The Communists

By Eleanor Roosevelt

HYDE PARK, Thursday.—I have been sent, by the Communist Political Assn., a statement of the resolution which they are considering and will vote on as an expression of the American Communist point of view and as their guide for action. As a document, it is excellent; but I think I should clarify, for two groups in this country, the column which I wrote a short time ago.

On the one hand, the Communist Political Assn. felt that I had not been entirely fair with them. On the other hand, I have been sent words of praise by some people who, whenever they differ with anyone, decide that that person should be labeled a communist, and who are also afraid of our association with the USSR.

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I want to make it absolutely clear that my whole desire in writing this column on the American Communists was to show how it is possible to work with the USSR and the people of that great country, and why we need have no fear of them. Those of us who take the trouble to understand it know what Communism in Russia is. We also know that any leader, no matter how powerful, has to listen to the people with whom he works. While for obvious reasons the people of Russia are still largely dictated to by their leaders, they have objectives and opportunities for growth in freedom, just as we had when we wrote our Constitution.

We have not quite attained the objectives which we wrote into our Constitution, but they are there as standards by which we measure our success. No one has any doubt of what our government is. No one need have any doubt as to what the government of the USSR is today, nor as to the hopes and aims of its people. We may not agree with those aims or methods, but we need not fear what we know.

I, for one, think democracy better than Communism if the people exercise their power. Nevertheless, I feel we can co-operate with the USSR and its people, just as we do with other nations.

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I hope the Communist Political Assn. will forgive me if I am frank with them. What I object to in the American Communists is not their open membership, nor even their published objectives. For years, in this country, they taught the philosophy of the lie. They taught that allegiance to the party and acceptance of orders from party heads, whose interests were not just those of the United States, were paramount.

I happen to believe that anyone has a right to be a Communist, to advocate his beliefs peacefully and accept the consequences. A Communist here will be—quite rightly it seems to me—under certain disadvantages. He will not be put into positions of leadership. I do not believe that he should be prevented from holding his views and earning a livelihood.

But because I have experienced the deception of the American Communists, I will not trust them. That is what I mean when I said that I did not think the people of this country would tolerate the type of American Communists who say one thing and do another.

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