

THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

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Description: In this segment of the Thanksgiving Day episode, Warren Austin discusses the tension between support of the UN and American patriotism.

Participants: Ambassador Warren R. Austin

[Warren Austin]: Once in a while, we read in the papers that some group or other in the name of patriotism has objected to displaying the blue and white flag of the United Nations on public buildings. [Deep breath] These people argue that paying tribute to the United Nations detracts from the honor and duty that every American owes his own country, and the flag which symbolizes thi-- his country. I am willing to agree that people who hold this view may be quite sincere. But I also think that they are taking a distorted view of patriotism and what is best for our country. I believe on this Thanksgiving Day, that we should give thanks for the existence of the United Nations. We should be proud to honor the United Nation's flag. In so doing, we are not lessening the patriotic pride that fills our hearts when we salute the Stars and Stripes. I do not see that there is any conflict between our allegiance to our country and our belief in and support for the United Nations. In fact, I think that our patriotism grows as we see our country strengthening its ties of friendship with other countries through the United Nations organization. Nations cannot live alone—Communities are dependent on one another—and so are countries. There was a time, and it was not so long ago, when people of Massachusetts regarded people of Virginia or even of Rhode Island as a species of foreigner. We from Vermont considered ourselves as citizens of an entirely independent country. For several years we were engaged in the Haldim and negotiations, which involved the possibility of Vermont becoming a British protectorate if Congress should continue to not recognize Vermont's independence and admit her to the Union. Those days are passed. It is as one country that the union of the states grew into prosperity and strength (2:40).

We are today a long way from world citizenship or world government. Such concepts are interesting topics for speculation, but they are not among today's realities. The United Nation flag, flying on a building, does not indicate that those inside have pledged allegiance to some world government—no such government exists. What it means is this: that a good many nations of the world have dedicated themselves to an ideal. The ideal is easy to understand. It is that the nations shall work together for peace and economic well-being for all the world. Its symbol is the blue banner, with the conventional emblem of peace embracing the world. When Secretary General Trygve Lie sent the first United Nations flag out to General MacArthur, I was confident that American boys, and the boys of every country represented, would be inspired by this emblem of their unity and sacrifice for humanity. It meant that the free nations were not only working together, but that they were together in the fight to stop aggression. If that aggression were allowed to proceed unchecked, neither peace nor economic well-being would be possible for any nation anywhere. The American units in Korea honor first and foremost the flag of the United States; the boys from Britain honor another. There are also the banners of Thailand, the Philippine Republic, Turkey, Australia, and the other counties whose men are joined with ours in Korea. They also gallantly proclaim each nation's fidelity and glorify its individuality at United Nations headquarters at Lake Success. All these countries are dedicated to a common effort. It is an effort that continues at Lake Success as in Korea. An effort whose results can be seen in many places all over the world. Why should the symbol of this common effort, what should be the symbol? The answer of course is the United Nation's flag. Whenever I see it flying from my own office building, or over the United Nations headquarters, or over some private dwelling I think again of the purposes that so many nations-- speaking so many languages--have freely decided to pursue together. On this Thanksgiving Day, I give thanks, that

in addition to our beloved stars and stripes; we do have the United Nations and the United Nation's flag. To me, they mean that the United States is not alone in opposing aggression, not alone in its readiness to work for a healthier and happier world (6:07).

To our country, in less than a generation, has come great power and great responsibilities. A famine in Yugoslavia, aggression in Korea, economic difficulties in Europe or South America must all be of greatest concern to us. For we realize now the interdependence of nations. We understand that peace is indivisible and that all countries of goodwill must do what is in their united power to curb war and famine, pestilence and disease. Once you let those four horsemen loose anywhere in the world they will sooner or later ride up your own doorstep. (7:01)

There is war, there is famine, and I do not think that any of us Americans, blessed as we are with plenty, are likely to forget it on this Thanksgiving Day. My conviction is that the United Nations grows ever stronger, the unity has been growing firmer, since the United Nations faced its greatest challenge on last June 25th. The measures that have already been adopted by the General Assembly this fall are, in my opinion, new and heartening evidence of the determination of member countries. Trials and hardships are many, but the cause challenges and gets the required service and sacrifice. On this great American day of Thanksgiving, our faith takes us up the hill, carrying high the banner of the United Nations.

(8:29)

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