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ACTIVIST AND AUTHOR RUTH GRUBER DEFENDS ROOSEVELT'S HOLOCAUST RECORD

Reminds Shalom TV viewers that FDR was president during a very anti-Semitic time in America

Compares Barack Obama to Franklin D. Roosevelt

April 29, 2009 (Fort Lee, NJ) -- In an exclusive interview now airing on Shalom TV, world renowned journalist and activist Ruth Gruber calls on the American Jewish community to "stop demonizing [Franklin Delano] Roosevelt and thank him for the good he did."



"What we don't remember is that at that period, even though we were fighting Nazis, we were an overtly anti-Semitic country," she says in response to accusations that FDR kept Jewish refugees from finding safety on American shores. "They were calling Roosevelt 'Rosenfeld,' they said, 'he's not a Yankee with blue blood, he's a Jew.' They were calling the New Deal the 'Jew Deal,' and that we were fighting the war for the Jews.

"Roosevelt was a great politician, and he knew that if you were a humanitarian first and then a politician, you could never become president of the United States. You have to be a politician first, and then you can be a humanitarian."

Ms. Gruber, now 97-years-old, also tells Shalom TV President Mark S. Golub of the radio hatemongering that assaulted both President Roosevelt and the Jewish community on a near weekly basis.

"Every Sunday afternoon, we all sat paralyzed listening to the radio--there was no TV then," she recalls. "Father [Charles Edward] Coughlin in Detroit was filling the air with the worst anti-Semitic trash. And people believed him. And he was converting people to Catholicism; to his kind of anti-Semitism.

"Roosevelt could have done more, but all of us could have done more, everybody in the country if you gave us a chance. I was so thrilled that I was given a chance to do something. But all of us, again, have to look in our soul and find things we could do. We were an anti-Semitic country."

An eyewitness to history, Gruber personally saw Nazi rallies while in Germany earning her doctorate. On returning to America, she became a special emissary of the US government sent to smuggle a thousand Jews out of Hitler's Europe as "temporary guests," later successfully lobbying for their right to stay in this country. After the war she followed the passengers of the legendary rescue ship Exodus from Haifa Harbor to an aborted stop in Cyprus to France, and was the only journalist allowed to accompany the refugees on their journey to Displaced Persons camps in Germany.

A former assistant to WWII Interior Secretary Harold Ickes, Ms. Gruber finds tremendous similarities between FDR's administration and Obama's, especially on economic programs.

"Roosevelt wanted to change America and did. Our new president is following so much of what Roosevelt did in those first hundred days."

Shalom TV is America's Jewish cable television network, available in more than 30 million homes across the country. Programming on the mainstream cultural service includes feature films and documentaries, exclusive news and event coverage, original series on Jewish learning, shows centered on the State of Israel, and special offerings for children.

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