Around the Globe

By Joseph Starobin

Mrs. Roosevelt's Comment on Foley Sq.

ON THE EVENING of Friday, Oct. 14, there was a meeting in New Britain, Conn., and it is recorded by the main speaker that she spoke about the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, and she spoke on matters dear to her as chairman of the UN Human Rights Commission. On the same day, 11 leaders of the American Communist Party were "found guilty." And for the 16 days since, they have been held in jail without bail. It is not recorded whether Mrs. Roosevelt found any connection between the two events in her New Britain speech. Her columns since that day have ignored the Foley Square verdict, except for one, just a week ago.

This was entitled "Memo to Moscow. For a moment I thought that title was just a nasty copyreader playing postman. But it seems that Mrs. Roosevelt feels her sole comment on Foley Square must be addressed to Moscow, on the popular but fantastic fallacy that the responsibility for American Communists lies elsewhere.

And then she says, "If the Communist Party is going to advocate force and violence, or show by its actions that this is what it advocates, then I am afraid it will eventually be outlawed." We are "going to see results which I would consider unfortunate," Mrs. Roosevelt continues. She prefers, Mrs. Roosevelt says, to see the Communist Party "change its tactics so that we could follow our traditional custom of permitting any one to try to persuade people that his beliefs are right," but we are to blame if we are outlawed.

THERE IS SOMETHING incredible about all this. Mrs. Roosevelt admits that outlawing Communists would persecute all sorts of people and take the country a long ways from its traditions. She puts the burden of proof on the Communists, without evidently having studied what they really stand for, as they explained all summer at Foley Square.

Thus, the Americans for Democratic Action have criticized the "vindictiveness" of holding Communist leaders without bail, and Attorney General McGrath was compelled to reassure people against hysteria [illegible] that the Communists are not outlawed. But Mrs. Roosevelt emphasizes that theme. She even defends such a [illegible]

ON WHAT EVIDENCE? Has Mrs. Roosevelt read the basic document of the Communist trial, the deposition prepared by William Z. Foster last June? Has she read Eugene Dennis' summation? Does she realize that 26 acts were charged against the Communist leaders by the indictment?

They reorganized their party in 1945, and that was labelled a "conspiracy," although no such charge was ever made when the American Communist Party was first organized, or against any other party. They were charged with teaching and advocating the principles of Marxism Leninism, which were called equivalent to overthrowing the government by force and violence, but this is exactly what is not true. There are no such doctrines in Marxism Leninism whatever, as the Communists proved. What they really advocate can be found in documents easily accessible to Mrs. Roosevelt as well as in their activity. And their right to ideas and activity is all inherent in the First Amendment, and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Mrs. Roosevelt wrote her column on the day that John Foster Dulles, the Republican opponent of Herbert Lehman, was speaking at Lafayette College. In essence, Dulles shifted attention from war with Russia abroad for the time being, but focussed on war against Communists and progressives here at home. Mr. Dulles' entire campaign has shown that he goes so far as to include supporters of Mr. Lehman, if not Lehman himself, as potential enemies to be ruthlessly fought. Where are Mrs. Roosevelt's misconceptions taking her if not toward the sinister paths of Dulles? Can such a stand help Mrs. Roosevelt's own campaign for Herbert Lehman? I doubt it.

But I don't doubt that to be honest with herself Mrs. Roosevelt must examine the facts about Foley Square. And to uphold "our traditional custom of permitting anyone to try to persuade people that his beliefs are right," she would have to condemn the Smith Act and the indictment as well as the verdict. At the very least, doesn't she have a word to say about the issue of bail?

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