

THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

April 3rd, 1951

Description: In the opening segment, ER and Elliott Roosevelt respond to a listener's question about the college basketball gambling scandal in New York City. In the interview segment discusses the Cold War and the economic, social, and political atmosphere of Berlin with Ernst Reuter, mayor of West Berlin.

Participants: Eleanor Roosevelt, Elliott Roosevelt, Ernst Reuter

[ER:] How do you do? This is Eleanor Roosevelt. Every Monday through Friday my son Elliott and I have the opportunity to visit with you here in my living room at the Park-Sheraton Hotel in New York City. Each day it is our desire to bring interesting guests that we are hopeful you will enjoy meeting. Elliott, will you tell our listeners today's plans?

[Elliott Roosevelt:] A city that is very far away in miles but very close in our thoughts is Berlin. Today Mrs. Roosevelt's guest is Ernst Reuter, mayor of the western sector of Berlin. I'm looking forward to the interview with Mayor Reuter, and as soon as we've discussed today's letter we'll come back to the interview. As a matter of fact I'm looking forward to this discussion of today's letter too, because it concerns the recent basketball fix. We'll hear Mrs. Roosevelt's opinion on the basketball scandals immediately after a message from the sponsors who make this program possible.

(Break 1:01-1:13)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] And now Mother to our question for today, which was sent in by Morris Hushberg of New York. He asks, "What is your reaction to the recent basketball scandals in New York City? Don't you think the boys have been punished enough, even before a trial?"

[ER:] No, I don't think they've been punished enough, even before trial. My reaction is that the people who need punishment the most are the people who use college athletics uh for gambling purposes and who tempt boys in this way. They are the ones who should be really punished. Um I also think it's very unwise for colleges to allow college athletics to get into places, such as the Garden--um now this I consider unwise, do you see; I don't consider it uh punishable, but I consider it unwise--where, they tempt the gamblers by the circumstances that make it possible um to-to use, to do this type of thing. Now where the--it's well to say boys, but after all I looked over the ages, and a lot of these young men, one of them was 25, and a lot of them-- (2:40)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] That's right! That's what really makes me laugh is what they-they talk about these poor innocent babes.

[ER:] Well, a lot of them--

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Some of them are married and have children.

[ER:] A lot of them are older than--they're GIs, returned GIs some of them, and--

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mhm.

[ER:] They're older than just undergraduate um boys of eighteen or nineteen. There are a few, I think, that are as young as that, but not many as I looked over that list, and it seems to me that um if they haven't yet had the experience that wrongdoing brings punishment, uh it's a good thing for them to have it now, before they go any further. And therefore-- uh

[Elliott Roosevelt:] They should be punished.

[ER:] They should be punished. Now, I don't think it should keep them from going on in college. I hope they will, after they've uh been punished--

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well

[ER:] -- go on and finish.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Now, now we're coming to what I consider uh is in large measure a crux of this entire problem, and it extends not only into the basketball world but into all phases of athletics where the athletics attract large gates, and large gate receipts. Uh I am very anxious for us to invite a college president to come on to discuss this problem. Uh in the case of these boys, most of them--

[ER:] Had athletic scholarships

[Elliott Roosevelt:] in looking over their records, they were there under a form of professionalism. They had a--what is known as an athletic scholarship.

[ER:] But that--

[Elliott Roosevelt:] But I noticed that even the studies, what they were majoring in, there was not a one of them that I found who was really in college to learn a profession or to learn any particular subject except physical training.

[ER:] Of course, I'm-I must say Elliott, that it's the alumni of colleges that most frequently have encouraged that type of thing. They wanted their colleges to shine in athletics, and they're the ones who raise money for these scholarships. (4:50)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well I remember all too well a-a boy genius who became president of the University of Chicago, and that gentleman said, "I am not going to have college athletics uh become the major uh thing that this university is known for," and he deemphasized to such an extent that he took football uh and took the University of Chicago right out of the Big 10. And uh the students--uh recently when he resigned at the age of fifty-three, because he felt that he was too old--fifty-one or fifty-three--uh to continue and that the college would get stagnant under his leadership, uh the students were terrifically upset about it, and I understand that even the alumni were upset. So it isn't necessarily the alumni's fault, because if you have a strong president he can mold what that college is going to do.

[ER:] I think that's true, and I think it is very important that we do emphasize that colleges um are places where you learn, and where you are expected to prepare for something that requires learning, and I think that's one of the things that uh in some colleges has been forgotten, and that's one reason why I was rather glad to see--I would hate to see intercollegiate um games completely stopped, but I would like to see them changed greatly, eh um so that they are not great moneymaking and therefore gambling destinations.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well I-I read a very interesting story uh in the papers not long ago, uh it was a statement by one of these boys, uh in which he said, "Well after all, uh I am going to this school solely

and simply because of my basketball ability. Uh, I don't even have to go to class when I don't want to. I'm uh purely here to promote the college."

[ER:] Well that, of course, is very bad, and that's bad if the president or the-or the board of trustees sanctions that. I-I think the whole--

[Elliott Roosevelt:] I think that.

[ER:] purpose of the college is lost.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] I think that the president and the board of trustees of such an institution is equally guilty, with the students, who have been bribed, because they have fallen into a form of bribery themselves to try to uh promote the university. And I read also in the paper, not long ago, that one of the universities which is involved in this scandal uh actually has had a tremendous increase in the number of students, and they used basketball for a form of advertising, uh in order to attract more students to the school.

[ER:] Yes it is unfortunate that that would be successful because young boys are made that way, and--

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, uh they have used uh--they have used these men, because I think that that's what, where the great--

[ER:] Yes.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] error is for all of these people to talk about the boys. (8:08)

[ER:] Boys.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] "The poor little boys. Oh I feel so sorry for the boys, they've been punished too much, and uh let them go back to school." If they went back to school they wouldn't know what to do as long as they can't play basketball. So, uh I think that we're-we're--

[ER:] Losing a lot of sympathy.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] We're losing a lot of sympathy and the American people are being uh brought up to a stage where their sympathies are aroused for people who do not deserve that sympathy.

[ER:] Well, I don't think you can be categorical. There may be some among them who do, but I think their cases will receive careful consideration, and I think each one should be considered individually.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Uh, you mean when they come to trial?

[ER:] Yes.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] And do you feel uh that uh--

[ER:] That those that--

[Elliott Roosevelt:] --that the universities themselves, at the time of the trial, [ER coughs] should be completely exposed? At the time of trial it should be brought out exactly what those boys were in school for, what kind of courses [ER: Yes.] they were taking.

[ER:] I think that's extremely valuable to bring out.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Put these universities on trial at the same time.

[ER:] Yes I think that's quite necessary.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well then what happens if you expose these rather large, important universities, uh and expose them as having been guilty of a blatant policy of using basketball for advertising purposes?

[ER:] Well you probably will bring about the change in the policy.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Could it not bring about the change in the board of trustees and in the president?

[ER:] Uh It might. But that again might be a mistake because, if you always remove every one uh who has gone along--because usually this is not a-a new policy--eh um, you may have done an injustice because these people--granted that there are people who are strong enough to move a whole board of trustees, and the faculty and the youngsters. They're not always available. And, um I would not be willing to say that I thought you should get rid of the board of trustees and the presidents of all these colleges. I think perhaps you could strengthen those who believe that the real purpose of a college was to learn something eh by bringing out the facts and making it clear that the public does not believe in this type of activity. Eh and I think it would change the picture a great deal. (10:42)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well I read of a reader of a newspaper who wrote in a suggestion not long ago, uh that would tend to curb the necessity for bribing these uh-uh players who play to advertise for their schools, uh that a certain percentage of the gate receipts of these big basketball games be turned over to a fund, which would be used uh to help the students upon their graduation who had contributed to those games, to get them started in businesses. What do you think of that suggestion?

[ER:] Well.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Say 15 or 20 percent of the total gate receipts would always go to this fund to help the students--

[ER:] Well that would make it even more important for a boy to play basketball. Um, I-I don't know. I'd have to think about that. I-I couldn't decide that offhand.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] You're not prepared to go along with that completely?

[ER:] No. No.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Alright, well I guess that where--our time is up, so that we can't talk about this any longer. But I've got a whole lot more questions on that [ER laughs], and let's try to get a college president on--

[ER:] Alright.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] See what he has to say.

[ER:] Fine.

(Break 12:01-12:10)

[ER:] With the problems of Germany and its rearmament so much in the news these days, I am very pleased to have the honor today of having as my guest Mr. Ernst Reuter, mayor of West Berlin, whom I know will be able to tell us a good deal we may not know about Germany, and Berlin in particular. I am happy to introduce to you Mayor Reuter.

[Ernst Reuter:] Oh Mrs. Roosevelt, it's always on my side, as you know, the pleasure is absolutely on my side, that I can be here not only in this country, that I can be together with you. And you know very well your name is [ER: Thank you] very famous to everybody of ours.

[ER:] Thank you. I am so glad you could come. Now first Mayor Reuter, I would like you to tell our listeners why you are here on a visit to the United States. (13:02)

[Ernst Reuter:] I have been invited by the ADA, Americans for Democratic Action, to attend their convention at Cleveland. I took the opportunity to have some uh public meetings and private meetings in several towns: uh Detroit, Milwaukee, Chicago. And later on I came to Washington to see and to have uh conversations with officials in the State Department, ECA [Economic Cooperation Administration] administration. I have had the honor to see the president, chief of the ECA administration. And then, uh as a Berliner, I have so many Berliners here, that means American Berliners here [ER: Yes.] --this country that is always a great uh opportunity to me, for me, to speak personally to them, to review all our needs, our sorrows, our fears, and our hopes.

[ER:] Well, Mr. Mayor, I was in Berlin in the winter of 1946, and at that time it was one of the greatest shocks because I had not--to me--I had not seen um any area that had been really, very heavily bombed, uh as areas were in the last war. And um the army flew me very low over various places, but it was not until I really was on the ground in Berlin that I had the full impact of what had happened to a great city. And um I don't think many of us in this country can picture that until we have seen it. Um, and since then I have followed with a great deal of interest all the things that have happened, and particularly the Berlin blockade time, so I would like to ask you what the morale of the people of Berlin is like a year and a half after the lifting of the blockade?

[Ernst Reuter:] Uh well, I should say one thing. I came back to Germany at the same time as you came to Berlin, December 1946, and I had gone through the same shock [ER: Well it was--] and I think, if you will come now and I hope you will come now, back to Berlin once, then you will hardly recognize the town. You will see that is a vivid town. It's a town which tries with every force to put forward the economic and external environment. And what's morale of the Berliners? You, you don't have to ask. The Berliners are all right.

[ER:] You just what?

[Ernst Reuter:] They are all right.

[ER:] They're all right!

[Ernst Reuter:] Their morale is always all right. They are frontier town. They know what they have to do, and they know very well what they have to expect in case they should give in.

[ER:] Well they have been so near to East Berlin, um and so near to the um uh actual Soviet uh occupation that um I-I wondered whether they--whether you expected the Russians to re-impose any kind of blockade in the near future. (16:36)

[Ernst Reuter:] You know very well, Mrs. Roosevelt, it's very difficult to see in other people's head, especially the head of the master of the Kremlin. But, so far as I can see, as I can guess, as I can watch, the whole developments uh in our town and the eastern zone of Germany, I do not expect anything like that. I think the Soviets know very well that an attack against Berlin means something more, and at least for the time being I have not the feeling that they want a hot war. They are very anxious to avoid anything which goes too far.

[ER:] Well, uh, how much communist influence remains in West Berlin, do you think?

[Ernst Reuter:] That can be proved very easily by figures. You see, we have had election in '48, and the participation in election was 89.4-or-5 percent. Then we have had elections in December uh 1950. The participation has been more than 90 percent. The participation in the vote--more than 90--in a free uh city, that means that actually everybody uh is taking part in the vote. [ER: Yes.] That means no communist influence left, and that can be easily seen every day. In spite of the fact that we have many difficulties, there is no communist influence in Berlin. We are too near to them.

[ER:] You're too near.

[Ernst Reuter:] Too near.

[ER:] Well now, how much actual communist influence do you think um uh East Berlin has uh-uh--I know they're under the communist rule, but I--what would you gather that the German feeling was under that rule, in East Berlin?

[Ernst Reuter:] That can be easily proved by figures too. Before we had the election in December 1950, two months before, we tried to make a last appeal to the East, that East Berlin could take part in the election. And so with very short notice, over the wireless, we invited our friends in East Berlin to-to send everybody who insists on free elections for the whole of Berlin, to send their ration cards to the city hall of West Berlin. That means that everybody who did dare to do that did take a certain risk, and he had to mail the envelope in West Berlin, and we had more than four hundred thousand--that means more than half of the population--voting this way, with a notice of four days and without any possibility to do anything, preparation work, inside East Berlin. So [ER: Well I have--perfectly] I think that is proof for the fact that the population is standing on our side.

[ER:] Well I think the population must be very uh--must feel very strongly because--

[Ernst Reuter:] Yes.

[ER:] That was asking a good deal.

[Ernst Reuter:] Certainly, certainly. (19:45)

[ER:] We um um interviewed when he was here, a young Dr. Hildebrandt--

[Ernst Reuter:] Yes.

[ER:] Who came from West Berlin--

[Ernst Reuter:] Yes, I know, I know him very well.

[ER:] Who, uh who seems to have um-um made a trip through the whole of this--eh, a good part of this country, eh and um I-I liked him very much. I thought he was a very nice young man. Um, now do you think the feeling that exists in East Berlin exists in the eastern part of Germany as a whole?

[Ernst Reuter:] Yes, I do think so. I personally have many possibilities to be in close and personal relationship with many of my old friends. Before Hitler came to power, I was mayor of a big city in present, what we call for the present day eastern Germany. I was mayor of Magdeburg. And about every week I have visitors, and I have the feeling 90 percent of the population is absolutely on our side. Four years ago I was told, uh that after five years occupation the communist influence must become stronger. Actually, the communist influence has lessened.

[ER:] Mhm. Well, um I-I wonder what you think the reason for that is? What do you think or why do you think it lessens instead of increasing?

[Ernst Reuter:] It's lessened first if you see every day what the communist system means and you understand that this is impossible to go along on any line of compromise with the system. Then, on the other side, I know that the example of Berlin of West Berlin has given a great deal of hope for them. But understand that for the Soviets and for people ruled by the Soviets, it's a remarkable thing that inside the iron curtain there is people who say no to them, resist, and that the resistance is possible even with peaceful means. And, uh as long as we can stand, and if the West's beginning to be strong-stronger in every sense of the word, then there will be no strength and there will be a constant lesson in-- of the confluence-- uh communist influence. The greatest mistake of Stalin--to come too near to us.

[ER:] To come too near?

[Ernst Reuter:] Yeah.

[ER:] Yes, well, um you know this interests me very much, because um I have been going to Germany ever since I was a little girl, and I had a great many German friends. I roomed in school in England with two German girls for three years, so I knew Frankfurt well--where they lived--and, uh I still, one of them still lives in Germany and I still hear from her. But, um I have always had a feeling that uh German people accepted um discipline much better, and perhaps might um not resent the communist discipline, um which is so severe, as much as other people. But they seem to have sensed a kind of taking away of the right to think.

[Ernst Reuter:] Yeah. That may be true. That is true to a certain amount, but peoples are changing their mind during the history too, and the communists are very helpful. (23:22)

[ER:] And the communists are helpful in making them change?

[Ernst Reuter:] Yeah. Yeah.

[ER:] Well I'm um particularly interested in the fact that the nearer um you get to uh communist rule, um there should be such resistance. I think that's very hopeful for the world as a whole. And now I'm sorry to say that we have to interrupt this conversation for a minute and let our announcer have a word, but we'll come right back.

(Break 23:54-23:56)

[ER:] We will now resume the talk with Mayor Reuter of Berlin, and the first question that I want to ask you Mr. Mayor, is um what economic progress has been made in Berlin? When I was there in '46 my

heart ached. I saw people living in cellars, and just the little stovepipe sticking out. I saw people I knew who had never done any work with their hands before dragging little carts of wood through the streets.

[Ernst Reuter: yeah] And um I-I would be very much interested to know what economic progress has come about?

[Ernst Reuter:] Everything you are saying is quite familiar to me. The shock uh was as great for me as it has been for you. The greatest shock personally for me was our beloved Tiergarten.

[ER:] Yes, that was a terrible--

[Ernst Reuter:] It was absolutely burnt down.

[ER:] Absolutely. (24:57)

[Ernst Reuter:] If you will come now back to Berlin, then you will see that the Tiergarten at least is beginning to become a green place, and growing again. All the German cities have sent plants and trees and all things to revive this old place. I should say that, at least in West Berlin we have no rationing system. Everybody is uh fed. There nobody I think is left hungry. We have uh coal, maybe not enough, but we have coal. Shortage of coal is maybe even less, a little more less than in West Germany, because for everything is arranged for Berlin to make stockpiling, and so on. And during the last year we have been in position to repair--because new building is out of question--to repair out bombed flats and houses so that we could gain fifteen thousand dwellings. If you make comparison with the time before Hitler came into power, in our best year we have been able to build new dwellings in Berlin while thirty thousand, for a population of four-and-a-quarter million.

Now in West Berlin we have a population of two-million-hundred-fifty-thousand. That means if we have in--been in a position to rebuild, and to give to the people about fifteen thousand new dwellings, that means we have made progress. Our streets are lightened, the shops in the windows are all right. The only question is whether we have money enough to buy everything, and that is a critical point. Economic position of a city like Berlin cannot be other than weak. We have been dismantled in a proportion that can be hardly imagined in this country--up to 80 percent--and we came into the scheme of the Marshall aid very late, sometime after the blockade ended. [ER coughs] That means in the beginning of 1950, [ER: Hm.] and according to our plans we are making together with our American friends, we hope that we can restore our industry on peace level--just working now on a level about 44 percent from the level of '33--uh '36. We hope that we can revive our industry on peace level, let me say in three years' time. Our unemployment is considerably great, [ER coughs] and we hope that in, during these three years, we will be in a position to come to a normal level. [ER: well--] It takes patience and time.

[ER:] Oh it does take patience and time, but I would think that was very remarkable if in three years' time you could come to a normal level again. And, you--do you hope to rebuild um any part of Berlin, or do you hope uh simply to um recondition what is standing and then gradually, um little by little, rebuild in the old areas?

[Ernst Reuter:] Ah, for the time being we have to repair and to re-shift what is possible to re-shift. That's already a great thing. New building in the narrow sense of the word, that can be only done after our economy is standing on sound feet.

[ER:] Now you said you had great unemployment, um or some unemployment. How--what is that due to? Lack of um-um--lack of uh business revival or um from lack of materials?

[Ernst Reuter:] That is due lack to working places, because industry has been dismantled too much. We have to rebuild to re-equip the industry. Then we have the daily, terrible influx of refugees coming from the east. There's no day where we have less than two hundred refugees coming from the east. [ER: Mhm.] That's for one city a very great strain. [ER: Yes] So the figures of people who want work is growing every day, although the figures of people employed is growing too, but the difference between--

[ER:] The difference is the refugees that come in.

[Ernst Reuter:] The refugees are, they are making not so easy. Then the city is growing. In contrast to East Berlin, West Berlin is growing in population. We have the influx from the east, and we have Berliners coming back from West Germany [ER: Mhm.] Because the confidence slowly is coming back. But anyway we hope to overcome these difficulties too in two, three years' time.

[ER:] That is really remarkable. Well on the basis of your experience in Berlin, what advice could you give the Western powers in treating with the Soviets? (30:05)

[Ernst Reuter:] I can, uh--that is a difficult question for me, because I can only answer with one short remark. If the spirit of Berlin will prevail all over the world, then we will handle the Soviet situation. I think we have given a comparatively good uh example, how to handle them. One has to become strong, and firmly, and there has to be uh prevailing--a stubborn determination to speak with them frankly, and to impose on them and to propose to them conditions which were the only conditions acceptable. That means restoring of freedom in the Soviet-occupied countries. And in the long run I am convinced that the more the Western powers and the Western world--not only the official statesmen but the whole Western world--will understand that we have to overcome a common danger, and that we have to rebuild as common sake, a free world, then we will be able to handle the Soviet situation too.

[ER:] Well I have that same feeling. I-I think that um the-- that West Berlin has given us a tremendous example of what can be done by stubborn conviction and determination and-and courage! What do you think the eventual hope of the people of Berlin is? They want it restored to--?

[Ernst Reuter:] Quite naturally everybody in Berlin wants to restore the unity of his city. That is a natural feeling and I hope you will forgive that that is first in our minds.

[ER:] I think that's quite natural.

[Ernst Reuter:] Then we want to restore the real connection with our countrymen in the east. You must understand that a man like I-I never have been since I came back to Berlin, I never have seen our beautiful lakes, our beautiful forests and the surroundings. I'm a captive inside let me say a city like the island of Manhattan. [ER: Yes.] What would you say if you had to stay only in Manhattan? You would

[ER: Yes, yes.] uh become very angry, and you would very much like to go outside, so we are in the same position. Um, uh it's understandable that our first aim is to restore the political liberty and the possibility to move freely from Berlin to the Soviet-occupied zone, and we have the feeling if that can be done, many other things for the whole world will be done, too.

[ER:] Well I-I can well understand that desire. Now how do you feel about German rearming?

[Ernst Reuter:] Say in the long run, there can be no vacuum, [unclear phrase], no empty place between two great uh worlds strung together. And I cannot imagine that uh anybody can think that Germany as a whole can be left unarmed so long as the whole world is armed. But on the other side, the German rearmament does need the consent of the German people. It's not so easy to shift over from disarmament

then to rearmament. I can easily shift over in my hotel from cold water to hot water. That's more easier. And then, the German rearmament question is connected with the question of our relationship with France and other peoples around. We have to try to restore a common feeling that Europe must be united, and without the abolishment-abolishment of the distrust of the surrounding neighbors, Germany alone cannot rearm. Germany can be rearmed only in the frame of a European general rearmament, and a European common defense of a common sake. That's the feeling of my people I think. (34:23)

[ER:] Well, uh that-that feeling then is that Europe must be a whole, um and that Germany is, must be a part of Western Europe.

[Ernst Reuter:] Yes. Exactly

[ER:] How do your young people feel? The same way?

[Ernst Reuter:] Yes--ja. Certainly. Can you imagine that my people uh just feel we are belonging to the east? That's impossible.

[ER:] That's impossible.

[Ernst Reuter:] Yeah. We know very well where we are belonging.

[ER:] To the west. Well that's a very encouraging thing, and I'm sorry our time has come to an end because there is much that I would like to talk to you about, but I thank you very much for coming to talk with me this morning Mayor Reuter.

[Ernst Reuter:] Well, I have to thank you.

[ER:] My good wishes.

(Break 35:05-35:20)

[ER:] Before I say goodbye for today, I would like to leave with you another thought. On July 4, 1776, by unanimous decision, the thirteen United States of America declared their independence. Here in part is what they said: "When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's god entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments and insti--are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor."

[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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