

Cottrell, Ann 1947

ER, Box 374

Cottrell

Dear Ann

Your letter was deeply interesting to me and I do not wonder that you could not write anything very encouraging I can tell you that what you wrote about China is only too familiar to me as I have had similar reports on China and in the countries you mention.

It is difficult to keep one's perspective and looking back over the ages, realize that one is only one little speck in the long and slow process of the development of man. Man has gone forward physically and scientifically rather quickly and much more slowly socially. Whether he can catch up in time to ward off self-destruction is something none of us knows.

I shall look forward to seeing you when you come back. I think in England you will get a sense of a weary people but a more steadfast and reassuring people. If you were at home you would not feel reassured by our domestic picture and yet basically I think we are sound.

*I just received it by way of ... I am delighted to have it and know
With every good wish we all will enjoy it.*

*C/O Cookes
Rome, Italy*

Sinai Desert
Egypt
29 September, 1947

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt --

Many times in the last twenty months I have started letters to you, but never finished or posted them. I guess this was because I was afraid you would not find them sufficiently interesting and that what I had to say you knew already. I am still running that same risk. I can tell you little that is cheering, everything will be in the negative, but I feel compelled to tell you how sick at heart I am by the sight of our sick world. So rare today are any indications of human kindness and love that whenever I do see them my eyes fill with tears.

As you may recall I went to China in January, 1946 as public relations officer for UNRRA on a leave of absence from the New York Herald Tribune. I went very ill-prepared for the job -- my knowledge of China and its people, top-heavy bureaucracy, black markets and corruption was next to nothing. I had only my background of eight years in newspaper work and starry-eyed idealism to offer. I went with visions of UNRRA rushing to the rescue of starving, battle-torn China.

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about in jeeps and staff cars; godowns and warehouses filled with all kinds of equipment that was rotting away because it was being hoarded until the day UNRRA left. I didn't expect when I went to the famine area last summer to find only two UNRRA workers standing by helplessly without any food or medical supplies while people dropped to their death in the streets. Nor did I expect to find UNRRA ships headed toward the famine area with a cargo of tar paper instead of food. I didn't expect my reports on the severity of the famine and the shortage of supplies to be either dis-believed or ignored by the front office, either. But all of this is true -- there is much more that I could tell you about conditions as I saw them from Canton to Harbin.

In all fairness UNRRA cannot be blamed solely (just for its lack of guts) as the original agreement between UNRRA and the Chinese government doomed the thing from the start.

As PRO I felt that my duty to the taxpayers of the member nations was to make all information accessible to correspondents - not just the rosey side. I had a running fight with the Chinese National Relief and Rehabilitation Administration public relations office, as it insisted on putting out stories that glossed over the truth or were down-right lies.

I was not particularly popular with the UNRRA administration leaders, especially Major General Glen E. Edgerton, the third chief of mission, who accomplished nothing so far as I could see. He was there to carry out the U.S. government's policy in China. What has happened since I left at the end of April and the office was

closing down and being given its fourth mission chief, I don't know as the newspapers in these other countries I have visited carry nothing on UNRRA in China.

Now I have been traveling for five months and still have about three months to go if I am to see several countries in Europe and if my money holds out. I am doing very little writing for publication, mostly because I feel too ill-informed to set myself as any kind of authority and because I never seem to find time. I just spend all of my time digging for facts and figures and trying to learn to know the peoples of the countries I visit. My stops so far have been Hong Kong, Saigon, Singapore, Penang, Bangkok, Rangoon, Calcutta, Darjeeling, Delhi, Kashmir, Delhi again, Agra, Bombay, Aden, Suez, Cairo comes next and then possibly Greece, Italy, France, the United Kingdom.

Well after being in China, S.E. Asia, India and now Egypt and talking to peasants of the land, shopkeepers, ricksha coolies, journalists and export-importers, students, politicians, prime ministers, Communists and reactionaries, untouchables and Bhamins, women in purdah and women on the platform, miners and shepherds, butchers and priests, refugees and pulka sahibs, I would say that four major impressions emerge.

The first is: the majority of these billion inhabitants of the countries I've visited are too ignorant, too worried about where they'll get their next bowl of rice to care really about what

is happening in their governments or internationally. (For example, the peasant tenant farmer in India wasn't in the least interested or thrilled by the transfer of power from Britain.) But these people must not be discounted in our calculations as they offer a good breeding ground if the seeds are sown the right way.

The second is: despite the ignorance and apathy of the masses, Asia is awakening. The middle class, although it is small, is trying to learn and figure out why it doesn't have a higher standard of living. This group is influencing labor, believe it or not. If this group and the members of the vast illiterate numbers ~~xxx~~ who are exposed to a political ideology or philosophy that will help them and their families are quick to become its followers. Thus, the Japanese theory of Asia for the Asiatics and Soviet Russia's anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, and pro-common man philosophy have merged together in the mind of the average guy and he is influenced to a degree that the democracies, who ~~xxx~~ are still asleep, cannot imagine.

The third, Mrs. Roosevelt, is: despite the popularity of President Roosevelt's four freedoms and Wilkie's "One World," there is little faith in the United Nations organization. For one thing the people know too little about it and those who do know are disillusioned. You mention UN and they say, " Don't make me laugh."

The fourth point is: those who think about other than next season's crop and the next bowl of rice are firmly convinced that a war between the Soviet Union and the United States is inevitable. Some think it is coming within a year; others give it three to five years.

Almost everyone seems to agree that two conflicting, aggressive philosophies cannot live together in one world. There are many who say America should use the atomic bomb now before it is too late (this comes mostly from a certain type of middle-income Britisher who now believes "Hitler was right.")

The people of the disputed parts of the world feel that they have to choose between the economic imperialism of America and the ideological cum economic imperialism of the Soviet Union. This subject of economic imperialism may be the heart of the problem, but in a letter like this, which is already quite long enough, I will not burden you with my views.

Faced with a choice between the two worlds, the peoples of Asia are inclined to lean toward Communism. You can't much blame them when you know the treatment they have received at the hands of the colonial-imperialists such as Britain, France and Holland. We are also forcing them into the other camp by our insistence in supporting such reactionaries as the Chiang Kai-Shek government in China.

Although I am opposed to foreign powers engineering coups d'etat within other countries, I wish that in some way the middle of the road groups in China and India could get on top so we could support them materially and morally. State controlled capitalism or moderate socialism seems to be the only answer, but the forces on both sides seem to be strong, consequently such groups as the Chinese Democratic League or the Congress Socialist party in India have a slim chance.

But it looks as if it is impossible to liberalize these reactionary governments, such as in China despite General Marshall's efforts, therefore we are driving people into the arms of Communism. We are, I believe, squinting any friendship or admiration these people of the East ever had for us. Our stock is sinking like a thermometer placed in a blizzard. Congress' stupid curtailment of USIS -- which was trying to salvage something of the reputation Mr. Roosevelt gave us -- has certainly made matters worse. People do not know our aims. (Frankly, I don't know what they are myself, anymore.) but Russia is telling them what ^{she is} ~~they are~~ convinced are our aims. Lenin knew what he was talking about when he once said, "The East will help us to success in the West."

Well, none of this is a very happy report, is it? Somebody has failed somewhere, or is it we have all failed everywhere? Or perhaps we are just going through our destined evolution toward self-destruction.

Although I have witnessed far too often in the last twenty months man's inhumanity to man, I'll never stop believing in the essential goodness of man. And let me tell you its damn difficult when you get around these Egyptians who seem to be motivated by everything that smacks of greed and lust. But how could I help when I have had starving Chinese with not a bowl of rice left, only weeds of the field left to eat, offer me their last cup of tea; or when I have a penniless Yugoslav refugee girl encamped on the desert for four years embroider a handkerchief for me? There are, thank goodness these instances of the little people of the world acting as the big people should.

I only wish that I could keep in close enough touch with the news to follow your activities closely. But from what I have heard you seem to be one of the rare people who is taking a sensible approach to the problems. Why can't Mr. Wallace do the same thing?

This letter has been more or less been written in bits and snatches, started on the Red Sea, written in the middle on the Sinai desert in an IRO Yugoslav refugee camp and finished up tonight in a hotel room at Shephard's in Cairo. Here I met a number of representatives of our great republic -- the armed services committee. I think it should be mandatory for every Congressman to spend a couple of months abroad in intensive study.

With the exception of Margaret Smith of Mainz, the group was certainly nothing in which to take any pride.

I would love to tell you all about the IRO camp, but this letter is already far too long. I have written a magazine article as a result of my ten days in the sands bordering the Suez Canal. I just hope to goodness I can place it, regardless of my fee; but I have a horrible feeling that the American reading public is fed up with refugees. At one time, during the UNRRA days, there were 35,000 Yugoslavs here; most of them were Partisans so didn't object to going home. The residue is anti-Tito. They are fine, strong courageous people and would be able to adapt themselves anywhere. Australia is taking some, but the U.S. still works on the quota system, so those who want to go to our promised land have a long wait. I was particularly impressed by two people there -- one an attractive little backed hunch-backed woman and the other a Sephardic Jewess from Sarajevo to whom Rebecca West devoted pages and pages in "Black Lamb and Grey Falcon" describing her beauty, her singing voice, charm, and grace and talent for living. I hope I can get these women jobs in the States and then find an immigration loophole to get them out.

I have just found out that it will be possible for me to go to Palestine, so I am am going at the end of the week and from there to Athens -- where I hope to get the low down on the situation -- and on to Rome. I want to get into Austria and Germany, too.

I don't know just what is going to come out of this two years of traveling around. I find so little time to do any magazine writing that I shall probably wrap it all up in a book, attempting to tell ~~me~~ ^{how} all this economic political mess really affects every-day living of the every-day sort of man and woman. A simple, human approach will drag in more readers than the best economic analysis in the world, don't you think?

I shall certainly look forward to seeing you again, Mrs. Roosevelt. I feel that I shall have a little bit more to offer since last we met.

Please be kind enough to give my regards to Miss Thompson.

Yours,

Ann Cottrell —

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The third: despite the popularity of President Roosevelt's four freedoms and Willkie's "One World" there is little faith in the United Nations Organization. For one thing the people know too little about it and those who do know are disillusioned. You mention UN and they say "Don't make me laugh".

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reactionary governments, such as in China despite General Marshall's efforts, therefore we are driving people into the arms of communism. We are, I believe, scuttling any friendship or admiration these people of the east ever had for us. Our stock is sinking like a thermometer placed in a blizzard. Congress' stupid curtailment of USIS - - which was trying to salvage something of the reputation Mr. Roosevelt gave us -- has certainly made matters worse. People do not know our aims. Russia is telling them what she is convinced are our aims. Lenin knew what he was talking about when he once said "The East will help us to success in the West".

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