

MRS. ROOSEVELT MEETS THE PUBLIC

October 15, 1950

Description: ER and her guests, Dr. Ralph Bunche and Ambassador Ernest Gross, answer questions about the United Nations on the first day of the annual observance of United Nations Week.

Participants: ER, Ralph Bunche, Ernest A. Gross, Elliott Roosevelt Doris Quinn, Lawton Smith, Mr. Simon, Miss Taylor.

[Theme music 0:08-0:21]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] [music continues softly] From the Colonial Room of the Park Sheraton Hotel in New York, NBC Television takes pleasure in presenting *Mrs. Roosevelt Meets the Public*. Today marks the opening of the annual observance of United Nations Week, a week set aside to help make us aware of the operations and functions of that organization. In considering the accomplishments of the United Nations in its five years of existence and in looking at its plans for the future, certain questions are inevitably raised in the minds of the American people. Questions such as [Intro music ends]—

[Lawton Smith:] What can the UN accomplish as long as Russia uses the veto?

[Doris Quinn:] I am an American mother; must our boys police the world for the United Nations?

[Mr. Simon:] When Korea comes under UN control, what will be done to ensure free elections? (1:20)

[ER:] These are some of the questions that are asked about the United Nations and I am very happy to be with you again this afternoon to try and give you the answers. We who work closely with the United Nations feel very strongly that this week, United Nations Week, people from all over the world should really take time out to understand the United Nations better and to decide how we individually can help to support the United Nations in its aims for world unity and world peace. As I've mentioned before, when your questions are the kind of questions that I feel I need help in answering, I'm going to try to get people to come and help me and I can think of no better people than the two I have with me today: Dr. Ralph Bunche, Director of the Division of Trusteeship at the United Nations, and Ambassador Earnest A. Gross, U.S. Deputy Representative to the United Nations and Deputy Representative in the Security Council. Dr. Bunche, in setting the scene for us to answer specific questions about the United Nations this afternoon, would you sum up briefly, rather in outline form, the accomplishments of the United Nations in the past five years? (3:06)

[Ralph Bunche:] That's um a very big order, uh Mrs. Roosevelt, if I took one hour [ER: I thought perhaps you would think that you had rather little time to do it in, but just touch the highlights] for each year of the United Nations. Yes, I'll touch a few of the highlights. Uh first of all, I think some uh mention should be made of the uh problem of membership. Uh, in San Francisco uh five years ago, there were fifty-one nations uh represented in formulating the charter of the United Nations. Uh today there are sixty members. The latest member, uh Indonesia, uh is the one that uh has been complimented uh universally uh for achieving its position in the community of nations, uh but the uh United Nations is still far from achieving the desired goal, which is universality of membership. There are still many important states uh whose representatives do not sit in the councils of the United Nations. To mention only a few, uh Ireland and Finland, for example, there are the former enemy states in the last war--Germany, uh Austria, and Japan-- there are the near-eastern uh states, uh the states of uh uh Jordan for example, uh Iran, um Korea

itself, uh the states of Eastern Europe-- Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania. Certainly the objective is always uh to get the complete universality as soon as possible uh in the United Nations.

Uh as regards other accomplishments, uh the United Nations activity mainly reduces itself to two basic approaches: one, the short range task of- of maintaining the peace, even an uneasy peace um while building foundations for a secure and permanent peace. Uh then the short range function, the United Nations has uh- has a quite impressive record of success. The function of um- of intervening uh to uh stop wars, stop threats to the peace, uh to restore peace when it has been broken. Unfortunately, in the age in which we live, uh there are local wars often and there've been a series of- a series of international crises of this nature during these five years. The United Nations has intervened and intervened with varying degrees of success in each one of them. Uh I'll only call attention to, eh, Iran, to Indonesia, Palestine, Greece, Kashmir, now Korea, and Berlin, and uh in each instance the United Nations has succeeded in-in preventing local conflicts from engulfing the world by spreading. Um as regards this long range function of building foundations for peace, for cultivating the soil for peace, of reaching the hearts and minds of people all over the world, of reaching their attitudes and practices, um the United Nations has also made progress, not spectacular progress, but good progress. Uh there's the Declaration of Human Rights, with which you, Mrs. Roosevelt, have had so much to do with, to which you have contributed uh so very much and now, the projected covenant on human rights or perhaps I should say covenants on human rights. Ah, there is the work uh uh in the field of trusteeship in non-self-governing territories uh which involves the future well-being and the hopes and aspirations of some two hundred million people in the world today. One out of every ten people still uh are in the condition of uh not uh enjoying self-government. If the-the broad program now developing in the United Nations of technical assistance to under developed areas, the United Nations counter project might recall of the point for programs. And there is the vast field of constructive efforts undertaken by the several specialized agencies: UNESCO, the World Health Organization, the International Labor Organization, and the lot. So I would say that, despite the Cold War, the vetoes, the walk-outs, the boycotts, despite the many admitted failures of the United Nations, the failure to achieve uh an international security force, to control atomic energy, uh to achieve disarmament, uh despite these things, the United Nations is stronger today, more authoritative, and with greater prestige than it had five years ago. And on October twenty-fourth, when we celebrate United Nations Day, I believe, quite earnestly, Mrs. Roosevelt, that the world will have very much to be thankful for to the United Nations. (08:36)

[ER:] Thank you, Dr. Bunche, I quite agree with you. And now that we have a summary of the accomplishments of the United Nations in the five years of its existence, Ambassador Gross, would you tell us briefly its aims for the future?

[Earnest Gross:] Yes, I'd be very glad to try, Mrs. Roosevelt. The aims of the- or our aims for the future of the United Nations, of course, are based on an ever-expanding use of the world organization to deal with world problems. Now, many people perhaps have forgotten that when President Truman um gave his inaugural address, point one, we hear a lot about point four, but point one of this address was unfaltering support by the United States of the United Nations and constant efforts on our part to seek methods of improving its effective operation. And I think that our primary goal, therefore, is summarized in that one sentence. We want to see the United Nations, on a constantly impr-improving basis, deal with problems which, in their very nature, are world problems. Dr. Bunche has mentioned local conflicts and that's one way of describing them, but these local conflicts of course have within them the seeds of world conflicts and we, therefore, are very eager to see to it that the machinery of the United Nations is able to deal promptly and effectively with those political, military threats to the world peace. And it is for that reason, of course, which we have introduced into the General Assembly a proposal which we believe will strengthen the United Nations. It will strengthen it on a more democratic basis. We believe that, as I think general Marshall once said, that majorities rally to the defense of the charge. The general assembly is a place of course where all members of the United Nations meet and make decisions. We want to see the general assembly strengthen itself and that is the first aim in the proposal which we have submitted. We

want to see the United Nations ca—be in a position to carry out its aims by having at its disposal, forces which may be used to meet these emergencies. We also want to see the members of the United Nations constantly consider methods of devising collective enforcement uh measures. We want to see everybody make equal sacrifices or sacrifices that are proportional to their ability to contribute. Dr. Bunche has mentioned the social progress which has been made, and as he so well said, which you yourself have contributed so mightily to. We want to see that the progress of the development of the Covenant on Human Rights. Uh we want to see economic aims of a worldwide scope carried out on an ever expanded basis by the specialized agencies, the health work, and the work of the International Labor Organization, the work of the Food and Agriculture Organization. We hope that the Soviet Union will realize that its people, will depend to a very great extent upon the successful functioning of these organizations. And so one of our aims, one of our hopes, is that the Soviet Union will realize that it should make a contribution, it should participate in these organizations, and we confidently expect that the leaders of the Soviet Union will see the light or will be impressed by the obvious need of the situation, and that their people will realize the problem. So that I think that the future of the United Nations can be summarized in a sentence by saying that we want to carry on with the principals of the charter, that they represent the minimum standards of international conduct and we want to see the nations of the world comply with those minimum standard of international conduct. (12:56)

[ER:] I gather that you really think that the United Nations, in its meetings and in its activities, is succeeding in educating all of us to live together.

[Earnest Gross:] I agree emphatically, Mrs. Roosevelt.

[ER:] That's something that interests me very much. Thank you very much, Ambassador Gross. Now, we can go on to the questions that have been written in to me. First of all, I should like to introduce Mrs. Doris Quinn. Mrs. Quinn, I have your letter here. Will you let me read it?

[Doris Quinn:] I'd be delighted if you would.

[ER:] Thank you. "Are our American boys to go on fighting wars for the United Nations? I have a young son whom I've kept in school by working as a stylist and lecturing on fashion in the evenings. I intend to send him on to college and law school and his being called upon to serve on a United Nations police force or army naturally worries me. If he is to serve for three years or so, his education will, of course, be interrupted and if we follow our original plans, he won't be self-supporting until he is in his thirties. This poses a big problem. If a permanent force is set up, what will other nations contribute? How many men will the United Nations need?" Well, Mrs. Quinn, you've asked some questions that are in the minds of a great many young people today and older people. I hope very much that if the real aims of the United Nations are carried out that the need for having people in large quantities prepared for war will become less, but undoubtedly for some time to come, since changing human nature is slow, there will have to be mobile forces, probably in different areas of the world, that are on call. I rather imagine that those will be made up of fairly young people uh who um are being called in their different nations for rather uh shorter periods than perhaps three years, though one never can tell. (Break 15:28-15:47) But, um, that unfortunately is something none of us can judge, we don't know ahead what will be called upon and it is essential to have peace even though we may have to have wars to keep the peace for uh the years until people are sufficiently educated to really enter in together into real disarmament.

Now, on the other question, of, "what will other nations contribute," that is the whole aim at present, to get each nation to contribute according to its capacity. That will have to be um assessed within the United Nations. And how many men will the United Nations need, I haven't any idea and I doubt if anyone can tell you because that's a developing thing. And if you knew exactly just what your problem was and that it wouldn't change, you could say definitely, but uh your very situation changes from day-to-

day changes and there are possibilities maybe that either Dr. Bunche or Ambassador Gross could assess it better than I could, but I would have no idea, would you, Dr. Bunche? (17:15)

[Ralph Bunche:] Well, Mrs. Roosevelt, I'd like to make just one comment on the question. It seems to me it might be taken one step further. It isn't merely a question of the- of American boys uh fighting wars for the United Nations. It's a question of American boys fighting wars for the United Nations in order that the United Nations may protect American boys, American people, their wives, parents, sisters, children, and their children's children. In fact, that they may protect all people who wish to live in a world of peace and justice and uh this is really um what is uh really taking place in Korea. Uh the- if the United Nations, by their support of American boys and the American public and the-the fighting men and the uh people, the citizens of other peace-loving countries make the United Nations strong enough, then there won't be any wars.

[ER:] Perhaps we'll have fewer wars.

[Ralph Bunche:] There won't be any wars to be fought.

[ER:] That's- that's something that all of us are hoping now. Have you anything to add to that Mr. Gro-Ambassador Gross?

[Earnest Gross:] Well, just this one thing that, of course, uh this may be worth saying, that the uh the Charter of the United Nations itself, of course, did- does contemplate that there will be forces put at the disposal of the security council, that the armed forces will be made available as a deterrent and I think that the uh that I—it's probably implicit in what you said Mrs. Roosevelt, that the best hope is to have a force strong enough and at the disposal of the United Nations.

[ER:] Of course it doesn't very much matter [ER] to Mrs. Quinn whether her-it matters, yes, in the large sense, whether her boy is there as a deterrent [Earnest Gross: Yes] or whether he's there to fight. He's still got to take the time out and I can quite understand uh that the period makes a difference and the age and the consideration of each case does make a difference, but nevertheless, I think that by and large this has to be done throughout the world and therefore we, the strongest democracy, will probably have to take our share, hard as it is. Now we'll come to our second letter and that comes from Mr. Lawton Smith. May I read it, sir? (19:40)

[Lawton Smith:] Please do.

[ER:] "During the-during World War II, I was in the Marines." That's a pretty good outfit, I had a son in the Marines. "I now own and operate my own printing business. As a businessman, I judge things by results. Sometimes it seems to me that the United Nations is just a glorified debating society. While the Russians are filibustering and using the veto out at Lake Success, orders are coming out of Moscow to go right ahead swallowing up another piece of humanity. Do you think, Mrs. Roosevelt, the United Nations can accomplish anything as long as Russia can use the veto? In the second place, I'd like to know if our troubles with Russia couldn't be settled if Stalin and Truman would sit down together." Now, Ambassador Gross, you can answer that.

[Earnest Gross:] I can try to answer it. Uh, the first point, of course, the abuse of the veto by the Soviet Union, uh one has to admit it immediately um uh does place a great obstacle in the way of the proper use of the United Nations and in dealing with the tasks for which it was setup, but it doesn't obstruct it, it doesn't prevent it from carrying out its duties. We have other methods of seeing to it uh that uh threats to the peace can be dealt with. Now the veto, of course, applies equally to all permanent members of the Security Council. We have advocated uh agreement among the permanent members to limit the use of the veto by voluntary methods. We hope that again that the Soviet Union will realize that that is an important

thing to do, but we feel that if the general assembly is in a position to carry out those responsibilities which the Security Council may not be able to carry out by reason of the abuse of the veto, that that will suffice to accomplish the objectives. Do you want me to go ahead with the second part of the question?

[ER:] Just say what-on the last part.

[Earnest Gross:] Ah, well, of course, I think that uh there's a great deal of appeal to the idea of uh people sitting down with each other. We sort of uh are used to the idea of the cracker barrel and that uh everything can be settled by people sitting round and talking it out and reaching agreement. The one missing ingredient, I think, may be the lack of good faith. And I think that it is very important for us, no matter how we negotiate, whether we do it through diplomatic representatives or through chiefs of state, to be perfectly confident that we and the rest of the free world are strong enough and in a position to reach agreements which we are confident will be complied with. When that day comes, when the day comes when we feel confident that agreements will be reached, will be-which will have meaning and which will be carried out, then I think it will not be necessary for chiefs of state to sit down and talk with each other. I think we can work out arrangements through [ER: unknown phrase] the existing organizations.

[ER:] I can-I-I think I agree with that answer. Now, I'm going to read to you the third letter and introduce to you, Mr. Simons, who wrote it, if you let me read it.

[Mr. Simons:] Thank you, certainly. (23:01)

[ER:] "I was lieutenant senior grade in the Navy-Air Force during the War, now I'm working in the plastic manufacturing business. These days everybody in this country feels that his future is tied up in the ultimate solution of the Korean situation. Now that MacArthur's United Nations forces have moved into North Korea, how is this territory going to be governed? When the fighting is over, how is the United Nations going to make sure that this time there will be a free, democratic election for all of Korea?" That, Dr. Bunche, you can answer.

[Ralph Bunche:] I uh only wish I could tell you I can answer it, Mrs. Roosevelt. Indeed, if I had the answer I think I would whisper it to my friend Ambassador Gross here and I'm sure he would uh introduce it in the assembly tomorrow morning [Ralph Bunche chuckles]. Um I uh-- the best I can do is to uh indicate the uh broad outlines uh of uh the answer to the question, um outlines which uh represent the thinking uh at the United Nations today. Uh first off, I think I should say that there is no question of United Nations control uh in the territory of the Republic of South Korea, uh as soon as the uh invading forces are driven out of South Korea, the civilian control is returned to its rightful owners, the authorities of the Republic of South Korea. (24:31)

[ER:] Which they elected themselves.

[Ralph Bunche:] Which they elected in-in free election under the supervision, indeed, of the United Nations. Now, as to the-the general problem, it-it seems to me that the broad outlines uh would be along these lines. That um here is a-a tremendous challenge to the constructive statesmanship uh of the United Nations in restoring a situation ah following military activity undertaken by the United Nations itself. The basic principle surely um is that the wishes and the well-being of the Korean people, all of the Korean people, South as well as North, um should be respected, uh should be promoted. Uh the thirty-eighth parallel is an artificial line, an unfortunate dividing line, splitting up a homogenous people, um but um, it has left uh certainly uh deep wounds, uh deep divisions uh in the country and these will have to be healed and it will not be simple or easy uh—

[ER:] You don't think that an election can be held immediately then?

[Ralph Bunche:] Not immediately, but I should hope uh soon. I should say that what uh- what we should aim for is the quick end of the military phase, and I think that is fast approaching, then the transfer at the earliest possible date uh to civilian authorities of uh power in the state. Uh already, I understand it umis-is designed to[ER: and finally an election.] turn local government over to the North Koreans as quickly as possible and then country-wide free elections under the supervision of the United Nations.

[ER:] We have very little time left and so I'm just going to ask Miss Taylor a question. Uh, you're a young businesswoman and uh you train entertainment troupes that appear in the major cities. May I ask your question?

[Miss Taylor:] Yes. (26:38)

[ER:] Uh can't the UN do something forceful to control atomic warfare? What does the Atomic Commission do? Now, you've only got one minute to answer it, Ambassador Gross, but I'm going to ask you to do it.

[Earnest Gross:] Yes, uh well I think that uh this can be answered in a sentence. The Atomic Energy Commission is trying to develop a system of control which assures that no state can evade those controls and we think that the scientific and political facts point to one inescapable fact and that is that any effective international control system must eh- must be based upon ownership and control and operation of all dangerous atomic facilities. There's no difference between a-atomic fuel used for military purposes or for peaceful purposes except the package you put it in, and in the Atomic Energy Commission we have now the majority of the commission which agree with us on that very fundamental proposition and we have unfortunately only the Soviet Bloc which is not willing to agree to what we consider to be the only kind of safe and effective control which will assure our own survival.

[ER:] Well now I see that our time is coming to a close. I think a good many people are really worried about um what can be done for atomic energy and we should sometime give more time to that consideration, but uh I've missed one question today that I hoped to get in, but we'll come to that another day. I hope that some questions that all of you have had about the United Nations have been answered. And I want to thank Dr. Bunche and Ambassador Gross and our other guests for being with me. I should be looking forward to seeing you again next week. Goodbye.

[Break 28:32-28:36]

[Theme music 28:36-28:48]

[Unknown Announcer 1:] [music continues softly] Be with us again next week at this same time when Mrs. Roosevelt meets the public to discuss the problem of graft in our local and national scene. If you have any questions that you would like Mrs. Roosevelt to answer, we invite you to submit them to her for possible inclusion on future programs. If your questions are deemed of sufficient interest, you may be invited to appear on this program to ask your questions in person. Portions of today's program, which originated from the Park Sheraton Hotel in New York, [music cuts] were on motion picture film.

[Theme music 29:19-29:28]

[Unknown Announcer 2:] NBC Television

[NBC chimes]

(29:38)

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