Communists Are Silly to Antagonize Religious Groups

By ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

HYDE PARK, Monday—I am in receipt of two communications, relative to the column that I wrote about the imprisonment of Cardinal Mindszenty, which should be of interest to readers of this column.

What I was trying to do, of course, was not to say that the cardinal was an altogether admirable character, but that it is stupid of the Communists to imprison people where it can be said that they have been imprisoned because of their religion.

One correspondent—a man who edits a publication that claims to be completely factual—writes me that I am not being fair in this situation. This is not a matter of religious persecution, he says, but a matter of opposition to progress. He claims that the Cardinal is a reactionary, if not a Fascist, and a notorious anti-Semite.

He also says that every fair-minded American, British and French correspondent in Hungary would bear him out in his assertion that the Cardinal was the main opponent to the general welfare of the Hungarian people. Cardinal Mindszenty controlled a million acres of land, says my correspondent, for the Roman Catholic Church was the largest landowner in Hungary; therefore, the Cardinal opposed all agrarian reform and opposed the separation of church and state. In addition, it is claimed that the Roman Catholic Church had a monopoly on education.

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ALL these facts, if they are true, would point to the conclusion that the Roman Catholic Church in Hungary seems to have some of the failings that have brought the church into difficulties in other parts of the world. This is no criticism of the church as such; it is only the result that follows when any church anywhere ceases to be a purely spiritual power and becomes a power politically and materially.

Certainly, I am in no position to say whether the facts, as sent to me by this particular gentleman, are true. However, I will say and repeat that it is an extremely foolish practice for the Communists to imprison people when it can be said that the cause of imprisonment is their religious belief.

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I ALSO received a communication telling me that I had been unjust to a member of another church—Bishop Ordass of the Lutheran Church in Hungary. The writer also enclosed an article that says in brief that some of the clergy of various Protestant denominations have given in to the Communists, have agreed to turn their schools over to the state and have compromised in various ways.

Bishop Ordass, however, refused and was sent to prison. The Communists accused him and others of black market operations and the "unfaithful use of American relief monies." The last accusation was promptly denied by Franklin Clark Fry, president of the United Lutheran Churches of America, so quite obviously these accusations are pretexts. They make one suspicious of the Communist methods, however, since it is obvious that Bishop Ordass was not a great landowner nor was his church, and probably he was not influential enough to oppose real reforms, tho he may have opposed Communist control.

It is hard to get at facts about anything that goes on in a Communist-controlled country, which Hungary now is, but it seems to me the Communists are foolish to make enemies of the various religious groups in the world. They will soon learn that it does their cause no good.

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