

## THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

April 17, 1951

Description: In the opening segment, ER and Elliott Roosevelt respond to a listener's question about Congress's failure to ratify the United Nation's genocide pact.

Participants: ER, Elliott Roosevelt

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[Elliott Roosevelt :] And now Mother, to our mail today. The question today is from Mrs. Dorothy Bernstein of Nyack, New York. She says uh would love to have you discuss or elaborate on genocide and whether or not we should have Congress ratify it.

[ER:] Of course we should have Congress ratify it. It's a disgrace that the United States should not as yet have signed the genocide pact.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] May I ask you for the benefit of many of us to uh tell us just what is genocide?

[ER:] Genocide-- [ER laughs] genocide means um the action to exterminate--or attempt to exterminate a people. It means what Hitler did to the Jews when he forbade the Jews um to really exist as human beings. They could not marry, they could not move from place to place, uh they could not um buy in many places, they could not work um. In other words, life was made practically impossible. And then, and he proceeded to um [Elliott Roosevelt: To systematic extermination] systematically exterminate the Jews. Now, it was not only the Jews that Hitler uh practically um tried to exterminate wherever he went into a country. For instance, let's take Poland. He not only conquered and destroyed the country, but he systematically went to work to destroy the people by taking the children and sending them back to Germany eh and there he established a most complete system of losing the children. It was very carefully worked out. Fortunately the Germans have uh a remarkable system of keeping records and the records they kept to lose children are the records we used afterwards to find them. [Elliott Roosevelt: Yeah.] But uh they-they showed us what his plans had been. There would have been no possibility of a future Polish nation [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm] because these children were first to be taken into centers and carefully indoctrinated into the fact that there was no such thing as any nation except the [Elliott Roosevelt: Germ--] German um nation and uh what they stood for. Then they were divided up and put in SS troop-troopers' families [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm] and uh as the children of those people [Elliott Roosevelt: Yes.] and um many a child um old enough to remember her own language or his own language. I remember particularly the story of one little girl who kept insisting that she had always been in this country, that she didn't know any other language, that she couldn't be anything but a German. The minute they crossed the border into her own country and she heard around her the Polish language, she began to talk Polish [Elliott Roosevelt: Uh-huh.] and uh it um--it-it was the systematic method of exterminating a people you see. (3:35)

[Elliott Roosevelt an ER overlap]

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Either a national group or a racial group?

[ER:] A racial group or a religious group.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] What is the genocide pact?

[ER:] Or a religious group.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Or a religious group. What is the genocide pact?

[ER:] Now, the genocide pact is an agreement that no nation signing it will ever engage in an effort to exterminate a whole group.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] That uh uh pact was arrived at where, in the United Nations?

[ER:] It was the arrived at in the United Nations and it has been signed by a sufficient number of nations so that it has come into being as a-an act of the United Nations. We have not signed it, but I've forgotten what the number was, fifteen or twenty nations, have signed it so that it is now actually a working pact agreed on and registered in the United Nations and [Elliott Roosevelt: Well, ah.] uh the trouble is with that--

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Have any of the Soviet Nations uh ratified this pact? (4:40)

[ER:] Oh no. No Soviet nation and no satellite has ratified that pact.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] But what about uh-uh, of the nations that have--uh what are those nations?

[ER:] I can't remember now, oh um, I remember uh—

[Elliott Roosevelt:] European nations?

[ER:] European nations [Elliott: South Americans?] and some South Americans.

[Elliott:] How about uh the Arab States?

[ER:] Well that again I can't remember. I haven't followed-- I haven't looked at—

[Elliott: Roosevelt:] But a sufficient majority of them—

[ER:] But whatever the number is, that has to put it into being as a pact under the United Nations has ratified. [Elliott Roosevelt: Well, why is there--] ER: a good many smaller nations—

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well why is there a hesitancy on the part of the American Congress to ratify this pact?

[ER:] Oh, because the American Bar Association has said that under the genocide pact, if there should be a lynching anywhere in the South, we could be held responsible by an international body.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Uh what would the international body be entitled to do [ER: I--] uh in the event of a lynching by a mob? (5:47)

[ER:] I don't think they would be entitled to do anything, only they could uh uh make us--uh, they could uh pass a resolution saying that uh we had um uh not lived up to the genocide pact and that would uh bring public opinion in the world to focus on something that had happened in our nation.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, uh isn't it perfectly [ER: and we--] true that this uh-- that a lynching, uh whether it was in the North or the South or anywhere, uh would be the act of mob violence against uh an individual [ER: an individual] or a small group of people [ER: But of course] but couldn't be genocide?

[ER:] What the Bar Association says, that this gives the right to an international body to interfere in a uh domestic [Elliott Roosevelt: Carrying out of our internal law] internal laws and that it would place us in a um difficult situation. Many of us think that um it would perhaps be better to place us in that situation um and I don't agree that it would give uh them the right because I don't think that a lynching is an attempt to wipe out a whole group of people.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] No.

[ER:] uh Even if you were lynching four or five people you wouldn't be trying to wipe out a whole race, do you see? [Elliott: Mhm.] But, that has been our trouble it's-it's the action of the American Bar Association [Elliott Roosevelt: Well, uh] that has kept us from ratifying. (7:18)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Is there now a concerted effort by uh any large group of people to uh try to get Congress to ratify this?

[ER:] I don't think there is a non-governmental agenc-- um uh association is in this country that hasn't um come out for ratification um except possibly—

[Elliott Roosevelt:] What about the church bodies? Are church bodies—

[ER:] Well the church bodies have all come out for it. It may be-- I-I haven't heard that the American Daughters of the Revolution has-have come out for it but um I-I have heard that um church-- many church groups and many um of the um civic and fraternal groups have come out for it.

[Elliott: Roosevelt:] Well then, in the event that the-all these groups have come out in favor of the genocide pact uh wouldn't it be uh something which should be, uh would find tremendous popular support on the part of the United States Senate to ratify?

[ER:] Well I don't, the uh—

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Aren't these groups [ER: I] the groups that bring pressure to bear in Congress?

[ER:] They do, but you see, most of these groups are not organized to do a political job. And um they are not really organized uh to get out the vote for instance or to um see to it that there is any change in the vote um because of a-a particular action of this or that person so I don't know that they carry as much weight as they would for instance if uh they actually went out and uh systematically to organize politically [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm] in any area where um there--they knew that someone had opposed it. (9:17)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well to sum up, and to answer Mrs. Bernstein of Nyack, New York, you would state uh that you are wholeheartedly and completely in favor of the ratification by the Senate of the genocide pact uh and you believe that it will have tremendous im--it will give tremendous impetus give to our leadership in the--with the other UN-UN nations.

[ER:] Oh yes. I think we should do it without question.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] All right. Well I think then that uh is a sufficient answer to Mrs. Bernstein and uh we will now move on to another part of the program and turn it over to our announcer.

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