

THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

August 7, 1951

Description: In this segment, ER and Elliott Roosevelt respond to a listener's question regarding the imprisonment of William Oatis, an American journalist imprisoned by Czechoslovakia for espionage.

Participants: Eleanor Roosevelt, Elliott Roosevelt, Ben Grauer.

[ER:] This is Eleanor Roosevelt speaking. Our program is coming to you from my living room here at the Park-Sheraton Hotel in New York City. I'm very happy to have this little while with you each day, and I hope you'll enjoy the guest we've invited to be with us today. And now for a moment I'm going to turn the program over to Elliott.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] The job of building America's strength is not solely or mainly a government undertaking. Even in time of stress it depends for full success upon the u-using of experience and training of every sector of the economy. For the purpose of study and recommendation the Committee for Economic Development was formed. It is an organization in which- in which One hundred and thirty leading businessmen and educators are devoting their time, experience, and resources to objective economic research and education. The chairman of the board of trustees of this committee, Mr. Marion B. Folsom is with Mrs. Roosevelt today to discuss some of these economic problems and what has been suggested as a remedy. Mrs. Roosevelt will introduce Mr. Folsom after we have our usual discussion of a problem sent in by a listener. Now we'll pause for just a minute to let our announcer have a few words.

[Break 1:30-1:36]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mrs. Lucy Brian of Elmwood has written to Mrs. Roosevelt asking the following question: "How is it possible that a foreign nation can try and convict an American citizen? I'm referring to William Oat-Oatis. How is it possible that they can stop the American Embassy from intervening?" (1:58)

[ER:] Well of course they can't stop the American embassy from intervening; the American embassy had representatives at the trial. The American embassy will make all possible representations to the government, but uh we would be entitled um under certain conditions to try a foreign citizen in our country if he broke our laws. Therefore if they say, as they do, that Oats [Oatis] um committed uh-- was spying against their country eh um-- they have a right to try him. Now the sad part of it-it is that the trial was a complete um um and absolute uh travesty on justice as he acknowledged that he had been spying and all his superiors here say, of course that was nonsense, that he's just a good reporter trying to find out things. But um they use methods to bring about uh this type of uh confession in Soviet courts and the results are very um depressing because a country eh has a right, if a man is convicted against the-- of having done something against the laws of that country eh uh to punish him. [Elliott Roosevelt: Well uh--] Now we may succeed in getting him off just as we did Mr. [Robert A.] Vogeler, uh by representations of our government and uh explaining that he really is not subject to the laws of their country, eh-- but um they could put him through this sort of thing, and uh just as they can put through the Catholic archbishop uh who was-- is not a citizen of their country either. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm] um So that um, you can-- you can't prevent intervention, you can't prevent um-um the embassy from speaking up for him. But short of going to war, uh there is nothing you can do but go through diplomatic means to finally get his release. [Elliott Roosevelt: Yes, but in this case--] With Mr. Vogeler we finally paid a ransom for him. (4:31)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] But in this case uh our American embassy was not allowed to either visit him or send him any uh um information or cigarettes or anything, he was held incommunicado throughout.

[ER:] Well I saw somewhere that he had um-- that there were two representatives of the American embassy at the trial.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] They were allowed to view the trial, that was all, as observers, but they were at no time allowed to obtain counsel for him or anything else.

[ER:] Well I think obtaining counsel would have been a ridiculous travesty anyway. You couldn't do-- no lawyer would have dared uh come out in a-in a government-- in a communist government and actually defend someone accused as he was. As—

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well there was a trial not so very long ago in this country. [ER: Ah well that's a different thing] A member of the- of the Russian ligation over here, and that young man was convicted of uh spying and of carrying on spy activities. We didn't put him in jail, we shipped him out of the country.

[ER:] Naturally, well that of course would be the natural uh thing for any government such as ours to do and we also would have permitted him to have counsel. uh [Elliott: We did.] We did.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] As a matter of fact he was represented at the trial not only by counsel but he also had with him at all times representatives of the Soviet embassy.

[ER:] But our system is an extremely um advanced system of justice and we are not living in a police state, we're not living under the kind of um of uh justice, which is justice for the man who thinks as you do and not justice for the man who disagrees with you [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm] [ER coughs]. And after all that's what we pride ourselves upon and it's something at times just now I'm a little afraid we may lose but um the-the right of the man who has differing opinions, as long as he doesn't actually commit a crime, uh to-to have, and even when he commits a crime, to have defense is-is a cardinal right under our form of justice. (7:01)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] But what I don't quite understand is uh if we are to go through the-the travesty of this kind of treatment, where a man like Mr. Vogeler, for instance can be held for a long time and then he is ransomed by our government. Uh it makes it almost useless to have any kind of uh uh relationship with that government.

[ER:] But it is useless. There is absolutely no value in any kind of relationship, it seems to me, except a purely formal um representation in the embassy of diplomatic people who are there primarily because we must have a bridge for communication. But as far as anything else goes, I uh-- if I were a newspaper I would withdraw my newspaper people because I don't think that it's either safe for them nor do I think that they are in a condition-- in a position now to give us any real information.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well if a country is going to have that type of uh attitude uh what value is it to maintenance of uh communication and formal—

[ER:] Well there is always [Elliott: interchange] a certain value if you have-- um the time may come you have messages to transmit, you also have uh certain opportunities for observation. I-I think there is always a value in keeping some formal bridges open, but I don't think there is much value in allowing your businessmen or your newspaper men to run the risk of um being arrested and put in prison and having to be uh got out by the government um through some kind of a compromise. (9:01)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] In that--In that case then wouldn't it be best for the western countries to have just one uh representative? It's a pretty dangerous spot to be. Why not just uh say have one person representing a lot of our countries over there?

[ER:] Well probably they wouldn't uh-- other countries might not uh want to do it on the same basis. For instance, there are countries that may continue to have uh trade relations and that want to keep up those uh avenues of exchange and that sort of thing. They might not want it, but I should think if any-any governments did want it, it would be a perfectly reasonable thing to say we will maintain a joint um diplomatic representation in your country.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mhm. I-I feel, of course that if a man like Mr. Oatis is to be incarcerated and then used as a trading point, uh which undoubtedly is what these uh countries are doing now. They select a person who will bring indignation on the part of the American people to a boiling point, and then they say to the government, "Alright, uh your people demand that this person be set free, alright, now our price is such-and-such," and then we have to pay it. I think that that's a ridiculous situation to allow to go on and that we should uh take steps, retaliatory steps uh [ER: Well we--] we can't uh-- it doesn't behoove us to go to the same—

[ER:] We have closed certain consulates, of course. Um very so-- various countries in this country are saying that they had no longer any object of being here, and I think we could take retaliatory steps and I think we should.(11:02)

[Elliott:] Uh It seems to me also that there's a lot of other pressure that we could bring. You mentioned—

[ER:] Of course they might very likely say that we had already taken them in, that we do not allow communists now to enter the country so that the people from these countries are not allowed to come into our country, except [Elliott Roosevelt: But that's perfectly ridiculous.] where they have diplomatic standing.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yes but they-they uh bring in all kinds of people into this country under the cloak of a diplomatic uh-uh mission of some kind or another.

[ER:] Well it's getting harder and harder to do; it's not so easy to do that anymore. They have to have uh they have to be pretty carefully uh screened nowadays days to get in.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well I still wouldn't uh-- I'd like to see some figures, but I would be willing to bet that uh we have far fewer people who are been permitted to go into the Soviet Union representing newspapers, business, or any other—

[ER:] Oh into the Soviet Union, that's true. I don't think there's any question as far as the Soviet Union is concerned.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Or into Czechoslovakia [ER: But, for instance--] or Hungary or any of these other countries.

[ER:] Uh some of these other countries we're pretty--we're pretty difficult if we let any-any communists in, and the Soviet Union gets in, I imagine, bigger um diplomatic uh groups because they insist that they need them for their embassies and so forth and so on. But I doubt if these other countries are getting in many people nowadays.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mhm. Well I hope that uh [ER: But I would-- I think] there is something more definite that can be done to stop this.

[ER:] I think we could find some retaliatory measures that we could take. I don't know just what they would be but I'm sure that they're under consideration because I don't think our government likes to have people [Elliott Roosevelt: To be pushed around] being pushed around and I also um know that of course they know that we're not going to war [Elliott: Mhm. Over one individual.] over one individual and therefore they're going to try to find means, and I'm sure they will find them eventually, which will control actions of this kind.

[Elliott:] Well I see that our time is up for this portion of the program and that we have to go on, and very shortly we'll be back with you with a uh very interesting interview.

[Break 13:41- 13:49]

[Ben Grauer:] This has been the Eleanor Roosevelt Program, recorded in Mrs. Roosevelt's living room in Park-Sheraton Hotel, on the corner of 55th Street and 7th Avenue in New York City. Today Mrs. Roosevelt's guest was Mr. Marion B. Folsom, who is chairman of the board of trustees of the Committee for Economic Development. A look at the guest list for tomorrow shows us that Mrs. Roosevelt will interview two gentlemen identified with the publication *Who's Who in the United Nations*, Mr. Christian E. Burckel, the publisher, and Mr. G. James Fleming. As you know the United Nations, which is now physically much closer to town since the personnel secretariat have occupied the UN secretariat building there on the East River, the UN is a world in itself with many-many representatives from the some sixty nations who compose it. Many interesting personalities; keeping them all straight with the individual changes in governments uh is quite a task, a task which much be accomplished so that all of the various nations will have authoritative information about the representatives of the other nations. So misters Burckel and Fleming will tell us of their work, and the interesting book which is the product of their activities in their visit with Mrs. Roosevelt tomorrow. And on Thursday Gian Carlo Menotti will be with us, the famous composer of *The Medium* and *The Telephone*. Mrs. Roosevelt and Elliott Roosevelt, uh with us each day from 12:30 to 1:15pm. Tomorrow's guest, the publisher and editor of *Who's Who in the United Nations*. Until tomorrow then, at the usual time, twelve-thirty, this is Ben Grauer bidding you all good afternoon. [names checked--CR]

[Break 15:39-15:51]

Friends, this is Ben Grauer speaking. Have you ever dipped into a bowl of vegetable soup and found plenty of rice and noodles but only a smattering of vegetables? It's rather disappointing, isn't it? More than that, it's downright annoying. Well you'll never have that trouble with Habitant vegetable soup, because it's simply chock-full of all kinds of garden-fresh vegetables aswim in the broth made from the natural juices. Yes, for hardy satisfying nourishment, Habitant vegetable soup ranks right up front with any food you can serve. And how your family will love the special Habitant flavor created by old fashioned, time-tested French recipes. So when you think of vegetable soup, think of Habitant and you'll be on the right track to satisfaction. For interesting variety in your soup menu, remember Habitant pea soup, genuine old country French style pea soup; and heavenly Habitant onion soup, with a golden goodness such as you've never tasted. All three come in the yellow cans, and your grocer has them. Get Habitant soups on your next shopping trip. Now here's Elliott with a letter from a listener.

[Break 17:03-17:19]

Yes, Elliott, we're looking forward to Mrs. Roosevelt's interview with today's noted guest. Meanwhile, I'm going to take this moment to look at the guest-- uh the program listings on WNBC for

tonight. And our radio highlights include, at eight o'clock, another in the series of eight programs titled *American Portraits*. A dramatization of events leading up to the Mayflower Compact will be heard tonight, when we bring you a dramatic character study of Elder William Brewster, leader of the first pilgrim settlers. Elder Brewster will be played by Frederick Warlock, supported by Martin Blane, in this fine drama which is written by George Faulkner, and produced and directed by one of the most noted of the young producer-directors of radio, the uh man at the helm of radio's big show, Dee Engelbach. That's *American Portraits* at eight o'clock, and I'll have the pleasure of joining in the proceedings as narrator.

At eight-thirty, *Dangerous Assignment*, with Brian Donlevy, starring in another of this adventure series. Little interlude of fun at nine o'clock with Harry McNaughton, *It's Higgins, Sir*. Harry McNaughton, the famous Beetle of Beetle and Bottle, as the English Butler, which an American family inherited and how they get along with him. Then there's Jack Pearl at nine-thirty with the *Pet Milk Show*. Jack Pearl is Baron Munchausen and soprano Mimi Benzell providing comedy and music. Another exciting story at ten o'clock in *Big Town*, crusading editor Steve Wilson played by Walter Greaza, and at ten-thirty, there's the summertime serenade light modern concert music featuring Norman Cloutier and the NBC orchestra. An interesting top-grade lineup of radio highlights for listening on WNBC tonight. Now here's Elliott to tell us about today's guest. [all names checked with NY Times listings--CR]

[Break 19:14-19:21]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] The president has said recently that we face three great dangers: aggression, inflation, and relaxation. The third of these dangers vitally affects the other two. For only by relaxation could we lose in the fateful world struggle between freedom and slavery. If we maintain vigilance and resoluteness, the superior resources of the free nations assure the ultimate triumph of freedom. Mrs. Roosevelt's guest today is with her to discuss ways and means of controlling inflation. Mother will you continue the introduction now?

[Break 20:01-20:13]

[Ben Grauer:] Right, Mrs. Roosevelt, we'll return to you and Mr. Folsom after we make our regular station identification. Tell your friends that this is WNBC AM and FM New York. You're listening to the Eleanor Roosevelt Program recorded in Mrs. Roosevelt's living room in the Park-Sheraton Hotel. Today's guest, Mr. Marion Folsom, who is the head of the Committee of Economic Development.

One of the things you'll encounter on your vacation trip is the hitchhiker who stands along the road and thumbs a ride. Well now, this announcement is brought to us by the American Automobile Association, who suggests it's nice to be a good fellow and do a friend a favor, but the association warns against picking up hitchhikers who may turn out to be thugs bent on robbery or even murder. At least twenty-seven states have passed laws against soliciting rides on the highway, but the practice persists. And every now and then you hear of a motorist who was held up and robbed by one of these highway criminals. Another practice to watch for, says the triple-A travel experts, is the fake breakdown, in which a robber, often a woman, stops her car on the highway and gives the appearance of being in trouble. The best way to handle the situation is to pass it by and then report to the nearest authorities who will investigate. The one possible exception to the no pick up rule is in the case of members of the Armed Forces, who are waiting in designated pickup stations at the entrance to a military or naval installations. These deserving men may be carried safely to the nearest town but no further than that. Don't be a victim of robbery by picking up hitchhikers along the road. That warning bears the uh stamp of the American Automobile Association. Now here again is Mrs. Roosevelt.

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Transcription: Andrew Leonard

First Edit: Christy Regenhardt

Final Edit: Andreas Meyris

The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project