Let's Face It

MRS. ROOSEVELT DISAGREES

by Max Gordon

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT WAS the top liberal figure at the conference that organized the Americans for Democratic Action in Washington over the Jan. 4 weekend.

But when it was all over she did not become a member of the outfit's organizing committee.

A lot of secrecy surrounded the conference, which was "off-the-record," and my picture of it is somewhat blurred. But Mrs. Roosevelt's World-Telegram column last Saturday suggests all was not peace and harmony, and may be the clue as to why she turned down the organizing committee's offer.

In her column, the former first lady challenges a speech made at the conference by Louis Fischer, one of Social-Democrat David Dubinsky's inner circle, in which Fischer said that fascism and communism are identical, and that when you fight fascism you also fight communism.

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MRS. ROOSEVELT quite properly infers that the speech means that Louis Fischer does not believe the Soviet Union and the United States can live at peace with each other and respect each other's independence.

She is against him on that and, in fact, rejects the whole idea behind the ADA, as expressed in its statement of purpose. The ADA classes communism with fascism and claims both have to be fought equally.

Here is the key paragraph in Mrs. Roosevelt's column, and it is a mighty important one, too:

"We who believe that, so far, democracy is the best form of self-government nevertheless recognize that it is not static and changes must come. I think we can see the possibilities of improved cooperation between the communism of the left and the democracy of the center, but there can be no cooperation at any point, at any time, between democracy and the fascism of the right."

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MRS. ROOSEVELT writes that she read Lerner's editorial on the subject "with interest," but comments directly only on the part in which Lerner says there is a world of difference between communism and fascism.

I disagree intensely with some things Mrs. Roosevelt says in that column, as, for instance, when she insists that are many similarities between "the two totalitarian systems."

She also sees great differences, maintains she is not convinced she knows what those differences are, and then proceeds to list a couple of pretty important ones.

I think she is seriously mistaken when she sees "many similarities" between communism ad fascism and we will have to argue further with her on that.

But the point is that people can be mistaken on that issue, can continue to argue it out, and can still cooperate right now in a single progressive movement which will fight like blazes to block those who are trying to drag us into a war, to smash up the unions, to wreck the programs of the New Deal, and to get set for the destruction of democracy altogether.

Considering what we are up against in the country today, this cooperation is not only something we CAN bring about, but MUST if we are to get anywhere.

MRS. ROOSEVELT'S difference with Louis Fischer for his point of view, points to the heart of the unnatural alliance between Social Democrats and liberals within the Americans for Democratic Action.

The great majority of the liberals believe that world cooperation for peace is necessary and possible. They want to work for it against the American species of Churchill.

But not so the Social Democrats. I am reminded, for instance, of Dubinsky's notorious statement at the height of the war in early 1943, when at a Workmen's Circle convention he publicly declared that Nathan Chanin, Workmen's Circle president, spoke also for him when Chanin said:

"The last shot has not been fired. It will be fired from free America—and from that shot, the Stalin regime, too, will be shot to pieces."

Does Dubinsky think that way today? Read the resolutions of the AFL convention, where he masterminded foreign policy, and the New Leader, weekly organ of his Social Democrats!

Yet Dubinsky and several of his close political pals are members of the ADA organizing committee, along with some earnest liberals.

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