

THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

January 19, 1951

Description: In the opening segment, ER and Elliott Roosevelt respond to a listener's question about ways to improve children's reading habits. In the interview segment, ER discusses the UN's possible role in preventing a future world war with Elvira K. Fradkin, author of the book *A World Airlift*.

Participants: ER, Elliott Roosevelt, Elvira K. Fradkin

[ER:] Has another question come in, Elliott?

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Yes, I have a very uh -- well, it's one of the question that we've dealt with in passing before but I think we can afford to stress this one in particular. It's from Mrs. Arthur D. Plotnick of Brooklyn. [Elliott Roosevelt coughs]

[ER:] Brooklyn seems to be one of our -- [Elliott Roosevelt: Favorite listening spots.] they bring us many of our -- yes, they bring us many of our questions! [ER and Elliott Roosevelt laugh]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, I'm very glad to see that we have a lot of listeners over in Brooklyn. It's one of my favorite spots. "How can I as a parent educate my twelve-year old daughter to learn to love and enjoy reading, which she does rarely? My husband and I are avid readers, yet my daughter has to be forced and reminded to read. She is a busy child with her studies, girls club, and Sunday school, all of which I do not force her to do. I take her to see films of good books. We all saw *Cyrano de Bergerac*, which she enjoyed, and *Treasure Island*. But I tell her she is missing so much of learning what is going on or has gone on in the world. She gets very good marks in school and is a hard plugger, but she will waste time rather than read a good book. (1:21)

[Elliott Roosevelt coughs]

[ER:][ER laughs] That's a terrible answer because -- a terrible question to answer because it certainly -- you can't force a child to read. There just is no way of-of making them uh by force enjoy reading, and I imagine that it will only come to her if um she someday is in the position where she has nothing else that she can do. And then she'll discover that she enjoys it. But I would be inclined to find out whether she has any eye defect which she -- bothers her when she reads for a long time. We found in the war, in the Depression rather, that a lot of the boys in the CCC camps, who had once uh got through school and apparently come on into high school, uh had stopped reading, and nearly always they had some kind of eye defect. And I-I would want to see if there wasn't something of that kind that bothered her so that she didn't want to use her eyes [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] for long periods of time, they got tired with the school work and the other things she did.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, uh I'd like to ask a question at this point. I find that uh there are a lot of people today who are complaining because their children are not taught to read in school. That under the modern method of teaching, you teach very well the idea of uh-uh being uh able to do your arithmetic and being able to spell and so forth, but you're not taught how to read uh under the modern method of education. And it isn't concerned with their eyesight or their hearing or anything else, it's just one of the methods of teaching that goes on in the school.

[ER:] Well, I'm surprised at that because there have been studies made to find out how quickly people read and how they read. Um I know there are different methods of learning to read, and I know some people read more quickly than others, [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] as some people have -- can just look at a page and apparently take the whole page in at once, whereas others read more slowly. Eh um but I --

[Elliott Roosevelt and ER overlap]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well that's a photographic mind. That you take in a whole page.

[ER:] When you look at a page and take it all in. But eh I-I should have thought they knew now, they'd made so many experiments how to teach almost any child to read. Then whether they used that or not would be a different question.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well now, let's take uh-uh, for instance, uh my experience with my own children. I find that uh my children uh read uh at about uh -- well, less than a quarter of the speed with which I read at, as I remember it, at their same age. And further than that, I find that they have great difficulty in concentrating when they're reading. (4:45)

[ER:] Well, I don't understand that, it must just be that it doesn't interest them.

[Elliott Roosevelt and ER overlap]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well now, isn't there's uh there's this -- must be something basically wrong uh with the educational system if you can't interest them in --

[ER:] Perhaps it's wrong-wrong with the kind of books we give them, perhaps they just aren't interested. (5:05)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Alright, well let's uh take, for instance, uh-uh one of the books that fascinated me when I first read it, and I think I first read it at about the age of ten or eleven, it was *The Tale of Two Cities*. And I've seen uh and I've read it many times since then, as a matter of fact, I read it just a couple of years ago and found it very interesting still. But eh I've tried it out on my daughter and on my son, uh particularly right after we had been to Europe as you remember this last summer, and uh they tried to read *A Tale of Two Cities* and they could not go through the book.

[Eleanor Roosevelt:] Well, I don't understand it, except that there is too much in the life of the modern youngster and they don't learn concentration and uh they have too many other distractions. That's all I can think of.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, now let's sort of examine those statements just a little bit because uh number one, uh they must learn concentration because eh they do rather well on mathematical problems and that does take concentration.

[ER:] But only for short periods.

[ER and Elliott Roosevelt overlap]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] All right, uh so that's for short periods.

[ER:] It doesn't mean you sit back and read uh for a couple of hours without taking your mind off what you're reading and losing yourself-- having enough imagination to lose yourself in the story.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well I don't -- of course, I'm not particularly sure of that statement because when you're solving a series of algebra or geometric problems, it seems to me that it calls for [ER: Concentration.] uh very intense concentration over quite a long while.

[ER:] Well, perhaps it does but I-I don't know. I would have said -- but perhaps, what it really requires is more relaxation to read a book. The power to relax and let your mind wander --[Elliott Roosevelt: Drift off into the - into the--] drift off into the book. [Elliott Roosevelt: Story itself.] Yes.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] That's what I feel. Uh I feel that uh with the advent of movies and television and so forth that what we have done is we have to create such a literal picture in front of the uh--an image in front of the minds of the children that it's very difficult to do the same job with words.

[ER:] Well, you know there are very few children that I-I notice now who do what uh I did as a child and what you used to do uh as children. Curl up in a chair and read a book regardless of what goes on around you um for two or three hours at a time. I'm -- now uh the only child in our whole environment that I know who does that is um uh little Grania Gurewitsch. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] She can read through um half a dozen books in two days [ER laughs]! (8:18)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, there are - there are lots of children, there are always exceptions. I'm talking of more average children. Uh I consider that I have average children. [Elliott Roosevelt laughs]

[Elliott Roosevelt and ER overlap]

[ER:] But I-I -- well, I think it's the relaxation, the power to relax [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] and-and lose yourself in something else. I think that's probably the matter today.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, I'm-I'm still going to stick to my theory that we have made uh such a realistic uh [ER: World?] images for the brain to-to have a picture of like-like *Cyrano de Bergerac*. For instance, when you see it in a movie, as it's been produced uh in the movies, it's such an easy thing for the mind to grasp that when you have the same thing in front of you in just words it has practically no meaning at all.

[ER:] Ah, but *Cyrano* was written as a play, it was written to be acted. That's not quite the same as-as reading a story in a book, not quite.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] What about *Treasure Island*?

[ER:] Well, *Treasure Island* I think uh they should be able to read.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] All right well, I-I see that we've gotten nowhere [ER laughs: Nowhere at all in answering the question!] in answering this poor lady in what she should do to make her uh daughter, who is uh evidently quite a bright girl, [ER: Perhaps the thing to do --] able to read and enjoy like the mother or father.

[ER:] Perhaps the thing to do is to let her daughter be a little bored.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well all right, uh so she'll be a little bit bored. You mean by preventing her from seeing the movies and seeing television?

[Elliott Roosevelt and ER overlap]

[ER:] No, I mean by taking her off. I'll tell you a good way to learn. Take -- I spent, used to spend, six months of the year on a place in the country without anyone my own age. My brothers were six years younger. Um and uh there was nobody to play with because it was five miles to drive anywhere uh and there were only horses. And if I hadn't read, I'd have been a lost person. I guess you have to provide that sort of an environment. And then the child will read because there isn't -- she's got to have something to fill life.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Uh-huh. And that's a rather drastic method to teach uh reading to a child.
ER:] Well, try it! Try it if you can't do anything else.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] All right well, I'm going to have you try it on one of your grandchildren [ER: Go off into the wilderness!] and then you can let Mrs. Plotnick from Brooklyn know exactly what success you had on one of your grandchildren. [ER laughs]

[ER:] Well, we'll have to go off into the wilderness! [ER and Elliott Roosevelt both laugh]

(Break 10:52 to 11:10)

[ER:] When police action by nations against an aggressor becomes necessary, how can a world war be prevented? With me this afternoon is Mrs. Elvira K. Fradkin, whose recently published book, *A World Airlift*, presents a bold new idea for preventing another world war. It gives me great pleasure to introduce Mrs. Fradkin.

[Elvira K. Fradkin:] To be with you, Mrs. Roosevelt, this afternoon, on this great nation-wide hookup, is a privilege which I'm sure I'll try my best to live up to.

[ER:] Thank you, Mrs. Fradkin. Now first of all, what is the United Nations Air Police Patrol, and how could it work in a world torn by suspicions and priming for war?

[Elvira K. Fradkin:] That is a great question, it's a very large question, and so we'll take it slowly and I'll answer the uh last part of your question first. How could it work in a world torn by suspicions and priming for war? That is, of course, the burning question. My thought in presenting this whole subject, a world airlift, a United Nations Air Police Patrol, was to meet first this terrible crisis which faces us immediately. And then not -- to strengthen the United Nation so it can meet other crises, if they come, in a more constructive fashion. So that if this United Nations Air Police Patrol were in operation now, the first surprise uh-uh invasion of the North Koreans would have been prevented, and secondly the c-Chinese uh--communists who are now pouring into Korea would have been held in check. By this --

[ER:] Well now, how is that possible?

[Elvira K. Fradkin:] Yes, that-that is a question which I'm sure would occur to everyone. How is it possible because the uh-uh united air power under the United Nations, the United War Aviation under the United Nations, uh then holds, first of all, the surprise element in modern warfare completely in check. And because the United Nations, with such a air police patrol, would be the only authority which could bomb from the air, either with high-explosive bombs or atom bombs. So that the uh supposed predominance of Soviet Russia in the far eastern area would be held in check by the actual super force under the United Nations.

[ER:] Well now, let me ask you, um you would have to have, in order to put this in operation, the agreement of everyone in the United Nations, and Russia is part of the United Nations. [Elvira K Fradkin: Yes.] Now, why wouldn't Russia know exactly what everybody else knew and uh why -- suppose she

vetoed a patrol, let us say, because the only way to take the surprise element out is to constantly patrol, isn't it, [Elvira K Fradkin: Yes.] and know what's going on. Well now, suppose she refused. What would you then do? (14:40)

[Elvira K Fradkin:] Yes, in other words, why should Russia join a United Nations [ER: Exactly.] Air Police Patrol? Well, I think there's a very sound reason. Russia is rimmed around by United Nations air bases. United ---Russia faces the combined air power of the United Nations as far as it has been mobilized in the whole Korean area. With uh--in your talk with Major [Alexander] de Seversky, I was very interested to note that uh you touched on that subject, but the Major, whose theory is very wise and with which I have no quarrel except for that it doesn't go far enough, uh forgot to add this other point: That the Russian uh and the Chinese communists are worried sick by the combined air power of the Western allied nations. Time and again at the United Nations, I know you've heard it because I watched you listening intently and I've listened too, we've heard uh the obstreperous and keen um demands of the Russian delegates, not only for their form of atomic energy control but also for -- against this combined allied air power. There, Mrs. Roosevelt, is the weak spot in the whole Russian defense system. And so it seems to me because they would definitely hate to have every one of their cities bombed, they would be perfectly willing to enter this United Nations Air Police Patrol as a first step in supporting the United Nations. My thought as I've watched this and studied this whole development under the United Nations, is that if we approach Russia first--uh Soviet Russia first, on this project of a United Nations Air Police Patrol, we will, to everyone's amazement I'm sure, have a support which you would never have in any in any other form [ER: Mhm.] of united action. Let me say a word longer--further there because it is so important, and you've posed the question which is in everyone's heart and mind. Uh the Russians-- the Soviet Russians are frantic because of this ring of American air bases, it was very significant. The General Wu [Xiuquan] of China mentioned those --that ring of air bases-- mentioned the fact that the Korean air bases were coming too close to China and the--and the whole far Eastern uh picture. It is a very significant fact that every time the question of strategic air bases comes up there is that not only great opposition on the part of the Russians but a great interest, a great desire, which you hear over at the United Nations, for some solution of that particular problem. They are then exposed from the air as they are not exposed either on land or sea. (17:45)

[ER:] That's eh that's true, I think. I hadn't thought of it. It might really be to their interest to come in on a United Nations Air Patrol for their own security.

[Elvira K Fradkin:] Yes, definitely. Let's go onto that word "patrol" because you asked [ER: Yes] me that a moment or two before. Um uh I noticed too, again with Major de Seversky, that he didn't get the picture at all. Uh a patrol by -uh by--in the air is a patrol which, not only under the United Nations, would include all war aviation. Now remember, that would appeal to the Russians tremendously. And uh the preliminary steps have all been taken on the Western side for it to consummate this final step. But a patrol could not be hoodwinked. Major de Seversky, I noticed, in his -- I like to refer back to him because I just heard him last night on another network which we shan't mention the name. [ER: No.] But we heard him on another network and again, and again he was a little worried about this question. I mean, he just stopped short of what I am proposing: a United Nations Air Police Patrol. Now then, the question of patrolling from the air does not mean that the Russians could hoodwink us because with this patrol would go, of course, a limited amount of inspection of the strategic airplane factories. That too would not be impossible because it is so much more easily to uh eh supervise and watch a finished warplane than it is to supervise and watch the whole problem of atomic energy, which we both know 85 percent of the way can be used for peace as well as for war. So that the patrolling would be not only the constant encircling of the world by the war aviating -- uh aviation under the auspices, and this will interest you very much, of an international aviation authority directly subservient to the military staff committee and the Security Council. But this patrol would also have, under that setup, a limited form of inspection which could be readily applicable. In other words, uh what we see here then is a definite pledge on the part of the

Russians and on the part of the United States, which are the two greatest air powers in the world, and on the part of all the smaller nations, a definite pledge for the union of the United Nations and for its strength and power in the air.

[ER:] Well, that is very um that is very clear to me now. And um with that pledge, I think there could be a lessening of suspicion and perhaps a greater sense of security, and those two things are the things that above everything else we must try to build, don't you agree with me?

[Elvira K. Fradkin:] Oh, I agree with you completely. This question of security, Mrs. Roosevelt, you and I have heard for long years, this--the search for adequate security has been a search which all through the centuries has been heart-rending. Under this set-up, the first steps toward adequate security against the air war and the atom war of this century [ER: Sneezes] could be achieved.

[ER:] Thank you very much. We just have to pause for a while.

(Break 21:22 to 21:37)

[ER:] Mrs. Fradkin, I'd like to ask you why this uh whole procedure is called a world airlift. You use the word a few minutes ago and I want to understand it better.

[Elvira K. Fradkin:] Yes, it's a term that um I thought would capture the imagination of every thinking person. For that Berlin airlift, which I, as you know, as the guest of General Clay, had the opportunity of seeing in operation in nineteen hundred and forty eight, instantly stirred a deep cord in my heart. There I saw leaving from uh Berlin Temple Hope Airfield, less--every three minutes and less, these planes bring succor and help. And the thought as I stood on that cold, breezy, windy airfield there at Temple Hope late in October of 1948, the thought flashed through my mind: this succor can be brought, this help and encouragement can be brought to people desiring freedom everywhere in the world.

[ER:] Well now, um you mean that by a constant patrol like that uh security and a sense of eh reassurance could come to people all over the world. But you also mean that this patrol, I gather, would know of any kind of emergencies perhaps more quickly; would let the world know about them. For instance, if they sighted um the beginnings of a flood or were notified that um as they flew up in the air that there was uh a place below them that uh was threatened with some great epidemic, uh they could actually get back to the center from which uh things would come and start the real airlift to that spot with the necessary things.

[Elvira K. Fradkin:] Oh, perfectly true! And besides that, a world airlift, a United Nations Air Police Patrol, could be of inestimable help to the United Nations special agencies. Just think what that could do to help not only the er uh um the repatriation and the reallocation of refugees. Just think what that United Nations Air Police Patrol could do for the World Health Organization. Think what it could do in guaranteeing peace and security for this whole program, this point four program in which President Truman, despite these terrible wars and crises, is still determined to embark. This program of lifting the status of uh civilization, or lack of civilization, and imp - and improving the standard of living of peoples in the so-called backward areas. Uh actually this could be a world airlift bringing help and succor through the agencies of the United Nations, and, as you just mentioned abo-ago-a minute ago, through meeting the crises as they arise, whether through natural causes or through war, wherever they occur. Actually, you know so well that the world is bound together by aviation. There is no such thing as isolation any longer. There is no such thing as regional self-containment. We are all bound together as I said to my good husband the other night --

[ER:] Yes, we're open [Elvira K. Fradkin: Oh yes.] uh to every nation in the world now. And um that leads me to Mr. Hoover's idea which seemed to me to ignore that fact the other day.

[Elvira K. Fradkin:] Oh I quite agree with you and ignored it at a crucial moment when the Europeans, as you know, cannot be thrown to the wolves, they must be protected. And when -- at a time when aviation is expanding, not only commercial and civil aviation, but war aviation is expanding with the jet-propelled planes. (25:43)

[ER:] Well now, Mrs. Fradkin, there's something that you said that I have been groping er thinking about but doing that a little gropingly, and I'm not yet clear in my mind. You said um that perhaps this United Nations Air Police Patrol might be the beginning of the reduction in the amount of money that would have to be spent on armaments throughout the world. Now I, in my mind, have been thinking a great deal about this question because it's obvious that one cannot be weak today. Either the United Nations and or individual nations have got to be able to defend a free world [Elvira K. Fradkin: Mhm.] against a slave world. Even though that is a defense of ideas, it still has to rely on some kind of power. And yet, as we do that in the normal and ordinary way, we are spending so much money that [ER clears throat] many of us wonder um whether it's going to mean that we cannot do the fundamental things, which I'm sure that you feel as I do are really at the basis of wars: the helping peoples to help themselves so that the misery of the world will bring to see solutions. Um that point bothers me so, I don't know where -- you dare not say you must not spend for arms, on the other hand, you know that if you don't spend for the alleviation of mankind's misery you've done nothing fundamental to remove the possibility [Elvira K. Fradkin: Yes.] of war. Now that's why you're --

[Elvira K. Fradkin:] And right at that spot, and right at that spot you couldn't have summed it up better. The United Nations Air Police Patrol comes in as a saving factor. No, I would not urge the reduction of armaments for a moment, not for a moment. Uh but I do urge the establishment as soon as possible of uh this world airlift. Not in any way urging or advocating a reduction of armaments even then. Let both sides -- these two great uh powerful blocs of nations-- stay armed. Let them, however, pull their war aviation under the United Nations, and then let everything rest in a perfect uh uh [ER: Static condition.] static condition for a few years to see, first of all, how this patrol will meet all the emergency of the moment and how the sense of security will seep down into the smallest nation. Once the sense of security is achieved, remember under the United Nations, once there is a feeling on the part of the Soviet Russians as well as the Western Bloc that here is an unbreakable pledge, then years later this whole question of reduction of armaments can be attacked scientifically. All these centuries and all of the great desire for the reduction of armaments -- and as you know I've studied this for long years -- there has never been a yardstick, there has never been a measuring -- a scientific measuring rod which could first guarantee security and then say to the nations: "On the basis of this guaranteed security, you can then proceed to discuss the question of the reduction of armaments and re-see where and how it can best be done." In other words, in this air and atom age into which we are so rapidly being propelled, here is our first pledge, here is our first pooling of resources, then we can see once that has been achieved what forms of armaments have become outmoded, where they can be reduced but reduced all the time with a permanent guarantee of security.

[ER:] How do you propose that we should make the great nations that have now the strongest air forces um see that it is in their interest to pool their military aviation resources uh to establish a United Nations Air Police Patrol?

[Elvira K. Fradkin:] That is a really key question. My answer to that is in this particular moment in history, it is really a matter of selfish, egotistic nationalism to establish a United Nations Air Police Patrol now. Because, first of all, from the Western point of view the rearmament of Europe will at least take, as every expert says, two years. Those two years are intensely important two years when we will be open to any kind of an attack anywhere. Uh --

[ER:] And this could be done right away?

[Elvira K. Fradkin:] Right away, without any change in the charter, Mrs. Roosevelt, without any amendments. It could be done without the least disarrangement of the possibility of o-our international machinery. From the Russian angle, these are the two strategic years too, Mrs. Roosevelt, because they are deathly frightened of this tre-tremendous increase, not only in our air power but in our atomic bombs. And so at this moment, at this juncture of history, it would seem to me that both great powerful nations and blocs of nations would be to their own selfish interest a great move forward.

[ER:] You've given me a lot to think about, and I hope you've given our audience a great deal to think about. Thank you so much for coming, Mrs. Fradkin.

[Elivra K. Fradkin:] And thank you, Mrs. Roosevelt, for this great opportunity.

(31:37)

Transcribed from holdings at Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (FDRL)
File(s): 72-30(73)

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