columns ran from December 1935 to September 1962. The columns appeared in newspapers throughout the US.
4. Tona Hangen, ‘When Radio Ruled: The Social Life of Sound’, *American Quarterly* 66, no. 2 (2014): 465–76. doi:10.1353/aq.2014.0029.
5. Linda Risso, ‘Radio Wars: Broadcasting in the Cold War’, *Cold War History* 13, no. 2 (2013): 145–52. doi:10.1080/14682745.2012.757134.
6. 95.7% of households owned at least one radio in 1950. Figures cited in Steve Craig, *Out of the Dark. A History of Radio and Rural America* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2009), 81.
7. Statistics on radio and television 1950–60. *UNESCO Statistical Reports and Studies (1963)* (Paris: UNESCO, 1963).
8. UNESCO statistics.
9. Even by 1961 less than 20% of households in France had a television set whereas 80% owned a radio. See Raymond Kuhn, *The Media in France* (London: Routledge, 1995), 78.
10. For extended histories of the VOA, see for example Nicholas Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency. American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Robert William Pirsein, *The Voice of America. An History of the International Broadcasting Activities of the United States Government 1940-1962* (New York: Arno Press, 1979); Michael Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens. The Battles of Western Broadcasting in the Cold War* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997); Holly C. Shulman, *The Voice of America: Propaganda and Democracy, 1941-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992). Much of the literature on Cold War broadcasting concerns US and UK radio services to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. This paper, by considering the case of France, thus hopes to offer a new perspective.
11. Among the many scholarly sources on Eleanor Roosevelt worth studying are the biographies by Blanche Wiesen-Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt: 1884–1933*, vol. I (New York: Viking, 1992) and vol. II (1999); Joan Hoff-Wilson and Majorie Lightman, eds., *Without Precedent: The Life and Career of Eleanor Roosevelt* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984); Maurine H. Beasley, *Eleanor Roosevelt. Transformative First Lady* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas 2010); *The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project* from George Washington University (https://erpapers.columbian.gwu.edu/), started by women’s historian Allida Black, which gathers contributions from the most eminent scholars on Eleanor Roosevelt and aims to make available both digital and print editions of her papers, including all the *My Day* columns; and the outstanding reference work, Maurine H. Beasley, Holly Shulman, and Henry Beasley, eds., *The Eleanor Roosevelt Encyclopedia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001). On the post-WWII period of particular interest are Allida M. Black, *Casting Her Own Shadow: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Shaping of Postwar Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Jason Berger, *A New Deal for the World: Eleanor Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981) and Mary Ann Glendon, *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York: Random House, 2001). In addition, the biographies written by ER’s friend Joseph Lash—for example, *Eleanor and Franklin : The Story of Their Relationship, Based on Eleanor Roosevelt’s Private Papers* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1971), *Eleanor: The Years Alone* (New York: Norton, 1972), and *Love, Eleanor: Eleanor Roosevelt and Her friends* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982)—and Eleanor Roosevelt’s own extensive published writings offer much personal information. She wrote 27 books, including three memoirs (combined in 1961 into *The Autobiography of Eleanor Roosevelt* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers). None of the above (with the exception of Maurine H. Beasley, *Eleanor Roosevelt* and an entry ‘Radio Broadcasts’ by Paul Belgrade in Beasley, Shulman and Beasley, The *Eleanor Roosevelt Encyclopedia*) make more than a cursory mention of Eleanor Roosevelt’s radio appearances. For consideration of her work on radio, consult Maurine H. Beasley and Paul Belgrade ‘Eleanor Roosevelt: First Lady as Radio Pioneer’

(Paper presented at the 68th Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, August 1985) https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED258200.pdf; Maurine H. Beasley, *Eleanor Roosevelt and the Media. A Public Quest for Self-Fulfillment* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Jason Loviglio, *Radio's Intimate Public. Network Broadcasting and Mass-Mediated Democracy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Stephen D. Smith, *The First Lady of Radio: Eleanor Roosevelt's Historic Broadcasts* (New York: The New Press, 2014); Anya Luscombe, 'Eleanor Roosevelt as "Ordinary" Citizen and "Expert" on Radio in the Early 1950s', *SAGE Open* 4 (2014). doi:10.1177/2158244014551712, and Helen J. Wamboldt, 'A Descriptive and Analytical Study of the Speaking Career of Anna Eleanor Roosevelt' (PhD diss., Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 1952). Of these, only the latter two have substantive information about the Cold War period.

12. Susan Ware, 'Writing Women's Lives: One Historian's Perspective', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 40, no. 3 (2010): 413–35.
13. Susan Ware, *Modern American Women, a Documentary History* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002); Helen Laville, *Cold War Women. The International Activities of American Women's Organistations* (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 2002); Joanne Meyerowitz, ed., *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Post-War America 1945-1960* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1994).
14. Ware, *Modern American Women*, 206–7.
15. Jennifer De Forest, 'Women United for the United Nations: US Women Advocating for Collective Security in the Cold War', *Women's History Review* 14, no. 1 (2005): 62; Ware, *Modern American Women*, 207; Helen Laville, 'The Memorial Day Statement: Women's Organizations in the "Peace Offensive"', in *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe 1945-1960*, ed. Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 192; Specifically on Eleanor Roosevelt's involvement in the global campaign for nuclear disarmament, see Dario Fazzi, *Eleanor Roosevelt and the Anti-Nuclear Movement: The Voice of Conscience* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).
16. Beasley, *Eleanor Roosevelt and the Media*, 179.
17. Transcripts (including English translations) of the radio programs and official correspondence relating to the programs used here are available on microfilm at the Roosevelt Study Center in Middelburg, the Netherlands in the *The Papers of Eleanor Roosevelt 1945-1962 Part I: United Nations Correspondence and Publications*. For the 1951–52 radio commentaries, the texts are available in English as "Press Releases" from the US delegation to the UN. Written transcripts in French are available for only some of the commentaries. Letters were sent to Mrs. Roosevelt in both French and English, but excerpts used here are those that were translated into English by the VOA and included in their memos and reports. Unfortunately, there are no audio recordings. The US state department documents were consulted at the National Archives at College Park, MD.
18. For a consideration of how Eleanor Roosevelt used the medium of radio to balance the public and private, to be considered both an expert on all sort of issues while at the same time being embraced by people as just 'ordinary Mrs. Roosevelt', or 'one of them', see Luscombe, *Eleanor Roosevelt as Ordinary Citizen*.
19. Wiesen-Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt. Vol 1*.
20. Wiesen-Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt. Vol 1*; Tamara K. Hareven, 'ER and Reform', in *Without Precedent: The Life and Career of Eleanor Roosevelt*, ed. Joan Hoff-Wilson and Majorie Lightman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press1984), 204.
21. Wiesen-Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt, Vol 1*.
22. Beasley and Belgrade, *Eleanor Roosevelt*, 3.
23. Belgrade, 'Radio Broadcasts', 428.
24. AFRA was a labor union (in 1952 it merged with the Television Authority to become AFTRA); the AWRT was a nonprofit organization, originally part of the National Association of Broadcasters, but independent since 1950.

25. Eleanor Roosevelt, January 26, 1949 Eleanor & Anna Roosevelt Program. ER recorded speeches and utterances. 80–5 (22). FDR Library, Hyde Park. Listeners to this 1948–49 program heard ER's daughter Anna broadcast from Hollywood and Mrs. Roosevelt from New York or wherever in the world she happened to be at that time.
26. Eleanor Roosevelt. September 1, 1951. *My Day*. Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Projects. George Washington University.
27. Cull, *The Cold War*, 65.
28. Ibid, 55.
29. Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens*, xiv.
30. The United States Information Service, or USIS, was the cultural arm of the United States Information Agency which used movies, magazines, radio, libraries, etc. The United States Information and Educational Exchange Act, better known as the Smith-Mundt Act, enacted in 1948, provided for more funding for international public diplomacy activities including the Voice of America, but also prohibited the broadcasting of VOA programs within the United States.
31. Rebecca J. Pulju, *Women and Mass Consumer Society in Postwar France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 101; Gabriella Gribaudi, Olivier Wieviorka, and Julie le Gac, 'Two Paths to the Same End? The Challenges of the Liberation in France and Italy', in *Seeking Peace in the Wake of War. Europe 1943-47*, ed. Stefan Ludwig Hoffmann et al. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015), 91–116; Michael Creswell '"With a Little Help from Our Friends": How France Secured an Anglo-American Continental Commitment, 1945-54', *Cold War History* 3, no.1 (2002): 1. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080.713999975.
32. Creswell, 'With a Little Help from our Friends', 23.
33. $12.3 billion was spent on aid to the whole of Europe, more than 2 billion going to France, see William I. Hitchcock 'The Marshall Plan and the Creation of the West', in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 157.
34. Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens*, xv.
35. Robert Gildea, *France since 1945* (Oxford: OUP, 2002). See also Alessandro Brogi, *Confronting America. The Cold War between the United States and the Communists in France and Italy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).
36. Cull, *The Cold War*, 55.
37. The birth rate in 1946 and 1950 was nearly 21 per thousand, compared to 15 per thousand before the war, see Jean-Pierre Rioux, *The Fourth Republic 1944-1958* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 351–2.
38. Kelly R. Colvin, '"A Well-Made Up Woman": Aesthetics and Conformity in Postwar France', *French Historical Studies* 38, no. 4 (2015): 691–717. doi:10.1215/00161071-3113863.
39. Compare for example Finland 1906, Germany 1918, UK 1918, and The Netherlands 1919. Women in the US gained the right to vote in 1920. France was earlier than for example Italy 1945, Belgium 1948, Greece 1952 and Switzerland 1971.
40. Rainbow Murray, 'Fifty Years of Feminizing France's Fifth Republic', *Modern & Contemporary France* 16, no. 4 (2008): 469–82. For a description of the women's movement in France in the early years after World War II, see Sylvie Chaperon, '"Feminism Is Dead. Long Live Feminism!" The Women's Movement in France at the Liberation, 1944-1946', in *When the War Was Over*, ed. Claire Duchen and Irene Bandhauer-Schoffman (London: Leicester University Press), 146–60.
41. Rebecca Pulju, 'Consumers for the Nation. Women, Politics, and Consumer Organization in France, 1944-1965', *Journal of Women's History* 18, no. 3 (2006): 68–90.
42. Pulju, *Women and Mass Consumer Society*, 10.
43. Ibid. 8.
44. The speech at the Sorbonne on 28 September 1948, entitled The Struggles for Human Rights, laid out the importance of human liberty to settle political differences. ER told her audience she had chosen to speak in France 'because here in this soil the roots of human freedom have long ago struck deep and here they have been richly nourished.' Digital copy available from

the Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project, https://www.gwu.edu/~erpapers/documents/speeches/doc026617.cfm. William Tyler of the US Foreign Service wrote to ER after her Sorbonne Speech to thank her and said: 'you moved your audience tremendously. You have struck a powerful blow for Franco-American relations and for the cause of freedom.' UN Part I. Reel 7. 226, Roosevelt Study Center Collection, Middelburg, the Netherlands.
45. Chaine Parisienne (Paris II network, regional program of Radio Diffusion Française (RDF), 8.45 pm
46. Interview with Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt – transcript 8 November 1948. Eleanor Roosevelt Correspondence UN Part I, Reel 7: 0122. Middelburg: Roosevelt Study Center Collection.
47. Derek W. Vaillant, 'Sounds from the Life of the Future', in *Radio's New Wave. Global Sound in the Digital Era*, ed. Jason Loviglio and Michele Hilmes (New York: Routledge, 2013): 180–93.
48. Colvin, 'Aesthetics and Conformity', 699.
49. Gardner, 'First Lady of the Voice of America'.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.; Bill Kirkpatrick, 'Voices Made for Print', in *Radio's New Wave. Global Sound in the Digital Era*, ed. Jason Loviglio and Michele Hilmes (New York: Routledge, 2013): 106–25.
52. Press Release No. 1295, November 16, 1951. United States Delegation. The French National Network was Radio Diffusion Francaise, or RDF.
53. Ibid.
54. For a discussion of listening publics at various times of day, see for example Donna Halper, *Invisible Stars. A Social History of Women in American Broadcasting* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2001).
55. Translation L'Humanité 17 December 1951. Enclosure D. to Despatch No 1667 of 26 December 1951 from American Embassy, Paris, France. Copy in Summary of USIS Radio Unit Activities 1 December 1951, through 31 May 1952.
56. Summary of USIS Radio Unit Activities 1 December 1951, through 31 May 1952.
57. Ibid.
58. Risso, 'Radio Wars', 149.
59. Memorandum. January 5, 1952. Eleanor Roosevelt Correspondence. UN Part I. Reel 10. 584. Middelburg: Roosevelt Study Center Collection.
60. Letter from Hulten to Barratt, 7 January 1952, Box 2390, RG 59, 511.5141, NARA, College Park, Maryland.
61. Laville, 'The Memorial Day Statement', 193; see also Blanche Wiesen-Cook, 'Turn toward Peace', in *Without Precedent: The Life and Career of Eleanor Roosevelt*, ed. Joan Hoff-Wilson and Majorie Lightman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 108–21.
62. Kate Lacey writes about the 'special relationship' of women to radio in for example Kate Lacey, 'Continuities and Change in Women's Radio', in *More Than a Music Box: Radio Cultures and Communities in a Multi-Media World*, ed. Andrew Crisell (New York: Berghahn Books 2003), 145–64.
63. Allida Black 'Introduction', in *The Papers of Eleanor Roosevelt, 1945-1962. Part II: United Nations Correspondence and Publications* (Bethesda, MD: UPA Collection, 2003).
64. Gardner, First Lady of Voice of America. A note of caution is in order here: Richard Gardner who wrote the glowing article in the *New York Times* about Mrs. Roosevelt's VOA broadcasts, was a great admirer of the First Lady. In ER's files there are several items of correspondence between them and several months after the article appeared he visited Hyde Park.
65. Black, 'Introduction'.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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