

THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

April 20th, 1951

Description: In the opening segment, ER and Elliott Roosevelt respond to a listener's question about the best ways we can interpret deliberately misleading news from other countries. In the interview segment, ER and her guest, David Schonfield, the foreign editor for the *Financial Times*, discuss Britain's economy.

Participants: Eleanor Roosevelt, Elliott Roosevelt, Andrew Schonfield (foreign editor, Financial Times)

[ER:] How do you do? This is Eleanor Roosevelt speaking. It gives me great pleasure to visit with you as I do each day at this time from my living room atop the Park Sheraton Hotel overlooking New York. I am grateful for the many encouraging letters you send me and most happy that you find my guests both informative and entertaining, as I do. Now, my son Elliott, who assists me on these programs, will speak to you.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] All right, Mother. He's not only a guest on our program. He's also a guest in our country. His name: Mr. Andrew Schonfield. His job, which he tells us is also his hobby: foreign editor of the *Financial Times*, Great Britain's leading financial daily paper. Mrs. Roosevelt will introduce Dr. uh-- Mr. Andrew Schonfield a little later on in the program. First, though, there's some interesting mail to go over, and a message from our sponsors, who make this recorded program possible.

[Break 01:07-01:11]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Today, Mother, our letter comes from Mrs. Joseph La Cava of Redding Ridge, Connecticut. She writes, "In an effort to keep myself informed, I read a diversity of papers, magazines, and books. From the enclosed clipping, which appeared in the newspaper *Labor*, I learn of a speech by Justice [William O.] Douglas, which should have been front-page news, yet I have seen no mention of it in any New York newspaper. In the Saturday review of literature, I read a review which caused me to buy a book by Graham Peck, *Two Kinds of Time*, which tells of the author's travels in the interior of China during the Japanese invasion. To me, Mr. Peck's reporting has the ring of truth." Uh, "Kuomintang corruption, its misuse of American money and material, its tax collection in wheat in famine areas, are recounted in heartbreaking detail. On his return to America, Mr. Peck looked through files of the *Times* and the *Herald Tribune* for the period of his stay in China and found nothing but tributes to the courage and wisdom of the Kuomintang. Listening to the American arguments on China in the UN Security Council, there was little understanding of the real conditions. The fact is that Chinese people's hatred of the Kuomintang is deep and well-earned. How can we think clearly, or at all, when we get no news, garbled news, or deliberately misleading news?"

[ER:] Well, I think it's very unfortunate when we get deliberately misleading news and garbled news. I think Mr. Peck's book is a most interesting book, and I feel, with this lady, that it is a sincere and truthful book. I think we--all of us who knew China and have known China for many years, have known that China's government has always been a corrupt government. Uh what is known as "squeeze" has gone on in China for generations, and certainly we know also that the Generalissimo was unfortunately never able to bring about a government which did represent the various uh elements in--among the Chinese people and which instituted reforms. Now, I have lately found that he did permit um Jimmy [Y.C. James] Yen to put in reforms in two provinces, and they worked extremely well up to the time the Chinese communists came in-in, but that was not done by the government. It was done by a movement known as Mass

Education, of which Jimmy Yen was head, and the money for which came in part from the loans made to China by our government, in part from private individuals. And that was a pattern which has stopped today, but which could be used in all Asian and near-Eastern-- in all underdeveloped countries. Um but we cannot be surprised that the reforms brought about um, under the communists uh -- have met with Chinese approval. They needed them badly. Land [Elliott Roosevelt: General Asiatic approval, actually.]- - land reform. Yes, actually. Land reforms were very badly needed in China. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mmh.] Um now, I doubt very much whether the form of collectivization that is practiced in the USSR has been put into practice in China. Um But uh the general type of reform-orm has been started, and you can't blame them for feeling, if the police state doesn't at once uh become a potent factor, that they've got more than they've ever had before. And you heard um uh other people make speeches on this subject. I remember hearing um uh someone at a foreign policy meeting not long ago -- I don't know whether it was Mrs. [Vera Micheles] Dean, but someone, anyway um saying that the um um general feeling was that this uh communist government in China was perhaps the most efficient government the people had ever had. (6:29)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yes, but um I'd like to deal a little bit with the question raised in this letter of the fact that all this was going on under Chiang Kai-shek. Uh the American public was not informed of it, and uh in addition to that, it was capable of being secured -- the information about it -- as, uh for instance, the fact that Mr. Graham Peck was able to go in and travel all over China and gather the data for his book. And there have been others who have done the same thing. And uh -- yet no newspaper has played that up, and they -- the newspapers, as a general rule, are -- the majority of newspapers are carrying on a terrific campaign to have the United States back up uh Chiang Kai-shek. Again.

[ER:] Well, I suppose you would have to attribute to newspapers, perhaps, a certain slant of personal interest.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, uh is it possibly not so much a-a question of a slant of personal interest uh as the fact that maybe even our government officials were hopeful of obtaining a change on the part of Chiang Kai-shek's government and continued right straight through to the end to hope against hope [ER: Well, I think that's --] that these things would be corrected?

[ER:] I think that's true. There's a new book out by um uh Sumner Welles, I think, which says if we had backed [Albert Coady] Wedemeyer um and Chiang [Kai-shek] with full military power, uh probably he would have succeeded. Now, it's just a question of opinion, isn't it. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] We began by thinking he would succeed, and um then eventually General Marshall decided that he never would be able to make any reforms at all, and gave up uh the -- and I think probably by that time that's the way it honestly looked to General Marshall.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yes. Well uh --, was General Marshall's report in any-to any great extent different from Mr. Wedemey-General Wedemeyer's report?

[ER:] Well, I-I don't know, because I haven't um -- I don't remember reading anything about what General Wedemeyer wanted-ed, but in this book of Sumner Welles's, um apparently he has stated um that General Wedemeyer wanted to back um Chiang a great deal more strongly than we were backing him, and that had we done so, we probably would have succeeded.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mhm. Well, I --

[ER:] In-in fixing General-Generalissimo [Elliott Roosevelt coughs] Chiang as a permanent government.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well of course to me, um the whole thing sounds rather fantastic, and the -- the-in this latter day, looking back on it, when one considers that uh it was members of Chiang's own family who reap the greatest benefits as far as individual wealth and so forth went out of the uh monies that were fed into -- uh-uh into China by this country. [ER: well--] At least, that is what is reported.

[ER:] Yes, I don't know that, and I couldn't say that. I've heard that, but I don't know it.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yes. Well in other words, uh it's rather difficult for you to answer Mrs. La Cava as to the real reasons why the news has been garbled, or we've received no news or deliberately misleading news -- m-maybe not deliberately but misleading news, anyway -- uh on all of this terrific question in the far east. (10:51)

[ER:] Yes, I think it is.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Uh well for instance uh I am uh particularly interested in uh-uh Mrs. Dean, who I think uh has a very interesting slant on the attitude of mind of the Asiatic nations other than communist China toward China. Do you think that uh Mrs. Dean, in-in her attitude, should receive a great deal of attention from the American press?

[ER:] Well, yes, I think she should be reported. Of course, she has through the Foreign Policy Association, um a limited audience, and their publications will carry what she -- what her impressions were. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mm.] Um but I think that she should uh get a certain amount of attention in the press.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mhm. Well, I think that that uh answers as far as we can uh this very interesting letter from Mrs. La Cava. So I think now we'll turn it over to our announcer.

[Break 11:54-12:17]

[ER:] On several of my programs, I have mentioned the state of austerity the English people are in, with particular reference [Elliott Roosevelt coughs] to their personal deprivations, and many of my listeners have commented upon it by letter. So today I am very happy to have with me a visitor from England who can tell us some of the reasons behind this, and also exactly what their whole economic picture is. He is Mr. Andrew Schonfield, foreign editor of the British publication *Financial Times*. I present to you Mr. Schonfield.

[Andrew Schonfield:] Well, Mrs. Roosevelt, it's very nice to be here. This is one pleasure I hadn't looked forward to.

[ER:] Well, I'm very glad to have you. And first, Mr. Schonfield, I would like you to tell our listeners what brings you to this country.

[Andrew Schonfield:] Um what I hope to be able to do is to um explain to people in this country what's happening in Britain, particularly so far as economic affairs are concerned. Uh I think one tends -- when events are moving as fast as they are at the moment, one tends to get rather remote one from the other. And uh-uh this might help -- one of the small things, it might help to bring us a little closer again.

[ER:] Well, are you going to make speeches?

[Andrew Schonfield:] Yes, I am going to um do a tour, which uh will take me mainly uh to Ohio and then to the South.

[ER:] And then to the South? Um will you go into the West at all or the Middle-West? Uh more than-more than Ohio. I mean Illinois and Indiana, so forth.

[Andrew Schonfield:] No, I'm afraid not. I haven't really got the time. It's one of the things I wanted to do, but can't.

[ER:] You can't. Um well, now we here in America find it hard to imagine people having to live on such short meat rations as you have in England. Um What happened to cause this terrible reduction in the British meat ration?

[Andrew Schonfield:] Well, this is a-a-a complicated and painful problem for us. Um what we have is about ten cents worth of meat each week at the moment, um and this ceases to be a joke after you've been doing it for about four weeks. Um Essentially, it's this: that uh we produce very little meat at home, um and uh our main source of meat abroad was Argentina, and we had an argument with the Argentine about the price we were to pay for this meat. This happened last year, and um we wanted a lower price, and our argument didn't get any stronger as world prices rose. However, the government stuck to this point, and uh there came a point in which the Argentine just cut off meat supplies altogether. Now we're negotiating with them and will probably have to give them a higher price.

[ER:] That's um -- in a way what happens internally here. Uh When I've talked about this before, some of my listeners have pointed out that many people in this country are getting not much more actual meat, not because of the shortage but because of the prohibitive prices. Now um, will this mean, if you-if you have to pay more -- it'll mean that people won't actually get anymore who can't afford to pay a higher price?

[Andrew Schonfield:] Yes, Mrs. Roosevelt, that is the crucial point. Um the government at home has been trying to keep the cost of living down, a-and in the course of it perhaps has put its foot out wrong, trying to do it so hard that in the end our suppliers refuse to give us anything at all, so that we weren't awfully clever about this. But the intention, the primary intention, was to keep prices down, and they have been kept down fairly well so far as food is concerned. Consumer goods are rising, fairly rapidly as they are here, but food isn't too bad.

[ER:] Um [clears throat] well, uh I-I wonder whether you can, when world prices rise, keep down uh your-your own prices.

[Andrew Schonfield:] Yes, well we-we have, too, a subsidy system. We've got a-an arrangement whereby a-a fairly large sum each year goes to maintain al-a-a-a fairly low price um for certain essential foods. But as you say, when prices are rising as fast as this, and the total sum we've got available for subsidies is fixed, um ultimately prices will have to rise. And they are doing so now, and people are extremely worried at home about this question. (17:06)

[ER:] Well, you're going into a great defense program which involves billions of dollars of expenditure. Um will this further decrease the British standard of living and add to the difficulties of the housewife and of the man in the street?

[Andrew Schonfield:] It certainly will, um but I think -- uh i-if I am to try and answer that uh exactly, one really ought to divide the problem into two parts, [ER: Mhm.] uh so far as food is concerned and other things. So far as food is concerned, certainly prices will rise, but there's no reason I think to expect that there will be greater shortages, on the contrary, um production of food Europe, from where we try to get a lot of food, is going up. [ER: Mhm.] And we've every reason to expect that we'll get our share of that.

Um as far as the other things are concerned, I-I-I-I think we're-we're-we're going to have a lot of trouble in the next few months.

[ER:] You mean your consumers' goods are going to --

[Andrew Schonfield:] Our consumer goods, yes.

[ER:] Well, that's going to-that's going to really um go up very high. Well now [clears throat] that, in a way, um has been artificially controlled because of your drive for export and for dollars, hasn't it?

[Andrew Schonfield: Yes.] So that is-is tied um in a way to your dollar shortage.

[Andrew Schonfield:] It is indeed. Um and-and that is right at the heart of it, really, Mrs. Roosevelt. The point is this: we expect that as our rearmament program goes forward um we're going to have to use a great deal of our engineering and metals-making capacity. [ER: Your essential materials, too.] Y-yes, our essential materials and our resources in um factory equipment and labor uh for rearmament. Now it also happens that our exports are very heavily dependent on these very engineering goods. We are--Britain is a very great exporter of engineering goods, vehicles, machinery, and so on. Now there we're up against it. If and when --

[ER:] If it goes into your-your program of-of armament, it can't be exported. [Andrew Schonfield: Precisely.] And that will bring -- uh and also it will mean uh fewer consumers' goods at home and higher prices for consumers' goods at home.

[Andrew Schonfield:] Yes, well the way that go-to take the-th story a little further, what happens is if we lose the engineering exports, we try to make it up with consumer goods exports like clothing, pottery, um that sort of thing. And, to the extent that we export those, is best for the home market, just that.

[ER:] And that means at home you-you not only don't have them, but they are exorbitant in price.

[Andrew Schonfield:] Exactly.

[ER:] That isn't a very happy picture for the um British [ER laughs] citizen, is it? Um well now your British budget, of course, uh will not come out 'til next month, but can you make any predictions about it?

[Andrew Schonfield:] Oh, dear. That really is difficult to do. [ER laughs] I'd like to be able to make predictions about it. I'd like to make-to be able to make hopeful ones. But I can't see how I can, because uh having got myself into this position of explaining that we've to consume less, obviously the budget has got to be so designed as to force us to consume less. That seems to me the story.

[ER:] Ah that is always uh theoretically very um logical, but it's really pretty hard when you begin to carry it out and actually make-uh make it impossible for people to buy. Um already your-your personal income tax, your direct taxation um on the individual income is very high. Can you increase that, or-or must -- uh is that about as high as you can carry? (21:20)

[Andrew Schonfield:] Well, it was a-a little higher. It was ten percent higher during the um extreme pressure of the war-of the last war.

[ER:] Yes, but people will bear things in-in the midst of a war. Now, what we're asking of people, both in your country and in ours, is to bear things which they've born in wartime but to do it uh in order to keep

the peace. And um that I-I think is asking a great deal of people, and I'm just wondering how hopeful you are that your people will do it. (21:56)

[Andrew Schonfield:] Yes. Well, I-I th-I think it's partly a-a psychological problem. If you can make the maintenance of peace uh-as dramatic and objective as winning a war, then you've got somewhere. But I know this is very difficult thing to do, and I think um it will be hard to raise direct taxation in Britain. Though I can't see, from the sheer arithmetic of the problem, how you get by without raising direct taxation.

[ER:] Well, we here in America feel that we're pretty heavily taxed um not only on income but uh by hidden taxes. Um how does our burden compare with that of the British, meaning, of course, the individual burden?

[Andrew Schonfield:] Well I-I-I'm only learning about American hidden taxes, but I'm awfully pleased to find how cheap cigarettes are here by comparison with us. We seem to be paying um uh something like uh uh oh, rather more than half a dollar per twenty, and um the-much the greater part of that consists of tax. Um similarly, whiskey, of course, is right out of any ordinary man's life altogether.

[ER:] Uh so that uh you feel that um we still have a good deal easier time than you have in Great Britain?

[Andrew Schonfield:] Well, now you're getting me into making invidious comparisons. [ER: Comparisons.] I'm just enjoying your good time.

[ER and Andrew Schonfield laugh]

[ER:] You're just enjoying being here. I see. Well, that's a nice way to have you feel. And now, I'm sorry, but we have to let our announcer uh say a few words, and we'll be right back.

[Break 23:37-23:46]

[ER:] I have been wondering whether uh there wouldn't be some way of um having some kind of individual contacts between um the housewife in this country and the housewife abroad by actually um sending things that we did have in greater quantity here. I remember being very much surprised at one point in the war to discover that Queen Mary would like very much as a gift uh-uh some rice. [ER and Andrew Schonfield laugh] It never occurred to me [Andrew Schonfield: Yes.] that Queen Mary didn't have the rice she really wanted to have! And uh it occurred to me there must be a great many other women at that time who would have been very glad of a gift of rice. And I wondered if that might not be not at all an economic uh-um perhaps uh discovery, but a-a discovery in friendship that might be very valuable if they did sometime exchange things.

[Andrew Schonfield:] That's a delightful thought. I'm sure my own wife would be awfully glad to be on the receiving end of this and give what she could. [ER laughs] But I'm not sure that we could get awfully far with the sort of troubles we're going to have in the next few months, and possibly years --

[ER:] By anything that weren't on a personal basis of that kind. [Andrew Schonfield: No, I don't.] I don't suppose so. Well now, on the subject of essential raw materials -- metals and sulfur, et cetera -- can you explain how it is that an element such as sulfur, for example, has become such an important topic?

[Andrew Schonfield:] Yes, it has become a terribly important topic and one we-we-we never even thought about much before. The point, I think, is that uh there are-there is only one major source of sulfur left in the world, and that's the United States. There's a little from Italy, but we depend on the United States, and

as I understand, the resources are being depleted. The others ways of getting the sulfuric acid haven't been develop with the speed that uh one would have hoped, partly because of post-war reconstruction of so many things one had to get on with. This one went by the board rather. And, furthermore, at the moment, um our imports of sulfur from the United States have been cut. You're not giving us as much as we got last year, um you were going to give rather less than you are now going to. Uh What happened was um uh you first imposed a rather heavy cut. We were very indignant about that, and asked you to give us some more, which you've done. But it's still very, very tight. And sulfuric acid enters into almost every single industry. And uh some industries, like rayon, for instance, um which we don't put at the-right at the top of essentiality, is already suffering a cut in production as a result of it in England.

[ER:] Yes, I see. Um I uh I don't think many people had given much thought to that particular point. I didn't realize that it had uh become as important. Um I suppose there are -- uh the priority of essentials must be one of the most difficult things to decide.

[Andrew Schonfield:] Frightfully, at the moment.

[ER:] Uh how-how have you gone about that? Have you --

[Andrew Schonfield:] Well, we really haven't gone very far-- let me be quite honest with you. When you had -- during the war, you see, you got this strange situation, which is so to say, uh three-quarters peace, quarter war. When you have an overriding priority in a war, it's fairly easy to work out your s-s-scale of priorities. But in peace, when you've got to-got so many competing items, and you've not just got to think what is number one, but what is number one, two, three, four, five, and six, it's immensely difficult. What we've done so far is with scarce materials, we've -- or the government has imposed a blanket prohibition on the production of certain items, uh much the same whereas you've done, I understand, with copper here. That's the method being adopted. But um, as far as proper priorities are concerned, it takes a lot of working out um when you've got -- I don't know if I can express this properly, when you've really got to decide what type of consumption is more important than another ty-kind of consumption.

[ER:] Yes, and also it must, in some cases, mean uh what type of businesses are you going to let be ruined, [Andrew Schonfield: Quite.] and what type are you going to keep going um just because you think they may become important again at some point? It's pretty tough on the people that you decide are going to be ruined. (28:56)

[Andrew Schonfield:] Yes, yes. Extremely tough on them. And um the-the-the-the system is bound to be ruthless. But as you said before, Mrs. Roosevelt, it's easier to be ruthless in the war, because you feel that your objective is overriding and is so throughout. In quarter war, it's much more difficult.

[ER:] I-I think it's much more difficult when you are um in a position uh of um of trying to educate people to the belief that this the only way in which they can preserve their existence [Andrew Schonfield: Yes.] uh through peace, uh and yet they are uncertain as -- of course, many of them are -- as to whether this is going to be an efficacious way or not. And I suppose that one of the things -- um the people that would suffer the most quickly are the small businesses, particularly small businesses that had been started since the last war, probably. And [coughs] -- at least that would be so with us. I find that one of the things that is coming in-- showing up now uh and making hardships is the recall into the services of people who served in the last war and had just got started in -- had married, had perhaps one or two children, had just got started in some kind of business, and [clears throat] had no one they could leave it to. It was very -- it's very personal, it's a small business. There's not [clears throat] -- so there's nobody to take over. Uh wives aren't always in the position of being able to take over their husband's business. [Andrew Schonfield laughs] And um that um -- in one way it solves the difficulty. The business goes for the board, and the man goes back in the Army eh. But in another way, in the long run, it makes what you fight for

less worth fighting for. And uh I-I wonder if that is one of the things that you have to um think through in Great Britain just as we have to think it through here. Now, I understand that you've been recalled to the Army um in common with a quarter million other young British men. When you get back from this trip you go to an Army camp, I'm told. Well, I suppose that this is in connection with the Class Z scheme, which is rather different from our American draft, and I wondered if you'd just explain to our listeners how it operates with you.

[Andrew Schonfield:] Yes, well, um I don't go straight back into the Army, Mrs. Roosevelt, I do get a-a couple of months to adjust myself to British way of life after this. Um and uh what happens in Britain, if I can try to explain it very briefly: we have had a conscript Army um ever since the war, and um recently the eighteen-month service, which every man does um when he reaches the age of eighteen or so, was um increased to two years' service. Um that has raised uh the manpower in our armed forces by something like ten to fifteen percent. Um still doesn't compare with your target figure; we've got about eight hundred thousand, we should have next month as against your target of about four million, I think that's right, isn't it? Um but, in addition to that, uh the idea is that we should have readily mobilizable um a reserve of men trained in the last war who could, at a moment's notice, in an emergency, do their stuff. Um now, uh the first quarter of a million or so of them um are to be called up this year and to create a couple of divisions which could then be mobilized rapidly, and I seem to have been caught on that ballot.

[ER:] [laughs] You're caught on that um -- well, now, that would mean that you'd be called for how long?

[Andrew Schonfield:] Um well, I should only do two weeks um this year. But what happens thereafter is uh-uh --

[ER:] Uh well, you do two weeks so to bring you up to date in training. [Andrew Schonfield: Yes.] [clears throat] Uh then you are available if it is necessary to call that extra number of people. [Andrew Schonfield: Yes.]. But [clears throat] that would, of course, from the point of view of many of the young men over here who write to me who were in the last war and who were-are now troubled because of their being called back into the regular service -- uh that would meet some of their difficulties, um because they would feel that they were keeping up but um uh were not being called 'til it was an absolute necessity.

[Andrew Schonfield:] Yes. Yes, well, I suppose that um at the moment, um we have an expanded-we have a very large reserve since we have been training large numbers of uh conscripts each year, and um it is mainly a question of bringing up to date [ER: Mhm.] um the people like myself. I've got to look at the instruments again, and look at the gun again, and see what it's like in now 1951. I saw it last in 1946 [laughter] and very glad to get rid of it.

[ER:] Very glad to get rid of it! Now you have to find out how it's changed. Well, uh this keeping the peace by preparing to be strong again is certainly a very difficult operation, but I hope we're successful, and I hope we find ways of making the peace a little more stable through the United Nations. Now I want to thank you very much for being here. I'm sorry we have to come to an end with our interview, but I'm very grateful to you, and I wish you luck in your trip in the United States.

[Andrew Schonfield:] Thank you very much, Mrs. Roosevelt. Great pleasure.

[Break 35:19-35:27]

[ER:] Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote like this about a place dear to our hearts, "Where we love is home, home that our feet may leave, but not our hearts." May we add to that truthful poetry a simple but exciting fact: that in America, home is a place entirely surrounded by freedom. Since earliest days,

mothers and fathers enjoying the blessing of this freedom have labored for it, and, as you know, not a few have died-- are dying for it. In their homes, they taught their children good citizenship along with goodness, taught them to love freedom while they're loving and serving both their neighbors and God, taught their children that helping to safeguard their American heritage of freedom is to serve abundantly. Indeed, one of the best and richest services permitted to you and to all of us in these days of tension is the daily faithful service of good citizenship. As we seize upon and act upon the familiar watchword, freedom is everybody's job.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] And now it's time to close the program and to remind you that you've been listening to the *Eleanor Roosevelt Program*, which comes to you each Monday through Friday at this same time. And this is Elliott Roosevelt speaking and wishing you all good day.

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