

## THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

February 20<sup>th</sup>, 1951

Description: In the opening segment, ER and Elliott Roosevelt respond to a listener's question about ER's opposition to Franco while she is willing to support communist Yugoslavia. In the interview segment, which was previously recorded from Washington, DC, ER and Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn discuss rearmament, the Marshall Plan, and United States foreign policy.

Participants: ER, Elliott Roosevelt, Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn

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

[Elliott Roosevelt]: Today, Mother will have as her guest the distinguished Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Honorable Sam Rayburn [1882-1961] from the great state of Texas. Mother was anxious to learn Mr. Rayburn's views about the extensive rearmament program we're launched upon. Before we hear their discussion, especially recorded in Washington for this program, I want Mother to tell our listeners why she's been reluctant to agree with those of our listeners who felt that the recognition of Spain should long ago have been a part of foreign policy. But before we get onto this controversial issue, a word from our sponsors.

(Break 1:09-1:21)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Our discussion subject today, Mother, comes from uh Mrs. Mildred Sablov of Brooklyn. Her letter says uh, "Dear Mrs. Roosevelt, today I heard you start to explain why you could favor alliance with Yugoslavia rather more readily than with Spain. You were out talked on this by [Edgar Ansel] Mr. Mowrer and your son, and then you sort of apologized by saying you know your at-attitude dates from the last war. Wasn't your attitude the more correct one regardless of how necessary it may be for us to use Franco now? Aren't the following items true and pertinent? One, Franco, representing a small, selfish minority in Spain, who stood to lose from the beginning democratic uh republic the Spanish people had elected, overthrew the elected government of the people. And has since stepped on every remaining vestige of the democratic spirit in Spain, and is certainly not known for his giving the Spanish people any social security. Two, Tito and his communists did not overthrow a democratic- democratically elected government but an outdated government that had fallen apart as a result of war, and has certainly never done anything serious for the age old problems of poverty and illiteracy in Yugoslavia. Three, Tito and his communists have begun social security measures to tackle these above mentioned problems. Four, the dissolution of the poor and the unemployed, which comprised the bulk of the people of Europe. If we support Franco to the extent of seeing no difference between his government and a socialist government like Yugoslavia's, we'll do untold harm. We have to tie up social security with democracy. They will get the idea that they must take a dictatorship to get it. I don't know if these reasons were behind your attitude. I think they must have been. Aren't they true? If so, I think it important that you speak out even though those around you say differently."

[ER:] Well, I didn't know you and Mr. Mowrer were really uh not in agreement with me. I don't think I really tried uh to completely state uh how I felt the other day. I feel as far as-as Franco is concerned, that he came to power as the result of friendship with Hitler and Mussolini and through the use of his armies -- of-of their armies. [Elliott Roosevelt: Their-their forces.] Uh I don't think it has -- uh his holding of power

uh has anything to do with any other question. I think it is simply a case of having become a dictator through his willingness to work with two other dictators and to accept help from their armies, and they were willing to give help because they felt that Spain would be useful to them if it was in the hands of a friendly dictator. Now, I have always held that um the loyalist government in its inception was a people's government and an effort of the part of uh the people to put in reforms and to have a government of their own. Now, the fact that many people feel that it became a communist-controlled movement has never seemed to me very extraordinary because uh all the rest of us, acting perhaps on the request of the League, or I uh I don't know just how it came about, but in any case uh we were all -- it may have been that some people had special interests -- but in any case all of us stayed neutral uh, and we didn't come to the help of the loyalist government. Uh therefore, when Russia did come to the help of that government, I was not deeply surprised that a great many people turned to Russia as a liberator. Now, someone the other day wrote in to me and said uh, "Ha! Ha! Here you are proved to be wrong because here is someone who became a communist in Spain, went to Russia when the Loyalist government was defeated, and now has come out against the communists."

That seems to me the most natural thing in the world to have happened. Because it was a natural thing to be grateful when the Russians said they would take their children and take care of them and give them an education. [Elliott Roosevelt: Yeah.] They-they said they would accept any people who wanted to be refugees. Here was a person who went to-- who believed all these promises and believed that he was going to a wonderful, free country. Now he's found it isn't a wonderful free country, but that doesn't prove to me that in its inception the loyalist movement wasn't a movement of the people of Spain, and I think the only way it does-- the only people who would believe that it really proved uh that originally that movement was a communist movement are those who don't know anything about history, [Elliott Roosevelt: Well, in actuality] and also don't know what happened when they went into Russia.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] And as I remember it in this particular person's testimony, which was given at a trial in Paris, uh he testified that there was no difference between Stalin and Franco. So that he uh -- while he uh repudiated the communism of-of uh Russia, at the same time he did not embrace Franco. (7:47)

[ER:] Well uh now therefore, uh while I have accepted the fact that having past a resolution against Franco in the United Nations and not having it remain simply a dead letter uh nothing happened. It now becomes necessary to-to have diplomatic relations with Franco. It's impossible to go on not having those with the government that is actually in power. Uh but uh that doesn't make me like a dictator um and a government that uh keeps people uh more or less as slaves [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] uh any better than I liked it before. Now to be quite frank, I don't call um uh Yugoslavia a socialist government, it is a communist government. And uh I think it would be foolish to say that it was anything else. But my feeling about Yugoslavia has been that there is a people -- the Spanish people I think have something of the same qualities -- they retain as individuals a certain dignity and a certain individual um desire for freedom. I think you have a feeling that that exists as you talk to both Spanish people and uh Yugoslavs. Uh now it may be that for that very reason, communism, which is, after all, more of an economic than a political uh process really, uh may be of value at the present time. I heard--one of the high officials the other day said something that interested me very much. Uh I cited the fact that I had asked someone to give me -- who was an official of the Yugoslav government -- to give me his day from early morning till night. And that I had been overcome by how hard that man works, and uh that it uh -- the effect that it had on me was to think, "Well gee, if anyone in a communist country works like that, we in the democracies had better get busy and work just as hard on the things we believe in."

And-and the man I was speaking to said, "Madame, you must remember that in Yugoslavia we have so few intellectuals, so few educated people that we have to work them to death, we can do nothing else. We don't have enough." And then I thought, well now how- how hard that must -- that's one of the things-and that's one of the things I've always believed: if you have an illiterate people, if you have a people who are badly off, there was something wrong with the government that brought that about. So it's not astounding that that government fell. And what you have to watch out for is if we are going to work

as we seem to be going to work with Tito's government that the people are getting something better. Uh if they are, it's going to be possible to live in the same world, and I think it could be possible to live the same world as the USSR if the people were getting constantly something better and the terror wasn't growing, and that would be so of any satellite and maybe so with many other places uh which we don't know so much about.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, I-I agree. Uh I feel that uh the whole problem of uh which kind of uh a dictatorship do you like best uh-uh--

[ER:] I don't like any dictatorship! I don't like any! [ER laughs]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] That -that- that's really basically the number one premise. The number two is that we have to work with both of these countries. And number three is that you have to uh-uh say which one you like more than another, you have to weigh how benevolent uh one dictator is over another. (12:31)

[ER:] Well, I think you have to do something more than that. Uh you and I know uh that we live in a democracy that has been in existence longer than any other democracy in the world. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] There is no other that has existed as long as ours has- [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] as ours has. And you know how hard it is to get everybody in our democracy actually to pull their weight in the boat.

[Elliott Roosevelt: Yes.] Well now, uh with that as a background, uh- uh just think for a minute what's got to happen in the countries where people can't read and write, where they have no social security eh, and they are suddenly offered a chance to eat when they haven't always had that chance to eat, and uh just think a little uh how far they have to go before they assume a responsibility of actually running a democracy. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] That's an awful long ways to go, and I couldn't help thinking at the ADA dinner the other night, when Dr. [Lambertus Nicodermus] Palar had listened to Mr. George Kennan's speech, and he turned to me and he said, "You're a very lucky country. Your people can think about freedom. In my country, I'm sure if anyone spoke to me -- anyone of my peoples spoke to me, it would be about where the next piece of bread was coming from." And I remembered back the days of the Depression, when I used to say to father that I thought there were people in this country who would sell their right to vote for a good square meal.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] I think that's entirely true. Well, I'm sorry that we can't go on further, but I think that our announcer has something to say.

(Break 14:36-14:42)

[ER]: Today, my guest is one of our most distinguished citizens and one of the outstanding personalities in our Congress. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you the Speaker of the House, Mr. Sam Rayburn. (14:57)

[Sam Rayburn] Well, Mrs. Roosevelt, I'm glad to be on this program with you, and especially I want to congratulate you on the work you are doing along these lines and along many others. I realized, I think as everybody does, that we live in a dangerous and-and I might say an unhappy and maybe a sad world. But I'm an unflinching optimist, I have to be, and I think in the long run, we're coming out of this thing all right. I think the strength and might, the vitality and the courage of the American people is going to assert itself in this time as it always has when a crisis--when we've faced a crisis. And I'm hoping that we've all, as one great statesman says, that we all think and act and talk together for the unity of our country and to try to lead those alive with us in the world uh along the lines that we think that is necessary in order for freedom in the world might continue to exist. And that unity is not uh easy to attain in a political organization and sometimes that political organization is reflected in the Congress of the United States,

both in the Senate and in the House. But it has appeared to me since this emergency arose that the representatives of the people have uh more clearly understood what we were probably uh up against than they did before the beginning of World War II. You remember that uh just a few weeks before Pearl Harbor that we came in one vote of taking our army down. (16:56)

[ER]: I remember well that vote.

[Sam Rayburn]: And uh that eh it was just a few weeks before, and it would have been a terrible thing if when the-the moment came instead of building up an army we been taking one down. And of course in democracies we all know that uh we don't like to maintain great military establishments in time of peace. But I think in the world in which we live today, the might of America has got to be shown in every way. (17:30)

[ER:] Well now, Mr. Speaker, that is something that um particularly interests me because you see, from the layman's point of view, we are asking of our people something we have never asked before. That is to maintain great military strength in the hope of preserving peace. We are asking them also at the same time to accept great personal sacrifices in order to be able to help bring up the economic conditions of other nations, some of which have um been badly hit in the last war when we, by the grace of God, were kept strong, and others who have never had a chance for development along certain lines of economic wellbeing. Now, this is something which is new to our people. It's uh it's an entirely new conception. Suddenly we are the only leaders and the only people able to do a great many things. And that demands great sacrifices from us and also great moral and spiritual leadership at home and abroad. At home, a realization that we stand as the exemplification to the world of what democracy means. And if we don't live up to its ideals, they look at it and they say, "Well, that's a failure." And they know everything that happens because we're an open country. And I just um think it's a tremendous thing we're asking, and I look upon it as um one of the things that our, particularly our Congress, our lower house particularly, um have a tremendous responsibility in explaining to our people, and you can speak about that better than anyone else, and I wonder if you'd be willing to say a few words about it.

(19:50)

[Sam Rayburn]: Well, I certainly would. Uh of course, uh you remember we have the Marshall Plan. It's to help the people who want to stand by us, and as you say we have been challenged with leadership, we are the leaders of the world or they have none. As I made uh a talk down in my country while ago, I said, "It matters not whether you love or hate Harry Truman, he's the President of the United States and he will be until January '53. He's the leader or we have none. He's the voice of America or America has no voice. He's the voice of the democracies of the earth." (20:25)

[ER:] And he has to make the ultimate decisions.

[Sam Rayburn:] And they are terrible decisions [ER: Terrible!] that he has to make. Now the way I look at it is this, I think a representative of the people should be truly representative. I've always made it a practice, if I may uh-uh be personal for a moment, when Congress recesses or adjourns, I go home. I live out on a broad highway and everybody knows I'm home. They come in and they give me their ideas and I give them mine. And we don't have much misunderstanding uh down in that country because I carry back to them what I learn here. I think they have a right uh to have access to me, and it certainly does me a great deal of good to have access to them. Now, oh we have, of course, made great sacrifices by putting up these billions of dollars for the Marshall Plan. Our people are very frightened about communism, of course we--everybody is throughout the length and uh breadth of the earth, but I do not think that the American people knowing freedom as they have known it and uh knowing that uh communism is exactly

the opposite to freedom -- there's no such thing as freedom of speech, press, action or anything in communism.

A French senator came over here in nineteen hundred and forty-six. Soon after the war closed they were in bad shape: out of work, factories down, transportation gone, bridges, roads. At that time the communists uh had eighty-two members of the French Senate. That same senator came back in nineteen hundred and forty-nine and was speaking to me, and that was after the Marshall Plan had worked something like three years, helped them on their feet and they'd gone to work and they could do their business uh in-in the usual way. And by that election, twenty-two communists came to the French Senate. Well now, I-- in my opinion, if it hadn't been for our helpfulness in that way, why Italy, France, Belgium, and whatnot might have uh fallen into the arms of communism. Uh we've got to keep the people, in my opinion, who want to stand by us. We've got to help them in a way that will give them the ability to stand by us, and uh-and uh so that when the supreme moment comes when--if we must go to arms, that they'll be with us, and that we'll have some place, some toe hold in Europe or someplace else to fight this battle. (23:08)

[ER:] Well now, you go home and tell your people all these things that you actually have close contact with, and I think that is probably one of the obligations of a representative, and probably one of the best things that can happen in a democracy, where each of us has to carry a little responsibility ourselves, not only through our vote but through our lives every day, and we're helped to do it well if our representatives keep us in touch with the world. Now we have to uh have a break and um for just one minute we'll go off the air and come right back to this interview.

(Break 24:00-24:05)

[ER:] I'm very glad now to return to the interview with Speaker of the House, Mr. Sam Rayburn, and um as he comes from Texas, when he tells us that he talks to his people and that they think as he does because he's able to tell them of things at hand, we know that we're getting at a very important part of the country. And so now I want to come back for a minute, um Mr. Speaker, to the new role the United States has been obliged to assume in the world, and um how you think that you and the Congress can help us, the people, to understand uh what this means both in peace and in war. (24:59)

[Sam Rayburn:] Well, um I look upon it this way, as you say whether we wanted it or not, world leadership was thrust upon us. And if we are--live up to what I think we should, we've got to accept that challenge. Now um there are great many ways that people can serve. I feel this way about the present situation, that every man, woman, and child in America should realize that we're all in this thing together. It's going to be a long hard pull for the American people and the other democracies in the world, in my opinion, and we must, and I trust we will, uh lay aside petty politics and uh be statesmen in the true sense of the word, that is that we all join together to do the things that the combined judgement of our leadership thinks should be done in order to preserve our democracy and also to be the light, and the help, and the hope of people who want to have freedom and uh and liberty throughout other sections of the world.

The other day we had a very good example and I--it-it thrilled me. Uh the Committee on Armed Services brought in a bill authorizing two billion dollar appropriation to help the Navy, Naval Air Force, and so forth, and so forth. And we called the roll on it and 365 men and women in the House of Representatives voted for it, and the no's were none. That's getting to a unity--[ER: That's great unity.] That's getting to a unity, uh and uh of course in doing these things uh we've got to forget some of these local matters, I think. They're necessary and all that. But the big job now is to the raise money and the American people have got to suffer; they've got to make great sacrifices, because we've got to raise more money than we've ever raised before. If this thing is to go on, it's going to cost billions upon billions of dollars. But I believe when the American people know what their duty is that they are going to respond. I-I've been in politics since I was twenty-four years of age, continuously in holding a legislative

office. But I thank God every day that I haven't lost confidence in folks. I believe earnestly and honestly that ninety-eight and a half percent of the American people have more good in them than they do bad, and when properly appealed to, they respond in peace or in war. (27:47)

[ER:] I think it's great deal in their real understanding. Now I have had some letters uh just lately, which repeat something which was written in by certain women, mothers, um at the beginning of the last war. And um I uh I sometimes wonder whether we don't um perhaps overlook the need for explanation of certain things. Now, at the beginning of the last war, a number of women wrote me and said, "We will never consent to our boys going to fight outside of our country. We will defend our shores to the last ditch but we would never have our boys go outside of our country." Now of course, they had no realization then of what going outside of their own country would mean to their own country. They uh -- if our boys hadn't fought far away from their own land, we would know today what war on our own doorstep meant, and we would not be able to take the--uh face the fact that we're going to do the things, that we are going to do because we wouldn't have the wherewithal. I saw, I don't know whether or not you saw the other day, but I saw that in Great Britain, which has never gone off its war-time restrictions, they were cutting the meat ration again by 20 percent. When I was there six months ago, the weekly meat ration was the thighs of one chop, now since that time it's been cut 60 percent! [ER laughs] Now, I just think that we have to understand what fighting away from our shores did for us. And when I get letters today I feel that that lesson has not been taken home by the representatives to their people. Um because that's part-of-of the job of a representative, and our representatives must understand that, and the mothers need comfort, they need help today to understand, um because it's awfully hard to send your boys out to defend your country. But nevertheless um we -we must really understand what we've been saved from and why today we are the nation that can take leadership.

(30:33)

[Sam Rayburn:] Well, that is certainly correct. I have um letters from mothers along that line, or did have them, but now I get many letters from mothers and others saying, "Don't draft the eighteen year olds." Well there's nobody in Congress that wants to draft anybody. Uh and it's the sternest necessity that we've ever enacted, this Selective Service Law, and kept it in effect and revived it this time. Now I am not for drafting eighteen years old, or nineteen years old, or twenty years old unless it's necessary to build this thing, to where we can send an army to other places and fight these battles, and uh push back this uh wave of communism and dictatorship and desperado-ism. And as you say, if we don't fight it there, we'll one day have to fight it here. [ER: Well, Mr. Speaker--] We might find ourselves in the same condition then that England and these other countries are in, and instead of having all the beef, and all the pork, and all the butter, and eggs, and milk that we want to eat here, and bread, we may be in the shape they're in because somebody would be here stamping our fields out. (31:43)

[ER:] Well, Mr. Speaker, you know I'm hoping that whatever we do today will keep us from having a war. That is the thing that above everything else I hope for. But um there is something that I think perhaps might help um people, all of us, and that is that in modern war the training that people get is important because it gives them a better chance to live if they are ever involved in war. And uh you know-- understand this but perhaps other people don't understand it so much, don't you agree with me on that? (32:23)

[Sam Rayburn:] Well, I certainly think that the training of the man has two uh things about it. One is train to use the instruments of war uh to fight the enemy. And a vitally important thing is to train him to protect himself and his own life, and uh that's the training that I want to see come; not only to use a gun for offensive but use it for defensive to protect the life of-of the-of the boy himself. And I feel this way: that the greatest uh assurance that we could possibly have in the kind of a world that we live is to get so strong and to show the might of America in such a way, it's man power, its-its uh capabilities uh for production.

That we are going to prepare ourselves in the fashion that we can defend ourselves. In all probability that's the best way to save lives and to keep down the war. (33:28)

[ER:] That's the only reason that I um have finally been won over to universal military service. It is that I feel in modern war um you have a better chance to live if you've had real training, and um since I do believe as you do, that it's the might of America that can keep the peace of the world, and since I have the faith in our own people that we are able to have might and not to use it for war, I um am feeling as you do that what we are doing today is the best insurance we can have against war. (34:20)

[Sam Rayburn:] Well, I-I--that is a constant prayer of mine. And I think of every father and mother and brother in the United States of America. Ah it certainly behooves us to get strong and stay strong. It's going to cost a lot of money; it's going to--we've all got to sacrifice in this thing. We can't have as much uh of the things as we'd like to have, of the pleasure and comforts of life, if we go through with this thing. But if we don't go through with it now, it will be worse later. (34:52)

[ER:] Well, that is exactly what I feel and I feel that we are willing to make the sacrifices not only to be strong in a military way but to help uh fight communism on an economic and spiritual and moral level, and so for that reason I am very hopeful uh that we will win successfully a peaceful world. And now I want to thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You were very kind to give your time to come and have this interview with me, and I'm deeply grateful to you.

[Sam Rayburn:] Well, I thank you very much.

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