

THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

March 19, 1951

Description: In the opening segment, ER and Elliott Roosevelt respond to a listener's question about the ways that the Soviet Union has changed since the 1920s. In the interview segment, which was pre-recorded in Washington, DC, ER discusses the potential for a Federated Europe or European Union with Ambassador Henri Bonnet of France.

Participants: ER, Elliott Roosevelt, Henri Bonnet

[ER:] Good day, this is Eleanor Roosevelt speaking. It gives me great pleasure to visit with you, as I do, each day at this time from my living room atop the Park Sheraton Hotel overlooking Central Park. I am grateful for the many encouraging letters you send me and most happy that you find my guests both informative and entertaining, as I do. Now my son, Elliott, who assists me on these programs, will speak to you.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Thank you, Mother. Today we are very proud to have as our guest, the French ambassador, his Excellency Ambassador Henri Bonnet. France is traditionally our friend and our ally and I know that the things Ambassador Bonnet will have to say in his interview today will be important and interesting to each of us. Mother will introduce Ambassador Bonnet as soon as we've taken a look at the mail. And we'll come back to it as soon as we've had a message from the sponsors who make this recorded program possible.

[Break: 1:09-1:23]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] In the letter which prompts the discussion, Mother and I will have today, I seem to come in for a bit of questioning. Here's the letter from Claire Goodrich of Nutley, New Jersey: uh, "Today on your radio program, I heard your son Elliott say something to the effect that the Russians had changed. Now I must go back to the uh-- 1920 when I was young and working in New York City. At that time, I and my acquaintances of the same age were besieged by young Russian students to supply them with the necessities of life, so that they could continue their studies without having to work, which they said was beneath them. Somewhat startled, I asked one of them, a girl, from whom I bought quantities of silk underwear, which I did not need, and for which I paid high prices just to help her along, why she thought it was all right for me to work and turn over my money to her. She explained very seriously that that was what Americans were to do when Russia ruled the world, which it surely intended to do. She continued to explain that she was a communist and that it was her duty to do the things that she had been sent here to do. When I thought the girl and her friends were joking they became indignant. They had never heard of the brotherhood of man or equal rights of any of the things I had been taught to work toward. This was only one of a series of episodes back in the twenties before the hush was put on, about 1929 I believe, when many of the members did what they now call 'going underground.' For years I was dismayed at the efforts of Americans to build up Communist Russia into a mighty military force. But I am glad now that we have begun to realize the truth; and that we must defend ourselves against the monster that we built. Tell Elliott that, uh, Russia has not changed, perhaps when he saw, what he saw there, was the deceit planned long ago for the benefit of visitors. Planned even before the death of Lenin and quite possibly, without his knowledge. Sincerely Yours, Claire Goodrich." I don't remember in what connection I said that uh the Russians had changed uh, but I think that the letter is a very interesting one uh with regard to Russian students being over here. Uh, did you know that in the twenties that they had numbers of Russian students? (3:54)

[ER:] No I'm afraid that in the twenties I uh was not particularly interested in-in students. My children were so much younger than the age of college students.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yes.

[ER:] That um I wasn't seeing very many at that time and I don't remember anything about it. I know quite well [ER coughs] of course that by the early thirties uh the change in their-- the way they talked had come about uh considerably, and was changed. They did not talk then, and in such a frank way about Russia ruling the world.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mhm.

[ER:] and um [ER coughs] they did talk about the value of communism to the peoples of the world and how important it was for the peoples of the world uh to have communism because then they would have the good things of life and it would not be in the hands of a few as it was in a capitalist country, and they picked out everything in our country and that time, which was the days of the depression [Elliott Roosevelt: mhm.], there were a good many things that were not uh very happy in our country, naturally they played them up and um I think they were deeply disappointed when, through our own democratic processes, we met those difficulties and we came [Elliott Roosevelt: licked' em] out with solutions and we really succeeded in meeting our problems [Elliott Roosevelt: Yes.] and um I think that probably was one of the disappointments to them and of course, you must-- uh she must know--oh that what they count on today is that the capitalist countries are going to blow up! That's the one thing they insist on all the time. And uh I think it's important that we don't blow up. [Laughter] I think it's important, just as important as that we have military strength. (5:58)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yes.

[ER:] um Now, from her point of view, we built um their strength. I think uh, the lady is a little bit wrong there. We did aid enormously during the war when Russia was our ally, but we did it because without Russia's fighting forces, we would have lost a great many more men and we would have taken many more years to win the war against Hitler.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well I've heard some of our military leaders say that uh- that they ha-- seriously questioned whether we could have uh won against Germany if the Russian manpower and Russian armies had not stayed in the war.

[ER:] Well that was the fear of course; the fear was always that Russia would make a separate peace, and that- um that was the reason for giving Russia um as much material aid as we did. Now undoubtedly that helped Russia um now. She had models, she had uh new ideas, uh she uh [ER coughs] was able, after the war, with her great manpower uh to um increase her power very greatly, and indirectly, I suppose we aided in that increase in power.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] But, let me ask you--

[ER:] But it was essential, to have her have it, because without it, we would have lost uh possibly the war, but in any case, many more years of time and many more men!

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well let me ask you, I imagine uh that to a certain extent what she means in this letter is that uh we recognized even before we gave her military aid in the last war uh that we recognized Russia

in 1933, and uh I know that for that for instance uh the Ford Motor Company did a tremendous amount of business with the Soviet Union, in fact they built a whole factories over there.

[ER:] Well, that I think was on um the theory that we have always had-- and-- and I-I still think it has uh merit. That if you help people raise their standard of living-- and, it-it does help you because you need outlets for what you make, in a big industrial country like ours. But at the same time, I think most of our people went in there uh to build up businesses and to trade um felt that, if the USSR was going to be, would become an open country, and trade with the rest of the world, it would be uh it would mean an increasing good standard of living and a lessening of the ability to tell the people fairy stories, which is what they do when they live behind an iron curtain and the recognition of Russia in the political field of course was not-- not, at all different from what in what we have just done in recognizing uh Franco in Spain, and the uh mere fact that you do not send-- have diplomatic relationships, uh just means that uh, you have no way of communicating with another country and uh it does not mean that you approve of their type of government, or of the way they live or anything else, it simply means that in the world of today its uh easier to have some kind of communication [Elliott Roosevelt: mhm.] with different countries. And we have a variety of reasons um when a government has existed for a certain length of time, [ER coughs] for feeling that diplomatic recognition does not mean approval, but is essential to the uh modern life of nations. Now um we don't know if we like it we can't say that um I am particularly uh um anxious to help nations that I don't approve of, and yet I think perhaps it's wise to continue the old theory that where you can raise people's standard of living, they are less apt to go to war. (10:44)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yeah, well, um my feeling also with regard to the uh Russians as a people is that the Russians, fundamentally, are a peace loving people, and it is only the uh the ruling few that uh I think that uh the number of actual number of communists, the people who are the--

[ER:] Communist Party members.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Communist Party members, I feel that uh they are so relatively few uh who would even contenance a war uh that uh surely we can reach through over a period of time the more that we keep in contact with the Russians and deprive them of the ability of shutting their people behind an iron curtain uh as time goes by, those people are going to come to understand, that we do not want war, that we do not want to invade them, that we do not want to take away from them their own nationalist uh love of country.

[ER:] Well that-- that I hope, that is one of the hopes of the present time.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well I hope that this answers the the question that uh the lady has raised, but I see that the watch means-- says that we have to move on to another part of the program now.

[Break: 12:10-12:15]

[ER:] Recently when I was in Washington, I had the honor of having the French Ambassador to the United States as my guest. With the possibility of another Big Four conference, and the many problems affecting both France and the United States, I was happy to be able to have Ambassador Bonnet to discuss these matters. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you his Excellency, Ambassador Henri Bonnet. (12:47)

[Henri Bonnet:] I thank you.

[ER:] Now, mister ambassador, I wonder if you think that in the general public opinion in France today um has come to a head about a federated Europe, do they think much about it, are they talking about it in Euro-- in France.

[Henri Bonnet:] Certainly, they do. It has uh become a popular uh subject in France, a popular subject indeed. Eh, recently there was a poll taken in uh France about uh that uh subject. It reveals that 65 percent of the French people, an enormous uh proportion is eh or are decidedly in favor of a federated eh Europe-- of a European Union.

[ER:] That's uh very encouraging. Now, um what is the French government prepared to do about this trend of thought?

[Henri Bonnet:] I should say that uh uh the uh French government uh, sees, uh, eye-to-eye uh with eh French public opinion in that respect. Uh I dare to say that uh the French government has taken the leadership in uh that matter in uh Europe. It's um the policy now of uh the cabinet in France uh to uh promote west, western European union. We have uh taken uh already-- uh we shall see uh, certainly, a number of steps in that direction. We have uh realized, and the government has realized that in the present world in our modern world, a uh a mosaic of states cannot uh develop fully the resources of the nation. That uh those uh comparatively smaller-- small nations must uh unite together uh break uh custom uh barriers-- develop uh bigger markets. The French government is convinced that the uh-- there is no other way to uh compete uh peacefully, for uh the improvement of the um situation, both inside and uh outside the nations uh to compete uh with uh nations like the United States, with big-bigger federations there is no other way. (15:39)

[ER:] and that is, it is really the economic considerations that have bought about this willingness to lay aside um old uh historical boundaries really, and um- to bring people to um to work together. So that it's on the economic side that you feel this you must start, isn't it?

[Henri Bonnet:] Well, I would not go as uh far as that. It is true that uh economic uh barriers, economic walls, uh obstacles uh play a great role in uh in the European divisions of the last uh century, let us say. uh since uh the beginning of the uh industrial revolution, but uh we realize fully too, the advantages of um political union, of a union from a political point of view. After all, the uh uh, the uh recent history of Europe, has uh shown uh that uh the rivalries and quarrels, be political or economic may lead to catastrophes. And um we uh with purpose now is to go slowly maybe but surely towards uh political union by uh the methods, through the method of destroying first the economic obstacles to such a union.

[ER:] Using [ER coughs] using the very obvious economic advantages to bring about the political union. Now in this country, we've heard a great deal about the Shuman Plan. And in when I was in Paris I had the pleasure of having an interview on the air with Mr. Shuman. But a great many people I think here don't really understand his plan and I wonder if you would again tell me something about it.

[Henri Bonnet:] With great pleasure, I think uh that uh the Shuman Plan is really the first uh step-- concrete step taken uh by uh by France. For uh bringing about uh that uh European Unity-- Western European unity. It's a good example of what uh we were saying a moment ago. Creating a union that union uh which uh makes uh strength uh in every field by uh breaking the uh main obstacles. The Schumann plan had uh two purposes. First, the one I mentioned already, breaking the tariff barriers, the walls, in a decisive field, the field of heavy industry-- of uh steel and uh coal. And second, a political purpose, to make uh wars between France and Germany impossible. Uh, how can we do that? By merging the uh industries the heavy industries, metallurgy, the citalurgy, of France and Germany and for other western European nations into a big pool in order to uh create a big market, comparable to the market you have here inside the-the United states and many steps-- many measures have to be taken to realize such an

ambitious uh proposition. If it is, and when it is implemented, there is no doubt that it uh, as it was said by the French cabinet, uh that when it is implemented, war between France and Germany will uh not only uh become unthinkable, but impossible! (20:18)

[ER:] well, now, uh what have been the main obstacles you've run into?

[Henri Bonnet:] Oh, uh there have been months of discussions which will be ended soon, in a few days maybe, and the treaty will have been uh established which will be signed soon in Paris, it will have to be ratified later by the parliament. It was um a uh complicated affair. Uh, we--it was not uh, a question only of declaration of uh good intentions. We had to create institutions, the first uh really European institutions, endowed powers, with decisive powers. There will be uh something corresponding to an executive, something corresponding to a legislative uh body, and something uh corresponding to a judicial body. The executive, first, will be call the high authority, it will be a small international body of um six people, uh coming from the six countries, but uh representing the community.

[ER:] what are the other nations, involved?

[Henri Bonnet:] They are Italy uh Belgium, Poland, and Luxembourg, plus Germany and France. And that uh exec--high authority will have the duty to uh merge the industries, uh to create the unity of the powerful uh industrial base in western Europe, which has been and is today divided in the artificially into four parts by frontiers, uh to develop the big market I spoke of, to expand industrial means, to raise standard of living of the uh workers, and uh of the whole population. That will be uh the duty of the high authority. (22:37)

[ER:] Well now, [unclear: tape distorts] obligation besides the business end to do a social job?

[Henri Bonnet:] Certainly, certainly, that is clearly defined or will be clearly defined in the treaty and there will be an anti cartel disposition, in the treaty itself.

[ER:] There will be an anti-cartel one. Now that's really interesting. And that will really mean that um for the first time there will be the coming together of these nations, to help their people, to raise their standard of living and to, help the nations to a stronger economic basis.

[Henri Bonnet:] Exactly, it's a very good definition.

[ER:] Well, then I think this is a very good place for us to break off for a minute and let our announcer come in, but I think that is the best explanation that I have heard of the whole idea of the Schumann Plan. Thank you for it.

[Henri Bonnet:] Thank you, Mrs. Roosevelt. (23:38)

[ER:] And now we come back again to our discussion with his Excellency Ambassador Henri Bonnet. And the first question I want to ask you, Mr. Ambassador, is: would an integrated Europe be an advantage in the reestablishment of a balance of power in Europe. (24:06)

[Henri Bonnet:] It will be a decisive, a great decisive advantage indeed, in my opinion-- in my judgment. When uh we think of the recent past of Europe, and by recent I mean the last fifty or uh even seventy years, its obvious uh that uh the rivalries, feuds, and the difficulties which have divided the European nations, have uh largely contributed at least, to bring about the present awful situation of uh Europe. All those nations of uh Western Europe, have been cruelly impoverished, uh by war, and what was the consequence? That the strength of Bolshevik Russia increased in proportion, on the other side of uh the

continent. There can be no doubt that if uh we had not had the French and German wars, which uh as you know have become global wars. The comparative, strong situation of uh Bolshevik Russia, Soviet Russia, would not be what it is today. One speaks uh very often here in this country and uh to um all the free countries of uh preventing a further expansion of uh Bolshevism. There is only one way in my opinion, the surest way is to recreate that situation which would have existed in Europe if uh France and uh Germany had not uh been bitter enemies! If we had not been attacked uh three times in a century by our neighbors! To recreate that situation, that means recreating a European unity when it is done, you shall have a real balance of power in uh Europe. The conditions will have been recreated for-for peaceful development, for uh putting an end for putting an end to that uh fear which exists uh now of a new war and uh it will be a great help also for uh a world balance of power, for world peace! It is in the interest of the United States as well of as Europe I think. (27:01)

[ER:] Well now how will it be accomplished in the military field?

[Henri Bonnet:] In the military field, uh we have proposed-- the uh French government has proposed uh recently-- to take uh another, uh, a second decisive step towards unity by the creation of a European integrated army. We propose that uh, little by little, the national armies of Western Europe: French, Italian, Belgian, tomorrow maybe German, be uh disappear, be replaced, uh progressively, by a unified European army. We have gone as far as to propose that uh such an army will be composed only of European divisions. A division will be composed of uh three combat teams for instance, uh one French, one German and one Italian or one Belgian, or two French and uh one German or two German and uh one French, and uh we would have thus a really federal army. The army of a federation, of the federation, which will be created one day. Such an army would be under the orders of General Eisenhower of course as a part, as an integral part of the [ER: Whole national union--] big Atlantic Army.

[ER:] Um, well now of course, that is calling down uh great protestations on the part of um the uh Soviet. At the present time I saw that they were claiming that uh they wanted peace, and uh, under the United States leadership, we were preparing for aggressive war. Now I just would like to ask whether France feels that she is preparing for aggressive war? [ER Laughs]

[Henri Bonnet:] Certainly not. And uh that was one of the purposes of our proposal to show that there is no other uh design. That to organize a defensive uh force for uh the uh future uh, European uh Union. I told a moment ago that uh European Unity was in the interest of the world balance of power of the United States as well as Europe. I should go as far as to say that it is in the interest of Soviet Russia too, because all of the people of the world need peace! It is true that uh Soviet uh Government has uh protested strongly against the rearmament of Germany, against the creation of a national German army. Our purpose, when proposing to create--

[ER:] Will not be a national German Army.

[Henri Bonnet:] That's it. Was to prevent the creation of a national uh German Army. (30:21)

[ER:] I should think in many ways, this plan, this integrated plan would-- should-- allay the fears of and actually make the uh the whole of Europe feel that uh what we are trying for is to eventually reach what we hoped to accomplish with the United Nations, we might reach a less burden on any country, individually, and more eventual unity within the United Nations. That would deem to be uh the beginning, as I would see it to our now bringing about in Europe.

[Henri Bonnet:] That's it.

[ER:] Now you said you thought there was possibility of political integration, you really feel that as the economic and the military go forward, uh there can begin to be a pooling of the political interest too.

[Henri Bonnet:] Uh that's uh our uh hope. We think, we realize rather, that it is impossible to create a federation now only by means of a political decision, as it was done in your country at the end of the 18th uh century. We well we were, at that time um, countries were living in a more simple world.

[ER:] A simpler world. [laughter]

[Henri Bonnet:] [laughter] It is more complicated today uh, there is no hope uh that such a decision, would create tomorrow a European parliament and so on. [ER: No.] We think build first the foundations, the Schuman plan in the industrial field will be one foundation, the European Army another one, we are planning for an agricultural pool and a pool of the transportation system. And after having built the foundation and the-the walls, it will be possible to put the roof on the building. And the roof will be the political uh union, the creation of a common assembly, and of a common executive for uh the western European people.

[ER:] I think that um this is the logical, regional approach to full understanding within the United Nations. I have often had the feeling that there was so much to learn in the United Nations um and such an unevenness in the development of different things, like agriculture and industry and in also the long time habits and customs in different areas, this regional approach appeals to my common sense as being uh one of the ways to help all of us in the United Nations to finally reach a real understanding. I have a great many people write to me in this country in favor of what they call a people's parliament, and a world federation and so forth. And I keep saying that that requires great preparation. That you don't come to that overnight. Do you feel that way? (34:00)

[Henri Bonnet:] I uh feel that way entirely. We shall go through collective security, through regional security, and uh towards uh world organization, through regional organization, Voila.

[ER:] That uh, I am very glad to hear you say that, and now, we have, just a few minutes, and I just wanted to say that I was so glad to see you the other day, that President [Vincent] Auriol, is coming over and that he is going to learn a few words of English.

[Henri Bonnet:] [Bonnet laughs] I am sure he will he will learn a few words of English, and he will be very glad to be here, to tell the American People how much uh they are close to the heart of the French people.

[ER:] Well, I was very happy, he has always been so very kind to me and Madam [Michelle] Auriol is coming with him. And now, we must bring our talk to an end and I am so grateful to you Mr. Ambassador for coming and having this interview with me.

[Henri Bonnet:] I thank you very much Mrs. Roosevelt, it was a great pleasure for me. (35:02)

[ER:] Today I am going to read a letter form a Miss Froelich of New York, which offers a very worthwhile suggestion. She writes, "I am a professor of electrical engineering at the College of the City of New York, and my friend, Mary Frances Blake, is a Professor of Machine Design, at the Engineering school of Cooper Union. We as two of the very few women engaged in the engineering profession [ER laughs] have been wondering what we can do to attract more women to this field. Certainly some of the long-term manpower problems in the emergency situations of our country could be solved if girls would be encouraged to enter engineering schools. At present we find that there is a general misconception of the meaning of the word engineering, which makes women shy away from this profession. Your daily radio

program has a great influence on the opinions of women, especially. We would both be willing to appear on the program and discuss these questions with you." Unfortunately, my schedule is so full at the present time, that I am unable to take advantage of Miss Brailey's very kind offer. But I thought perhaps by reading her letter, it might stimulate some interest. If I were a girl I think it would be fun to be an engineer!

[Elliott Roosevelt:] And now it's time to close the program and to remind you that you have 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. (36:50)

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