

THE ELEANOR AND ANNA ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

November 17th, 1948 (air date)

Description: From Hollywood, Anna Roosevelt defends FDR's performance at Yalta which had recently been called in to question by a biased reporter. From Paris, ER interviews Henry Morgenthau on Israel's refusal to relinquish hold on the Negev Desert.

Participants: ER, Anna Roosevelt, John Nelson, Henry Morgenthau

[John Nelson:] From Paris and Hollywood the American Broadcasting Company brings you Eleanor and Anna Roosevelt.

[Anna Roosevelt:] Good morning and thank you, John Nelson. The news this morning as usual is full of conflict, contrast, and confusion with China and the Holy Land, the twin trouble spots of the day. And I noticed a new name has been added to the long list of Americans who've tried to work with the Chiang Kai-shek government in China and finally, in frustration and disillusionment, have thrown up their hands and concluded that it is impossible. The latest name is that of Roger Lapham, the former mayor of San Francisco and now head of China aid under the Marshall Plan. Lapham says he cannot accomplish anything with Chiang and threatens to bypass the generalissimo after this. There have been many others, General Stilwell for one, and for another, General Marshall, who returned from China greatly disillusioned. So I wonder what will be accomplished by William Bullitt, the former Ambassador to Russia who arrived in Shanghai the other day as a representative of the so-called Congressional Watchdog Committee on Foreign Aid. While Mr. Bullitt was crossing the Pacific I looked up his articles which appeared several weeks ago in *Life* magazine. These articles criticize a great length my father's foreign policies, those of President Truman, and the actions of General Marshall as special envoy to China. They claim to tell the inside story of Tehran, Yalta, and Potsdam. And in short, as Bullitt says, "how we won the war and lost the peace." That we won the war I will agree; that we've lost the peace seems to me a grievously premature conclusion and one which shows a lamentable lack of faith in our ability to achieve what has to be achieved.

As an example of Mr. Bullitt's bias, he accuses my father of being very ill at the Yalta Big Three conference, and of having, in Bullitt's words, "difficulty in formulating his thoughts and greater difficulty in expressing them consecutively." He adds that Father held to his determination to appease Stalin. Now it happens that I was at Yalta with my father and Mr. Bullitt was not. So I feel that I'm in a good position to say that what I choose to call his deductions are entirely false. Admittedly my father was tired, but his mind remained as decisive as ever and definitely the thought of appeasement never entered it. What was foremost was the steadfast and long range goal of a secure and lasting peace. And he knew that peace could never be achieved until the communist countries and the democracies found a common meeting ground, which he further knew meant willingness to give and take. William Bullitt's glib misinterpretations are unworthy of a good reporter. I wonder about the wisdom of sending so biased an investigator to report to Congress on conditions in China. In the other trouble spot, Israel, a deadlock continues over the Negev Desert, that historic wasteland known in Biblical times as Beersheba. Our United Nations mediator, Dr. Ralph Bunche, wants the Jewish forces to give up their Negev desert bases but they flatly refused. Mr. Henry Morgenthau, in an interview transcribed earlier with my mother in Paris, tells why they refuse. So here is my mother with Mr. Morgenthau who, when he made these statements, had just returned from a tour of Israel and the Holy Land. (3:49)

[ER:] Thank you, Anna. At this time when so much world attention is centered on the unhappy new nation of Israel, I feel particularly fortunate in having as a guest today someone who has recently returned

from that strife-torn country and who can tell us first-hand some of the facts behind the tragic situation now existing there. He is Mr. Henry Morgenthau, the distinguished former Secretary of the Treasury and an old and dear friend of mine. Mr. Morgenthau has recently returned from Israel, a trip on which he took my young grandson, Curtis Boettiger, and I am very pleased that he has consented to appear on this program today to tell American listeners some firsthand facts on this rather confused but very important situation in Israel. First of all, Mr. Morgenthau, could you tell me a little bit about the country so that American radio listeners can form a better picture of it? I think most of us have some sort of mental picture of Israel from our Bibles if not from the newspapers, but people want something a little bit clearer. So tell me how large it is.

[Henry Morgenthau:] Mrs. Roosevelt, the state of Israel is about the size of Rhode Island. It has a climate very much like that of Lower California.

[ER:] Could you explain for us why there has been so much controversy and fighting over the Negev?

[Henry Morgenthau:] Frankly, I believe there's a conflict over the Negev simply because the British would like to have it as a military base. The Jews must have it, not for military reasons, not because it is a matter of prestige or pride. They must have the Negev because the lives of hundreds of thousands of homeless men and women in Europe depend upon it. The Negev represents no less than sixty percent of the entire area of the state of Israel. Where would Israel settle the large masses of Jews from the displaced persons camps and other distressed areas of Europe if the greater part of its territory were cut off?

[ER:] Did you see any of the fighting firsthand while you were in Israel?

[Henry Morgenthau:] I went down to the Negev when we reached the Jewish settlement of Negba. My military escort handed me a tin helmet. It was too hot so I didn't wear it, but I knew I was at the front. As a matter of fact, I stood at a point less than three quarters of a mile from the Egyptian position. Every house in the Negba had been destroyed. The hundred and thirty men and women left in the settlement had to eat and sleep underground. In Jerusalem I went to the Notre Dame de France. They're only about thirty yards in the Arab lines. Three heavy shells fell within ten yards of where I stood during my visit to that part of the Israeli front.

[ER:] Could you tell us Henry, from what you saw on your trip, what the Jews have accomplished in Israel?

[Henry Morgenthau:] What the Jews have accomplished in Israel is nothing short of a miracle. As I told you, they have built modern towns and cities on sand dunes. They've brought water to the desert areas and converted them into the most fertile land in the country. They revived the Hebrew language as a living tongue. When a child cries for its mother in Hebrew, then you know that the language has been reborn. There are eight hundred thousand Jews in Israel today. Their achievements are now making possible what I consider the greatest accomplishment of all. That is a transfer of a minimum of fifteen thousand refugees a month from Europe to the Jewish homeland. I saw the pregnant women and mothers with small infants as they arrived from Cyprus. The British wouldn't let their husbands come with them. They were dazed, thin, almost beaten, like prisoners getting their first look at the sun after many months of internment. (8:09)

[ER:] Did you see anything that would indicate what kind of treatment the Arabs would receive in a Jewish state?

[Henry Morgenthau:] In the first place, the Arabs have been completely given political freedom. The mayor and deputy mayor are Arabs. So is a judge, and the entire police force except for the

superintendent of police. The Jewish administration has increased wages for Arab workers to four times what they were before in some cases, and to no less than double for all workers. The Arab population is free to organize its own political parties, its labor unions, and to participate in the Israel election like other members of the Jewish state.

[ER:] On the whole, it seems to me that the Arabs in Israel have a better time than the Jews in Cyprus. I'm always tremendously interested in the women and children in any country. Could you tell us something of what is being done for the women and children in Israel?

[Henry Morgenthau:] The women in Israel, Mrs. Roosevelt, are free as the women in United States. In many ways they have a greater share in the building and the defense of the Jewish state. Up to a short time ago, women were front line soldiers like their brothers and husbands. Women are farmers, scientists, and even road builders. In the agricultural settlements the children are cared for in the most modern and progressive way, leaving their mothers free to work or study. The schools are excellent, and there's a greater literacy in Israel than in any other country in the world.

[ER:] I know you spent a great deal of time in Israel with Dr. [Chaim] Weizmann, president of the State Council, and Prime Minister Ben-Gurion. Could you tell me from these conversations what their aims for the new nation are?

[Henry Morgenthau:] In my talks with President Weizmann and Prime Minister Ben-Gurion, I have found they were planning and working for a society that was the hope and dream of President Roosevelt. A little left of center is about the best description of the direction of the present government. There's a strong desire the genuine friendship with the United States. I'm sure that Israel will be a strong bulwark for democracy if we give it our moral and material support.

[Anna Roosevelt:] Thank you, Mother, and you too, Mr. Morgenthau for a firsthand view of the newest nation in the world. Henry Morgenthau speaks of Israel's need for moral and material support. Well it's a need which some American citizens are taking most seriously today. I'm referring to Americans like the ten who were indicted yesterday by a federal grand jury for plotting to smuggle arms and war planes to Israel. These ten men are faced with arrest and trial on a very serious charge, for admittedly it is a grave matter to bypass the laws of the United States to smuggle implements of war into another country. And it arouses, I think, a big question in the minds of the rest of us. Why, we ask, are these Americans so involving themselves in the affairs of a foreign nation? I asked this question yesterday of a man whose name I cannot disclose, but one who is in a position to know the answers. This man spoke of course of the British arming Egyptian forces and the forces in Transjordan, Iraq, and Lebanon. This man spoke too of what he and others like him consider the burning injustice of British aid to the Arabs, and of how certain Americans are morally aroused to the point where they must act. It is not, this man said, that we don't love America or that our loyalty is divided. We think America is the finest country in the world, he declared, and we wish to stay Americans. But, he continued, the Jews of Europe are not so lucky as Jews in America. In the past ten years six million of them have been destroyed. The pitiful remnants of these people no longer belong in Europe and, he said, we want to help them. This man told me maybe not a single plane will get across. After all, he said, a flying fortress loaded with gallons of gasoline isn't the easiest thing in the world to conceal. But it will be worth our efforts, he said, if the people of Israel hear of the attempt and are heartened. Many Americans, Jews and gentiles alike, do not agree that outside aid should be given to Israel or the Arabs. But in a question involving so much human suffering it's well to learn as much as possible of both sides.

Well up to now our discussion has been on the serious side. And along with all these pressing problems comes another of awful and immediate urgency, a matter of great and universal concern: Christmas shopping. My mother, who has five children and seventeen grandchildren has solved the problem in her own way by starting her next year's Christmas shopping the day after Christmas. All

yearlong she picks up gifts wherever she happens to be. In Paris a scarf for Sistie, in London a book for Chandler, in New York a game for Johnny. Then she stores them all away in the closet until next Christmas. (13:44)

[John Nelson:] And I bet by that time the closet looks just like Fibber McGee's.

[Anna Roosevelt:] Oh yes. And speaking of Christmas, you might remember this, John, and be thinking of an answer. While I was talking with a friend the other day, someone made the inevitable comment that Christmas is almost here again. At that, the eyes of my friend's three year old daughter widened in interest and she asked, "Where has it been mommy?"

[John Nelson:] Listen Friday, and each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at this same time or most of these same ABC stations for Eleanor and Anna Roosevelt from Paris and Hollywood. Mrs. Roosevelt's interview with Henry Morgenthau was transcribed earlier. This is ABC, the American Broadcasting Company.

Transcribed from holdings at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (FDRL)
File(s): 80-5(10)

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