

## THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

October 26, 1950

Description: In this segment, Elliott Roosevelt and ER respond to a listener's question about the prospects of world peace and what can be done to attain it.

Participants: ER, Elliott Roosevelt

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[ER:] You said I seemed distressed at answering the questions the other day. Sometimes I am a little worried as to what you are going to pull out [Elliott Roosevelt laughs] of these letters.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well you know, I find that the letters that we're receiving are really and truly uh very searching and are extremely interesting to me; they make me stop and think, and I find that very, very good for myself, because uh all too often we could just go along in our rut and we never stop to think about what makes the world tick. Now here's a question that even I have uh have thought of a number of times. I've thought about it in connection with my own children. Um this question comes from a lady who wants to know what we're going to do to allay the fears of people, women in particular that wars will cease, that their children are not being born to become cannon fodder?

[ER:] That's a pretty tough question, because uh it's a question that means people have to have a philosophy. (1:17)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yes, they do have to have a philosophy, but I think that they also need encouragement.

[ER:] Well, they do need -- perhaps they need encouragement, but I don't think encouragement will do this. I think it has to be a kind of courage that comes from a survey of history, a realization of um the place that man occupies, and the fact that man um is really not completely master of his own destiny, that he must have some dependence on strength higher than his own. That's real belief in a spiritual value, and if he has that belief he will believe that as long as life is meant to go on, it will go on, and therefore while he is here he must live, and he must have the courage to let other people live, let children come into the world. (2:44)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Then we come right back to what we were discussing the other day, which is that uh we must have a spiritual value that people need uh the knowledge uh that we do have a supreme being who exists, and who uh if we strive that we will have assistance in reaching the goals that we're after.

[ER:] That's true, but the supreme being will be different to so many people, Elliott. I mean, after all, you must think that all over this world there are people who are living under exactly the same fears and tensions that we are, and they have different religions and they- they appeal and have to draw their strength from different beliefs, so that we can't say just a supreme being. We have to believe that the beliefs of people are what uh really matter; the fact that they do believe in something, and that something gives them courage um to go on and do the best that they are able to do. Now the freedom of people, the freedom of -- is there freedom of choice to do, uh they can cho-choose either to do well or to do badly. Now if they have courage and they decide to go on and they decide that whatever comes they have to meet it, and they either meet it well or they meet it badly, [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm] so therefore uh they will the do the best they know how, that's where you're-you're free will and you're free intelligence is given play. And um I'm- I'm a very bad person to ask this question of because I don't understand how you can be afraid, uh because whatever you have to face you always have to face, that's all there is to it. And I

um therefore, a long while ago I made up my mind that much that people suffered was in anticipation, that when the thing really happened uh you had to face it, that was all there was, and therefore what you wanted to spare yourself was that worry beforehand about what may happen and which very rarely does happen. (5:23)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yeah, I think there is a great deal of truth and I think a great majority of people can bring themselves to stand whatever uh they are called upon to stand for themselves. But people hate to think that uh that they are -- really today they have it within their grasp to either sentence their children to uh a destruction or to a great cataclysmic uh horror uh by actions which they might be responsible for.

[ER:] But that- that is after all your belief in the spiritual, because if you believe that there is such a thing as good in the world and you put the best that you know into living, then you haven't sentenced your children to anything, you've done your best to build for them and then it's up to them to do the rest.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] And don't you feel also that uh in addition to doing the best that you know how in your own life, that you have a tremendous responsibility to instill in your children a fearlessness to face the future and an awareness that there are problems, and there are going to be tremendous crises that they will be called upon to face, and that the only way that they can face those is if they approach them without fear. (7:00)

[ER:] I don't think you can do that except by example. I don't think any amount of telling anyone will - will teach that. I think you have to show that that is the way you meet problems or you meet situations --

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Actually, I didn't mean by telling, I meant by example.

[ER:] Well, I think that's so. I think you have to do it by just not -- but you see I think again it becomes an unconscious thing, that gradually builds up in people. That's the value of living; that gradually as you live you build up from your past and from your experience and from the way you live, you build up the ability to do certain things and through that you give to your children what they live by. (7:58)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] I think that a good way to illustrate this is to uh take our situation today, where tremendous fear has be-had been created about the atomic bomb, and uh speeches are made and people speak uh of the horror and the end of civilization and the fact that the atomic bomb is of such magnitude that whole uh whole races of people, whole nations will be wiped out uh by an atomic attack. And if you look back through history, when gunpowder was first invented and uh it was used as a weapon and the crossbow was the great weapon before the invention of the gun uh with gunpowder. Uh when it was first used in war, uh the people who didn't have the guns felt that the end of the world had come. Uh they -- the armies that faced those that had the guns broke and ran, the countries were disorganized, there was terrific panic, and it wasn't very long before, all of a sudden, it was an accepted mode of warfare. There were counter-weapons uh there were improvements over that now the gun is practically outmoded by the guided missile and-and other weapons. And we are constantly developing, but we also constantly develop defenses, and humanity always manages to go on. And that is the thing that I think that most people forget when they say the end--

[ER:] Man has had periods when it was almost extinct though, or went back a good many hundreds of years.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, are you talking about the Dark Ages?

[ER:] Well, that's one of them.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] I mean the--that period in European history when civilization was supposed to have been blasted; well actually was civilization blasted?

[ER:] No, it was a very- it was a very uh great period out of which grew a great deal, of course.

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