The Hysterical Radio Campaign To Save Mindszenty's Skin

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By Bob Lauter

THE CAMPAIGN which radio is now conducting to intervene in the affairs of Hungary in the matter of the trial of Josef Cardinal Mindszenty is neither convincing nor level-headed. It makes no such pretenses. It is a loud, raucous, hysterical campaign which is based on an appeal to prejudice and not to reason.

On Sunday a network (Mutual) carried the address of Frances Cardinal Spellman. Commentators have argued the most fantastic explanations for Mindzsenty's confession. And on Monday morning, Anna Roosevelt, on the Eleanor and Anna Roosevelt program (10:45 WJZ), added her comments.

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ANNA ROOSEVELT began by stating that the trial of the Cardinal is not a religious issue. I thought it was high time someone said that, and I waited expectantly for a few objective remarks. They were not forthcoming. The rest of her talk was right out of the Hearst press, and Anna Roosevelt will have to forgive me if I point out that she used a particularly dishonest form of reporting.

Her system was to cite a long list of rumors. The Cardinal's will had been broken. He had been tortured. He had been made to stand upright for 82 hours. He was shown the bloody bodies of other victims of torture. He was drugged. His confession is not to be taken seriously.

After devoting the major part of her report to these tidbits from the garbage pail of anti-Communism, she slipped in the statement, "Of course, these are only reports and it is difficult to learn the truth. . . ." This is known as reporter's insurance. You inflame people with the most fantastic rumors, and then cover yourself with a vague admission, slipped in somewhere, that all of what you have been saying is not exactly gospel. Antics such as these go by the name of "integrity" with radio reporters. I have a shorter and more accurate name for them.

O, yes. With a remarkably convenient lapse of memory, she characterized the trial as part of a "diabolic pattern" dating back to the "so-called purge trials" in the Soviet Union. Doesn't Anna Roosevelt recall that even such a professional anti-Sovieteer as Winston Churchill has long since admitted that those trials uncovered treason and made a significant contribution to the winning of the war?

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THE RADIO CAMPAIGN to save Mindszenty's skin, like the press campaign, raises some interesting questions. I recall no such concerted campaign on the part of the networks to free Tom Mooney. I can not for the life of me name a commentator who rushed with similar fervor to speak up in behalf of the Scottsboro boys when they were framed. And isn't it strange that Anna Roosevelt's vociferous concern for the state of justice in Budapest does not extend to Trenton, N. J., where six Negroes are standing trial for a murder they did not commit?

The radio is not primarily concerned with saving Cardinal Mindszenty. Its campaign is the campaign to preserve the right of imperialist intervention in the affairs of Hungary.

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