

THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

December 12, 1950

Description: In the interview segment, ER discusses life behind the Iron Curtain with Boris Shube, former political advisor to the American Radio Station in Berlin.

Participants: Eleanor Roosevelt, Elliott Roosevelt and Boris Shube

[Elliott Roosevelt:] The guest we bring to our listeners today is a man who has played a prominent part in trying to bring the truth to those behind the Iron Curtain. His name is Boris Shube. Mr. Shube worked as political adviser to the American Radio Station behind the Iron Curtain in Berlin and has recently had his book published, entitled *The Choice*.

[ER:] First of all, Mr. Shube, we would like to know something about you. Where you were born, how you came to be interested in Russian affairs.

[Boris Shube:] Well I was born in New York, and my interest in Russian affairs ah dates back almost to the cradle. My father was active in the democratic Russian revolutionary movement from 1903 approximately. And ah as a very small child in New York, I came into contact with all sorts of opponents of Tsarist tyranny. Am monarchists, liberals, even Leon Trotsky, whom I once met as a child of four, and according to my father's story, I refused to shake hands with him at that time.

[ER:] Well then, you know--you can speak Russian, which must be an enormous help.

[Boris Shube:] Yes, uh my first language was Russian despite the fact that I was born here. And it was in school that I learned English. [ER: Learned English.]

[ER:] Yes, well that--that's how you got on so well in Russia, then. I would give a great deal to know Russian but they say it's the most difficult language in the world to learn. So that you don't know whether it's difficult because it was your language! [ER laughs.]

[Boris Shube:] I couldn't say.

[ER:] Well, now ah, what happened to you as you grew up here? You grew up in this country? (1:49)

[Boris Shube:] I grew up in this country and spent most of my time in the right field bleachers of the Yankee Stadium. [ER, Elliott Roosevelt, and Boris Shube laugh]

[ER:] A little time in school?

[Boris Shube:] Oh, some time in school, at the University of Michigan and Columbia.

[ER:] And then when the war came?

[Boris Shube:] I was ah drafted, I went overseas in the infantry, I was a private at the time and I was later transferred to the Psychological Warfare Division of Supreme Headquarters [SHAPE].

[ER:] Oh well then--and that am--ah--did you get into Russia during war? (2:22)

[Boris Shube:] No. During the war, I came into contact with thousands of Russians though uh as they were being liberated by American troops, [ER: Oh really?] uh right up to the river Elbe where I did meet many Soviet Russians too, including high officers and Soviet troops, journalists, and so on.

[ER:] And of course you had the tradition uh um of believing in the revolution.

[Boris Shube:] Well I had the tradition of--of knowing that--that Russians had been fighting for political freedom for well over a century and that thousands of them had died for it and, [Elliott Roosevelt coughs in the background] just as Americans, that such feelings that go very deeply into the hearts of people and remain there, no matter what temporary tyranny they live under.

[ER:] Well um I can well imagine that but how do we get a message across to the Russian people?

[Boris Shube:] I think the history of American-Russian relations for the last hundred and fifty years gives us all of the material we need to get that message across. I think we have demonstrated again and again our friendship to Russia in every period of crisis and--and periods of starvation--the Hoover war relief, Lend-Lease. It's very easy to convince the Russians that we're still our friends if we make that our main purpose in talking to them.(3:45)

[ER:] Well if the present regime were overthrown, where would the new leaders come from? What form of government would they adopt?

[Boris Shube:] I think a surprising proportion of the new leaders would come from among military men, scientists, journalists, uh men in public life with relatively little interest in the communist party and its workings, men whom the regime uses now as a front and as instruments but who are thoroughly, internally prepared for something more democratic. I think they would furnish a great deal of it. I think the outside world can contribute something in a way of exchange of ideas, scholars, and so on, all of which the Russians would welcome enormously. But I think inside Russia you have the kernel for-for a democratic government.

[ER:] Well I certainly hope what you have been telling us uh may come to pass for we want peace, all of us. And there is no feeling in this country as far as I can find it, of animosity towards the Russian people or desire to use the atom bomb. And now, thank you very much for being with us this this day and uh I hope with all my heart that you are right.

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