

## THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT SHOW

November 24, 1950

Description: In the opening segment, ER and Elliott Roosevelt respond to a listener's question about the politics surrounding the United Nations' Children's Emergency Fund. In the interview segment, ER discusses aid efforts for children in post-war Europe with John Barclay, organizing secretary for International Health for Children.

Participants: Eleanor Roosevelt, Elliott, John Barclay

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[ER:] Well, Elliott, I wonder what you found in the mail today to ask me.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, I have a very interesting inquiry that came in from uh one of the ladies who's particularly interested in uh the argument that seems to be going on out at the United Nations and has been going on for a long time uh and why there's so much misunderstanding on the question of the Children's Emergency Fund. Uh this lady says that the uh US position uh seems to be at variance with a great many other nations who usually agree with the United States and also with many groups here in the United States that are working uh very much at variance to the United States proposals.

[ER:] Well, I think that it would be very confusing to someone who hadn't followed it. Of course, it's no longer under discussion. It was finally uh settled until it comes up in the General Assembly the other day, eh and the United States' position was turned down by a very large majority. I still think that the United States' position was correct. But I think that a number of um elements entered into the misunderstandings. I--

[Elliott Roosevelt overlaps ER]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] I think it may be our audience who would like to have more of a background uh concerning the whole thing because uh so many people don't really understand what the Children's Emergency Fund is. (1:43)

[ER:] Well, the Children's Emergency Fund was started after the war with the idea uh really of one young Norwegian who felt that if everybody would give one day's pay, eh something could be done for the children of Europe who suffered in devastated countries. His name was Mr. Aske Ording and uh he was the prime mover at the start. And uh we got Mr. Chester Bowles as our first chairman of the international group. And uh, they never did get one day's pay from everybody all over the world for this organization, but they did get some governments and the United States um provided a fund by which it matched on a rather high percentage whatever was given by any other nation, any other government. And um, we carried that on as the Children's Emergency Fund uh through field missions in European countries, even in countries behind the Iron Curtain- never Russia, uh the USSR itself, and Ukraine, Byelorussia, never asked for help. But um, Poland and Czechoslovakia, they have had help, Romania's had help a number of countries, Bulgaria even, behind the Iron Curtain, have been helped. And um many people felt that this was the one thing which had no political strings tied to it, but oh fully a year ago the United States began to realize that the emergency in Europe was over. It had been started as the Children's Emergency fund to be uh carried on until the war devastation in those countries had come to an end. Well in the meantime, the fund itself, finding that its work was growing less in Europe, had branched out and had begun to do a number of things in other countries. It had started a little work in China, it was doing some work for Arab refugees, and it was doing um some work in South America even. So that even in India, I think. So that they had begun to feel that this European emergency had come to an end, but they were not prepared to think in terms of uh no more supplies-- uh feeding stations. Uh

they felt that should go on. And um so we really had to go through a period of deciding what should happen. And now, I think we have to um stop for a minute. We go on afterwards.

[Break from 4:57 to 5:09]

[ER:] Well, here I am again, Elliott. Should I go on?

[ER and Elliott Roosevelt overlap here]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, why don't you go right on because we're right in the middle of when we had to stop and fill in some of our sponsor's messages?

[ER:] Well, uh-uh I can start right there, namely the State Department felt that if an organization was going to go on it must be a permanent organization. And uh their reason for its being a permanent organization was that, if we were going to begin to look at the world as a whole, oh we were going to have to think about four hundred million children that were underfed in the world. That's a good many children, and the Children's Emergency Fund hadn't been touching anything like that number of children. So the State Department felt, and the congress felt, that now this ceased to be an emergency fund. Of course, the people of Asia, for instance, in India or the near East, still felt it was an emergency for them, but for us, it looked like a long-time job that had to be pretty permanent for a long while. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] So we felt that, in spite of the fact that there would have to be supplies, cases of powdered milk, and medicine, so forth for a long time, that to do a job that would make any dent on the future, every single time that uh someone asked for something, um the specialized agencies, World Health, UNESCO, uh FAO, Food and Agriculture, uh all the--ILO if necessary, must find out if they had an interest there, and if they had, they must be asked what could be done permanently to change that situation and make the people able to do better in feeding and caring for their own children in the future. But we met with great resistance, the people didn't believe us. They thought that we were just trying to get out of doing what we'd done for the people, for the children of Europe. They said eh "You don't care whether the children of Asia die," and uh they wanted, because they didn't believe us, supplies because those they could hold in their hands, whereas projects for the future, some of them even said, "All you want to give us is advice when our children are hungry." Well that was because technical advice, of course, is what is offered under point four, [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] and we explained very carefully that we didn't intend to stop supplies, but that we must do something permanent for the future, with no success whatever, and finally, they all passed a resolution offered by Australia. Australia and Great Britain, for what reason I don't know, felt that this should on— if this was to continue at all it should only be on an emergency basis for two years. Um and Australia offered a resolution saying that this should only continue for two years on an emergency basis. Yugoslavia amended that, say that it should continue on the emergency basis for three years, and then become permanent, which made the um resolution neither fish, flesh nor fowl because it wasn't all emergency, but it wasn't a permanent organization. And it didn't really make much sense, but that's the way they passed it, and that's the way it now stands. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] And what will happen by the time we get to the plenary no one knows. We are perfectly willing and glad to consider anything which would improve this set up as it now is, and which would uh, as far as we see it, give the children better help, because, after all, it's the children who suffer, and it's the children who will get help if there is any to give. And we fuss over resolutions and what should be done, but it's the children that really are at stake. So--(9:30)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Right, didn't this get passed in in a form where the money never was appropriated by our Congress?

[ER:] Oh, well that was last time our Congress turned down appropriating the last fifteen million dollars on an emergency basis. They said this was no more an emergency, this was a permanent setup, or it

wasn't any set up that amounted to anything. But I don't think they believe that our Congress will insist on a permanent set up, we tried to persuade them but I don't think they believe us. (10:00)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Mhm. So in other words uh the difficulty seems to be that the professionals in the child uh welfare field and the other countries just don't believe that uh they can persuade our congress to do things that uh our own delegates feel that congress won't do.

[ER:] Yes, that's it [ER laughs].

(Break 10:23-34)

[ER:] My guest today is a visitor from Great Britain, Mr. John Barclay, who is organizing secretary for International Help for Children, an independ- an independent organization for helping rehabilitate the children of Europe. Mr. Barclay.

[John Barclay:] Well I'm extremely glad to be here and to have this opportunity of saying something about the work-- the very small uh little bit of work we're doing for the children in Europe. I have been here just five weeks, and it has been a great pleasure to visit this country.

[ER:] Well I'm so glad that you could come in uh today because ever since you came to see me, I uh have been thinking about the children and what you told me about your work, and I wanted very much to have our listeners have an opportunity to hear about it. And I'd like to ask you first, whether your organization is associated with any of the other child welfare groups who have been helping the children of Europe.

[John Barclay:] No, we are quite an independent organization. We found there was a gap in the various relief organizations, and we rather boldly stepped in and tried to fill it in a very small way to see if it could be demonstrated that this kind of rehabilitation, which I should be telling you about, could really work. (12:04)

[ER:] Well, that's interesting because you're just a small organization working alone. Now, uh I'd like to know how the International Help for Children operates: by contributing food and clothing and other essentials or in some other way? Tell me about it

[John Barclay:] Well no, we don't believe that the just the mere giving of clothes and food is enough. I've been to Greece and recently and seen some of the appalling suffering in the villages up in the north of Greece and I have come to the conclusion that children suffer very much indeed from feeling that they have lost touch with society, that you can go on feeding very often a starving child and quite well, and you can give it clothes, but it doesn't seem to make a move. There's a look in its eyes which seems to uh make no impression and in fact, quite often, children sometimes even then begin to fade away. They seem to get less and less virile.

[ER and Barclay overlap here]

[ER:] That that just is the sense--is that when they've lost their families or is it when their families are there?

[John Barclay:] It's uh--Most of the children we help are part orphans or complete orphans. But even when their family, as some of the German children we've helped, have wandered about Europe for three years with their mother and their father the same sense of lack of background anchorage is apparent, and it's for those particular children that we try to help and try to find uh uh means of helping them. (13:43)

[ER:] And you think they need more than the material things, they need um something intangible, like uh living in a family where they feel they are loved.

[John Barclay:] That is the very point. We have to replace the lost sense of affection which these children have been suffering from—from so long—for so long and we do it by choosing the children very carefully in the four or five countries that we are helping and bringing them over to British homes where the mother of a family, of usually three or four children somewhere about the ages of the child we bring, invites them quite free of charge into her family, and keeps them there for at least three months, very often for eight, nine, ten and twelve months, and for that we don't pay anything at all, we just leave it to the mother, who has, of course, her home has been very carefully examined and inspected, and the-the child feels once more as part of a family. And that's where the cure seems to be.

[ER and John Barclay overlap here.]

[ER:] That's interesting because you must bring them into homes where they have to learn the language, first of all.

[John Barclay:] Yes, that's the most interesting and people always seem to ask that question first. They say, "is it uh possible?" I've got a rather uh short recipe for that. Uh if you bring a French child or a uh Greek child into a family and no one can speak its language, uh my recipe is leave the children together as long as possible for the first three days, remove all adults, and give them some books to look at, at picture books and photographs, stir well, allow it to simmer for another day, and you will find they are fast friends and very quickly beginning to learn each other's language. (15:30)

[ER:] Now that's very interesting because um it's difficult to learn um, it must be done with a sign language to start with.

[John Barclay:] It's done very much by the sign language and the British child very often doesn't learn the other's language, but the other child learns English much more quickly.

[ER:] Is that because English is easier or is it because uh the other child is more adaptable?

[John Barclay:] No, I think it's because they hear English all around them, and the English children are naturally rather slow at picking up foreign languages. But we find that with French, German, and Greek children.

[ER:] That's very interesting. Um I'd like to know when your organization was founded and uh just under what circumstances it began. (16:15)

[John Barclay:] Well actually we, my partner and I-- my partner is Miss uh Miss McEwen and I were working in an organization in 1944, before the war was ended, bringing over ten thousand Dutch children from Holland to Britain uh at the time when the war was retreating from their country. And while we were working for them for three years and for some Czech children and French children, we discovered this secret, uh quite an obvious one, that the child needed family life. And when this organization wound up in 1947, uh we decided uh to start our own. We had no capital; we put in one hundred pounds and decided to go on for three months to see if we could really get started.

[ER:] 100 pounds in our money today, [Barclay: Ah yes.] would be about what? Four hundred--

[ER and John Barclay overlap here]

[John Barclay:] Three hundred dollars.

[ER:] 300 dollars?

[John Barclay:] That's all we had and we worked for nothing. We hired a room, we hired a typewriter, we hired a friend to do the typing and we decided to close down before we were in debt. But I went off to talk

to schools, and I felt the children who would understand exactly what was wanted. And I just told schools the story of one child somewhere in another country, and I asked them if they would find the money to bring the child over, find the home, find the clothes necessary and give it a good holiday. And, in a school of eight hundred girls, everyone wanted the one child, so we got homes immediately for twenty five or thirty children, [ER begins to speak] and the money for them. (17:49)

[ER:] That's very interesting. Well now, how do you finance this organization today?

[John Barclay:] Of course, that is the biggest problem. We, we have to raise every penny uh from public subscription. We uh really need a little bit of help with the transportation of the children from Greece, Germany, and Italy. Those are the three countries which are most expensive. But even so, to completely rehabilitate a child only costs fifty dollars. That is [they talk over each other]

[ER:] Fifty dollars for their traveling and everything?

[John Barclay:] Everything. Because our overhead expenses work out at fourteen to fifteen dollars per child helped. That is our, the lowest on record, our public ordinances tell us. We all work seven days a week, it's our vocation. We work 11 months in the year, we work at ridiculously low salaries, uh but there are only five of us, and we do all the work ourselves through voluntary organizations-- voluntary committees which we set up.

[ER:] Well don't you have to have someone go and get these children and travel with them?

[John Barclay:] All that is done by voluntary helpers. We actually do the work, we send voluntary escorts, who are usually uh quite uh well-trained people who volunteer for the job. And the children always come across with their own escort, uh-uh a lady, or sometimes a man who comes across who speaks both languages and stays with the children. (19:22)

[ER:] That is extraordinary.

[John Barclay:] But it's all done through voluntary help outside our own five- five and a half actually.

[ER:] But don't you have to pay the, the traveling expenses of the voluntary help?

[John Barclay:] Only the traveling. And that count works out at that sum over the whole year for the children helped.

[ER:] My goodness, I think that's simply quite extraordinary. [John Barclay: It's quite amazing.] Well, I think that is an achievement really to get them uh to take care of them for that length of time

[John Barclay:] You see, all the uh hospitality is quite free. Once we get them over here, the family invites them in as their guest. When they come to our convalescent home, sometimes they have to go to through a convalescent home, that costs them an extra two hundred and fifty pounds a month for twenty-five children. (20:11)

[ER:] I see. When you put them in your convalescent home, well that uh that naturally would be more expensive because that must mean that you that you give them special care those first uh first part of the time

[John Barclay:] Yes, it does. It means a lot of extra work and-

[ER:] Medical care too? [John Barclay's voice fades.]

[John Barclay:] And medical care. Of course, the medical services are given quite freely.

[ER:] Are they given [John Barclay begins speaking here] freely?

[John Barclay:] They are given quite freely by the local medical office of uh health.

[ER:] Well I think that is extraordinary. Well now for just a few minutes we'll have to go back to my son, Elliott.

(Break 20:42-56)

[ER:] Mr. Barclay, I remember your telling me the first time you came to see me that you had brought a little girl over here with you. Uh have you found her a home? And tell me a little about her.

[John Barclay:] Yes, Angeliki. Angeliki is the most interesting child we've ever helped. And I always feel that if we did nothing else at all, we have done something, which is quite in itself worth the organization. We were asked by Lady Norton, the wife of the British Ambassador in Athens last October to bring over a child who was completely blind and deaf and, therefore, dumb. She had been found six years ago on the uh steps on the police station in Athens and was put into a home for incurables. She was there for four years and then she was put into a home for the blind, and proved to be extremely intelligent but there was no one there who was trained to help her. We took her over to England, we took her to Morefield's hospital, which is the chief hospital for the blind and for the diseases of the eyes in London, and eleven surgeons examined her but found her to be quite uh blind and unable to be given sight. During nine months we've had her in England, we've taught her all sorts of things. Of course we are not specially trained, but we've taught her to sew and she made her dress, which she traveled in on the boat, every stitch of it. And one of the uh one of the passengers onboard the SS America we traveled on, uh who was a master tailor, examining her work, said that her stitches were better than any of his apprentices. And she's--

[ER:] Well I think that's extraordinary because I'm looking at photographs which you brought me of her and in one, she has um paper mats apparently that she has cut out with quite intricate patterns.(22:45)

[John Barclay:] Yes, that was marvelous. A child of fifteen became her great friend and taught her paper folding. [ER: Ah.] And once she is taught, she never forgets, she has a very quick uh imagination and very good intellect. Uh we have great difficulty beginning in getting in touch with her, but we have worked out a sign language. But now, I'm very thankful to say, this is where I'm so excited about the [ER coughs] cooperation between the uh your country and ours. Through the American Foundation for the Overseas Blind, uh we have been able to place that child, Angeliki, in the um uh the famous school at uh Boston-- the uh school where Helen Keller was trained and she is settling down there perfectly. (23:34)

[ER:] Well that is wonderful. I see also a picture in which she's knitting.

[John Barclay:] Oh, she can knit and sew and do a great many things now, and she learned braille in ten days, English braille in ten days and wrote me a letter asking me to--a short note asking me to come and see her before I left America.

[ER:] Why how perfectly wonderful.

[John Barclay:] So I think there is a very great hope of that child becoming a very-a very fine person indeed.

[ER:] Well I'm sure that um Helen Keller's example will be a wonderful thing for her to follow. But I must ask you one more thing about your organization. How large is the organization now, and how many children have you assisted since it was founded in 1947?[John Barclay, overlapping:] We are still the same size. We are still five and half an accountant. He does half our work and half somebody else's. Um,

and we have helped just over three thousand children from six countries in the three years. We've got to know most of them ourselves, we visited them, we meet them, we visit them once or twice when they're in homes. They get to know us and we follow their cases up afterwards in eighty percent of the cases so that we do know a good deal about them. But the greatest thing we find is the way it brings in to touch with the uh child, the mother on this side and the mother on the other side, or the friends of the child. (24:52)

[ER:] They become--they get to know each other?

[John Barclay:] They get to know each other through letters, the child sends back letters. Uh my—When I went to Greece and Germany, I found these letters were being passed from hand to hand and it-it seems to me that it is real United Nations work on the level where, as a rule, the rather overworked mother of a small middle class family doesn't feel she can do very much about uh all this international work. She hears about United Nations work, but what can she do? She's rather busy and got a family. But when you say this is the most important work you can do, to rehabilitate a a child from uh a country which has suffered much worse than even our own, to take it into your home, to get to know something about the country, to tell your own friends about the child, and then for the child to write back and go back eventually and tell their country about ours. And I've come over here because I feel that some American people might like to help us in this very small work. It's--[ER overlaps Barclay]

[ER:] But of course you couldn't bring children over here [John Barclay: No.] because it's too long a journey.

[John Barclay:] No, we don't feel that would be economically possible or good for the child for a short visit. But we do hope that those who are interested will feel that it's uh a small piece of Anglo-American cooperation uh along the lines of United Nations building peace in Europe.

[ER:] Yet you're really not in any way connected with the United Nations? [John Barclay overlaps ER] (26:22)

[John Barclay:] No, not financially supported by anyone at all. We want to be free to find out the best methods of dealing with these children. Many of them have lost limbs. We have one boy who's lost both his arms, and we've taught him to ride a bicycle. He hasn't yet got his new arms but we've taught him self-confidence and given him something to fasten on his arms so he can ride and we've got children who have suffered from infantile paralysis and not been dealt with at once as they should have been and we've got them right. We've got children who were suffering from three years starvation and the diseases which follow and we feel that this is the sort of work that—very small, uh nothing that will shatter um a continent or alter uh the shape of the world, but we feel it is personal, creative and we do want those uh of your own country, people who would feel willing to help us, to help us a little bit uh if they can.

[ER:] I'd like to ask you whether in the time you've been here you've found any response so far?

[John Barclay:] I have found a great deal of interest and a certain amount of financial support. Uh but we uh [ER overlaps with John Barclay]

[ER:] feel the need, a good deal more.

[John Barclay:] We do need, really, a little bit more for uh working the long distance children.

[ER:] Have you found uh any interest among foundations? (27:44)

[John Barclay:] Uh that's more long distance. I think they will eventually help us. [ER: I think--] They want to consider it. But the-- what we need really is that our committee says that we are working too hard,

that the three of us who do most of the traveling and the organizing uh should not have to do all the raising of the money as well and it was, a matter fact uh American people who saw our work in Greece and in Germany who advised me to come and talk to a few people over here. Since I've been here, I've spoken to a number of small meetings and I have been invited to come back again to give a series of lectures in the spring if it can be organized.

[ER:] Now I think that might be very helpful because you might, if you gave a series of lectures, reach a wider audience and also uh make some money out of the lectures.

[ER and John Barclay overlap here]

[John Barclay:] Yes. We--I do really want to uh raise if possible, uh for three years we only need fifty thousand dollars, and that would see us through with all our foreign work and we would go carry on raising all our money for our English side, our own administration, we would raise that in England, and for any English children we help. But for the Italian, Greek, and—they're the worst cases, we do need help with transportation; it's such a drain on our resources. (29:05)

[ER:] Yes, I can well understand that, I can well understand that um you- you must have help. Couldn't you get uh families in this county to adopt a child in a home in England and send the clothing and send some of the food, and give you enough money for their transportation?

[John Barclay:] The—there is an organization, an American organization called the Foster Parents' Plan which is a very excellent organization doing that, and we don't want to overlap with them at all. The only difference we have with them is that we feel that a foster parent who never sees the child and a child who never sees its foster parent does not supply that first principle which I made very beginning of this talk, [ER: Yes.] that the child must have affection and love, which cannot be sent through uh the post. [ER overlaps with John Barclay]

[ER:] And and the child must be in a home. That's one of your main-- [John Barclay:] It must be in a home. I think that is absolutely essential. Without that--

[ER and Barclay overlap here]

[ER:] Yes, well I think that would be sound practice in almost every one of our child welfare organizations in this country, we would feel that a child of that kind needed a home and needed a context of a home, that without that they really had very little chance of rehabilitation. Do you find when you send them back that they have difficulty readjusting?

[John Barclay:] No, we don't. I've been back, especially to see that, in Greece and in Germany, and the child quickly readapts itself, and is so much well uh better in strength and other ways that it quickly recovers, and--

[ER:] It does?

[John Barclay:] Oh, it does, yes.

[ER:] That was one thing always worried me during the war about the children brought over from England, I thought that they would have a hard time when they went back.

[John Barclay:] No, I've seen some of them too. Friends of ours came over and I found they uh did settle down. [ER: They did settle down.] They came back so much better and with great love for this country.

[ER:] Well now I thank you so much for being with us today, Mr. Barclay, and I wish you the greatest success. I hope that you get all the money that you need for the next three years, and--

[John Barclay:] Thank you very much, Mrs. Roosevelt, indeed.

[ER:] Now back to my son, Elliott.

(31:16)

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Transcription: Stavroula Pabst  
First Edit: Ruby Johnson  
Final Edit: Andreas Meyris  
Final Check: Natalie Hall

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