

THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

March 23rd, 1951

Description: In the opening segment, ER and Elliott Roosevelt respond to a listener's question about universal military training. In the interview segment, ER's guest is Judge Robert P. Patterson, the secretary of war.

Participants: ER, Elliott Roosevelt, Judge Robert P. Patterson

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mother, yesterday we discussed a letter that you received from Mrs. Jesse Ernst, in uh which she urged that uh people today talk in simple language uh and describe uh for the average person the advantages of living in a country like ours and uh why uh it's worthwhile to make the personal sacrifices to fight communism. And uh we discussed, if you remember, uh what would happen if communism were to take over in this country, the changes that would come in our daily living, and then we discussed briefly uh some of the uh difficulties that face us in combatting communism. Now I'd like to go on further with that question uh by uh re- returning for a second to universal military training. So many people are against uh um young people having to serve in the armed forces, and I think that there are several advantages to it, besides the training for the defense of our country that they get.

[ER:] Well, I think so too. I think there are possibilities uh um of learning things that will be of lasting value. I think there is an opportunity to learn about other men [Elliott Roosevelt coughs] and that in itself is important, to rise to leadership, um to find out what skills you have because there [Elliott Roosevelt: That's right.] are many skills which um are needed when you get a-a-a group of men together in an army, and uh I think the-the um the value to an eighteen year old youngster um can be very great. Now of course there are temptations, but as we've just been seeing in the scandals here in basketball, there are temptations in anything you do in life!

[Elliott Roosevelt:] That's right.

[ER:] And uh it seems to me that you have a chance in the army to develop some of the qualities that would have prevented the uh falling under the temptation that assails people.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, one of the principle advantages that I think the universal military training offers is the fact that uh-uh a great deal of the temptations that our people fall into, youngsters fall into, come about because of faulty uh physical well-being, and as a result, many times, a faulty mental well-being, uh because uh in the draft we've discovered that a tremendous percentage of our youngsters are--have bad health.

[ER:] Well, that's nothing new, dear. I'm sorry to tell you that we discovered that in the draft of World War I. [ER laughs]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yes, but we've never--

[ER:] And we've talked about it ever since!

[Elliott Roosevelt:] We've talked about it ever since--

[ER:] As something we should change our medical program and we never get it done.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, uh universal military training may be one way of checking the uh the tendency of-of spreading the uh physical um mal-uh maladjustments and uh, and bad and bad physical health that has--

[ER:] Unfortunately, it ought to begin much earlier. I don't know. Um I've-I've never been completely convinced that we had the perfect setup or that Great Britain had the perfect setup for um giving everybody in a country a uh like ours the best possible medical care from pre-natal days, because that's what we really need. [Elliott Roosevelt: Yes.] And um it should be something which um was available to all --was available to everybody because it's for the good of the community as a whole. [Elliott Roosevelt: That's correct.] And um no country can flourish where uh its people are not in healthy condition. That holds good for men and women both, [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] because um-- and it has to begin with the baby, it can't begin-- it's already-- any defect is uh is perhaps almost past ridding at eighteen when they come into the armed services. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] And [ER coughs] yet it could have been cured or-or made much better probably, if it had been discovered when they were very small. And much of what you say about the mental attitude today, where we know a great deal more about the mental attitude -- you'll find the doctors telling you that has to begin with the baby! Now that seems utterly silly [ER laughs] but they tell us that it's true!

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well uh, there-- here's one very good point of beginning. Uh we find that in order to continue to have the advantages that we have in our country and not to be swallowed up by communism, we must improve the mental and physical health of our whole community, starting at the earliest age.

[ER:] But I think it's only fair to say that the communists will tell you that they had the perfect physical setup, that they-they did everything, they had better hospitals, they had better training, they had better everything.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, if they do, then it's uh very vital to us [ER: Yes, but they don't.] that we do the improving ourselves so that uh--

[ER:] Yes, but as a matter of fact, they don't. But I think it's uh essential that we should always realize that we will be met by the assurance that everything-- and many of their people believe it because they've never been outside that country, that everything there is perfect and above everything in every other country of the world.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Ah well, that's alright uh, but they have to pay a price for-- even if it is, let's just grant that it is, they're paying a price in lack of personal freedom, which we discussed yesterday, uh which our people don't want to pay. So therefore our people must make the rectifying uh programs work in this country ah so that we can keep what we've got in the way of individual freedom. Now, in order to do that it means that uh we've got to interest people in communities to organize, to back a-and search for a new program that will vastly improve the medical care of our people.

[ER:] That's quite right, but you're going to face the fact that the minute you do that, people are going to say this is socialism, [Elliott Roosevelt coughs] and socialism is next to communism, and that's one of the things you have to combat. You have to combat the feeling in [Elliott Roosevelt: Well, let's go behind that though--]many people's minds that the minute you do anything for people where everybody agrees to do it together, somebody's sure to say, "Oh dear, you're doing away with the old individual uh responsibility." [Elliott Roosevelt: In other words uh--] And again the reason is, you have to do it differently because we're in a different kind of world, we're not in the kind of world where you could have the old individual responsibilities.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] All right, but it's everybody's [ER coughs] individual responsibility uh[ER: To come in with everybody else.] to come in with everybody else, particularly when we're threatened from without

[ER: That's right.] by another group, [ER: That's right.] so that uh we know that under our system that once in a while we must unite. [ER: That's it.] Now, one of the things we must unite on is to improve the overall physical and mental well-being of our people. Now, in order to improve it, it calls for united action. Therefore, the people who scream socialism and uh the-the doing away of rugged individualism, uh on this particular argument, they must uh come in and join in with the will. Now that doesn't necessarily mean that we have to have a government uh owning medical profession. [ER laughs: No] All right well, that-that is uh one of the questions that I wanted to ask you about uh, what it would mean to us uh if we have to carry over a long period of time uh our battle uh to keep from going under a communist-dominated rule. Um what about um from the standpoint of the simple pleasures of uh living, such as the fact that we have more automobiles for our people here, we have more washing machines, we have more uh electric stoves and gas stoves, and things of that nature, the--

[ER:] You know, I don't believe that means that we have to go without those things. But I think it means that we have to be more careful of them. Now, [ER clears throat] I-I uh have noticed, many times, what very poor care we take of many of our things. I mean, I'll see -- I'll go in and see a very fine stove which is not working properly because it hasn't been cleaned properly. I will go in -- I'll drive along, and I'll see lawn machinery that costs a great deal to the farmer, left out in the snow and the rain. Now, those are the things we have to learn that we can't afford. We have to take care of what we get, and it has to last longer. That's really what we're up against for the next few years.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yeah, all right. Now, uh do you feel ah that um our more restricted way of living uh should be looked upon as something which our whole generation is going to have to do uh in order for us to make sure of-of preserving our peace?

[ER:] Oh yes, I think that probably it may be one or two generations are going to have to do it. But I don't think that we need to be unhappy about it. I think we can be happy about it because [Elliott Roosevelt: In other words--]I think it will bring us a lot of-of return.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Or in other words, we must band together and operate uh with unity in this country uh over a long period of time and it can prove a tremendous benefit to us as a people.

[ER:] I-I think so.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] All right, well I think that answers um must of the questions raised by this letter, and we'll bear in mind in the future the-the admonition that we must speak simply and not talk over the heads of-of other people.

[ER:] I think that we could use certain techniques that we haven't used. I heard the other day that the Soviets were using in Iran little street plays that depicted the miseries of the people, and then said um this is the way the Soviets would uh correct these miseries. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] But I'm not at all sure that one couldn't do something very similar uh [Elliott Roosevelt: In this country.] in our own country.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] All right, well we'll uh talk about that too fur-further on another program.

[Break 12:00 to 12:07]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] As leaders of public opinion as well as uh advisors to industry, the lawyers of our nation hold an extremely responsible position. It isn't often that lawyers step out of their proscribed roles,

but uh one group of very eminent gentlemen has realized the importance of the contribution they can make. This group has established a series of forums to discuss amongst themselves the problems of the world. These forums, now held in New York each Saturday, are expected to contribute substantially to the knowledge which the law professions should possess. And now, Mother, after this lengthy speech on my part, will you introduce your guest for today?

[ER:] Very gladly, Elliott. I'd like to add to Elliott's remarks that in a previous talk with my guest today, I think he told me that the immediate prospects of war or peace concern every member of the bar. I imagine he also told me that they also concern every citizen in the United States [ER laughs]. The ability to appraise the facts, in the light of political and economic developments, enhances materially the value of lawyers to American business and industry. And now, it gives me great pleasure to present to you our former Secretary of War, and also judge of the United States Court of Appeals, Judge Robert P. Patterson.

[Robert P. Patterson:] I'm very happy indeed to be with you this morning, Mrs. Roosevelt.

[ER:] Thank you. Elliott and I, Judge Patterson, have just given a little information about the Practising Law Institute forums. Would you like to expand a little on the background of their purpose?

[Robert P. Patterson:] Uh for many years, I've been one of the trustees of the Practising Law Institute, and now I'm the president. The purpose of the Practising Law Institute is to keep lawyers actually practicing law abreast of developments in the law. Uh we do not uh conduct any courses like a law school for law students, but ours is a post-legal education program for lawyers who are actually practicing.

[ER:] Well, then um this new forum um is actually uh started with the idea of bringing out or formulating, rather, the ideas on uh current events, is that it? (15:03)

[Robert P. Patterson:] Yes, that is right. Uh in the main, of course, uh the courses that the Practising Law Institute offers to practicing lawyers have to do with legal subjects: uh the law of estates, the law of taxes, the law of real property. But our director uh, some months ago, who was Harold Seligson, got the idea and submitted it to the trustees, that we were not discharging our full duty. Just by that, he thought that one of the most intricate uh and complicated and pressing problems of the day had to do with our relations with Soviet Russia. Uh and it seemed to him that lawyers were under a duty not only as citizens, but as legal advisors to businesspeople, to be well posted on the past, present, and what the future might hold for us and for the nation, in the way of relations of this country, and what the probable course of events might be in regard to Soviet Russia. So he proposed this course, and the course was started last Saturday and was very successful.

[ER:] And now who participated in this forum, or course, as you call it?

[Robert P. Patterson:] Well, one of your friends, Mrs. Roosevelt, uh Ambassador Ernest Gross was present uh and gave his thoughts, and a number of experts from the colleges and universities who have devoted their time to a study of the affairs and the activities of the Soviet Union.

[ER:] Well, um now um did these uh--is the idea really uh to um try and evaluate the chances of war or the possibilities of living in the same world together? I mean you could barely cover the whole thing, beyond the mere fact of whether we have a chance to preserve the peace.

[Robert P. Patterson:] Yes, that is right. Eh it was -- the purpose was to give the lawyers who attended, and there were uh some six hundred.

[ER:] There were? That's a great number.

[Robert P. Patterson:] I was surprised at the attendance. Uh [ER: Mhm.] I was rather dubious, uh I must confess, [Elliott Roosevelt coughs] when the idea was first suggested, as to whether it wasn't too great a departure from our normal uh program. Uh but uh it turned out that it aroused a vast interest among lawyers.

[ER:] If people are confused, I suppose even lawyers are confused. [ER and Elliott Roosevelt laugh]

[Robert P. Patterson:] Indeed they are. Uh lawyers are only citizens after all, uh like all of us, and uh they uh they responded very well, and uh it showed that there was a need, and that Mr. Seligson was quite correct, quite right in his uh diagnosis. Uh the purpose is, as you have said, to uh give them the information, give them the information and then let them form their own judgment as to what the prospects are for peace and what the risks may be for war.

[ER:] Well, you haven't--you didn't come to any decisions, of course, I suppose?

[Robert P. Patterson:] I don't think anyone can. [ER laughs] It must a matter of individual judgment.

[ER:] Mhm. And um what uh what do you think um were the points that were brought out that uh were of most importance to the lawyers there that they probably didn't know about before?

[Robert P. Patterson:] Well, it's the American way, and we like it, uh to give all citizens the fullest information we can. Uh full and free discussion, and then let each man or woman form his own judgment as to what is uh the best policy to pursue for our own nation and what is the most likely turn of events.

[ER:] Well, I wonder whether if you touched on a point which was brought up to me a short time ago by a young German from West Berlin, who's been [ER coughs] broadcasting for two years in East Berlin and thinks he has quite a network of people working for him, even in some of the satellite uh countries who are very unhappy over the type of Soviet police rule that they are under. Now, um [ER coughs] did um-- he believed that we should make -- at least, this was a point he made to me -- we should always try to make a difference between the Russian people and their Kremlin masters, or the Communist Party. Now, was that at all discussed?

[Robert P. Patterson:] Yes, and that is a distinction that must never be overlooked, of course. Uh it is to us inconceivable that two hundred million Russian people would really be hostile or would have uh a policy of hatred toward other people uh or would approve of the lowering of an Iron Curtain to cut off access between them and the rest of the world -- that has to do with the Russian people. On the other hand, we have seen the policies of the men in control of the Russian government to be the exact opposite: to promote a-a policy of hate, of complete isolation, and uh to try to prevent access uh from us to the Russian people and from the Russian people to us. Yes, the-the distinctions between the practices of the ruling group in the Kremlin and what we must take to be the true feeling of the mass of the people there -- that distinction was brought up, and I don't think we can ever overlook it. (21:47)

[ER:] As I understand it um there are uh probably only about six million people in Russia who are actually members of the party. Is that right?

[Robert P. Patterson:] Well, that's my understanding, and of course the power is centered in a very small group among those six million.

[ER:] Yes, it's um and while probably there are uh several-- a number more that benefit by the party activities, it must be a small percentage in comparison with the whole people. So--

[Robert P. Patterson:] It's a very small percentage indeed, and uh the mass of the Russian people have, as we see it, uh no uh control, no voice at all in the conduct of policies of the Russian government.

[ER:] Well, that's very interesting to me, [Robert P. Patterson coughs] and I'm sorry that we have to stop talking for a minute, because I have another question I want to ask you very soon, but we have to-- I think Elliott wants to have a word. [ER laughs]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, at this point in the program we usually turn it over to the announcer for a few moments, and we'll come back right away, Judge Patterson, to this discussion between yourself and Mother. I'd like to ask a few questions too, because-- about this forum and some of the ideas that were propounded there.

[Break 23:14 to 23:24]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] And now, Mother, would you take over again uh on our interview with Judge Patterson?

[ER:] Yes, I will, but I'm going to let you in a minute uh ask the questions that you [ER coughs] said you particularly wanted to ask. But I have one I want very much to um ask, and that is: What were the points that Ambassador Gross particularly stressed? Uh I've heard him before, and I was interested to know what he stressed in this forum.

[Robert P. Patterson:] Well, I believe he brought out, principally, the fact that negotiations with uh the Soviet government are not like uh ordinary negotiations uh unless you have what the Secretary of State has so well called a position of strength, uh there is no point at all and nothing to be achieved uh in negotiations or endeavors to arrive at an agreement. Uh they--they in the Soviet government have respect only for force, and unless there is uh physical strength to back up your point, they pay no attention to it at all.

[ER:] Mhm. Well, that, of course, is um one of the things I think I've also heard Professor [Philip] Mosely point out, who's made a very careful study of Russian attitudes, and I-I think that's quite evident in the um attack on Korea, and um that--that is the way that they think and that they act. Now Elliott, if you want to ask some questions. (25:16)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, Judge Patterson, you said uh in the earlier part of the interview that in uh during the course it was uh clearly demonstrated that uh really this is the attitude of a very small group of people in the Soviet Union and does not reflect the thinking of people of the Soviet Union. Did anybody propound any means or method whereby the people of the Soviet Union and of the satellite nations could be reached to uh at least put the position of the United States more clearly before them, and give a demonstration of the fact that we are not desirous of having a war?

[Robert P. Patterson:] Elliott, that's one of the hardest uh features of the whole problem. I've heard people so many times say, "Just get in touch with the Russia people. Put the facts to them. [ER laughs] Everything will be alright. Uh, send the *Voice of America* over there." But if the Russian government persists in jamming the radio channels, and there aren't many radio sets in Russia anyway, uh what more can you do? Uh I think that no means of communication with the Russian people should be overlooked, but when people say that it's going to be a simple thing to do, and why don't you just do it, just do it, let's do it. I must confess that I'm baffled.

[ER:] I'm always getting letters from people saying they've just written to Premier Stalin, and I always wonder how much good that's going to do! [ER laughs] Well--[Robert P. Patterson: I do too.] [ER laughs] And um I'd-I'd like to ask um one question: What was the feeling-- had-had the Stalin's last statement been made when this forum was held, and what was the feeling about it?

[Robert P. Patterson:] It had just been made uh, I think the day before. Uh like so many of his uh utterances -- I won't say so many because he doesn't utter very often, nothing like eh as often as I do, or the rest of us do -- uh but like so many of his utterances, nevertheless, you can read it any number of ways and read into it any meaning you please.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mhm.

[ER:] And that's one of the difficulties, and very often [Elliott Roosevelt coughs] when he talks about disarmament and, of course, that's talk which attracts people a great deal, anything that says disarmament means possible peace to people, and when he gets that, [Robert P. Patterson: It certainly has a strong appeal.] I always wonder um how we could possibly check what was really behind what he said.

[Robert P. Patterson:] I suppose [ER coughs] that is a complete impossibility. [ER: Therefore, uh--] I don't think the uh enlightenment of people in the United States or anywhere in the world was particularly promoted by what he said last week.

[ER:] Yes, I don't think um uh any of us actually know um-- everybody knows what uh the democracies have in the way of-of materiel approximately. They may not know exactly, but it seems to me sometimes that we print in the papers almost too much, and um ah yet uh when Premier Stalin speaks, there is very little actually that you can possibly check on what he says.

[Robert P. Patterson:] When he said that uh the Russian army had demobilized many men after the last forum [ER: Well, the older men.] that could be true of course, but nevertheless they took in by universal military service all men of eighteen, so that uh while it is doubtless the fact that uh many men were mustered out, [ER: They probably--] many more came in. [ER: Many more came in!] So it doesn't mean anything about the present strength of the armed forces, it uh didn't uh give you any clue at all to what that might be. (29:42)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] 'Course what interests me uh, Judge, is the fact that the-the real basic uh problem is uh mutual distrust, and I've yet to hear a uh Russian government representative, from Stalin on down, ever propound any uh single act that the Soviet Union would uh recommend that would uh bring about greater trust between the diff--the different nations.

[Robert P. Patterson:] I've sometimes thought uh, Elliott, that the key to the whole thing, the-the key to the whole thing would be free discussion, free speech, and a free press in Soviet Russia. Uh how that is to be done--

[Robert P. Patterson and ER overlap]

[ER:] How will that be done?

[Robert P. Patterson:] How that is to be done is something beyond me--

[Elliott Roosevelt:] And that would automatically spell the doom of the present government in the Soviet Union.

[ER:] Automatically!

[Robert P. Patterson:] No doubt it would, and also when you have free discussion then you have breaks and curbs put upon uh strong and arbitrary action by any ruling group. Uh you have a slowing down of any uh drastic action that might be uh underway or under consideration. Now, I confess that how to bring about uh free speech, free press, and free discussion within the Soviet Union, I have not the cure for.

[ER:] Of course, they always say in the United Nations that all those things exist in the Soviet Union. The only thing they do not permit is the type of warmongering which we engage in. [Robert P. Patterson laughs] That is repeated to us very often. I'd like to ask you one question: What was said in the forum on the subject of the atom bomb and other weapons of mass destruction?

[Robert P. Patterson:] Uh they were discussed. Uh I have myself the feeling that uh it is our possession of uh the atom bomb -- uh for which we are indebted to President Roosevelt because of his leadership. I remember it so well, back in 1940 and 1941, when the idea seemed fantastic, and when it took truly bold leadership to go forward to that project. But it is the uh atom bomb and our possession of it, as I see it, which has been the greatest preserver of peace of the world for the last four years. (32:32)

[ER:] Well, I'm very interested to have you say that because I feel that too, not that I want it used especially, because I am horrified at the thought of what might happen to the world, but on the other hand, I think the possession of it is of vast importance to us. In keeping--

[Robert P. Patterson:] The mere-the mere possession of it, you're quite right. And it's been the great deterrent against uh aggression.

[ER:] Against aggression. Against actual war. What is your personal feeling about our American-Soviet relations? Do you think that there's any um chance that uh um-- do you think that they've really grown so bad now that there's no chance of working them out uh um, not quickly, but on a slow basis, or--what-- what is your feeling on that subject?

[Robert P. Patterson:] I believe there is a chance of working them out. Uh I believe that relations between the United States and the Soviet Union will improve when we have more military strength. And uh and as we have said uh when we can argue and discuss and negotiate from a position of strength, that is the only thing they will respect. So I believe that as our military power comes up and increases and is stepped up, our relations with the Soviet Union will improve.

[ER:] Well then, you feel, on the whole, that Korea has not done us harm?

[Robert P. Patterson:] I think it was the only thing to do to go into Korea. I think it was the salvation of the United Nations to take uh the stand they did last June. Uh I believe that uh the chance of world peace through organized, collective security on a United Nations basis um was enhanced and increased by the conduct of the United Nations last summer in Korea.

[ER:] Well, I agree with you, and now I see Elliott motioning to me so I think I have to say thank you so much for being with me today.

[Robert P. Patterson:] Well, thank you, Mrs. Roosevelt, I've had a very good time indeed.

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