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A NEW DEAL FOR THE WORLD: ELEANOR ROOSEVELT
AND AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY, 1920-1962.

CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, PH.D., 1979

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1979

A NEW DEAL FOR THE WORLD:
ELEANOR ROOSEVELT
AND AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY
1920-1962

by

JASON BERGER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate
Faculty in History in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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1979

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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INTRODUCTION

Eleanor Roosevelt made her first public statement on foreign policy during the 1920 election. As wife of the Democratic party's candidate for Vice President, Mrs. Roosevelt said that it was essential for the United States to enter the League of Nations. Subsequently, as a leader of the women's peace movement, First Lady, columnist, United Nations ambassador, radio and television hostess, and prominent liberal, Eleanor Roosevelt continued to comment on the direction of American foreign policy. This dissertation examines this often neglected aspect of her public life.

When in the White House, Mrs. Roosevelt played an important role in the peace movement. Although she had developed a close relationship with many pacifists, Eleanor Roosevelt tried to make them aware that the United States must, if necessary, fight to defeat fascism. She defended her husband's preparedness and aid to Great Britain policies. In addition, she played an important role in efforts to save the lives of Jewish refugees. During World War II Mrs. Roosevelt was one of the leading liberals who advocated "A New Deal for the World."

Following the death of her husband, President Truman appointed Eleanor Roosevelt a member of the United States delegation to the United Nations General Assembly. As probably the most popular American representative, she

participated in the 1946-1948 refugee debates and defended displaced people's right to political and religious asylum. As chairman of the United Nations Human Rights Commission, she made a significant contribution to the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

During the Truman era, Eleanor Roosevelt reluctantly recognized the need for the containment of the Soviet Union. Although she distrusted the military aspects of the policy, she supported N.A.T.O. and the Korean War, but always believed that economic aid was the wiser method to defeat communism. In the 1948 campaign, she defended Truman from attacks by Henry Wallace and Thomas Dewey. She also emerged as one of the leading liberal critics of McCarthyism.

When Eisenhower became President, Eleanor Roosevelt, for the first time since the 1920s, found herself in opposition to the administration's foreign policy. She accused Eisenhower and Dulles of ignoring Adlai Stevenson's advice that "a full belly is a better obstacle to communism than a bayonet." Against the administration's emphasis on forming regional alliances, arming conservative governments, and threatening "massive retaliation," Eleanor Roosevelt astutely warned that such policies would not win Third World peasants and workers to the side of democracy. She further criticized the administration for equating neutralism with pro-Communism. Such an attitude, she believed, weakened the United States' position in the Third World. During the 1956 presidential election, Mrs. Roosevelt accused Dulles of

mishandling the Suez crisis. She found it inconceivable that Washington should have sided with the Soviet Union in opposing Israel's right to self-defense and the right of Great Britain and France to operate the Suez Canal.

With John Kennedy as President, Eleanor Roosevelt continued to comment on foreign policy, focusing on issues which she had been long identified with: nuclear disarmament, foreign aid, and support of the United Nations.

CHAPTER I

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT AND PACIFISM

1920 to 1938

Eleanor Roosevelt was born in New York City on October 11, 1884. When she was eight years old, her mother died; less than two years later, her father passed away. Brought up by her maternal grandmother and aunt in New York City, Eleanor Roosevelt received her primary education from tutors. Frequently she spent time with her father's brother, Theodore Roosevelt, at his Long Island summer home.

In the summer of 1899, at the age of 15, Eleanor Roosevelt left New York to attend Allenswood, a London finishing school. For three years, she studied history, languages, and literature. In her autobiography, Mrs. Roosevelt recalled hearing the school's controversial headmistress, Mlle. Souvestre, deplore the British conduct in the Boer War. Such sessions, she recalled, increased her sympathy for the underdog and broadened her intellectual horizons.

After returning to New York City in the summer of 1902, Eleanor Roosevelt taught immigrant children at the Rivington Street Settlement House.¹ Perhaps in this settlement house Mrs. Roosevelt discovered the relationship between this unique American social institution and the struggle for world peace. Jane Addams made such a connection in Peace, Bread, and War. She recalled why (in 1915) social workers met at the Henry

¹Joseph P. Lash, Eleanor and Franklin (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1971), Chapters 1-8.

Street settlement house to protest the outbreak of war in Europe:

All of us, through long experience were convinced that a friendly and cooperative relationship was constantly becoming more possible between all peoples. We believed that war, seeking its end through coercion not only interrupted but fatally reversed this process of cooperating good will which, if it had a chance would eventually include the human family itself.

Lillian Wald, the meeting's host, agreed:

. . . we on Henry Street have become internationalists, not through the written word or through abstract theses, but because we have found that the problems of one set of people are essentially the problems of all. We have found that the things which make men alike are finer than the things which make them different, and that the vision which long since proclaimed the interdependence and the kinship of mankind was farsighted and true.²

After marrying Franklin Roosevelt in 1905, Eleanor Roosevelt left the settlement house to be his "Proper Victorian" wife. The Roosevelts moved to Washington in 1913 when her husband was appointed Assistant Secretary of the Navy. With the outbreak of war, Eleanor Roosevelt sympathized with the pro-British position of her husband and uncle but she secretly admired Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan's pacifism. She was, as she admitted in her

²Jane Addams, Newer Ideals On Peace (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1906), pp. 11-23; Lillian Wald, Windows On Henry Street (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1934), p. 337.

autobiography, one of the few in Washington who did not ridicule him for having given miniature plowshares as gifts. After hearing President Wilson deliver his war message to congress on April 2, 1917, Eleanor Roosevelt returned "home still half dazed by the sense of impending change."

When the U.S. entered the war, Eleanor Roosevelt worked as a Red Cross volunteer at a military hospital in Washington. After the Armistice she accompanied her husband on a trip to Europe where she visited a number of hospitals and battlefields. The scene of human suffering and devastation intensified her hatred of war. In the only interview she granted during her husband's 1920 campaign for the vice presidency, Eleanor Roosevelt stressed the necessity of United States participation in the League of Nations.³

After Franklin Roosevelt contracted polio in the summer of 1921, his wife became, in the words of her major biographer, Joseph Lash, "her husband's stand-in." As a member of the women's division of the Democratic party, Eleanor Roosevelt supported Governor Al Smith's reelection campaigns and his bids in 1924 and 1928 for the presidency. She befriended Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman, two Democratic Party organizers who had previously been suffragettes. Eleanor Roosevelt also joined the League of Women Voters, where she worked with Carrie Chapman Catt, the organization's founder, and Esther Lape.⁴

³Joseph P. Lash, Eleanor and Franklin (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1971), Chapters 8, 9, 19, 20, 24.

⁴Ibid., chapters 27, 28, 29.

In the summer of 1923, Edward Bok, the publisher of the Ladies Home Journal, appointed Lape, assisted by Eleanor Roosevelt, to administer his \$100,000 contest for the best practical peace plan. Mrs. Roosevelt formally announced in the October issue of the Ladies Home Journal that half of the money would go to the winner, chosen by a jury of distinguished Americans; the other half would be awarded if the Senate ratified the proposal or if a large enough percentage of the population approved it in a referendum. Deferring to Bok's intention to avoid partisan politics, she barred any plan that recommended joining the League of Nations. Mrs. Roosevelt warned those who

have seemed to get the idea that in making this award Mr. Bok thought we would buy, as it were, a chemical formula that, rightly used, would immediately produce peace. Of course, we know that no formula, no plan, no one idea, no one mechanism of association among nations will immediately procure peace. The award is not an attempt to "buy" a road to world peace for one hundred thousand dollars. All that the offer of the award can do is to create a new avenue through which plans can be offered for public consideration.⁵

The American Peace Award headquarters in New York received over twenty thousand entries. Having sorted out nearly fourteen thousand deemed "generally ineligible," Mrs. Roosevelt,

⁵Eleanor Roosevelt, "The American Peace Award," Ladies Home Journal 40 (October, 1923), p. 54; Charles DeBenedetti, "The \$100,000 American Peace Award of 1924," The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 98 (April, 1974), pp. 224-225.

Miss Lape, and college volunteers then classified the remainder according to emphasis--political, economic, and educational--and selected the hundred best for consideration by a jury headed by Colonel House.⁶

On January 7, 1924, Bok presented his peace prize to Charles Levermore, the retired president of Adelphi College. He recommended that the United States cooperate with the League of Nations' social and technical agencies, enter the World Court, and accept the League only "as an instrument of mutual counsel." Mrs. Roosevelt's policy committee then mailed out nine million ballots and arranged with newspapers and magazines, with a collective readership of thirty-three million, to publish the plan and the ballot for the national referendum.⁷

The referendum soon encountered serious opposition. William Borah, a Republican isolationist leader in the Senate, denounced it as a "sinister" ruse to entangle the nation in the League's affairs. Democratic Senator James Reed's Special Committee on Propaganda investigated the contest. Miss Lape testified that she, Mrs. Roosevelt and Mrs. Frank Vanderlip had selected the policy committee's members. The isolationist New York Herald ran as its headline "THREE WOMEN ENGINEER BOK PEACE PRIZE CONTEST" and reported that the contest

⁶DeBenedetti, "The \$100,000 American Peace Award of 1924," pp. 230-237; American Peace Award Correspondence, Box 1, Women's International League For Peace and Freedom Papers, Swarthmore College Peace Collection (cited hereafter as S.C.P.C.), Swarthmore, Pa.

⁷DeBenedetti, "The \$100,000 American Peace Award of 1924," pp. 238-240.

"was managed by two matrons of social distinction and a highly educated and most efficient young woman."⁸

In March of 1924 Mrs. Roosevelt and Miss Lape lobbied in Washington for the Levermore peace plan. They found the Democratic senators willing to praise the program but not to commit themselves further. "They have so little courage," Eleanor Roosevelt wrote her husband, "they agree their private views are met but the party isn't for it."⁹

In spite of the failure of the peace award contest, Eleanor Roosevelt remained active in internationalist causes. She presented her early thoughts on peace to the 1924 National Conference on the Cause and Cure of War. In representing the Federation of Women's Clubs, Eleanor Roosevelt questioned whether war could be morally justified:

I do not quite see why there should be any such thing as a righteous war. Therefore it seems to me that, granting that we had a law, and that a nation broke that law, granting that a weaker nation was wrongfully attacked, why could there not be some form of legal redress under the League of Nations or Court and why can it not be treated eventually in some way, in just the way that we treat murder or any other crime?¹⁰

Eleanor Roosevelt therefore enthusiastically supported the American entry into the World Court. She assisted Esther Lape in organizing the American Foundation, a leading World

⁸Ibid., pp. 240-249; Lash, Eleanor and Franklin, pp. 283-285.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰The World Tomorrow, 22 February, 1933, pp. 182-183, National Committee on the Cause and Cure of War Papers, Box 3, S.C.P.C.; New York Times, 22 January, 1925.

Court organization. In November of 1925, she held at her home a reception for World Court supporters and then spoke to a local womens' club meeting on the court issue. "Cannot the women rise to this great opportunity and work now," Eleanor Roosevelt asked, "and not have the double horror, if another war comes, of losing their loved ones, knowing that they lifted no finger when they might have worked hard?" Eleanor Roosevelt wisely advised those present to have an open mind, to "grasp anything which is a step forward, not hold out for our particular ultimate panacea."¹¹

Campaigning for Al Smith in 1928, Mrs. Roosevelt commented on the outlawing of war, an issue that had captured the internationalists' imagination. Although she welcomed the Kellogg Briand Pact, she recognized that the treaty's weakness lay in "the evident inability to name any constructive way in which these treaties may function." This realistic assessment of the treaty, as did her opposition to unilateral disarmament, separated Mrs. Roosevelt from the utopians in the peace movement. "None of us believe that the United States can disarm alone," she said in 1931, "as much as we would like to see the burden of taxation lifted. Nations must come together, not in fear, but in trust, step by step the world may be led to settle disputes in a more civilized manner."¹²

¹¹New York Times, 25 November, 1925; Lash, Eleanor and Franklin, pp. 285-286.

¹²1928 Campaign Speeches File, Box 3022, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York; New York Times, 22 November, 1931.

When Franklin D. Roosevelt was governor of New York from 1929 to early 1933, his wife advocated American entry into the League of Nations and the World Court. In order not to offend the isolationists, F.D.R. avoided taking a position on these issues. In his 1932 campaign he further capitulated to the isolationists when he announced his opposition to joining the League, a decision which upset his wife and her Wilsonian friends. This conflict between principle and expediency foreshadows the difficulties Mrs. Roosevelt would face as "First Lady." In the words of Joseph Lash, "Franklin was the politician, she the agitator."¹³

II

On May 3, 1935, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom sponsored a radio broadcast honoring Jane Addams. In her speech, Eleanor Roosevelt praised the revered social worker for "making women conscious of their interest in peace." In contrast to men who destroy, Jane Addams had said, women create and nurture life. Therefore, for biological and sociological reasons, women had to oppose war.¹⁴

¹³Lash, Eleanor and Franklin, pp. 346-348.

¹⁴Broadcast honoring Jane Addams, Women's International League of Peace and Freedom Papers, S.C.P.C. For good treatments of Jane Addams and her "feminist" peace ideology see Marie Louise Degen, The History of The Woman's Peace Party [rpt. 1939 ed.] (New York: Burt Franklin Reprints, 1974); John C. Farrell, Beloved Lady: A History of Jane Addam's Ideas on Reform and Peace (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1967); Allen F. Davis, American Heroine: The Life and Legend of Jane

When in the White House, Eleanor Roosevelt replaced Jane Addams as the most visible leader of the women's peace movement.¹⁵ Women, Mrs. Roosevelt also suggested in 1935,

Addams (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973); Jane Addams discussed her ideas of peace in Newer Ideals of Peace (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1906) and Peace and Bread in Time of War (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1922). The best example of Jane Addams' thoughts on peace can be found in the platform of the Women's Peace Party which she, along with Carrie Chapman Catt, and two European pacifists, Rosika Schwimmer and Emmeline Pethick Lawrence helped draft in 1915:

As women, we feel a peculiar moral passion or revolt against both the cruelty and the waste of war.

As women, we are especially the custodians of the life of the ages. We will not longer consent to its reckless destruction.

As women, we are particularly charged with the future of childhood and with the care of the helpless and the unfortunate. We will not longer endure without protest that added burden of maimed and invalid men and poverty stricken widows and orphans which war places upon us.

As women, we have builded by the patient drudgery of the past the basic foundation of the home and of peaceful industry. We will not longer endure without a protest that must be heard and heeded by men, that hoary evil which in an hour destroys the social structure that centuries of toil have reared.

As women, we are called upon to start each generation onward toward a better humanity. We will not longer tolerate without determined opposition that denial of the sovereignty of reason and justice by which war and all that makes for war today render impotent the idealism of the race.

(Addresses given at the Organization Conference of the Women's Peace Party, Washington, D.C., January 10, 1915; Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Papers (Box 5), S.C.P.C.).

¹⁵Even before becoming First Lady, Mrs. Roosevelt stressed the women's peace theme. In 1930 she called on women to become more active in international affairs. Men, she observed, will always approach peace through the conventional diplomatic channels. The woman's approach is different; it "is particularly in education and a change in the hearts of men." Such a

possessed special qualities that made it natural for them to work for peace:

We women who have intuition, who have tact, who are accustomed to using thoughtfulness for others in the daily affairs of life, should transfer that skill to a larger field and see if we cannot bring about a better understanding in our own nation in regard to the troubles of other nations, and the things that they are up against. We can set our own house in order and remove the troubles that we have at home which tend for differences of opinion amongst ourselves, realizing that that same thing may be going on in other countries and that therefore we must show the same consideration and understanding to them that we hope they will show to us.¹⁶

Only women, Eleanor Roosevelt told a 1937 radio audience, could be trusted to lead a peace crusade because

Men are conscious of the fact that for generations it has been considered necessary for them to be willing to die for their country, and they have responded over and over again to this patriotic appeal, therefore they feel the cause of peace smacks somewhat of cowardice. They do not always realize that the changes which have come to the world make it necessary, if we wish our civilization to survive, to put an end to war at once.¹⁷

mission, Eleanor Roosevelt proclaimed, is "political work" for every woman, regardless of party.

The following year, in an Atlanta speech, Mrs. Roosevelt expressed little faith that men could be trusted to work for peace. "Any successful crusade against it," she foresaw, "must be conducted by the women of all countries." (Eleanor Roosevelt, "Women in Politics," [The City Club of New York] The Quarterly, January 1930, p. 7; New York Times, 22 November, 1931).

¹⁶Delegates Worksheet, Conference on the Cause and Cure of War, 1935, National Conference on the Cause and Cure of War Papers (henceforth cited as N.C.C.C.W. Papers), S.C.P.C.

¹⁷Radio Address by Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt launching the No-Foreign-War Crusade, April 6, 1937, Emergency Peace Campaign Papers, S.C.P.C.

Eleanor Roosevelt promised that when enough women decided to work for peace wars would cease because "a woman's will is the strongest thing in the world."¹⁸

Jane Addams and Eleanor Roosevelt urged women to resist the glorification of war and the military by American culture. During the Spanish American War Jane Addams had recalled children "playing war . . . In no instance . . . were they 'freeing Cubans' but with violence characteristic of their age they were slaying Spaniards . . . The predatory spirit is so near the surface in human nature that the spectacle of war has been a great setback to the development of civilization."¹⁹ Eleanor Roosevelt expressed similar thoughts in a 1933 article on children's war toys.

Very often we sow the seeds in youth for an interest which will later engross the man or woman. I do not believe that every little boy who plays with soldiers and stages his battles and shoots the opposition army with peas is going to be an ardent militarist. But I do believe that the glamour of the gorgeously dressed toy soldiers and variegated toy armies with different uniforms and cavalry and artillery bands will somehow create in the boy's mind an excitement which will carry over into manhood and may lead him, when he hears the military band play and sees uniforms and hears the rhythmic tramp of marching feet through the streets, to desire to join them.²⁰

¹⁸Delegates Worksheet, 1935 Conference on the Cause and Cure of War, N.C.C.C.W. Papers, S.C.P.C.

¹⁹Davis, American Heroine, p. 140.

²⁰New York Times, 19 December 1933. In a radio broadcast in 1934 Eleanor Roosevelt noted that the Germans produced "the most remarkable toy soldiers." "Children play not for pleasure, but to win at all costs; many even cheat," Mrs.

Throughout their careers, both Jane Addams and Eleanor Roosevelt searched for, in the words of William James, "a moral equivalent of war." "Perhaps our very hope that these substitutes may be discovered," Miss Addams had written in 1906,

has become the custodian of a secret change that is going on all about us. We care less each day for the heroism connected with warfare and destruction and constantly admire more that which pertains to labor and the nourishing of human life. The new heroism manifests itself at the present moment in a universal determination to abolish poverty and disease, a manifestation so widespread that it may justly be called international.²¹

Eleanor Roosevelt entitled her version of the New Heroism the "New Patriotism." "It was [the] idea of serving that made war the great patriotic gesture," she said in January 1934. "It was a feeling that you were serving in the finest way possible." In words echoing Jane Addams, Eleanor Roosevelt

Roosevelt told the same audience. Although such fighting is considered "preparation for the business world, it hardly makes one considerate of others." (New York Times, 12 November, 1934).

Four years later Mrs. Roosevelt wrote in My Day: "My small grandson was playing with some soldiers and suddenly, without any prompting, he looked at me and said: 'I don't like to play war but I love to make parades.' A little while ago, when he was listening to a conversation about war he remarked: 'War kills people with gases and things of that sort, but I like to play with soldiers and they don't have to be hurt.'"

I wonder if it isn't more important to guide children in their thinking than it is to worry about the toys they have. He has already learned that there are different uses to which you can put an army. He likes a parade and he doesn't like what he has heard about war. Perhaps some day we will all think of armies as police forces to preserve the peace of the world, and then they will become that instead of forces for aggression." [My Day, March 23, 1938.]

²¹Addams, Newer Ideals of Peace, pp. 23-24.

added, "Something has to be substituted for that feeling" A year later, Eleanor Roosevelt repeated this message: "We must find a substitute for war. War, while it goes on, appeals to the idealism of youth; it furnishes certain things which youth crave. We must find a substitute."²²

The New Patriotism offered the youth of America the opportunity to serve their nation in peacetime pursuits. "It is just as patriotic and just as self-sacrificing," Eleanor Roosevelt told a late December 1933 White House gathering of pacifist students, "to live in one's country and make it a help to the world and to all people in it." Mrs. Roosevelt urged toymakers to "turn their attention from tin soldiers, cannon, tanks, battleships and other warlike toys and make instead armies of foresters and farmers and mills with modern workmen."²³

III

In response to the disillusionment following World War I, the peace movement became an important voice in American politics. The leading anti-war organizations tried to mobilize the American people to work for peace. Carrie Chapman Catt's National Conference on the Cause and Cure of War held an annual conference to educate its participants to work for

²²Delegates Worksheet, 1935 Conference on the Cause and Cure of War, N.C.C. W. Papers, S.C.P.C.; Eleanor Roosevelt, Speech to the Progressive Education Association, November 25, 1934, Box 3027, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

²³New York Times, 19, 29 December, 1933.

peace. The militant Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, led by Dorothy Detzer, and Jeanette Rankin's and Frederick Libby's National Council for the Prevention of War, pressed for neutrality legislation, disarmament, and free trade. The Fellowship of Reconciliation and the War Resister's League represented religious and ethical pacifism. As the world teetered on the brink of war, the peace forces assumed more of an isolationist character. Originally these groups called themselves internationalists as their program was an appeal for world cooperation. But they soon opposed proposals that the United States join with other nations to resist fascist aggression in Europe and the Japanese invasion of China.

In essentially agreeing with the substance of the peace movement's program, Mrs. Roosevelt participated in their anti-war rallies, attended their conventions, and spoke on their peace broadcasts. My Day publicized the peace groups' activities. Mrs. Roosevelt contributed a chapter to Carrie Chapman Catt's book Why Wars Must Cease (1935), and also wrote This Troubled World (1938); both works focused on the necessity to abolish war.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, on the other hand, avoided being identified with the peace movement. He opposed unilateral disarmament, questioned the effectiveness of neutrality legislation, and was reluctant to press for American entry into the World Court.

The Senate's isolationist bloc had thus far prevented

the U.S. from joining the World Court. Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes, supported by President Harding, introduced a number of reservations to the World Court treaty designed to preserve American sovereignty. This did not satisfy the isolationists, who successfully persuaded Harding to retreat on the issue. In 1924 both parties endorsed World Court treaties in their platforms. President Coolidge then submitted the treaty to the Senate. After the Senate added a number of crippling reservations to the treaty, President Coolidge recalled the document. In 1929 Elihu Root negotiated in Geneva a plan whereby the United States could object to a decision and, if the court overrode the American protest, could withdraw. Fearing isolationist opposition to the Root formula, President Hoover refused to submit the modified treaty to the Senate. In 1932 both parties again endorsed entry into the court. Internationalists then placed pressure on Roosevelt to fulfill his platform pledge. At one of her earliest press conferences, his own wife called for the ratification of the treaty. Franklin D. Roosevelt assured her and Esther Lape that he would submit the court treaty to the 1934 Senate session.²⁴

Roosevelt could not carry out his promise. In December 1933 he requested that his wife inform Esther Lape that "politically speaking and judging by the present time, it would be unwise to do anything about the World Court."²⁵

²⁴Selig Adler, The Uncertain Giant, 1921-1941: American Foreign Policy Between the Wars (New York: The Free Press, 1967), pp. 84-87, 157-158; Lash, Eleanor and Franklin, pp. 556-557.

²⁵Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, pp. 556-557.

His reluctance to enter into a conflict with the Senate isolationists did not deter the Senate Foreign Relations Committee from holding its own World Court hearings. The committee's Democratic majority recommended entry. Roosevelt then asked the Senate on January 16, 1935 to "throw its weight into the scale in favor of peace" by ratifying the treaty. In response, the isolationists, led by Hiram Johnson and William Borah, portrayed the treaty as an insidious trick to ensnare the United States in world affairs. William R. Hearst, Will Rogers, and Father Coughlin urged their respective audiences to flood the Senate with anti-court letters. Esther Lape frantically requested Mrs. Roosevelt to speak out for the Court in order to offset this surge of isolationist sentiment.²⁶

Two days before the Senate vote, Eleanor Roosevelt, not F.D.R., delivered a radio address for ratification. She reminded her listeners that the treaty contained an "optional clause" forbidding the consideration of any question without American consent. "It seems to me," she continued,

that we, the strongest nation in the world, cannot be afraid to take this step, to make this gesture in an effort to have questions settled by law and not by war. Is it really the spirit of our country's men and women, young and old, that they are afraid to join the World Court?

She concluded with an appeal to the women of her generation whose memories of suffering from the past war, she hoped,

²⁶Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Age of Roosevelt: The Politics of Upheaval, 1935-1936 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1966), pp. 4-5; Lash, Eleanor and Franklin, pp. 557-558.

would lead to the treaty's ratification.²⁷

Eleanor Roosevelt's address unleashed a last minute torrent of pro-World Court telegrams. Yet the Senate, on January 29, 1935, failed to ratify the treaty by seven votes. Mrs. Roosevelt wrote Esther Lape, "It is discouraging that Mr. Hearst and Father Coughlin can influence the country in the way that they do, but that is that."²⁸

Over a year later the American Friends Service Committee launched its Emergency Peace Campaign in association with other anti-war organizations. The Campaign's activities included special radio shows, peace caravans, anti-war rallies, youth peace camps, and massive literature and leaflet distribution. Eleanor Roosevelt consented to deliver an E.P.C. sponsored radio speech on April 21, 1936, with the noted British pacifist George Lansbury.²⁹ This decision proved controversial. The E.P.C. legislative platform called for disarmament, a rigid neutrality law, and the support of the Ludlow Amendment, a program her husband opposed.³⁰

James Farley received a letter from an irate Indiana

²⁷Stenographic report of address made by Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt over the N.B.C. network, Sunday night, January 27, 1935. Box 3030, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

²⁸Lash, Eleanor and Franklin, p. 559.

²⁹Press Releases March 10, April 6, 1936, Emergency Peace Campaign Papers (henceforth cited as E.P.C.), Box 5, S.C.P.C.; Frederick J. Libby, To End War: The Start of the National Council For the Prevention of War (New York: Fellowship Publications, 1969), pp. 122-125.

³⁰E.P.C. Legislative Program, 1936, E.P.C. Papers, Box 5, S.C.P.C.

woman Democrat charging that by getting involved in the campaign, Mrs. Roosevelt was "agitating college students" and "advocating . . . Communistic programs." The letter also revealed an anti-Quaker bias. Mrs. Roosevelt responded to her critic:

I am not agitating college students, neither am I advocating any Communistic program. I am afraid you do not know a good deal about the Quakers. They served as stretcher bearers in the war and were in the trenches with the wounded, and never back of the firing lines, and when the war was over they helped to rebuild what their conscience and their religion would not allow them to destroy.

She explained that she could differ with the organization but still cooperate in a general drive for peace:

The peace drive is a coming together of all organizations interested in peace to promote the spirit in this country. All those who speak and who work for peace do not agree exactly as to the way in which peace shall be obtained. I happen to believe that adequate armament for defense is necessary. Others may not; but I can join in any demonstration, at least, which has as its object the will for peace.³¹

Felix Frankfurter also questioned Eleanor Roosevelt's involvement in the peace mobilization. He asked Missey Le Hand to warn the President that his wife's sharing of the podium with Lansbury might be a

dangerous enterprise. The Hearst press and others will pervert it, on the score of a pacifist labor leader butting in to hamper

³¹Eleanor Roosevelt to Mabel C. Schillinger, April 22, 1936, Box 1403, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

The American movement of defence, etc. If I were the Roosevelts, I should look hard at everything coming from the other side with strict relevance to the re-election; and the more so as the present positions of England and the USA are so widely different.³²

Roosevelt sent the letter to his wife for her comment. Mrs. Roosevelt informed Frankfurter that, although she opposed many positions of the Emergency Peace Campaign,

I am responsible for my opinions only and they have accepted those . . . What Mr. Hearst says or does not say seems to me to matter very little. Whatever he has to say has already been said, and so, though I appreciate your correspondent's concern, will you kindly tell him we will take our medicine and go on doing what things we want to do. The President will not be elected or defeated on anything I do.³³

Writing the April 21 speech proved difficult. Clarence Pickett, executive secretary of the American Friends Service Committee, provided the first draft. Franklin D. Roosevelt then revised it to bring it in line with administration policy. The opening sentence originally read, "I am glad to take part in the Emergency Peace Campaign which has as its great purpose-- keeping the United States out of war." The President added: "while at the same time maintaining reasonable defense for the nation." Both drafts included a recitation of the administration's contributions to peace. The President left in

³²Felix Frankfurter to Marguerite Le Hand, April 14, 1936, Box 1379, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

³³Eleanor Roosevelt to Felix Frankfurter, April 18, 1936; Felix Frankfurter to Eleanor Roosevelt, April 21, 1936; Eleanor Roosevelt to Felix Frankfurter, April 30, 1936; op. cit.

"We have pledged ourselves to build up our naval defenses only to treaty strength," but inserted "as long as treaties are operative." Roosevelt struck from the text a criticism of the Treaty of Versailles.³⁴ Mrs. Roosevelt did not personally deliver the April radio address. Clarence Pickett's April 21, 1936 entry in his journal stated that he heard the speech read on radio by Hannah Clothier Hull of W.I.L.P.F. Frederick Libby of the N.C.P.W. confirmed this in his autobiography. Perhaps at the last moment, Mrs. Roosevelt heeded Frankfurter's advice not to share the platform with Lansbury.³⁵

³⁴Lash, Eleanor and Franklin, p. 563; drafts of original and corrected speech, Box 3033, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

³⁵Jack Sutters of the American Friends Service Committee sent the author the following on October 7, 1977:

It just occurred to me to look through Clarence Pickett's day journal to see what he might say regarding Mrs. Roosevelt's part in the radio broadcast. The only mention he makes is the following: "The Harveys and I dropped out during the evening at ten o'clock to hear the broadcast which started the Emergency Peace Campaign on its way. Hannah Clothier Hull read Mrs. Roosevelt's speech." This comes from Clarence E. Pickett's Journal, January to June 1936, and is contained in the entry for April 21, 1936; Libby, To End War, p. 123; the E.P.C. press release (to be released after 10:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 21), included the original draft of Mrs. Roosevelt's speech, not the corrected one by her husband which is in the Hyde Park library.

CHAPTER II
ELEANOR ROOSEVELT
VS.
ISOLATIONISM

In a 1934 letter, Eleanor Roosevelt defined herself as a "realistic pacifist."¹ From 1934 to 1938 she struggled to reconcile her pacifism with her fears of fascism. During this period Mrs. Roosevelt did not comment specifically on the rise of Hitler, the Italian conquest of Ethiopia, or Japanese aggression in China.² She did oppose unilateral disarmament and modified her position on neutrality legislation. This reveals that Mrs. Roosevelt was well aware that many of the proposals of the peace movement could not prevent war and would seriously weaken the U.S.

On October 9, 1935 Eleanor Roosevelt was the host of a nationwide radio broadcast entitled "Women Want Peace." Sponsored by the National Committee For the Prevention of War, the program featured speeches by the leading women peace advocates. In her opening address Mrs. Roosevelt linked the "Women Want Peace" theme to disarmament. Although flanked by a number of pacifists, Mrs. Roosevelt asserted that an "adequate defense is necessary as long as we cannot have

¹Eleanor Roosevelt to Lewis B. Chamberlin, February 19, 1934, Box 1289, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

²After a thorough check of My Day from 1936 to 1938 and the Article and Speech File in Hyde Park, I found very few references to these incidents. I suspect Eleanor Roosevelt purposely avoided commenting on specific foreign policy issues. She rather concentrated on working for peace as discussed in the previous chapter and such controversial questions as disarmament and neutrality legislation.

simultaneous reduction in armaments."³ A January 22, 1936 letter from Representative Jeanette Rankin sparked a lively exchange with Mrs. Roosevelt on this issue. In taking the position that governments, not people, cause wars, the congresswoman asked, "if you do not think that big navies cause the distrust between nations?" Eleanor Roosevelt replied,

I think that all armament does cause distrust between nations, but that disarmament must be international so that no one country leaves itself open to attack or invasion from another.

Miss Rankin agreed that the reduction of arms must be international but she inquired: "With the oceans protecting the United States is it not possible to protect our shores in such a way as to prevent invasion and do it with a greatly reduced navy?" Mrs. Roosevelt answered: "the sea is no longer a real barrier between nations."⁴

In This Troubled World, Mrs. Roosevelt questioned the idea that submarines and planes could protect the coasts. Such a defense program, she pointed out, would be "prohibitive in cost for a nation with a great many miles of borders to defend." The United States therefore needed a navy that

³For Release Thursday, October 10, 1935, Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt and Ten Famous Women Plead for Peace, Box 3030, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

⁴Jeanette Rankin to Eleanor Roosevelt, January 22, 1936; Eleanor Roosevelt to Jeanette Rankin, January 25, 1936; Jeanette Rankin to Eleanor Roosevelt, January 29, 1936; Eleanor Roosevelt to Jeanette Rankin, February 6, 1936, National Council For the Prevention of War Papers, S.C.P.C.

could keep an enemy far from American shores.⁵ In a February 15, 1938 speech, Eleanor Roosevelt added that the nation required an even stronger military force:

It is unfortunately true that we still live in a world where force is the only voice that carries conviction and weight with certain groups. I wish it was not so. I wish we lived in a world where reason and patience prevailed and that the money could be spent on other things. But now, today, it is undoubtedly necessary for us to have better equipment for self defense. Unless and until the strong nations of the world can agree to disarm, we must maintain our own forces; there is nothing else for us to do.⁶

The following day, Mrs. Roosevelt's isolationist congressman, Hamilton Fish said: "For many years she has represented the peace loving people of this country but I'm afraid today she's just another spokesman for the White House." Eleanor Roosevelt's peace appeals misled her representative. She always supported preparedness.⁷

Although Eleanor Roosevelt opposed unilateral disarmament, she originally supported the Neutrality Act of 1935. "Without the agitation and perseverance of the peace groups in this country," Mrs. Roosevelt wrote the pacifist leader John Holmes in 1935,

⁵Eleanor Roosevelt, This Troubled World (New York: H. C. Kinsey and Company, 1938), pp. 4-7.

⁶New York Times, 15 February, 1938.

⁷New York Times, 16 February, 1938.

Congress would never have passed the peace resolution of last year, but the passage of that resolution does not prevent individual congressmen and senators from coming to the President to try to have particular products of their district kept off any list which is considered "munitions of war."

This statement implies that she backed the peace activists' demand for a stricter law. Nevertheless, she soon recognized the difficulties of a rigid neutrality law. In a speech to the 1936 National Conference on the Cause and Cure of War, Eleanor Roosevelt warned her audience to reserve judgment on the neutrality issue:

The other day I read that a certain question had been asked of a group of people. They had been asked if they favored, when two nations went to war, the cutting off from our country of all supplies to belligerent nations. Now remember, all supplies to belligerent nations. Seventy percent of the answers said that they did favor the cutting off of all supplies. That is a very good illustration of the fact that questions are asked and answered very often without a real understanding of what the question implies and of what you mean when you say: "Yes" or "No."

The underlining of "all" in her draft suggests she desired to emphasize that the denial of supplies to victims of aggression could be an unwise as well as an unneutral act. The following year she again praised the neutrality law but did add: "I think that if we have a real desire to keep out of war, we will have to realize that our efforts for peace

must go a little deeper than negative gestures."⁸

Mrs. O. D. Oliphant, past president of the Women's Auxiliary of the American Legion called Eleanor Roosevelt "the number one pacifist in the land." Joseph Lash entitled his chapter on Eleanor Roosevelt's peace activities "From Pacifist to Anti-Fascist." If we use the Quaker definition of a pacifist, Mrs. Roosevelt hardly qualifies because she opposed unilateral disarmament. Perhaps Frances Perkins was more accurate when she described her friend "as near pacifist as one can be and still be a realist." Eleanor Roosevelt, herself, defined this in her June 19, 1937 My Day:

There seems no question to me that being a pacifist means that you do not seek a fight, that you use every means in your power to prevent a fight, and that this includes giving all the assistance you possibly can short of military assistance to other nations that are honestly trying to keep out of war. It also means you do not try to impose your opinions on other people nor force them to grant you anything they do not wish to grant. But if war comes to your own country, then even pacifists, it seems to me, must stand up and fight for their beliefs.⁹

⁸Eleanor Roosevelt to John Haynes Holmes, October 23, 1935, Box 1342; Speech, N.C.C.C.W., 1936 Conference, Box 3034, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers; Speeches 1936, 1937, E.P.C., E.P.C. Papers, S.C.P.C.; My Day, 30 December 1936, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers. The My Day articles hereinafter cited are the mimeographed copies in Hyde Park. The date indicated is the date released.

⁹New York Times, 4 November 1935; The Reminiscences of Frances Perkins, Columbia University Oral History Project, p. 553; Eleanor Roosevelt to Lewis B. Chamberlin, February 19, 1934, Box 1289, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers; My Day, 19 June, 1937.

The Spanish Civil War revealed to Mrs. Roosevelt that even pacifists must fight for their beliefs. She now decided to attack fascism publicly, and when the war erupted in Europe, she reminded the American people, especially her friends in the peace movement, that the U.S. might have to enter the war to resist totalitarianism.

II

"To see Spain go under," Martha Gellhorn wrote Eleanor Roosevelt in late 1938, "and with it those ideals, those few ideals that are worth dying for, seems to me a misery that we are not going to get over easily."¹⁰ As a committed anti-fascist, Eleanor Roosevelt understood the young journalist's frustration. Mrs. Roosevelt failed to persuade the American people to help the Loyalists. She had discussed with her husband, for example, the possibility of asking Congress to repeal the arms embargo provision of the Neutrality Act so that the Madrid government could purchase American arms. Franklin D. Roosevelt refused because of isolationist opposition. "It was the physical inability to be panicked by something that is happening 1,000 miles away," Mrs. Roosevelt wrote Gellhorn in early 1939, that explained this indifference. Even though Spain was "fighting on the frontier of democracy," Eleanor Roosevelt expressed her fear

¹⁰This letter is undated. It is in the Gellhorn File, Box 1499. Eleanor Roosevelt answered this particular letter on either January 5 or 26, 1939.

that if you actually took a vote of the people they would be pretty confused as to how far they agreed with that conception of what is happening in Spain. Very few of them look far into the future and the possibilities of infiltration from South America if Spain is once conquered by Italy and Germany with the submissive Spanish government; and you can't blame them, for we have been for years a country that felt secure in isolation and modern inventions don't get across into people's consciousness beyond certain obvious uses.¹¹

Eleanor Roosevelt had tried to publicize the Loyalist struggle. In early 1937, after Martha Gellhorn had given a first-hand account of the Civil War at a White House luncheon, she wrote in My Day that Gellhorn had returned home "with one deep conviction, the Spanish people are glorious people, something is happening in Spain which may mean much to the rest of the world." Eleanor Roosevelt also arranged with Gellhorn to have a White House showing of the pro-Loyalist, Communist-made documentary, The Spanish Earth. Both she and the President were astonished to learn of the concentration of land ownership in the hands of the church and the nobility.¹²

Conservative American Catholics protested Eleanor Roosevelt's support of the Loyalists. The Brooklyn Tablet, the diocesan newspaper, criticized Eleanor Roosevelt for accepting

¹¹Eleanor Roosevelt to Martha Gellhorn, January 5, 26, 1939, Gellhorn File, Box 1499, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers. The journalist, Louis Fischer, visited Eleanor Roosevelt on February 24, 1938 to enlist her aid in changing the Neutrality Law. After questioning him about whether American public opinion would support the lifting of the arms embargo, she promised to discuss the matter with the President. Eleanor Roosevelt sent Fischer a note stating that the President sympathized with him but still he could not obtain sufficient popular support to change the law. "History," Fischer sadly noted in his diary, "will record President Roosevelt's failure to lift the arms embargo as a blunder." [Appendix: Letters from Mrs. Roosevelt, Louis Fischer Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.]

¹²Lash, Eleanor and Franklin, p. 567. Before leaving for her first visit to Spain, Gellhorn wrote Mrs. Roosevelt that

a book of Goya etchings from the Loyalist government. Eleanor Roosevelt indignantly responded in My Day: "I am not neutral in feeling as I believe in Democracy and the right of a people to choose their own government without having it imposed upon them by Hitler and Mussolini." Mrs. Roosevelt was further outraged when a Los Angeles Catholic organization threatened to boycott her speech because she would be sharing the podium with a supporter of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. In a letter to Ann T. Ganey, the organizer of the boycott, Eleanor Roosevelt questioned her insinuation that the Loyalists were anti-church and Communist. It was Franco

who controlled the air forces, most of the real harm to the churches was done by the air forces. As he had the full support of the Italian and German fascist governments, it was natural that the democratic loyalist government had to turn for what help they could not get to the communists. That did not, however, mean that they themselves were a communist government.

"Look at Germany," she advised Ganey,

where one is obliged to feel that fascism is as dangerous to any church as communism, and therefore in this sad civil war, I have always felt that what blame there was, was equal on both sides and I know a great many Catholics who feel the same way.

Well aware that Communists fought with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, Mrs. Roosevelt still defended American volunteers in the war:

she desperately wanted to be there because "that's the Balkans of 1912." (Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Martha Gellhorn to Eleanor Roosevelt, January 16, 1937, Box 1424).

The Abraham Lincoln Brigade was composed of young Americans who felt that democracy was threatened in Spain and therefore I cannot feel that any one supporting them is in any way anti-Catholic or pro-communist.¹³

By 1939, with a Franco victory imminent, Eleanor Roosevelt feared "the peace negotiations will have to take into account, on one side at least, the wishes of certain gentlemen who do not live in Spain." She questioned the credibility of Franco's promise that "all but criminals are safe. . . . Too many dictatorships, have proved to us that when one man or small group of men decide on this particular point a criminal is often one who happens to think differently from the leader in power."¹⁴

Eleanor Roosevelt also expressed concern for the fate of such "criminals." She inquired into Washington's policy about the release of the Abraham Lincoln and the International Brigade prisoners captured by Franco. Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles assured her that efforts were being made to free them. However, when Eleanor Roosevelt asked Welles about mass executions of Spanish Loyalists, Welles cited a dispatch from the American consul in Barcelona claiming that no such killings had occurred. "This answer," Eleanor Roosevelt responded, "does not seem to be entirely satisfactory."¹⁵

¹³Lash, Eleanor and Franklin, p. 570; Eleanor Roosevelt to Anne T. Ganey, March 29, 1939, Box 1347, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

¹⁴My Day, 7 February, 3 April, 1936.

¹⁵Sumner Welles File, Boxes 766, 793, 1808, Sumner Welles to Eleanor Roosevelt, January 9, 1940, Box 793, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

The lesson learned from the Spanish Civil War, Eleanor Roosevelt wrote Martha Gellhorn in early 1939, was that the American people neither desired to help "people suffering in other lands" nor "run the risk of any more suffering here by aiding . . . the refugees from other lands."¹⁶ From 1939 to 1941, Eleanor Roosevelt tried to persuade Americans to move beyond their isolationist-inspired apathy.

III

"People rise to great crises," Eleanor Roosevelt wrote in early 1939. "That is what the Spanish people are doing. That is what the Czechs would have done if they had been given the chance."¹⁷ At Munich the western powers did not give the Czechs such an opportunity. In hoping that Hitler could be appeased, Chamberlin and Daladier approved the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia. Since war was avoided, Eleanor Roosevelt praised the pact; but she asked in My Day "whether the

Adolf Berle, writing for Cordell Hull, following another of Eleanor Roosevelt's inquiries concerning the prisoners, informed her that the United States government could not protest the executions unless American citizens were involved. When later Mrs. Roosevelt received a telegram asking for her help in preventing the executions of two noted Loyalists, she sent it to her husband who, in turn, forwarded it to Welles. The Undersecretary reported to the President that he had informed the Spanish ambassador in Washington, and instructed the American ambassador in Madrid to notify the Franco government that the American people hoped the executions would stop. (Eleanor Roosevelt to Cordell Hull, March 19, 1940, Adolf Berle Jr. to Eleanor Roosevelt, March 25, 1940, Box 778.)

¹⁶Eleanor Roosevelt to Martha Gellhorn, January 26, 1939; Box 1499, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

¹⁷Ibid.

patient in this case when he comes to and finds himself minus some arms and legs will not feel rather sad without being allowed a consultation." To her daughter, Mrs. Roosevelt recognized the basic flaw of appeasement:

I feel of course that Hitler having acquired all he wanted this time will begin again to get the next thing he wants when he is ready to do so. Therefore we have only postponed a war unless we are prepared to let Hitler and his ideas dominate Europe.¹⁸

Hitler, as Eleanor Roosevelt predicted, again threatened the peace in 1939. Mrs. Roosevelt advised him through My Day to visit the French cemeteries before he made the decision for peace or war. She expressed sorrow that only he would decide his people's fate. As war approached, Eleanor Roosevelt was distressed by the United States' inability to influence the events in Europe. "Blindly to ask for peace is no help in the present situation," Eleanor Roosevelt wrote, after reading her husband's final peace appeal, "for peace may be bought today at too high cost in the future."¹⁹

At the outbreak of war, Eleanor Roosevelt agreed with her husband that the American people could be neither "neutral in thought nor in deed." This would be a different war because

¹⁸My Day, 17, 21, 28 September, 1938; Eleanor Roosevelt to Anna Roosevelt Boettiger, October 3, 1938, Box 1, Anna Roosevelt Halsted Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.

¹⁹My Day, 1, 15, 30 August, 1939; New York Times, 16 July, 1939; Lash, Eleanor and Franklin, p. 583.

We do have to fight with our minds, for this is as much a war for the control of ideas as for control of material resources. If certain ideas triumph, then what our forefathers founded in this nation in the way of ideas and ideals should receive a serious blow.

Mrs. Roosevelt condemned Hitler for his treatment of minorities and for ordering the German air force to bomb Polish cities.²⁰

When a former Allenswood classmate of hers, a German, asked her to sympathize with the reasons Hitler had for going to war, Eleanor Roosevelt sent her reply to Sumner Welles. In the draft of the letter, Eleanor Roosevelt wrote Carolyn von Schaeffer-Bernstein of her inability to

understand how people of spirit can be terrified by one man and his storm troops to the point of countenancing the kind of horrors which seem to have gone on in Germany, not only where the Jews are concerned, but in the case of Catholics and some of the liberal German Protestants.

Surprisingly, Mrs. Roosevelt did agree with her German friend that "there may be a need for curtailing the ascendancy of the Jewish people," but she added, "it seems to me it might have been done in a more humane way by a ruler who had intelligence and decency." Mrs. Roosevelt concluded, hoping:

that we are not facing another four years of struggle and I hope that our country will not have to go to war, but no country can exist free and unoppressed while a man

²⁰My Day, 2, 19 September, 1939.

like Hitler remains in power.

Welles recommended that she not mail the reply lest it end up in the wrong hands.²¹

Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, and most of France fell to the advancing German armies in the spring of 1940. Eleanor Roosevelt asked her daughter: "What will be Hitler's next move? Latin America or the United States, economic or military, and will Japan be acting with them in a concerted plan?" Interventionists hoped that the Nazi successes on the battlefield would frighten the nation into supporting rearmament. "Only an adequate defense," Eleanor Roosevelt told a May 1940 audience, "could save the United States from being in the same position as England and France are in today." This she defined as "a two ocean navy, a great many planes, a larger army than can really patrol our borders, tanks, guns, and ammunition." In alluding to her "Uncle Teddy," she defended the appropriations for such protection because "as long as the other fellow has a big stick--we must have one even bigger." She further appealed to the nation's mothers to support re-arming because "a bully rarely attacks where he thinks he is beaten."²²

²¹Eleanor Roosevelt to Sumner Welles, September 6, 1939; Sumner Welles to Eleanor Roosevelt, September 11, 1939; Draft of letter, Eleanor Roosevelt to Carola Von S. Bernstein, September 6, 1939, Box 1486, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

²²Eleanor Roosevelt to Anna Roosevelt Boettiger, June 26, 1940, Box 2, Anna Roosevelt Halsted Papers; New York Times, 18 May, 1940; My Day, 11 June, 28 August, 1940, NBC Radio Broadcast, June 23, 1940, Box 3039, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

Both Eleanor Roosevelt and her husband were confident that the nation would support the administration's defense measures. Franklin Roosevelt told his April 18, 1940 press conference that his wife had just returned from a tour of the country and had learned that the people have been taking "their heads out of the sand" and asking, "What is going to happen if?" Two months later Mrs. Roosevelt informed reporters that those previously skeptical of the President's policies have been rushing to him with offers of support. "We don't realize a thing until it gets so bad it hits us right in the face," Eleanor Roosevelt told the press conference.²³

Mrs. Roosevelt deplored isolationist opposition to her husband's policies. As long as the nation remained disunited, she told a May 1940 audience, "we are nailing one more nail into our coffin." The Germans have "contempt for those who can't meet her on her own ground." When demonstrating City College of New York students shouted at her: "Tell Frank the yanks aren't coming," Mrs. Roosevelt responded, "All right, all right, but what if the Nazis are?" She recalled the following day in her column how "my heart sank. Poor youngsters, they have the same desire we all have to live in a civilized world and yet are obliged to face as we all must, the impact of circumstances arising from a desire to wipe out what we have called civilization."²⁴

²³Complete Presidential Press Conference of Franklin D. Roosevelt (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), Volumes 15-16, 1940, pp. 264-266; 538-540.

²⁴New York Times, 18 May, 1940; My Day, May 15, 27, July 20, 1940

During the 1940 campaign Eleanor Roosevelt was troubled by the influence the isolationists had on Willkie. She wrote an English friend right after the election:

We realize now that Mr. Willkie was backed by forces which were a greater menace than many of us were willing to believe. There was a fascist tendency for an appeasement policy toward Germany which terrifies many of us and makes us feel that the decision of the Willkie backers to keep up their organization is none too good for this country.

Eleanor Roosevelt's fears proved exaggerated. Willkie endorsed Lend-Lease and emerged, once again, as a leading Republican internationalist. Writing to the same English friend, Mrs. Roosevelt praised him for switching.²⁵

Eleanor Roosevelt vigorously defended Lend-Lease. In a May 1941 broadcast she warned that, if Hitler defeated Great Britain, the United States would have to compete with slave labor. She asked her audience: "Are we prepared to meet slave labor with slave labor?" Eleanor Roosevelt specifically singled out Senator Arthur Vandenberg, Charles Lindbergh and Representative Hamilton Fish for opposing Lend-Lease. Following an anti-Lend-Lease speech by Vandenberg, an indignant Eleanor Roosevelt told reporters that no statesman had the right to "play with words when the world is on fire." At an April 1941 press conference she stated that Charles Lindbergh "has a strange lack of confidence in his own people. He gives

²⁵Eleanor Roosevelt to Florence Willert, November 16, 1940, February 19, 1941, Florence Willert Papers, Yale University Library.

us very little credit for much courage, or much common sense." The following day both Roosevelts held press conferences to comment on Lindbergh's belief that a Nazi victory was inevitable. Mrs. Roosevelt remarked, "Perhaps at an earlier date it would have been equally foolish to think the colonists could win." Her husband compared Lindbergh to the Vallandighams of 1863 and the quitters at Valley Forge. Two months later Eleanor Roosevelt repeated in My Day a question that her Dutchess County isolationist congressman, Hamilton Fish, sent his constituents: "Should the United States enter the war or stay out of it?" Eleanor Roosevelt answered she would choose to stay out but so did Norway, Holland, France, Russia, and many Germans. She charged Representative Fish with oversimplifying the issue, and then addressed the following questions to him: "Shall the United States allow any enemy nation to obtain possessions which may menace, under modern conditions of warfare, the safety of the United States? Or: Shall we accept restrictions on our trade or the abrogation of our right to travel in neutral waters throughout the world?" Concluding, Eleanor Roosevelt wrote: "We have always been a proud and independent people, Mr. Congressman. As a woman, I pray for peace, not only now, but in the future. But I think we must look a little beyond next week if we expect to ensure an independent United States of America for our children."²⁶

²⁶Radio Broadcast, 13 May, 1941, Box 3402, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers; New York Times, 25 April, 1941; My Day, 28 June, 1941; Arthur H. Vandenberg, Jr., editor, The Private Papers of Senator Vandenberg (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1952), p. 8.

To counter the influence of the Fishes and the Lindberghs, Eleanor Roosevelt supported the efforts of interventionists to mobilize American public opinion to back Lend-Lease. Along with Willkie and Ickes, she spoke at major pro-British rallies. Although Mrs. Roosevelt never joined Fight For Freedom, she assisted the organization in its work. For example, in October of 1941 she received the women delegates to a Fight For Freedom convention at the White House.²⁷ At the same time Mrs. Roosevelt deplored America First. She did express compassion for the idealists and pacifists who joined the isolationist lobby group out of a sincere desperation for peace, but she could not forgive the organization's members

who for personal and selfish reasons insist on being blind and of course which would destroy us as a nation, and which seems to endorse the principle which holds sway in other nations because their leaders consider them necessary to their national life.²⁸

Responding to her anti-fascist stand, the German and Italian press accused Eleanor Roosevelt of meddling in diplomacy. The Boersen Zeitung charged the President's wife with "attempting to create among the American people a hysterical fear of a German attack." It quoted Eleanor Roosevelt as saying, at the start of the war in 1939, that it would be

²⁷Mark Lincoln Chadwin, The Warhawks: American Interventionists Before Pearl Harbor (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1970), pp. 180, 203, 229.

²⁸Pan American Coffee Bureau Broadcast, September 28, November 11, 1941, Box 3402, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

difficult for the United States to avoid the war. The paper contrasted this position with the peaceful one taken by her husband and asked whether a family quarrel existed in the White House or was the government using Eleanor Roosevelt to "habituate the American public to the idea of participating in the war." The newspaper also noted that Eleanor Roosevelt had warm relations with American Jewry. The Italian press echoed the German remarks. The Populo Italia demanded that an "embargo" be placed on Mrs. Roosevelt. The Italian news agency suggested that Eleanor Roosevelt's activist role was unbecoming for a woman:

Mrs. Roosevelt's continuous manifestations of bellicose frenzy are followed in real surprise in Europe where the conception of femininity is enveloped in a halo of kindness and sweetness in conformity with the social foundations of woman in her quality of mother, wife, and daughter.

On November 18, 1941, the New York Times reported: "For 20 pfennigs Berliners may throw three balls at a caricature of Mrs. Roosevelt on a wall on Friedrichstrasse during the weekend Nazi celebrations."²⁹

Throughout the thirties Eleanor Roosevelt considered Japan to be an aggressive, militarist nation. In a 1935 letter to Rabbi Leopold Mann, a noted anti-war clergyman, she displayed both an understanding of the

²⁹New York Times, 4, 8 November, 1939, 17 May, 18 November, 1941.

Japanese position and a toughness if Tokyo grew even more belligerent:

I always wish that we could cut down our bill for preparedness, but I think we made an honest effort in the naval conferences and Japan was extremely difficult. I do, however, realize how hard it has been for Japan to accept our attitude as a superior, and I sometimes wonder if we made more effort to have them granted even a small percentage of the quota, that we would get further on in our military and naval conferences.

Few people realize in this country that at Christmas time of this year, the three largest Japanese department stores had spread out upon their tables maps of the Pacific Ocean with the sinking of the American fleet by the Japanese fleet all laid out for the Japanese people to examine, but done, of course, in the usual perfect Japanese way and looking like a most beautifully planned landscape of trees.³⁰

Eleanor Roosevelt feared that American policies in Asia encouraged Japanese aggression. In September 1940 she met Roger Green, Chairman of the American Committee for Non-Participation in Japanese Aggression. Green told her that the shipping of war materiel for Japan assisted their conquest of China. She then asked the Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles: "I would like to know just what the State Department bases the continuation of trade with Japan on and how much our trade with her amounts to?" In believing that "the recent defense measures should make it possible to curtail it without offense in any way," she wondered whether "there is a chance of shortening that war . . ." Welles sent her a

³⁰Eleanor Roosevelt to Rabbi Mann, January 23, 1935, Box 1347, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers; Lash, Eleanor and Franklin, p. 566.

detailed memorandum explaining the administration's policy in Asia. Eleanor Roosevelt responded: "I find the memorandum on the Far Eastern situation somewhat confusing." The following month Franklin Roosevelt sent his wife this note explaining why the administration could not impose an economic boycott against Japan:

The real answer which you cannot use is that if we forbid oil shipments to Japan, Japan will increase her purchases of Mexican oil and furthermore, may be driven by actual necessity to a descent on the Dutch East Indies. At this writing, we all regard such action on our part as an encouragement to the spread of war in the Far East.³¹

On the evening after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Eleanor Roosevelt appealed by radio to the American people to have faith in their army and their nation. In Berlin, Hitler told the Reichstag, "She and her sons refused to live in the world as we National Socialists understand . . . a world of work and not of falsehood." Eleanor Roosevelt responded, "I have no desire to live in a world Mr. Hitler would create."³²

³¹Eleanor Roosevelt to Sumner Welles, September 12, October 5, 1940, Box 793; Franklin D. Roosevelt to Eleanor Roosevelt, November 13, 1940 (Frank Kingdon File), Box 1808, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

³²Pan American Coffee Bureau Broadcast, December 7, 1941, Box 3403; Eleanor Roosevelt Papers; New York Times, 12 December, 1941.

CHAPTER III

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT AND

REFUGEE POLICY

Hitler's world contained thousands of refugees fleeing imminent detention in the concentration camps, or worse, death. The United States admitted only a small number of these persecuted Jews. The Immigration Act of 1924 had placed a 25,000 annual quota on visas for Germans. The act's "likely to be a public charge" clause entitled immigration authorities to bar entry even if the quota was not met. During the early Nazi period, the American consuls in the German cities enforced this clause with a vengeance. They denied visas to countless Jewish doctors, lawyers, scientists, teachers, and artists. A number of these American officials were anti-Semitic, others were timid bureaucrats fearful of their superior's wrath. Nativism, anti-communism, religious prejudice, and organized labor's fear of competition for jobs in the depressed economy all explain the Roosevelt administration's failure to correct this procedure and, more important, to ask Congress to increase the quota.¹

James McDonald, the League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, lobbied for a change in the immigration law. Mrs. Roosevelt frequently served as his liaison with the State Department and the White House.² She also worked with

¹Saul Friedman, No Haven For the Oppressed: United States Policy Toward Jewish Refugees, 1938-1945, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973), p. 25.

²In July of 1934 McDonald informed Eleanor Roosevelt that the Nazis would try to make conditions so unbearable for the

Justine Wise Polier, the daughter of Rabbi Stephen Wise. Judge Polier always found Mrs. Roosevelt deeply concerned with the plight of the German Jews and willing to offer advice and help when she felt she would not embarrass the President. On one occasion, Mrs. Polier recalled Eleanor Roosevelt expressing astonishment that more American Jews did not request help for their German brethren:

You know when I ask for help for the share-croppers, the miners' children, the first people to come forward are the Jews. Now when they need help why do they hesitate to come to ask for help; or why do they seem embarrassed?

Judge Polier told her that the reason for such hesitation "was . . . because of the cruelty of the Christian world. They don't feel they could turn to other people for help."³

Jews as to force them to leave. Thus the burden to meet this exodus would fall on the United States. Mrs. Roosevelt forwarded this letter to F.D.R. [James G. McDonald to Anna Eleanor Roosevelt, July 24, 1935, James G. McDonald Papers, Columbia University Library]; McDonald also sent New York's Governor Lehman a letter he received from Felix Warburg stating that out of a quota of 25,000 the consular officials had limited entry to only 2,500. Lehman attached the McDonald letter to his plea to the President to increase the quota to 5,000. Lehman reminded his friend that the United States had always been a haven for refugees. In response to pressure from his wife, Lehman, and McDonald, Roosevelt reevaluated the administration's refugee policy. Based on information from the State Department, Roosevelt, in a letter to Lehman, claimed the quotas had already been filled. He also noted that the consuls had already been advised to be "most considerate and attentive to the needs of the refugees, consistent with American laws." [Edgar B. Nixon, ed. Franklin D. Roosevelt and Foreign Affairs, I (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 50-52.]

³Justine Wise Polier, interview held on February 16, 1979, New York City.

On November 11, 1938 Krystallnacht commenced a new wave of organized Nazi violence against the Jews. At his press conference, Franklin Roosevelt deplored the destruction of the synagogues. With his wife at his side, the President announced that he would recall the American ambassador and would permit over ten thousand German political refugees to remain indefinitely in the United States on visitor visas. In My Day, Eleanor Roosevelt simply described Krystallnacht as "incomprehensible."⁴ Even after Krystallnacht, Franklin Roosevelt refused to request Congress to change the immigration laws. Two Jewish congressmen, Emanuel Celler and Samuel Dickstein, introduced their own bills to increase the quota. Fearing that restrictionists in Congress could actually lower the quota through amending the bills, the Jewish and non-sectarian pro-refugee organizations persuaded Celler and Dickstein to withdraw their acts.⁵

Open door advocates rather focused their attention on the efforts being undertaken to bring into the United States 20,000 (mostly Jewish) German children. It appeared that their parents and Hitler were willing to approve such a rescue project. The only question was whether Congress could waive the quota restriction.⁶ In mid-December 1938 an interim

⁴Friedman, No Haven for the Oppressed, pp. 87-88; New York Times, 19 November, 1938; My Day, 25 November, 1938.

⁵David S. Wyman, Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis, 1938-1941 (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1968), pp. 75-79.

⁶Ibid.

committee was formed to mobilize public opinion to support such a change. They met at the New York home of Dr. Marion Kenworthy. Eleanor Roosevelt frequently attended the Sunday evening planning sessions along with Ben Cohen, Clarence Pickett, Justine Wise Polier and Marshall Field. The interim committee of the Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children first set out to obtain support from the nation's leading churchmen. They found most of the clergymen receptive except for Francis Cardinal Spellman. Judge Polier recalled that she and her father "felt that he was profoundly anti-Semitic. He had no feeling for helping or lifting his finger due to his own prejudices." In spite of Spellman's silence, George Cardinal Mundelein and Bishop James Sheil of Chicago consented to be the leading Catholic sponsors. Along with the clergymen, prominent politicians, businessmen, labor leaders, and members of the academic community offered their support.⁷

While Eleanor Roosevelt never officially joined the interim committee, she served as its liaison with the White House. For example, she relayed to Judge Polier advice on how the legislation should be framed in Congress to permit the entry of the children:

⁷Interview with Judge Justine Wise Polier by Dr. Thomas Soapes, Oral Historian, on September 14, 1977, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, pp. 16-17; Wyman, Paper Walls, pp. 75-79. The co-chairmen of the Non-Sectarian Committee included Anson Phelps Stokes, Governor Herbert Lehman, and William Allen White. The national committee, numbering more than 70 members, included Marshall Field, Rev. Harry Emerson Fosdick, Helen Hayes, and Alfred Landon.

My husband says that you had better go to work at once and get two people of opposite parties in the House and in the Senate and have them jointly get agreement on the legislation which you want for bringing in children.

The State Department is only afraid of what Congress will say to them, and therefore if you remove that fear the State Department will make no objection.

He advises that you choose your people rather carefully and, if possible, get all the Catholic support you can.⁸

On February 9, 1939, Senator Robert F. Wagner, a Catholic Democrat, and Representative Edith Nouse Rogers, a Protestant Republican, introduced identical rescue bills. The Wagner-Rogers bill would permit entry of 20,000 German refugee children in a two year period provided that they would be properly cared for. This bill was the first serious attempt to liberalize the 1924 Immigration Act. Eleanor Roosevelt cabled her husband, vacationing in the Carribean, to ask whether she should inform Sumner Welles that both of them supported the bill. Roosevelt replied: "It is all right for you to support the child refugee bill but it is best for me to say nothing till I get back." Roosevelt also ordered his aide, General Edwin M. ("Pa") Watson, to write "File No Action" on an inquiry of his position on the bill received from Representative Caroline O'Day, a friend of Mrs. Roosevelt.⁹

"It seemed to be the humanitarian thing to do," Mrs. Roosevelt said, upon announcing her support of the Wagner-

⁸Eleanor Roosevelt to Justine Wise Polier, January 4, 1939, Box 1520, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

⁹Wyman, Paper Walls, pp. 96-97.

Rogers bill in early February. She made this statement, surprisingly, one week before her husband gave her permission to do so. Following the cable, the President's wife decided to remain silent on the bill. She explained why to Judge Polier:

I talked with Mr. James McDonald and he told me he is in favor of the bill personally, but he has been told that pressing the President at the present time may mean that the people in Congress who have bills to cut the quota will present them immediately and that might precipitate a difficult situation which would result in cutting the quota by 90%, and that, of course, would be very serious. Therefore, the committee hesitates to recommend support of the bill when they do not know whether this will be the result or not.

I also talked with Sumner Welles. He says that personally he is in favor of the bill and feels as I do about it, but that it would not be advisable for the President to come out, because if the President did and was defeated it would be very bad. I told him I did not think it was any question of the President's actually coming out, though he was anxious to see the bill go through.

I cabled the President and he said I could come out and I could talk to Mr. Welles and say he would be pleased to have the bill go through but he did not want to say anything publicly at the present time.

Mr. Welles feels very strongly that pressing the bill at the present time might do exactly what Mr. McDonald says, because his desk is flooded with protests accusing the State Department of conniving in allowing a great many more Jewish people than the quota permits to enter the country under various pretenses.¹⁰

¹⁰ Ibid; New York Times, 15 February, 1939; Eleanor Roosevelt to Judge Polier, February 28, 1939, Box 1520, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt thus silently watched the restrictionists in the Senate amend the bill to its death. The final bill that was passed provided for including the children within existing quotas. This, Senator Wagner refused to accept; thus he withdrew his bill. The Non-Sectarian Committee originally hoped American sympathy for suffering children would overcome the era's economic insecurity, isolationism, and anti-Semitism. They were wrong.¹¹

The Non-Sectarian Committee soon became the United States Committee For the Care of European Children (U.S.C.). Eleanor Roosevelt consented to be its honorary president. This organization arranged temporary homes for British children during the duration of the war. It also succeeded in rescuing a limited number of German Jewish children from detention camps in Vichy France and Spain. Eleanor Roosevelt publicized the activities of the U.S.C. in My Day, in speeches, and on her radio show. In comparison to the failure of the Wagner-Rogers Bill, the American public was more receptive to receiving English children. Congress authorized their departure. Money poured in to finance the project and the U.S.C. was overwhelmed with adoption requests. Only a trickle of British children reached American shores. When the Germans sank the City of Benares with 79 of the children on board, the British cancelled the evacuation.¹²

¹¹Wyman, Paper Walls, pp. 79-92.

¹²Ibid., Chapter 6; Interview with Judge Justine Wise Polier by Dr. Thomas Soapes, Oral Historian, on September 14, 1977, The Franklin D. Roosevelt Library. Article and Speech File, Box 3039, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

With the outbreak of the war, German and Austrian Jews and other potential refugees besieged the American consulates for assistance to leave their countries. The fortunate few who obtained visas often encountered anti-Semitism or bureaucratic indifference which slowed down their departures. Their American relatives and friends deluged Eleanor Roosevelt with appeals for help. She forwarded the petitions to Sumner Welles who frequently returned the letters to her, replying that the consuls acted perfectly within the letter of the law. Welles, a childhood friend of Mrs. Roosevelt's brother and genuinely sympathetic, did assist her when he had the power to do so. For example, when Dorothy Detzer notified her that an overtly anti-Semitic, anti-Catholic consul worked in Zurich, Welles had the man transferred.¹³

¹³Refugee Files, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers; Wyman, Paper Walls, pp. 155-158. Eleanor Roosevelt's interest in particular refugees' problems might have made the difference in saving a few lives. The experience of Dr. Vera Lachmann, a noted scholar of Germanic literature, serves as one example of the First Lady's role. Henry Noble MacCracken, President of Vassar College, wrote to Eleanor Roosevelt about Dr. Lachmann's difficulties in leaving Berlin in the fall of 1939. Vassar College had offered Dr. Lachmann a position based on the recommendation of a friend of its president whose daughter had studied with the Jewish woman in Berlin. The consul in Berlin had ruled that Dr. Lachmann did not teach in an accredited German university so she could not qualify for a visa. Dr. Lachmann could not teach in such a university because the law barred her from doing so; instead, she organized her own school.

MacCracken enclosed in his appeal testimony from a Yale friend and Radcliffe College attesting that Vera Lachmann's school was comparable to American colleges. The President of Vassar requested Eleanor Roosevelt's help to untangle this bureaucratic mess. Eleanor Roosevelt sent all the material to Sumner Welles. The undersecretary informed Eleanor Roosevelt that he had requested a report on the case from the Berlin embassy. He promised the First Lady and MacCracken that Dr. Lachmann would be shown "every consideration consistent with the immigration laws." Dr. Lachmann left Berlin on November 16, 1939 with the visa in hand. Perhaps Eleanor Roosevelt's

Many refugees fled to southern France, Spain, and Portugal where they were forced to live in camps. The more fortunate entered England and Sweden. When France surrendered in June of 1940, the Vichy government promised to return the Jewish and political exiles to Hitler. The refugees found Spain and Portugal equally dangerous because of Gestapo activity.¹⁴ In her June 26, 1940 My Day, Eleanor Roosevelt appealed to the United States to admit these exiles:

Under the quota we have received a number of German, Austrian, Italian and Spanish refugees. People who have been marked people in their own countries because of their active opposition to Fascist or Nazi regimes. They have left behind them, however, in France, Sweden, and England members of their families, intimate friends, beloved political leaders and now cannot rest in safety because of the dangers which surround these loved ones. Many of these people could help us greatly in the next few weeks or months, for they know how Communists, Nazis and Fascists work. They know how propaganda is spread, how young people are influenced. They are as good material as the political refugees who came with Carl Schurz, the German, or Kosciusko, the Pole, whose statues we have taught our young people to honor because of their love of liberty.¹⁵

intercession helped her. After reporting to Vassar for her job, Dr. Lachmann discovered it was not a professorial one, but rather a temporary teaching assistantship funded by Jews to help refugees find employment. Apparently, the Vassar president created this position just to help her leave Germany. Vassar did not have any intention of retaining Dr. Lachmann because it rarely hired Jews. This was how the United States welcomed Vera Lachmann. She eventually taught at Brooklyn College from where she recently retired. Throughout the pre-war and war years, Eleanor Roosevelt deplored in her column and speeches the treatment refugees such as Vera Lachmann received when arriving in this country. (Oral interview with Vera Lachmann, November 11, 1977); [The experience of Vera Lachmann is outlined in documents in the refugee files at Hyde Park.]

¹⁴Wyman, Paper Walls, p. 137.

¹⁵My Day, 26 June, 1940.

Responding to pressure by pro-refugee organizations, President Roosevelt offered these Jews the opportunity to obtain emergency visitors' visas.¹⁶

In July of 1940 Washington instituted the procedure to admit these refugees. The Presidential Advisory Committee on Refugees (P.A.C.R.) would accept names of those reported in immediate danger. After checking the background of the applicants, the P.A.C.R. would send the names to the Justice Department for a security clearance. Then the State Department would wire the consul to issue the visa. The consul could still deny it but the department possessed "more or less mandatory instructions" to override the veto. Implementing this route was a victory for the pro-refugee lobby in and out of the government. On July 26, 1940, Mildred Adams of the Emergency Rescue Committee, the largest pro-refugee organization, wrote Eleanor Roosevelt's secretary: "We realize that quick action which has come in this matter is in large part due to her understanding and efforts."¹⁷ Mrs. Roosevelt

¹⁶Wyman, Paper Walls, p. 138.

¹⁷Mildred Adams to Eleanor Roosevelt's Secretary, July 30, 1940, Box 1807, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers. It is difficult to find documentary evidence to support Mildred Adams, although historians of the Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust (i.e., Wyman, Friedman, Morse, and Feingold) agree with the Emergency Rescue Committee. Material in the Hyde Park files does indicate Eleanor Roosevelt met during the period with the P.A.C.R. heads George Warren and James McDonald; it is possible she served as a liaison between her husband and them to create the procedure; for a good summary of the procedure, see Wyman, Paper Walls, pp. 138-149.

also authorized the Emergency Rescue Committee to use her name if they thought it would help expedite the processing of the immigrants' papers in Washington and abroad.¹⁸

The new procedure soon encountered serious obstacles. Eleanor Roosevelt was notified that the consuls were still obstructing the refugees' departure. She cabled Sumner Welles on September 6, 1940: "Is there no way of getting our consul in Marseilles to help in getting a few more of these poor people out?" Two weeks later Frank Kingdon of the Emergency Rescue Committee informed her that the Lisbon consul had been holding up refugees. On September 26, Karl Frank of the American Friends of German Freedom telegraphed Eleanor Roosevelt that he learned of a "new order to the consuls to issue no visitors' visas after Oct. 1." Replying to Eleanor Roosevelt's request for his comment, Sumner Welles claimed Frank was inaccurate. Eleanor Roosevelt then sent the telegram to her husband with this note attached: "FDR-- Something Has Gone Wrong." The President responded, "What does seem wrong?"¹⁹

Something had indeed gone wrong. Assistant Secretary of State Breckenridge Long was responsible for the new order

¹⁸Secretary to Eleanor Roosevelt to Frank Kingdon, August 3, 1940, Box 1808, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

¹⁹Eleanor Roosevelt to Sumner Welles, September 6, 1940, Box 793, Frank Kingdon to Eleanor Roosevelt, September 20, 1940, Box 1809. Telegram, Karl Frank to Eleanor Roosevelt, September 26, 1940, Sumner Welles to Eleanor Roosevelt, October 1, 1940, F.D.R. to Eleanor Roosevelt, October 16, 1940, Box 793, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

Frank cited. A former ambassador to Italy, an admirer of Mussolini, and an anti-Semite who praised Mein Kampf for its provocative statements on world Jewry, Long sought to sabotage the new procedure. As head of the visa division of the State Department, Long succeeded in either blocking or slowing down the Jewish and left-wing exiles' entry into the United States. In a letter to Adolf A. Berle, Jr., and James C. Dunn, Long suggested the department

can delay and effectively stop for a temporary period of indefinite length the number of immigrants into the United States. We could do this by simply advising our consuls to put every obstacle in the way and to resort to various administrative advices which would postpone and postpone the granting of visas.

One device Long used was to instruct the consuls in July to deny visas to refugees who did not possess exit permits. Long was well aware that Vichy France and the Nazis in occupied Europe issued few exit permits.²⁰

Eleanor Roosevelt knew it was Long who tried to prevent the refugees from entering the United States. Justice Polier recalled hearing her telling F.D.R.: "'Franklin you know he's a fascist.' And really cross he said, 'I've told you Eleanor, you must not say that.' She said, 'well maybe I shouldn't say it, but he is.'"²¹ In September of 1940 Eleanor Roosevelt

²⁰Henry L. Feingold, The Politics of Rescue: The Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust, 1938-1945 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1970), pp. 132-137. Prof. Feingold includes in these pages an excellent portrait of Long.

²¹Interview with Judge Justine Wise Polier by Dr. Thomas Scopes, Oral Historian, on September 14, 1977, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, p. 20.

clashed with Long over the Quanza incident. The freighter had docked in Norfolk with 83 Jews aboard after Nicaragua and Mexico denied them sanctuary. Long, who opposed their entry, noted in his diary that admitting these Jews, many of whom, he thought, had money, would be a dangerous precedent. Eleanor Roosevelt phoned Long to express her concern for the refugees, especially the children, and then instructed him to call her husband to discuss the matter. When the Assistant Secretary spoke to F.D.R., the President appeared uninterested, but he did order Long and the State Department to solve this problem. Secretary of State Cordell Hull, with Long vehemently objecting, finally decided to admit 40 of the 83 Jews. In his sensationalized study of the Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust, While Six Million Died, Arthur Morse credits Mrs. Roosevelt's intervention with saving the lives of those refugees fortunate enough to be given entry permits. While the evidence of her involvement is sketchy, it appears that her intercession helped. As all the Jews were not admitted, Breckinridge Long could also claim a victory.²²

²²Sumner Welles to Eleanor Roosevelt, September 12, 1940, Box 793, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers; Fred L. Israel, ed., The War Diary of Breckinridge Long (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), pp. 130-131; Arthur D. Morse, While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy (New York: Random House, 1968), pp. 30-31. In his discussion of the Quanza affair Morse suggests that Mrs. Roosevelt encouraged a delegation of American Jews headed by Dr. Nachman Goldman to meet Cordell Hull to press for entry. Unfortunately, he provides no reference to substantiate this meeting.

In an August 1940 letter to Roosevelt, Long requested tighter procedures to admit the refugees. The Assistant Secretary of State argued that a substantial number of them awaiting entry on the visitors' visas were not of the "desirable" element. Long also claimed that 2,583 emergency visas had been extended, more than one quarter of which went to Jewish religious leaders. Long concluded by asking the President to cancel the "mandatory authority" Washington had to override the consuls, thereby returning to them more discretionary power to bar entry. On September 19, Franklin Roosevelt approved Long's request. He had a copy of Long's letter sent to the P.A.C.R.²³

George Warren, the P.A.C.R.'s executive secretary, then met with Eleanor Roosevelt on September 27 to discuss Long's letter and F.D.R.'s new order. He provided her with a lengthy memorandum refuting Long's claims. Mrs. Roosevelt forwarded Warren's report to her husband with a cover letter in which she insisted that the State Department only authorized the entry of 50 of the more than 2,000 names. Mrs. Roosevelt further requested her husband to speak to James McDonald. She concluded the memo stating, "I am thinking about these poor people who may die at any time and who are asking only to come here on transit visas."²⁴

²³Wyman, Paper Walls, pp. 142-145.

²⁴George Warren to Eleanor Roosevelt, September 27, 1940, Eleanor Roosevelt to Franklin D. Roosevelt, September 28, 1940; both attached to Memorandum For the Under Secretary of State, October 2, 1940, Official File 3186, Box 3, Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers.

With this letter Eleanor Roosevelt entered into the bureaucratic battle over refugee policy. Long's close friend, presidential appointment secretary, "Pa" Watson, made it difficult for Roosevelt to meet with pro-refugee advocates. If they were fortunate enough to speak with F.D.R., Watson helped Long by then scheduling a short conference for the Assistant Secretary. Eleanor Roosevelt thus became the only channel of communication between the President and the refugee organizations.²⁵

Before seeing McDonald, Roosevelt met Long on October 3. The Assistant Secretary wrote in his diary that the President was in one hundred percent accord with him. Six days later McDonald finally had his conference with Roosevelt. Whenever he tried to raise the refugee issue, the President diverted him with trivial stories until Watson informed both that the time of the meeting had expired. McDonald hurriedly summed up his case against Long. Roosevelt then called in Long and Welles. He reported to them that he told McDonald not to "pull any sob stuff" on him. Franklin Roosevelt also informed Long that he backed his demand that consuls should have more freedom to deny visas. However, the President ordered them to work out a compromise with all the groups involved in this dispute. Out of this conference an interdepartmental committee was formed to check on the P.A.C.R.'s recommendations. Its conclusions would then go to the consul. If the consul over-

²⁵Feingold, Politics of Rescue, pp. 144-145; Prof. Feingold describes the relationship of Long and "Pa" Watson.

rode the committee, he would have to explain why to the State Department. This procedure satisfied Long.²⁶

But the compromise did not satisfy the refugees and their friends; for in late 1940 and early 1941, the bureaucracy refused entry to many immigrants who sought the emergency visa. The Emergency Rescue Committee's Ingrid Warburg informed Eleanor Roosevelt of this on December 4. One week later Eleanor Roosevelt asked Welles whether the process could be expedited. He responded with a lengthy apologetic explanation that the background had to be thoroughly checked before a decision could be made. Eleanor Roosevelt thus had to write McDonald on March 2, 1941 that the President "feels that if a few of the people are turned down you should not become discouraged because sometimes things are discovered in an investigation which makes it necessary to refuse, and these investigations have to be made."²⁷

By July 1941, 3,268 visas had been authorized with only 1,236 granted. Thousands could not secure the authorization.²⁸ Although she tried to help, Eleanor Roosevelt failed to counter the influence Breckenridge Long had on her husband. Albert Einstein wrote Mrs. Roosevelt on July 26, 1941 that the State Department made it all but impossible to admit refugees into the United States. The method it used "is to make immigration

²⁶Wyman, Paper Walls, pp. 145-147.

²⁷Eleanor Roosevelt to Sumner Welles, December 11, 1940, Welles to Eleanor Roosevelt, December 13, 1940, Box 793, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers; Eleanor Roosevelt to James McDonald, March 2, 1941, James G. McDonald Papers, Columbia University Library.

²⁸Wyman, Paper Walls, pp. 148-149.

impossible by erecting a wall of bureaucratic measures alleged to be necessary to protect America against subversive, dangerous elements." Eleanor Roosevelt helplessly forwarded the letter to her husband.²⁹

The Germans sent increasing numbers of Jews to concentration camps. As early as October 25, 1941, Eleanor Roosevelt wrote it was "so horrible to contemplate" the mass removal of Polish and Russian Jews. She hoped that at a certain point their "feelings become numb and their sufferings cease." Later she described her reaction at seeing a photograph of a camp:

I cannot bear to think of children behind barbed wire looking out at a free world-- only, of course, the world they live in is not free. We can only hope that out of this period of chaos will come again a free world where children will not be starved or be confined against their will.

Rabbi Stephen Wise tried to enlist her help in publicizing the existence of the camps. He sent her the December 1942 (American Jewish Congress) Congress Weekly that documented for the first time Hitler's "final solution." Eleanor Roosevelt replied, "I am, of course, horrified as is everyone but I have written and spoken on the subject and do not know what more I can say."³⁰

²⁹Albert Einstein to Eleanor Roosevelt, July 26, 1941, P.P.F. 7177, Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.

³⁰My Day, 25 October, 1941, 13 May, 1942; Stephen S. Wise to Eleanor Roosevelt, December 28, 1942, Box 1669, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

Following American entry into the war, attempts to rescue the Jews proved to be more difficult. In August 1942 Berlin ordered Vichy France to start deporting non-French Jews to Auschwitz. By October close to 10,000 left France for the gas chambers. Eight thousand parentless children still remained in southern France living in detention camps. On August 27 Varian Fry of the Emergency Rescue Committee informed Eleanor Roosevelt of their plight. Four days later she received a telegram from Frank Kingdon requesting her help to open up the United States for 5,000 of these orphans. Mrs. Roosevelt arranged for James McDonald and George Warren to meet with the State Department to discuss the rescue of the children. Originally, the Department decided to admit 1,000. Even Breckenridge Long supported this decision. He noted in his diary: "The appeal for asylum is irresistible to any human instinct and the act of barbarity just as repulsive." "But," he added, "we cannot receive into our midst all--or even a large fraction." Long credited Eleanor Roosevelt with persuading the government to raise the figure to 5,000. Tragically, the children never reached the American shores. The German occupation of Vichy France in November 1942 closed the door of escape. If the State Department bureaucracy had moved faster in processing the papers, a large number of the children could have been saved. In the final analysis, Breckenridge Long defeated the First Lady in the game in which he, not she, excelled.³¹

³¹Frank Kingdon to Eleanor Roosevelt, August 31, 1942, Varian Fry to Eleanor Roosevelt, August 27, 1942, Francis

Eleanor Roosevelt had always hoped that the Jews fleeing the Germans could enter Palestine. She was outraged when the British denied entry to the refugees. Justine Polier described to her the Struma tragedy in which an unseaworthy steamer with 767 Jews aboard sank in the Black Sea after it was denied entry into the port of Haifa. Eleanor Roosevelt sent Polier's letter to Welles with a note in which she described the British policy as "cruel beyond words." Welles replied to Eleanor Roosevelt that the British seemed "adamant" in their refusal to increase the number of Jews permitted to immigrate to Palestine. In her answer of March 13, Eleanor Roosevelt again labelled British policy "so cruel that if it were generally known in this country, it would increase the dislike of Great Britain which is already too prevalent."³²

Scholars have recently criticized the Roosevelt Administration for its apathy towards the persecuted Jews. The scholarly studies by Henry Feingold, Saul Friedman, and David Wyman and the more popular account by Arthur Morse have all

Biddle to F.D.R., September 11, 1942, Boxes 1808, 3136, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers; James McDonald to Eleanor Roosevelt, September 14, 1942, Eleanor Roosevelt to James McDonald, September 17, 1942, James McDonald to Eleanor Roosevelt, September 21, 1942, James G. McDonald Papers, Columbia University Library; Fred Israel, ed., The War Diary of Breckinridge Long, pp. 282-283; Wyman, Paper Walls, pp. 128-134; Friedman, No Haven For the Oppressed, pp. 205-206.

³²Justine Polier to Eleanor Roosevelt, March 8, 1942, Biddle Folder, Box 858; Eleanor Roosevelt to Sumner Welles, March 9, 1942, Sumner Welles to Eleanor Roosevelt, March 12, 1942, Eleanor Roosevelt to Sumner Welles, March 13, 1942, Box 853, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers; Feingold, The Politics of Rescue, p. 171.

absolved Eleanor Roosevelt from sharing her husband's indifference. On February 22, 1940, Eleanor Roosevelt reminded a meeting of the American Jewish Congress that many people not of their "race" were interested in helping the refugees. She promised to do anything she could to aid them.³³ The evidence proves that she did. Along with Clarence Pickett, Frank Kingdon, George Rublee, James McDonald, Varian Fry, Mildred Adams and George Warren, Eleanor Roosevelt was one of the few Americans not of their "race" who tried to save Jewish lives.

³³New York Times, 23 February, 1940.

CHAPTER IV

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT, WORLD WAR II,
AND THE NEW DEAL FOR THE WORLD

During World War II, American liberals advocated the internationalization of the New Deal. Common Sense wrote in early 1942: "Roosevelt and the New Deal can still give us something to fight for, us and the British, and the conquered peoples of Europe." Freda Kirchwey, editor of The Nation, expressed the hope that "only a New Deal for the world, more far-reaching and consistent than our own faltering New Deal, can prevent the coming of World War III." She warned that

A return to the power structure of pre-war Europe--with its economic relationship unchanged, its colonial system intact, its former ruling groups in control-- . . . would mean only a new cycle of economic disintegration, dictatorship, and war . . .¹

Vice President Henry Wallace was the international New Dealer's political and spiritual leader. As early as 1934 he recognized the universal application of Roosevelt's recovery program:

. . . I feel confident that we must expand our vision to embrace the far off countries and must take steps to adjust our economic affairs so that we are benefitting the far-off countries at the same time we are benefitting the rank and file of our people.

"A modern Isaiah," wrote the Secretary of Agriculture, in his

¹"Dear Mr. President," Common Sense II (April, 1942), pp. 126-127; Freda Kirchwey, "Program of Action," Nation 158 (March 11, 1944), pp. 300-305.

book, Statesmanship and Religion, "would cry out against international injustices. He would go to the people of the different nations . . . and call for a New Deal among nations." Henry Wallace therefore considered World War II, in the words of Eric Goldman, as "the Armageddon of Liberalism."² Eleanor Roosevelt shared her friend's vision. She supported his selection as the Democratic party's 1940 candidate for vice president. After the Democrats denied Wallace the 1944 nomination, Eleanor Roosevelt praised him in My Day:

There is no question in my mind but that Henry Wallace would rather be defeated in a fight which he had undertaken than trim his sails or disavow a belief which he held. There is integrity and pride in all the Wallaces back of him, and history will record no lack of these qualities in the present day Wallace because of the years he has spent in Washington . . . He believes in the rights of people--all the people, not just a few. He is an economist and he has a practical mind. At times, to meet existing circumstances, he has had to accept certain modifications of his own objectives, but never has he changed his goal . . . Mr. Wallace has made far more of the office of Vice President than most men have been able to make in the past. When he has thought things were worth doing, he has done them, no matter how much it cost him personally.³

In a New Republic review of Democracy Reborn, a collection of Wallace's speeches, she disputed the claim that Wallace was

²Alonzo Hamby, Beyond the New Deal: Harry S. Truman and American Liberalism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), pp. 22-27; Eric F. Goldman, Rendezvous With Destiny: A History of Modern American Reform (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), p. 303; Henry A. Wallace, Statesmanship and Religion (New York: Round Table Press, 1934), pp. 101-103.

³My Day, 24 July, 1944.

"a dreamer, an impractical person, a mystic."

If one were to pick out the one outstanding and continuing theme of all that Wallace says, it is his belief that whatever is done, must be done for the general welfare of the majority of the people. This belief colors his attitude on domestic as well as international problems.

You will hear people say that they are afraid of Henry Wallace because he is a dreamer, an impractical person, a mystic. No one who reads these speeches attentively would be afraid on any of these counts. They would recognize instead a man of curiosity, of deep religious feeling, not bound by any particular doctrine. They would know that he had to be practical because his scientific training was too intense to allow loose thinking. They would know that out of his background, nothing which was not truly American could possibly grow. He has traditional American attitudes on so many things that this fear of him which has been implanted in some people's minds will seem strange to anyone who reads him carefully.

She especially praised Wallace for warning

us of the possible danger of American fascism. He knows our weaknesses, he knows our temptations, but he has a deep-seated faith in the common sense, idealism and purpose which our people have. As far back as 1940 he said, "There has continually flamed in the hearts of Americans the belief that this continent is different. On this new soil, we have thought, mankind would escape from the compulsions, the suspicions and the greeds of the Old World."

But Mr. Wallace knows that we have to grow with the times and he is trying to point out the way we must travel.⁴

Henry Wallace pointed the way in his May 1942 speech entitled "The Price of Free World Victory." The Vice

⁴Eleanor Roosevelt, "Henry Wallace's Democracy," New Republic III (August 7, 1944), pp. 165-166.

President invited his audience to join a Biblical crusade to purge the world of the Satanic forces of wealth and privilege. "The people's revolution is on the march," Wallace proclaimed, "and the devil and all his angels cannot prevail against it. They cannot prevail for on the side of the people is the Lord." "The century in which we are entering-- the century which will come out of this war," Wallace declared, "can be and must be the century of the common man." In this new world order, he promised an end to imperialism, the abolition of cartels, and freedom from want.⁵

Shortly after Wallace delivered his "Century of the Common Man" speech, Eleanor Roosevelt informed him that she had learned from young people that "his speech was the basis for more real stirring of thought than anything else that has happened." On September 3, 1943 she referred to Wallace's address in a nationally broadcast speech to the International Student Assembly:

His speech created a picture in our minds and awakened our common desire to wipe out forever the causes which bring about insecurity and war among the nations of the world. If we need to emerge into a People's Century, we recognize the fact that people all over the world have never really had one.⁶

Eleanor Roosevelt used the same international liberal

⁵John Morton Blum, ed., The Price Of Vision: The Diary of Henry A. Wallace, 1942-1946 (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1973), pp. 635-640.

⁶Eleanor Roosevelt to Henry Wallace, July 31, 1942, Reel 40, Number 1247, Henry A. Wallace Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library; Speech to the International Student Assembly, September 3, 1943, Box 3045, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

slogans as Wallace. In her speeches, articles, and columns, the phrases "People's Century," "Century of the Common Man," "People's War," and "People's Crusade" appear frequently. For example, Eleanor Roosevelt told her radio audience:

Unless it be made unmistakably clear that this is a people's war, that the people themselves understand it as such and that it can be won by the fighting and working of the people themselves, there is a grave danger that it will be followed by a peace which is not a people's peace.

In an April 16, 1943 My Day she captured the essence of Wallace's appeal for unity of all classes in the war:

Since this is to be the century of the common man there must be a partnership between those who work with their hands and those who work with their heads. They must all insist on their common interest because they are workers of the world. They are the mass of people who must control their governments in order to have a chance to build a better life throughout the world.

Eleanor Roosevelt joined the Vice President in warning the enemies of liberal democracy:

The people themselves are going to run their own affairs, they are not going to delegate them to a few people and become slaves to those few. Having established that, we shall still be carrying out the revolution, the revolution of people all over the world.⁷

⁷Pan American Coffee Broadcast, March 22, 1942; Eleanor Roosevelt, draft of "What Are We Fighting For," American Magazine (March, 1942), Box 3045, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers; My Day, 16 April, 1943.

Mrs. Roosevelt quickly discovered that Winston Churchill did not share the dream she and Wallace had of a liberal millenium. Right after Pearl Harbor Mrs. Roosevelt told Justine Polier of hearing Churchill tell her husband, "After the war we've got to form an Anglo-American alliance to meet the problems of the world." F.D.R. responded, "Yes, Yes, Yes." Eleanor Roosevelt grew so incensed on hearing this discussion that she told Churchill, "It doesn't mean he agrees with you; it means he is listening." On another occasion, Judge Polier recalled attending a White House dinner with Mrs. Roosevelt and F.D.R. who had just returned from Casablanca. The President described visiting rubber plantations where he saw children with legs about two finger sizes in circumference. Mrs. Roosevelt asked him: "Did you tell Winston?" F.D.R. answered, "Yes, I did." His wife then responded, "Well are ours any better?"⁸

At a spring 1944 Hyde Park luncheon Mrs. Roosevelt informed Churchill that peace could be insured only if the world's standard of living were improved. Churchill again countered with the suggestion that an Anglo-American peace force would prevent future wars. F.D.R. just listened.⁹ Although he listed "freedom from want" as one of his peace time goals, it was his wife who pressed for its realization. In a late 1943 My Day, for example, she proposed the following

⁸Interview with Judge Justine Wise Polier by Dr. Thomas Soapes, September 14, 1977, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, p. 33.

⁹James MacGregor Burns, Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom, 1940-1945 (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, 1970), p. 521.

program to rebuild the war-torn world:

I hope that one of our first aims will be, as far as possible, to alleviate the pangs of hunger for many people throughout the world who are now suffering and to give the children everywhere the most adequate diet that we possibly can, so that we may repair as quickly as possible the harm which these war years may have already wrought on their innocent minds and bodies.

Second only to the need for food, I think is the need for helping people all over the world to get back on their own feet and re-establish their own economy in order that they may take part in the world economy of the future. This must be built on a scale of plentiful production in order that there may be full employment for all people and a rising standard of living throughout the world.

This means a basic change in the old type of economy where power was maintained in the hands of a comparatively small number of people who were influential in world finance and world business. The different cartel groups are illustrative of an international type of cooperation which we undoubtedly want to wipe out if we are to achieve a new type of economic freedom for the people of the world as a whole.¹⁰

In this statement, Eleanor Roosevelt's application of New Deal rhetoric and economics illustrates her link with the international liberals.

Mrs. Roosevelt also recognized the "open door" potential of a universal relief and recovery program. Haunted by the "ghosts of depression past and future,"¹¹ she feared that once the war ended the United States would have a surplus of

¹⁰My Day, 13 November, 1943.

¹¹Walter LaFeber, America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1975 (New York: Wiley, 1976), Chapter 1. Professor LaFeber uses this phrase in his introductory chapter on the Open Door.

manufactured goods. Through rebuilding the devastated world, future American aid would insure markets for the anticipated glut and help the common man. In a 1943 address to the Australian people, Mrs. Roosevelt linked the Open Door aim of the program to the dreams of the international New Dealers:

We can make up our minds that the time has come for world thinking, and see to it that we use every bit of ingenuity and invention that we have to make our peacetime economy an economy of abundance and employment for all people with low prices on goods so that the people who are just beginning to struggle upward in the rest of the world and who need our goods will be able to buy them. Those are the world markets that we need, but we must remember that at the same time we must try to help the people to whom we wish to sell, and to produce such things as we desire to buy because a one-sided economy is never, in the long run, of permanent value.¹²

Henry Wallace also advocated a liberal Open Door policy. In 1942, he said, "We can be decently human and hard-headed if we exchange our post-war surplus for goods for peace and for improving the standard of living of so-called backward peoples." Wallace further proposed world-wide T.V.A. and W.P.A. projects financed by an international lending authority.¹³

¹²My Day, 26 August, 1943; Broadcast, Sydney, Australia, September 7, 1943, Box 3048, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

¹³Russell Lord, ed., Democracy Reborn (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1944), p. 205. On numerous occasions Wallace called for T.V.A.'s for the world. On December 29, 1942, he said, for example: "This war will be a failure and the peace will be a failure if we do not provide that, as far as humanly possible, food shall be provided for every innocent babe regardless of its nationality. The example we set here, if

Franklin D. Roosevelt never publicly expressed this dream. Perhaps the efforts by Senator Robert Taft and Representative Claire Booth Luce to portray this liberal T.V.A. vision as "globaloney" persuaded him to remain silent. Nevertheless, Roosevelt was interested in exporting T.V.A.'s. Henry Field, an anthropologist who advised F.D.R. on this issue, recalled F.D.R. telling him:

I want to make North Africa the granary of Europe, just as it was in Roman days. We can pump desalinated water from the Mediterranean for irrigation and build air-conditioned cities in the desert. Technicians will be recruited from among the displaced persons. Steel pipe and housing materials can be manufactured as each European country converts from wartime production to peaceful economy. We will transport the men and equipment in an international fleet. We will pay high wages, probably with a withholding tax to force savings. This will encourage the technicians to bring their families. That will be one practical way to take up the slack and encourage migration and settlement. Although this will be expensive, it will be far better than the dole--just handing out billions for doing nothing. The North African project will have a counterpart to help Southeast Asia and the Pacific area. We may have others along the Khabur in Syria, the Jordan, and in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley.

In the report of a conversation he had with the Secretary of Labor, Field discovered that the President hoped during retirement to work on such a project:

Miss Frances Perkins told me that the last time she saw the President she asked him, "What are

truthfully and honestly followed, will result in the establishment of a T.V.A. on the Danube and upon every river of similar magnitude anywhere." [New York Times, 30 December, 1942.]

you going to do after you are no longer President?" F.D.R. replied that he planned to devote the rest of his life to re-developing that area from the Sahara to the Tigris-Euphrates Valley. He talked glowingly of irrigation projects, dams, hydro-electric systems, and a great agricultural renaissance. It was obvious from his talk that one of his keenest interests was this project, which he had discussed with me some months before at Shangri-la, later Camp David.¹⁴

Eleanor Roosevelt shared her husband's enthusiasm. In a My Day review of David Lilienthal's book T.V.A.: Democracy On The March, Mrs. Roosevelt observed that she had seen the program's success at home and expressed confidence that it could be introduced to India, China, Africa, and South and Central America.¹⁵

II

Before the developing areas in the world could utilize T.V.A. programs, Eleanor Roosevelt and the international liberals insisted that the colonies and client-states be freed from colonial control. Walter White, the president of the N.A.A.C.P., acknowledged Mrs. Roosevelt's opposition to imperialism by inserting the following quotation of hers as the preface to his book, A Rising Wind:

¹⁴Henry Field, "M" Project For F.D.R.: Studies on Migration and Settlement," 1962, pp. 327-328, 374-375, Henry Field Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.

¹⁵My Day, 14 June, 1944.

At the close, Mrs. Roosevelt quoted a phrase from the late Thomas Wolfe, ending ". . . a wind is rising and the rivers flow."

"Yes," she said, "a wind is rising throughout the world of free men everywhere, and they will not be kept in bondage. The rivers flow in the democracies that now exist through to those who are held temporarily in slavery and on to the deluded human beings who are voluntary slaves."

"They have thought that force and cruelty and people who cast aside free choice and accept the will of one man or a few men can endure and dominate. But the rivers flow so swiftly they cannot be turned back, and the new beds which they make for themselves are in the pattern of new ideas which the people who believe in freedom in the world are fashioning today. Democracy shall triumph."

The New York Herald Tribune, September 29, 1941.¹⁶

Although White considered his friend's words an attack on imperialism and racism, Eleanor Roosevelt approached both issues more cautiously than most liberals and international New Dealers. Domestic political considerations as well as America's relations with its allies explain her moderation.

In contrast to Henry Wallace and Wendell Willkie, Eleanor Roosevelt refused to criticize publicly the British policy in India. Paul Kellogg, editor of Survey Associates, wrote to Mrs. Roosevelt to enlist her aid in arranging a meeting between Louis Fischer, the liberal journalist and friend of Gandhi, and the President. Mrs. Roosevelt sent Kellogg's letter to F.D.R. Roosevelt answered:

¹⁶Walter White, A Rising Wind (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1945), preface.

I would go very slow on this Gandhi business. I am not at all certain that Louis Fischer is right either in the sureness of his judgment or in his description of Gandhi's mind as being flexible and having integrity and openness to accommodation. There are other sides to this picture. At this time it is best to "lay off" and not get into another spider's web.¹⁷

In her attacks on imperialism, Eleanor Roosevelt avoided entering "another spider's web" by not directly criticizing the British, French, or Dutch empires.

Eleanor Roosevelt approached the civil rights issue in a similar fashion. She deplored segregation as forcefully as any American liberal. Right after Pearl Harbor she wrote:

If we cannot meet with fairness to our citizens of every nationality, of really believing in the Bill of Rights and making it a reality for all loyal American citizens, regardless of race, creed, or color; if we can not keep in check anti-Semitism, anti-racial feelings, as well as anti-religious feelings, then we shall have removed from the world the one real hope for the future on which all humanity must now rely.¹⁸

In a New Republic article Mrs. Roosevelt demanded for all Americans equality of education, freedom of expression, the right to vote, and a guaranteed job. "These are inherent rights in a democracy," she continued. "I do not see how we can fight the war and deny these rights to any citizen of our own land." During a nationwide radio broadcast in 1945, Mrs. Roosevelt asked:

¹⁷Frank Kellogg to Eleanor Roosevelt, August 25, 1942, F.D.R. to Eleanor Roosevelt, September 10, 1942, Box 1648, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

¹⁸My Day, 16 December, 1941.

What about the colored boy from Harlem who lost an arm or leg in Italy? Is he to be rehabilitated after the long months in the hospital and then denied employment because of discrimination which will make it more difficult for him than for his buddy--a white boy--wounded at the same spot and nursed back to health during those same long months? The skins are of a different color, but the future should be faced on an equal basis for both, and they should be treated equally as well by the people whom they helped keep safe at home.¹⁹

Nevertheless, Mrs. Roosevelt advocated a gradualist approach to ending segregation. In an article in The Negro Digest entitled "If I Were A Negro," she advised blacks not to do "too much demanding" but to prove themselves and in the end "good performances would be acknowledged." Although beginning quite strongly in attacking racism, the following statement from the New Republic illustrates her caution on this issue:

It seems trite to say to the Negro, you must have patience, when he has had patience so long, you must not expect miracles overnight, when he can look back to the years of slavery and say--how many nights he has waited for justice! Nevertheless, that is what we must continue to say in the interests of our government as a whole and of the Negro people; but that does not mean that we must sit idle and do nothing. We must keep moving forward steadily, removing restrictions which have no sense, and fighting prejudice. If we are wise we shall do this where it is easiest to do at first, and watch it spread gradually to places where the old prejudices are slow to disappear.²⁰

¹⁹Eleanor Roosevelt, "Race, Religion and Prejudice," New Republic 106 (May 11, 1942), p. 630. Broadcast, National Democratic Forum, February 24, 1945, Box 3051, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

¹⁸Lash, Eleanor and Franklin, p. 674; Roosevelt, "Race, Religion, and Prejudice," p. 630.

The 1941 March on Washington, organized by A. Philip Randolph, troubled Mrs. Roosevelt. Privately she informed the rally's leaders that she sympathized with their goals but the prospect of a mass protest frightened her. Acting on orders from her husband, Mrs. Roosevelt tried to persuade Randolph to cancel the march. The civil rights leader refused. He told Mrs. Roosevelt that he would postpone the march only if F.D.R. issued an executive order "with teeth in it" banning discrimination in the defense industries. Eleanor Roosevelt thus advised her husband to request personally that Randolph cancel the march. After meeting with Randolph, Franklin D. Roosevelt issued his historic order ending segregation in the defense industries. Randolph then cancelled the march.²¹

Along with the civil rights issue, Eleanor Roosevelt struggled with the injustice of relocating Japanese-Americans in detention camps. Nearly two months before her husband issued his March 1942 executive order, she warned Americans that one cannot "tell the difference between a citizen and a non-citizen by just looking at him, by seeing the color of his skin, or by hearing him talk." However, after the Japanese-Americans were moved, she endorsed the internment. In a 1943 Collier's Magazine article Eleanor Roosevelt argued that the evacuation was performed with

²¹Jervis Anderson, A. Philip Randolph: A Biographical Portrait (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1973), pp. 694-697.

"remarkable skill and kindness" and the Japanese-Americans proved themselves to be "patient and courageous." She implored her readers to treat the Japanese-Americans fairly and she condemned the racist feelings in California.²² In the case of the Japanese-Americans, as with ending discrimination or challenging Churchill on India, Eleanor Roosevelt could not break with the administration's policies. Thus she had to moderate or camouflage her true stand on these three issues.

Eleanor Roosevelt believed that ending racism at home and abroad, and introducing the New Deal to the world, would usher in the "century of the common man." She hoped this liberal ideology would be the best deterrent against either resurgent fascism or communism. Although she supported the popular front, Eleanor Roosevelt always distrusted Stalin and his American Communist and liberal supporters.

III

Whatever sympathy Eleanor Roosevelt had for the Soviet Union vanished when Stalin and Hitler concluded their non-aggression pact of 1939. Mrs. Roosevelt had been impressed with the way the Communists had modernized their country through economic planning and public ownership. She praised

²²Pan American Coffee Bureau Broadcast, January 11, 1942, Box 3044, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers; Eleanor Roosevelt, "The Democratic Effort," Common Ground 2 (Spring, 1942), pp. 9-10; "A Challenge to Sportsmanship," Colliers 112 (October 16, 1943), p. 71.

Moscow's offer to cooperate with the democracies in a popular front against fascism. However, Mrs. Roosevelt never had any illusions concerning the nature of the Soviet government. She had always regarded Stalin as an untrustworthy, ruthless dictator who had trampled on the human rights of his people.²³

Stalin's pact with Hitler outraged Mrs. Roosevelt. In a letter to Anna Louise Strong, one of the leading American apologists for the Soviet Union, Mrs. Roosevelt said that the effect of the treaty was simply to provide Hitler the freedom to attack the west. She could not trust Stalin, "a man who, as part of a government, wipes out a people's religion, no matter how the church deserved correction," nor could she accept Moscow's claim that the Red Army had liberated Poland. Mrs. Roosevelt cited a report charging the Russians with executing small Polish landowners and priests. She was equally infuriated by the Russian invasion of Finland in 1940.²⁴ When the Cold War set in, Eleanor Roosevelt did not forget Stalin's Pact with Hitler and the invasion of Finland.

Mrs. Roosevelt considered the American Communist Party's defense of the Nazi-Soviet pact and of the Baltic War morally reprehensible. One month before Molotov and von Ribbentrop signed the agreement, the party called once again for the popular front against Fascism. Its sudden endorsement of

²³Joseph P. Lash, Eleanor Roosevelt: A Friend's Memoir (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, 1964), Chapter 1.

²⁴Lash, Eleanor and Franklin, p. 585.

Moscow's treaty revealed to Mrs. Roosevelt that Earl Browder and his associates "are discovered not to have been acting as free agents, but as directed ones."²⁵ Still she believed their civil liberties should be preserved, and she continued to cooperate with Communists in causes she agreed with such as civil rights and refugee relief. Although she recognized that the Kremlin controlled the party, Mrs. Roosevelt firmly believed that the depression, not allegiance to a foreign nation and ideology, had produced most American Communists. Joseph Lash recalled her often saying, "The Communists are dangerous only as we ourselves fail."²⁶

Lash was active in the American Youth Congress, which represented youth groups of all political and religious interests, and lobbied for the New Deal Programs designed to help young people. Impressed with this goal, Eleanor Roosevelt became one of the organization's sponsors. In the fall of 1939, the House Committee on Un-American Activities, popularly known as the Dies Committee, cited the American Youth Congress as a Communist-front organization. Mrs. Roosevelt protested this as red-baiting. She announced that she could personally verify the group's loyalty since she had sat in on its strategy sessions, spent hours talking to its

²⁵Eleanor Roosevelt to Anna Louise Strong, August 28, 1939; September 27, 1939; October 17, 1939; Box 1529, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

²⁶Eleanor Roosevelt to Anna Louise Strong, October 25, 1939, Box 1529 Eleanor Roosevelt Papers; Lash, Eleanor and Franklin, Chapter 48; Lash, Eleanor Roosevelt: A Friend's Memoir, pp. 73-76.

leaders, read its own resolutions and FBI reports on its activities.²⁷

In late November the Dies Committee subpoenaed the Congress's leaders. Mrs. Roosevelt gave two reasons for her decision to accompany the young people to the hearings:

One is that as far as is humanly possible, I give to young people whom I know and trust, the feeling that in any situation, particularly a difficult one, they may count on my assistance. My second interest is a desire to observe to what extent the Government is not only striving to uncover unAmerican activities, but is giving to youth the assurance that their government does not look upon them with suspicion until they are proved guilty, and is anxious to help them in every way to build up the faith and trust in democracy which should be the heritage of every youngster in the United States.²⁸

She heard Joseph Lash admit that Communists held leadership positions in the organization but deny they ran the Congress. Except for the committee counsel, J. B. Matthews, a known red-baiter, "whose attitude, tone of voice, and phraseology made one feel that a prisoner considered guilty was tried before the bar," Eleanor Roosevelt found the committee treated the young people fairly. She maintained at her December 4 press conference that the Congress was not a Communist front. Two months later, responding to the demand of John Hamilton, chairman of the Republican National Committee, that the Congress purge its Communist members,

²⁷New York Times, 22 November, 1939.

²⁸My Day, 1 December, 1939.

she reiterated her position that the youth organization had no connection with the party. The Congress, Mrs. Roosevelt said, stood for the "same tolerance, freedom of expression and representation that we as a nation stand for." What Eleanor Roosevelt failed to realize was that many of the Congress' leaders hid their Communist affiliations from her. At one meeting she asked that the Communists stand to identify themselves. Nobody rose. Joseph Lash recalled that Mrs. Roosevelt demanded that the leaders be honest with her. She soon discovered some were not.²⁹

Mrs. Roosevelt enthusiastically backed the American Youth Congress's Washington pilgrimage held in early 1940. She arranged for the delegates to visit the White House grounds on February 10. They heard her husband attack those in the organization who espoused a pro-Stalinist foreign policy. The President further described the Soviet government as a "dictatorship as absolute as any other dictatorship in the world." He concluded his address advising those Communists listening to him to advocate change only through constitutional means. Many booed F.D.R.'s stern lecture.³⁰

The following day Eleanor Roosevelt held a public question and answer session with the delegates. When asked whether the

²⁹New York Times, 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 December, 1939; 6 February, 1940; My Day, 2 December, 1939; E. J. Kahn, "The Years Alone," Part 1, The New Yorker 24 (June 12, 1948), p. 36; James I. Loeb, Jr., Interview, February 23, 1979, New York City.

³⁰New York Times, 11 February, 1940.

American Youth Congress should condemn the invasion of Finland, the first lady cleverly answered that the representatives should not go on record for anything they did not believe in; "however," she quickly added, "I think it is only fair to say that you don't understand the back history underlying many European questions." Mrs. Roosevelt then expressed her sympathy for Spain, China and Czechoslovakia, all victims of fascism. "I also have sympathy with Finland!" Eleanor Roosevelt added. She concluded her answer with this attack on the Soviet Union: "There is no excuse for a big nation to invade a small nation. . . ." A number in the audience also booed Mrs. Roosevelt.³¹

In the spring of 1940 Eleanor Roosevelt worked with the Congress' non-Communist members to salvage their organization. She advised Lash that the only way for the Congress to regain national favor, following the Dies hearings and the heckling of her husband, was to endorse the nation's foreign policy and condemn the Russian invasion of Finland. The Congress rejected her plea at its summer convention. Sadly discovering that the convention's speeches and positions bore a remarkable similarity to the Communist party line, she quietly severed her ties with the Congress. Following Hitler's invasion of Russia, she rejected their overtures for a new popular front commitment. In This I Remember, written during the early cold war, Eleanor Roosevelt cited her experience

³¹New York Times, 12 February, 1940.

with the Congress as a lesson on Communist tactics that would soon help her in the United Nations and in her relationship with Henry Wallace:

I discovered for myself how infiltration of an organization is accomplished. I was taught how communists get themselves into positions of importance. I understand all their methods of objection and delay, the effort to tire out the rest of the group and carry the vote when all their opponents have gone home.³²

³²Lash, Eleanor Roosevelt: A Friend's Memoir, p. 205; Eleanor Roosevelt, This I Remember (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), p. 205.

CHAPTER V

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT, THE LIBERALS, AND THE
ORIGINS OF THE COLD WAR: 1945 - 1948

Following the death of her husband, Eleanor Roosevelt looked forward to writing her column without the restrictions that she placed on herself as First Lady. "Now I am on my own," she announced in My Day, "and I hope to write as a newspaper woman." She informed Harold Ickes of her desire to help the Democrats, not by articulating the "party line," but by aiding "the liberals in the country." "If I could write interesting columns and do an article now and then," she declared, "my voice would not be silent."¹

Eleanor Roosevelt continued to advocate liberal peace goals: A New Deal For the World, an end to racial discrimination, the dismantling of empires, and the establishment of the United Nations. One day before the convening of the San Francisco conference, she observed,

Now, at last, we come to the San Francisco meeting, the purpose of which is not to write in detail all the plans for the future. Rather, it is merely to set up an organization before which, at a later time, these problems of peace will come up for discussion. The setting up of this machinery is not an end in itself, but it is an essential step on the way. Without the machinery, future generations could never build a peaceful world.

Mrs. Roosevelt further insisted that the United States had a special responsibility to aid in reconstructing the

¹Joseph P. Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1972), pp. 27-28.

world. She anticipated that "some foolish people will ask, 'why do we have to concern ourselves with the development and reconstruction of ruined countries?' We are the greatest producing country in the world," Eleanor Roosevelt replied.

We need markets not only at home, but abroad, and we cannot have them unless people can start up their industries and national economy again and buy from us. If Europe or Asia falls apart because of starvation or lack of work for their people, chaos will result and World War III will be in the making.²

In May 1945 Mrs. Roosevelt learned that the French Stalinist, Jacques Duclos, had ordered his American and West European comrades to replace the popular front with a renewed commitment to world revolution. She wrote in My Day that the Communist Party of the United States' decision to follow the Duclos letter reveals that the party was an agent of a foreign power. Eleanor Roosevelt warned that the American people should be frightened when a group decides to "propagandize rather than cooperate." "Now the party," she insisted, sought "to force Communism on our democracy." "That," she promised, "we will not tolerate." When the American Communists protested her position, she indignantly responded,

I hope the Communist Political Association 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

²My Day, 25 April, 21 May, 8 June, 1945.

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.

Mrs. Roosevelt defended an individual's right to be a Communist as long as he advocated his philosophy peacefully; however, recalling her personal experience with Communist deception, she said:

I will not trust them. That is what I meant 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.³

Eleanor Roosevelt was equally disturbed with the Stalinization of Poland. "Poland has a right to its freedom," she wrote in June; but she added, "it is evident, too, that Russia, in return for her valiant fighting, has a right to feel her European doorway is safe."⁴ Mrs. Roosevelt soon learned that these two goals were irreconcilable, but in 1945 she still hoped that a compromise with Russia over Poland and other outstanding issues could be reached.

Russia, she emphasized,

is an unknown quantity. Her strength is not yet measured. The fact that she has done in some 25 years what the rest of Europe has taken several hundred years to do gives many a sense of insecurity. We

³My Day, 9, 22 June, 1945.

⁴My Day, 1 June, 1945.

know how rapidly her people have become literate. We know their fanaticism in defense of their form of government and of the leaders who have turned medieval conditions into a modern industrial civilization. We often do not understand that such rapid development means uneven development. I am told that throughout Russia you often hear the phrase, "It will be better." That is a sign that they know their accomplishment is not yet achieved. Something great has happened, nevertheless. We, in this country, do not quite understand it as yet, and there lies one of the reasons for our uncertainty.

Eleanor Roosevelt praised Stalin for honoring the Yalta commitment when he entered the war against Japan in late July. She defended him from the accusation that he joined the Pacific war only to

be included in the benefits when peace came. . . . I can only remark that those who say this have no understanding of the Russian character, and no knowledge of the facts. As far as military commitments are concerned, I have never heard it said that the Soviet Union had shirked any of them or had ever broken her word.⁵

For the anti-Stalinists who suspected that he stalled the attack on Japanese forces in China to improve his chances for a less costly victory, Mrs. Roosevelt reminded them that the same accusation could be made against the United States for delaying the second front. Eleanor Roosevelt especially deplored those Americans who believed war with Russia was inevitable. With the U.S. possessing the atomic bomb, she

⁵My Day, 8, 11 August, 1945.

wrote, entering such a war

means annihilation. There is only one answer to these fears, and that is a belief that the Soviet Union and the United States, as well as the United Nations as a whole, can live peacefully together . . .

One way to achieve this unity, she suggested, was through sharing the secret information regarding the manufacture of the bomb with Russia.⁶

In the summer and fall of 1945 Mrs. Roosevelt was critical of American foreign policy. She opposed the abrupt summer cutoff of Lend-Lease: "Through a lack of forethought and realization of our responsibility, we may, however, create discord and dislike for ourselves." "Our international manners," Eleanor Roosevelt suggested in My Day, "perhaps need reconsidering." To her English friend, Lady Florence Willert, she added, "Over here I think we are finding it very hard to grow up and I hate the way we handled the end of Lend-Lease."⁷ Eleanor Roosevelt's sympathy with Stalin's fear of capitalist encirclement appears in an exchange of letters she had with President Truman. If the United States only provided economic aid to Great Britain, she wrote the President, this could be interpreted by other nations as an economic alliance against them. Truman replied with the promise that he also planned to offer the Soviets economic assistance.⁸

⁶Ibid.

⁷My Day, 31 August, 1945; Eleanor Roosevelt to Florence Willert, August 31, 1945, Florence Willert Papers, Yale University Library.

⁸Eleanor Roosevelt to Harry Truman, November 20, 1945; Harry Truman to Eleanor Roosevelt, November 26, 1945, Box 4560 Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

Mrs. Roosevelt was also disturbed by the events in the Middle East and Asia. She advised Truman that "we would not have on our conscience the death of at least fifty of these creatures daily," if Great Britain admitted more Jews into Palestine. Although she recognized that the need for Middle Eastern oil complicated the Palestine issue, she warned the President that

Great Britain is always anxious to have some one pull her chestnuts out of the fire, and though I am very fond of the British individually and like a great many of them, I object very much to being used by them.

Turning to China, Eleanor Roosevelt wrote that the U.S. had to

stop the civil war there by moral pressure and not by the use of military force, and insist that Generalissimo Chiang give wider representation to all Chinese groups, which will allow the middle of the road Democratic League to grow, I am very much afraid that continued war there may lead us to general war again.

"Being a strong nation and having the greatest physical, mental and spiritual strength today," Eleanor Roosevelt wrote in concluding her letter to Truman,

gives us a tremendous responsibility. We can not use our strength to coerce, but if we are big enough, I think we can lead, but it will require great vision and understanding on our part.⁹

⁹Ibid.

As a member of the American delegation to the London Conference of January 1946, Eleanor Roosevelt hoped the U.S. could provide such leadership in the newly formed United Nations Organization.

I

In late 1945 President Truman confided to Secretary of State James F. Byrnes that there were two liberals whose support he had to be assured of: Henry Wallace, because of his popularity among labor, and Eleanor Roosevelt, because of her influence with the Black voters. Truman instructed Byrnes to find a position for Eleanor Roosevelt in the area of foreign affairs. Byrnes placed Eleanor Roosevelt's name on the top of the list of the proposed delegation to the upcoming London conference of the United Nations.¹⁰ The Nation praised this initiative: "To millions of Americans she is a friend who can be relied upon to voice their deepest aspirations for a better world. . . . To millions in other lands she is the symbol of the most generous aspects of our nation."¹¹

The American delegation included Secretary of State James F. Byrnes, Edward Stettinius, John Foster Dulles, and Senators Tom Connally and Arthur Vandenberg. Mrs. Roosevelt was at first reluctant to accept Truman's appointment because

¹⁰Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, p. 36.

¹¹Nation, 161 (December 29, 1945), p. 722.

she felt that she lacked diplomatic experience. She realized, however, that she could still make a contribution to the conference:

Some things I can take to the first meeting: a sincere desire to understand the problems of the rest of the world and our relationship to them; a real good will for people throughout the world; a hope that I shall be able to build a sense of personal trust and friendship with my co-workers . . .¹²

Upon arriving in London, Mrs. Roosevelt discovered there were few women delegates. In an N.B.C. radio interview she described this as "a pity because I think that men and women working together must eventually build this organization." "I walked on eggs," Eleanor Roosevelt recollected in On My Own:

I knew that as the only woman on the delegation I was not very welcome. Moreover, if I failed to be a useful member, it would not be considered merely that I as an individual had failed, but that all women had failed, and there would be little chance for others to serve in the near future.¹³

Eleanor Roosevelt recognized the limited goal of the conference. Its aim, she told her radio listeners, was merely "to try and see whether some machinery can be devised which will keep nations together and make them work together, so

¹²Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, p. 37.

¹³The National Hour, N.B.C., January 13, 1946, Box 3051, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers; Eleanor Roosevelt, On My Own (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), p. 377.

that peace can come to the world."¹⁴ Although she claimed that the conference was a success, the conduct of the American delegates troubled her. Mrs. Roosevelt wrote her daughter and Bernard Baruch:

Secretary Byrnes seems to be afraid to decide on what he thinks is right and stand on it. I am going to try to tell him tactfully that everyone has to get the things they need from us and that is our ace in the hole. We could lead but we don't. We shift to conciliate and trail either Britain or Russia and at times I am sure a feeling that we had convictions and would fight for them would be reassuring to them. Secy. Byrnes is afraid of his own delegation. He has held very few meetings and now we begin to need them and yet we have to ask to see him in separate groups. It isn't that he is leaving me out, for the others complain to me.

Mrs. Roosevelt added that Dulles and Vandenberg were not able to "build friendship for us, they have no confidence so they are rude and arrogant and create suspicion." Eleanor Roosevelt was also angry with the President and Secretary of State James Byrnes for failing to brief the delegation adequately. Durward Sandifer, the State Department official who advised Mrs. Roosevelt in London wrote of hearing her tell Ben Cohen:

She had not talked much with other delegates and especially with the Russians because she did not feel that she knew what were the objectives and policies of either the President or the Secretary of State. She had offered to go to see the

¹⁴The National Hour, op. cit.

President when he appointed her but he had said it was not necessary and because she had only a week to get ready and had many things to do, she did not insist, but never again would she serve without a full and frank talk with the President and Secretary of State.¹⁵

The delegation assigned Mrs. Roosevelt to Committee Three, dealing with humanitarian, social and cultural issues. Her male peers believed this committee would be safest for an inexperienced woman. After briefings by State Department officials, Eleanor Roosevelt soon realized that her assignment would be more important than had been expected. From January 28 to February 12, 1946, Eleanor Roosevelt participated in an exploratory debate in Committee Three concerning the fate of over one million displaced East Europeans living in western detention camps. The British delegate, Philip Noel Baker, proposed the creation of an international authority under United Nations auspices to solve this refugee crisis. Eleanor Roosevelt, joined by the other western delegates, supported this resolution. The Yugoslavian delegate, Dr. Ales Bebler, denied the refugee problem was international, pointing out that eleven million people had already returned to their nations of origin. A. A. Arutiunian of the Soviet Union agreed and proposed that the most practical solution to the

¹⁵Eleanor Roosevelt, Diary of London Conference, January 16, 29 entries, Anna Roosevelt Halsted Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library; Mrs. Roosevelt's secretary sent the identical appraisal to Bernard Baruch [Bernard Baruch Papers, Princeton University Library]; Irene Reitman Sandifer, "Mrs. Roosevelt As We Knew Her," copyright 1975 by Mrs. Durward Sandifer, 8304 Oakford Place, Silver Springs, Maryland, pp. 6-7.

problem would be repatriation.

As the debate continued, the cleavage between East and West widened. Arutiunian's classification of the displaced peoples as mostly "traitors, quislings, and war criminals," elicited vigorous protests from Eleanor Roosevelt and her fellow western delegates, who claimed that many refused to return for political and religious reasons. On February 8, Bebler's resolution--"No propaganda should be permitted in refugee camps against the interests of the organization of the United Nations or her members, nor propaganda against returning to their native countries"--invited this criticism from the American delegate:

Who is to decide what is propaganda? We are here to encourage as much individual freedom as possible. We shall do nothing to restrict individual liberty. . . . Are we of the United Nations so feeble that we have to forbid human beings to voice their thoughts; are we so weak that we have to fear their discussion with their friends?

The committee rejected the Communist resolution.¹⁶ Eleanor Roosevelt wrote Anna that she found the meetings

. . . a liberal education in backgrounds and personalities but one thing stands out. Since the Civil War we have had no political or religious refugees fleeing our country and we forget to take it into account. No European or South American forgets it for a minute. Next it seems to take years of stability to make you

¹⁶My Day, 30 January, 2 February 2, 1946; John George Stoessinger, The Refugee and the World Community (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958), pp. 61-72.

look beyond your own situation and consider that there are human rights that operate for those who think in a way that you think wrong.¹⁷

On February 12, Andrei Vyshinsky, the Soviet ambassador, reintroduced in the General Assembly the Yugoslav resolution and added one of his own, calling for Eastern European representatives to administer the camps. He demanded that the United Nations cease aiding "quislings, traitors, and war criminals," all of whom, he said, should be turned over to their respective nations for trial. Dulles requested that Mrs. Roosevelt answer the Russian.¹⁸ When Mrs. Roosevelt approached the dais, Senator Vandenberg, who had been an isolationist critic of her husband, remarked to his fellow delegates, "There goes a great lady, and I take back everything I ever said against her, which was plenty."¹⁹

Mrs. Roosevelt recalled in On My Own how frightened she was to enter into a debate with the grand inquisitor of Stalin's purge trials. Speaking without benefit of notes, very late in the evening, Mrs. Roosevelt apologized for taking up the delegates' time, for she thought the Soviet objections had already been settled in Committee Three. That committee's final report did include the pledge that traitors should be

¹⁷Eleanor Roosevelt, Diary of London Conference, February 6 entry, Anna Roosevelt Halsted Papers.

¹⁸Roosevelt, On My Own, pp. 51-52.

¹⁹Arthur M. Vandenberg, Jr., editor, The Private Papers of Senator Vandenberg (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1952), p. 240.

returned; therefore, she found the Soviet amendment superfluous. Once again, Mrs. Roosevelt asked:

What is propaganda? Are we so weak in the United Nations, are we as individual nations so weak, that we are going to forbid human beings to say what they think and fear whatever their friends with their particular type of mind happen to believe in?

As for the Russian request:

It is like saying you are always sure you are going to be right. I am not always sure my Government or my nation will be right. I hope it will be and I shall do my very best to keep it as right as I can keep it and so, I am sure, will every other nation. But there are people who are going to disagree, and I think we aim to reach a point where we, on the whole, are so right that the majority of our people will be with us. We can always stand having amongst us the people who do not agree, because we are sure that the right is so carefully guarded, and the freedom of people is so carefully guarded, that we shall always have the majority with us.

"For that reason," Mrs. Roosevelt concluded, "I oppose these amendments in a report which we have to accept as I consider them to be restrictive of human rights and freedoms." The General Assembly rejected the Russian proposal in the early hours of the morning.²⁰

Dulles and Vandenberg, both of whom had protested her appointment, personally complimented Mrs. Roosevelt for her

²⁰United Nations, Official Records of the First Part of the First Session of the General Assembly, Plenary Meetings of the General Assembly, Verbatim Record, 10 January-14 February, 1946, pp. 413-421; Roosevelt, On My Own, pp. 51-52.

defense of human rights in Committee Three. After he returned to the United States, Dulles described her confrontation with Vyshinsky as "one of the most dramatic episodes of the conference" in which she

with moving simplicity pleaded for tolerance and where Mr. Vishinsky [sic], with the explosive power of a great prosecutor, denounced tolerance as a dangerous weakness.²¹

The following November Mrs. Roosevelt and Vyshinsky clashed again on the refugee issue. A special subcommittee presented Committee Three with a draft constitution for an International Refugee Organization that would both repatriate and resettle displaced people. On November 6 Vyshinsky demanded that the International Refugee Organization be denied the authority to resettle "quislings, traitors, and war criminals" and those, he added, who "simply refused to return home." The Soviet ambassador introduced a group of resolutions similar to those the General Assembly had rejected the previous February. In her answer to Vyshinsky, Eleanor Roosevelt recognized the cold war implications of their debate:

. . . under the guise of freedom of expression propaganda hostile to the countries of origin is tolerated. On this point I am afraid we hold very different ideas. But this does not preclude cooperation between us. We, in the United States, tolerate opposi-

²¹Roosevelt, On My Own, p. 53; New York Times, 2 March, 1946.

tion provided it does not extend to the point of advocacy of the overthrow of government by force. Unless the right of opposition is conceded, it seems to me that there is very little possibility that countries with differing conceptions of democracy can live together without friction in the same world.

Mrs. Roosevelt then disputed the Russian assertion that all who refused to return to their homes were traitors. Her previous visit to the camps, she told the committee, had shown her that some refugees simply believed "their country no longer belongs to them."

Despite Communist attempts to block passage of the constitution, Committee Three approved it and then reported the document to the General Assembly. In calling for its ratification, Eleanor Roosevelt focused on the humanitarian side of the issue. Her adversary, Andrei Gromyko, answered with a tedious regurgitation of his bloc's case. The assembly approved the International Refugee Organization's constitution. The vote reflected the hardening lines in the cold war.²²

Throughout 1947 Eleanor Roosevelt clashed repeatedly with the Russians in Committee Three over the refugee issue. The Soviets demanded forced repatriation while Eleanor Roosevelt defended the refugee's right to political and religious asylum. During these debates Eleanor Roosevelt

²²New York Times, 9 November 1946; Department of State Bulletin, 15 (November 24, 1946), pp. 935-938; Stoessinger, The Refugee and The World Community, p. 80.

witnessed the Russian refusal to compromise, their use of the sessions to propagandize against the West, and their insensitivity to individual rights. In a Ladies Home Journal interview in May 1946, Mrs. Roosevelt said that the United States was obligated

to stand up for what we think are the rights of human beings, to defend the principles we believe to be essential for civilization and progress.

"That was my motive in the debates," Mrs. Roosevelt told her interviewers; therefore, "the Russians seemed willing to respect my criticism because they knew I was sincere, and I was not attacking them out of mere dislike for them as Russians."²³

Eleanor Roosevelt often turned visibly angry on hearing a Communist delegate attack the West. "When something was said with which she disagreed," wrote the artist S. J. Woolf, who sketched her as a delegate, "she could barely disguise her feelings. It was hard for her to restrain herself and often before the speech was ended she grasped the triangular sign with the United States on it and, waving it, gave notice that she wanted to be heard."²⁴ In My Day she compared the Soviet debating style to Nazi methods

²³"Can America Be Prosperous in A Sea of Human Misery: A Discussion Between Mrs. Roosevelt and the Editors of the Ladies Home Journal," Ladies Home Journal, 60 (May, 1946), p. 132.

²⁴S. J. Woolf, "The New Chapter in Mrs. Roosevelt's Life," New York Times Magazine, 15 (December, 1946), p. 15.

Adolf Hitler accustomed us to a certain type of propaganda--the louder he proclaimed a falsehood and the more often he repeated it, the surer he seemed to feel that his own people and the world would believe him.

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The fanaticism was brought about by these propaganda techniques, and we are seeing repeated today a somewhat similar technique--employed this time by the Russians. Not only do they reiterate accusations, but they make sure that those whom they control politically play the same tune.

After listening to a classic Vyshinsky diatribe, she wrote:

Suddenly you feel that you are in a court room and that he is delivering the indictment against the defendant. His use of adjectives and similes is somewhat redundant but decidedly picturesque.

He started his case by discrediting all of the witnesses for the other side--which is, of course, a valuable trick of lawyers. Then he made it appear that any one who did not agree with him must have been "a child born blind."

The only thing Mr. Vishninsky [sic] really lacks is a knowledge of the psychology of the people of the United States, who in this case are the judges of their delegates' position. The people of this country are anxious to cooperate with the USSR, as is shown by the fact that our representatives do all they can to bring about cooperation. But this speech of Mr. Vishinsky's destroyed the belief of our people that conciliation is either wise or possible in dealing with the representatives of the Government of the USSR.²⁵

Even after observing Vyshinsky's antics, and having to criticize them, Mrs. Roosevelt still hoped for future agreements

²⁵My Day, 1, 23, October, 1947.

with the Soviet Union. In 1946 she was neither a cold warrior nor a popular frontier who rationalized Soviet expansionism. All she suggested was that the United States avoid taking either extreme in its diplomacy. Soon Mrs. Roosevelt would have to choose one of the sides.

II

On her return from the 1946 London conference, Mrs. Roosevelt interpreted recent Soviet diplomatic activity in a February memorandum to President Truman. In Iran and the Dardanelles she believed Stalin sought "political control to safeguard economic agreements" that would permit his nation to "import and export without difficulty." In Eastern Europe she thought that Russian security needs explained why "she will try to control the government of the nations in all these areas and why she dreads seeing Germany built up as an industrial power against her." Turning to Western Europe she informed Truman that "the whole social structure is crumbling and we might as well face the fact that leadership must come from us or it will inevitably come from Russia."²⁶

In her Ladies Home Journal interview Eleanor Roosevelt repeated her conviction that "the devastated world must be rebuilt. . . . either we will take the lead in building it or Russia will." Writing one year before the unveiling of the Marshall Plan, Mrs. Roosevelt warned that the denial of

²⁶Memo for President Truman, Box 4560, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

American assistance to the European nations "would surely make them our enemies, drive them into the arms of Russia, which appears to have more sympathy for their troubles." Eleanor Roosevelt also emphasized the "open door" potential of a recovery program:

People who are not working cannot buy. We must help Europe to start to work again, perhaps even to train her industrially, so they can be our customers. We will have to do this thing through many methods, some of them governmental, for our own long-term benefit.

Mrs. Roosevelt invited the Soviet Union to participate in the American effort to rebuild the world. "We have obligations to Russia, too," she reminded her Ladies Home Journal interviewers; ". . . we cannot forget her people's suffering." When asked whether aiding Russia would be appeasement, Eleanor Roosevelt replied that she does not "regard as appeasement anything which is fair, or which is a recognition of the legitimate aspiration of any nation." Eleanor Roosevelt further hoped that the offer of economic aid to Russia would lead to a reduction of cold war tensions. Averell Harriman recalled that she believed such assistance would make the Soviets into "good world citizens."²⁷

In her 1946 columns, articles, and speeches, Mrs. Roosevelt presented a more positive view of the Soviet Union than

²⁷"Can America Be Prosperous in a Sea of Human Misery?" p. 134; Interview conducted with Governor Averell Harriman, February 2, 1978 by Dr. Thomas Soapes, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, p. 6.

the one she confidentially expressed to Truman. She feared that the anti-Soviet hysteria sweeping the U.S. in the spring and summer of 1946 would undermine the United Nations and jeopardize the hope of future agreements with Russia. She therefore asked the American people to be patient with the Soviet Union, to understand that the Russian insecurity and belligerency were caused by centuries of isolation and repeated invasions by the western powers.²⁸

Henry Wallace soon made a similar plea in his bid for leadership of those liberals disenchanted with Truman's foreign policy. For the most part, Mrs. Roosevelt agreed with Wallace's early criticism of the administration. She shared his fear that an Anglo-American alliance, as suggested by Churchill in his historic "iron curtain" speech, threatened the United Nations. She joined Wallace in condemning those in Washington who planned to encircle the Soviet Union with military bases and alliances. Along with the Secretary of Commerce, Mrs. Roosevelt warned against the revival of international cartels and a rehabilitated, conservative Germany. Both Roosevelt and Wallace were visibly upset with the double standard that enabled the administration to condemn Russia's anti-democratic policies while supporting nations flirting with fascism.²⁹ Writing Truman in June 1946, Mrs. Roosevelt agreed that the government had to be firm with the

²⁸My Day, 23 May, 9, 12, 13 August, 1946; New York Times, 6 April, 8 October, 1946.

²⁹Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, pp. 84-85; My Day, 16, 27 March, 14, 15 August, 30 September, 29 October, 11, 20 November, 1946.

Russians but added that the Kremlin must

have complete confidence in one's integrity and I am not sure that our attitude on questions like Spain and the Argentine and even in Germany itself, has been conducive to creating a feeling that we would always keep our word and that we would always talk things out absolutely sincerely before we took action.³⁰

In his historic September 12, 1946 Madison Square Garden speech, Henry Wallace addressed himself to the problem of Soviet-American relations. Mrs. Roosevelt interpreted this address as a positive attempt

to make clear that we neither approved of British imperialism nor of Soviet aggression. He stated that we wanted to be friendly with Russia, that we wanted to meet her half-way, but that she also had to meet us half-way.

The Secretary of Commerce's statement: "Getting tough never brought anything real and lasting--whether for schoolyard bullies or world powers. The tougher we get, the tougher the Russians will get" drew Mrs. Roosevelt's praise. But she differed sharply with Wallace on his most controversial proposal:

The "spheres of influence" section of Secretary of Commerce Henry Wallace's speech last week seems to me to have been written without proper explanation. Because Russia has gained a predominant military and political interest in

³⁰Eleanor Roosevelt to Harry Truman, June 1, 1946, Box 4560, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

certain countries along her borders, and because Great Britain has always shown the same type of interest in countries along what are known as her "life lines," and because we in this hemisphere find that we have similar interests with our neighbors, many people feel that we must of necessity accept the fact that there will be spheres of influence in the future. However, I really think this matter requires a little more thinking through.

Mrs. Roosevelt still tried to reconcile his concept of sphere of influence with her internationalist dream:

Within its sphere of interest, each great power is required, by its acceptance of the principles laid down in the Atlantic Charter and in the United Nations Charter, to give freedom of action to the peoples of the various nations in that sphere. And if their interests should clash, the great power, under these agreements, would have to accept whatever differences a smaller nation might choose in religion, politics or economics. Spheres of interest, in other words, can only be held together by mutual agreement, and there is no reason why this concept should prevent our trying to keep the world "One World" and to achieve the basic principles which concern us all.³¹

She would soon discover that both Wallace and Stalin interpreted the sphere of influence concept differently from this.

Wallace's speech divided, rather than solidified, the anti-Truman liberals. Those who agreed with Mrs. Roosevelt thought that Wallace's ideas undermined the United Nations. The New York Post, for example, wrote that Wallace's speech sounded "surprisingly enough like isolationism, two worldism,

³¹My Day, 17, 20, 21, 23 September, 1946.

and a repudiation of the hopeful principles of the Atlantic Charter and the United Nations." The Nation described it as a "brutally realistic position, demanding a new orientation on the part of most liberal thinkers." His promise of "a division of the world into 'zones' dominated by great powers has so many obvious dangers that it must be accepted, if at all, reluctantly and as a bad second best."³²

Mrs. Roosevelt and Henry Wallace also differed over the Baruch atomic energy plan. Baruch proposed that the United States unilaterally reduce its nuclear stockpile provided that there would be international inspection and the big powers on the Security Council would be barred from vetoing resolutions dealing with atomic matters. Wallace advocated the immediate sharing of the bomb's secret with the Russians. He labelled the Baruch plan a trick to perpetuate America's nuclear monopoly. Because of her confidence in the U.N., Eleanor Roosevelt supported Baruch. She felt certain that the U.N. would be able to enforce disarmament through inspection.³³

Following Wallace's ouster from the cabinet, Eleanor Roosevelt suggested that Wallace discuss his opposition to the plan with Baruch. They met on September 27. Baruch believed he had finally obtained Wallace's approval of his program. When he arranged for both to issue a joint state-

³²Alonzo Hamby, Beyond the New Deal: Harry S. Truman and American Liberalism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), p. 132.

³³My Day, 17 June, 3 October, 1946.

ment announcing their agreement, Wallace suddenly refused. Baruch called a press conference to condemn Wallace for reneging. Henry Wallace had a different interpretation of the meeting:

Baruch wanted to get in touch with me so that he could knife me, which he did very effectively. I thought I owed it to Mrs. Roosevelt to carry out her wishes. . . . It didn't work out well because it enabled Baruch to cut my throat in the public press and enabled him to help build up this concept of me being pro-Russia.

Wallace added that Baruch's "extraordinary influence" on Mrs. Roosevelt forced her to follow "the most reactionary elements in the Democratic party." He believed Baruch's secret financial help to Mrs. Roosevelt and her sons influenced her politics.³⁴

Wallace failed to acknowledge that the origin of his dispute with Mrs. Roosevelt was over the popular front. He still believed that liberals and Communists could collaborate in working for progressive reform at home and for peace abroad. This is why he became affiliated with the Progressive Citizens of America and was willing to be advised by Communists and former Communists. Eleanor Roosevelt, on the other hand, distrusted the American Communists. "Because of her experience with the students," James Loeb recalled, "she

³⁴My Day, 17 June, 13 October, 1946; Margaret Coit, Mr. Baruch (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Company, 1957), p. 600; Lash, p. 89; The Reminiscences of Henry Wallace, Columbia University Oral History Project, pp. 3671-3673.

realized that they had lied to her and [she] became very astute on this issue." On a number of occasions, Mrs. Roosevelt invited Loeb, a leader of the Union of Democratic Action, an anti-Communist, liberal organization, to her apartment to inform young Americans of the difficulties of having a popular front.³⁵

Loeb enlisted Mrs. Roosevelt's help in expanding the New York based U.D.A. into the anti-Stalinist liberal alternative to the P.C.A. She praised his May 13, 1946 letter to the New Republic, in which Loeb called on liberals to decide

Whether they believe the present critical tension in international affairs is due exclusively to the imperialistic, capitalistic, power-mad warmongering of the Western democracies and whether it is their conviction that the sole objective of the progressive movement is economic security or whether human freedom is a co-equal good.

Loeb insisted that liberals must "oppose the admission of Communists to progressive organizations because any united-front movement tends inevitably to become less united and more front."³⁶

Loeb, Mrs. Roosevelt, and the anti-Communist liberals formed the Americans for Democratic Action in January of 1947. In her speech to the A.D.A. meeting she said, according to the New York Times, that the

³⁵James Loeb, Jr., interview held on February 23, 1979, New York City.

³⁶Ibid.; James Loeb, Jr., "Letter to the Editor," New Republic, 114 (May 13, 1946), p. 699.

liberals were fighting both Communists and Fascists and must not lose sight of either. They are not trying to tell Russia what kind of government they should have, she said, but they do not want communism in this country or in any other democratic country. Mrs. Roosevelt also emphasized that the policy of the organization should not be merely negative, but should seek affirmatively to promote the welfare of this country and of democratic nations throughout the world.

Mrs. Roosevelt further reminded her friends that improving the world's standard of living would be the best deterrent against communism. She pledged \$100 and promised to raise an additional \$5,000 for the organization.³⁷

Eleanor Roosevelt defended the A.D.A.'s decision to bar Communists from membership. In a letter to Max Lerner she objected to his characterization of this policy as red-baiting.

The American Communists seem to have succeeded very well in jeopardizing whatever the liberals work for. Therefore, to keep them out of policy-making and staff positions seems to be very essential even at the price of being called red-baiters, which I hope no member of this new group will really be.

To Fiorello LaGuardia, she questioned his accusation that the A.D.A. indiscriminately accused Americans of being Communist:

. . .I do not believe in having everyone [who is liberal] called Communist, or everyone who is conservative called a Fascist, but I think it is possible to

³⁷Loeb interview; New York Times, 5 January, 1947; Adam Clymer, "Union for Democratic Action," (Honors Thesis, Harvard College, 1958), pp. 121-131; Interview conducted with Joseph Rauh, January 31, 1978 by Dr. Thomas Soapes, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, pp. 3-4.

determine whether one is one or the other
and it does not take long to do so.

Mrs. Roosevelt concluded, expressing the hope that the "P.C.A. could remove from its leadership the Communist element" so that liberals could unite once again.³⁸

The direction of American foreign policy in early 1947 made this dream impossible. In contrast to the P.C.A.'s criticism of the Truman Doctrine, the A.D.A. reluctantly endorsed the military and economic aid program for Greece and Turkey. Most members supported the administration's desire to prevent Communism from expanding into the Eastern Mediterranean. But a sizable number questioned the wisdom of having the U.S. replace the British as the protector of the Athens monarchy and ignoring the U.N.³⁹ Eleanor Roosevelt, for example, asked:

. . . why must this country accept Great Britain's military responsibilities? Britain undertook them for reasons of her own, which may or may not seem good reasons to us. It does not seem as though a government could be completely stable, and representative of 85 percent of the will of the people, and still require military bolstering from the outside.

The program's unilateralism also troubled her:

I naturally grieve to see this country do anything which harms the strength of the UN. If we could have given help for relief and

³⁸Eleanor Roosevelt to Max Lerner, January 18, 1947, Box 3761; Eleanor Roosevelt to Fiorello LaGuardia, April 11, 1947, Box 3761, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

³⁹Hamby, Beyond the New Deal, pp. 175-179.

rehabilitation on a purely non-political basis, and then have insisted that the UN join us in deciding what should be done on any political or policing basis to keep Greece and Turkey free from all outside interference, and to allow her to settle her own difficulties in the way the majority of her people desired to have them settled, I would have felt far happier than I do now.⁴⁰

In her critique of the Truman Doctrine, Eleanor Roosevelt even proposed expanding the relief program to include Yugoslavia and Poland. She acknowledged that both nations were controlled by Russia

but the people who are going to suffer from starvation probably know very little about the political complexion of their government. Where are these countries going to turn for aid in the next critical months, before their harvest, which has been damaged by a bad winter, comes to fruition? If we refuse to help them, there is nowhere for them to turn except to Russia. Now is when help is needed, not later.⁴¹

The administration could not afford to have one of its most popular members question a major policy decision. The State Department sent an official to brief its U.N. delegate on the need for the doctrine; but, as she wrote to Dean Acheson, bypassing the U.N. still disturbed her:

. . . I am wondering what you have decided to do if the USSR were to say: "Since you have acted alone without consulting the United Nations, we are free to do the same."

⁴⁰My Day, 14 March, 1947.

⁴¹My Day, 9 April, 1947.

We see no reason why you should send advisers and give them money to arm, obviously against us. We told you we had nothing to do with infiltration of people in the armed bands. We told you we wanted to control the Dardanelles. We are here and have an army and are going to send it in because this is our sphere of interest and not yours."

I hope never again that this type of action be taken without at least consulting with the Secretary-General and with our permanent member on the Security Council beforehand. It all seems to me a most unfortunate way to do things.

She promised Acheson that the American people were not "going to like granting money for military purposes." To President Truman she expressed her fear of seeing the United States take over "Mr. Churchill's policies in the Near East in the name of democracy, as the way to really create a barrier to communism or fascism."⁴²

Both President Truman and Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson responded by defending the Truman Doctrine. Truman claimed that the Eastern Mediterranean still remained the best strategic area to block communist expansion, "regardless of whether or not the terrain is good." Acheson reminded Mrs. Roosevelt that Russia had not consulted the U.N. about its actions in Eastern Europe.⁴³

During the debate over the Truman Doctrine, Eleanor Roosevelt repeated her call for a comprehensive program to

⁴²Eleanor Roosevelt to Dean Acheson, March 26, 1947, Box 3475; Eleanor Roosevelt to Harry Truman, April 17, 1947, Box 4560, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

⁴³Harry Truman to Eleanor Roosevelt, May 7, 1947, Box 4560; Dean Acheson to Eleanor Roosevelt, April 15, 1947, Box 3755, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

rebuild Europe. On the second anniversary of F.D.R.'s death, she said in a memorial address: "The peasant, the man of the soil, all over Europe is the man who needs to be inspired and to gain courage to build up his devastated lands. Too few of us in this country have an understanding of the people who have formed the basis of European society." In her April 28 My Day, Mrs. Roosevelt accused the United States of having failed to develop a plan to rebuild the war-torn world:

What we needed was a complete plan--financial, industrial, agricultural, educational and spiritual. It should have been flexible and adjustable: if we found it did not work in certain ways, it should have been possible to change it. But we should have envisioned the whole picture of what rebuilding the world, after four years of all-out destruction, really meant.

As in the past, she recognized the containment value of such a program:

We must stop Russia's influence from growing, but what is our substitution? I learned a long while ago that vacuums have to be filled with something. It is not enough to be against a thing; you have to give people something for which they can actually work.⁴⁴

Eleanor Roosevelt thus welcomed the Marshall Plan. She praised its emphasis on economic and humanitarian assistance in contrast to the military and strategic orientation of the Truman Doctrine. Eleanor Roosevelt further understood that an economically and politically stable Western Europe would

⁴⁴Radio Address on Second Anniversary of the Death of President Roosevelt, April 12, 1947, Box 3053, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers; My Day, 28 April, 1947.

serve as a buffer to Soviet expansionism. Even though she supported this goal, Mrs. Roosevelt still hoped the Soviet Union could be induced to participate in the program. She refused to concede that Europe had already been divided into two armed blocs. The offer of American aid to East Europe, she hoped, could regain the trust of the Communists and then outstanding disagreements could be resolved. When Foreign Minister Molotov rejected the American offer, Mrs. Roosevelt accused him of creating "the very thing he fears, which is division instead of cooperation." She promised that the Russians would soon learn that "we have none of the more serious evil intentions which she attributes to us."⁴⁵ By holding the Soviet Union

⁴⁵My Day, 9 June, 5, 9, 15, 28 July, 4 August, 20 September, 10 October, 1947; New York Times, 13 November, 1947; World Security Workshop Broadcast, October 12, 1947; Box 3053, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers. Before Marshall delivered his speech, Mrs. Roosevelt wrote John Foster Dulles to outline her views on how an aid program could help Russia: "Great Britain has the capacity to provide practically everything which is essential to building up the industries of the USSR and countries that depend upon her. We wish, of course, to give proper share to our Allies in Europe which we hope to build up so that they never again depend on Germany in the way they had to depend in the past. A proper distribution of coal from the Ruhr can insure that once they have the set-up there, they will not need Germany as they did in the past for their economic life.

The question is how would the USSR pay for the things if we provide them and Great Britain does the same where she can. There is only one way and that is with raw materials. The USSR is rich in raw materials but she has to have the military to produce them. She has a shortage of manpower so if she produced the raw materials it would be many years before she could really be in competition with Great Britain or ourselves in manufactured goods. The same thing holds true of many of her neighboring countries.

I am wondering if along this line, something could not be worked out which would actually safeguard us, but at the same time, be of benefit to the other countries and bring about an agreement. I know you realize the need for agreement where it is possible, as well as I do. I think this would help us on the political side because it would help our economic situation

responsible for the sabotage of a comprehensive, humanitarian-oriented, recovery plan, Mrs. Roosevelt joined liberals in adding a moral dimension to a program developed to protect American strategic, economic, and political interests. This made it easier for them to support containment and become cold warriors.

From 1946 to December 1947, Eleanor Roosevelt moved closer to the administration's foreign policy. As a leading anti-Stalinist liberal, she found Wallace's espousal of a conciliatory foreign policy toward Moscow unrealistic, given Stalin's rejection of the Marshall and the Baruch Plans. At the same time, she was troubled by the military and imperialistic implications of the Truman Doctrine. She criticized the administration's flirtation with anti-communist fascist nations such as Argentina and Spain and thought its interest in reviving Germany would compromise the American position as leader of the democratic forces in the cold war. As an active A.D.A. member, Mrs. Roosevelt hoped this organization would mobilize liberals against Henry Wallace.

III

On December 29, 1947, Henry Wallace launched his candidacy for the presidency, pledging to run in opposition to the Truman

an agreement. I know you realize the need for agreement where it is possible, as well as I do. I think this would help us on the political side because it would help our economic situation at home to straighten itself out and to stay more stable in the next few years. This rehabilitation program from the economic standpoint would, I think, strengthen the belief in democracy on the part of other nations, as nothing else can." [Eleanor Roosevelt to John Foster Dulles, May 21, 1947, John Foster Dulles Papers, Princeton University Library.]

Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the anti-Communist hysteria that he believed was sweeping the nation. Wallace's call for a popular front of liberals and Communists failed to impress Mrs. Roosevelt. The former vice-president, Mrs. Roosevelt wrote in My Day, was a poor politician "who has never been able to gauge public opinion and has never picked his advisers carefully." Communists, she warned, "will be the nucleus of his campaign" and will be "working for confusion because that is the way to create economic chaos and political weakness, and this is their one hope of defeating democracy in the world and proving that Communism is the only thing people can turn to."

Her most significant differences with the P.C.A.'s candidate was in the area of foreign affairs. Believing that Wallace's inexperience in diplomacy accounted for his frequent oversimplifications of the issues, Eleanor Roosevelt exclaimed, "Oh, Mr. Wallace, if you were president you would not have such pat sentences to offer us. You would find it harder to act constructively than you suggest in your speeches." For example, Wallace's opposition to the Baruch plan distressed her because she believed it was the Russians, not the Americans, who had prevented nuclear disarmament. Turning to Greece, Mrs. Roosevelt agreed with Wallace's objection to bailing out the British and supporting the monarchy, but she now claimed that the Greek people

have had plenty of time and opportunity to express themselves since then, and have done so. Neither Great Britain nor the United

States has such great military power in Greece that the Greeks are under any compulsion to have a government of which they do not approve.

The "government" established recently by the guerillas is led by a known communist. Certainly the Greeks have a right to ask for help in remaining a democratic state; and certainly the steady progress of the USSR's political influence over every state which they have taken over shows that they have every intention of spreading communism wherever they can. Are we to be so naive as to believe that, with such a program well under way, a few gentle words from us will change the USSR's policy?

For the first time, in this January 3, 1948 column, Mrs. Roosevelt defended the Truman Doctrine. The Wallace candidacy pushed her closer to the administration. Mrs. Roosevelt also differed with Wallace over the need for a universal service bill. Although she considered the projected draft calls too high, she accepted the fact, in contrast to Wallace, that the United States required a strong army to counter the Soviet power in the world.⁴⁶

Wallace's opposition to the Marshall Plan angered Mrs. Roosevelt. The P.C.A.'s criticisms of it, she had said earlier,

follow so closely the arguments put out by the Comintern . . . [that they] do themselves harm, for they offer nothing constructive and thus increase in many less radical but liberal groups the sense of suspicion and uncertainty regarding the influences under which they operate.⁴⁷

Eleanor Roosevelt considered the special Bronx congressional

⁴⁶My Day, 31 December, 1947, 2, 3, 5, 9 January, 1948.

⁴⁷My Day, 15 October, 1947.

election scheduled for February 15, 1948 a test vote on the Marshall Plan between the anti-Stalinist liberals and the pro-Wallace American Labor Party. In endorsing the regular Democratic candidate, Karl Propger, Mrs. Roosevelt warned that, if Wallace-endorsed Leo Isaacson won, his vote in Congress would "help create that chaos in Europe which will come about if those nations do not receive our help to rehabilitate themselves."⁴⁸

Isaacson's victory with 56% of the vote stunned the White House and the Americans for Democratic Action. It showed that Wallace had the potential to spoil Democratic victories in the key industrial states. In the spring, Wallace drew large crowds during his tour of the nation. A.D.A. commenced a campaign to discredit Wallace. Eleanor Roosevelt told James Loeb it was the A.D.A.'s responsibility to fight Wallace. Many liberals, such as Chester Bowles and Freda Kirchwey, who had been reluctant to attack Wallace, did so now because the coup in Czechoslovakia seemed to prove the Soviet Union's aggressive intentions.⁴⁹

Mrs. Roosevelt was no less outraged:

One wonders if the USSR, in taking over Czechoslovakia in such a high-handed manner, realizes the inevitable conclusion that forces itself upon people in other parts of the world. Many of us would like to feel

⁴⁸My Day, 14 February, 1948.

⁴⁹Loeb Interview; Hamby, Beyond Liberalism, pp. 221-222; My Day, 9 March, 1948.

that the USSR believed in self-determination for all nations and that, where people wanted to hold a free and honest election, the USSR would allow them to do so. But after this coup in Czechoslovakia, who can believe anything but that, when the USSR decides it is to her benefit to take over a country and has a large enough organized minority to do so, then the rights or the wrongs of the question mean nothing whatsoever to her.⁵⁰

In mid-March Mrs. Roosevelt announced she opposed Wallace's "mushy" policies because the nation needed strong leaders "with spiritual and moral convictions." When Wallace promised in early April,

The Russians have no necessity to expand their borders nor will they for many decades to come except as internal threats and pressures compel them to seek military superiority.

Mrs. Roosevelt asked him:

How do you know when they will stop? If you can tell us that and give it to us signed and sealed by Premier Stalin himself, I think you will relieve the minds of many people, not only in your own country but in countries which are not too far away from these Russian internal pressures and would prefer to stay free.

I wish with all my heart that Mr. Wallace were carrying on daily negotiations on specific projects with representatives of the USSR. He would find that the difference between Communist dictatorship and Fascist dictatorship becomes more and more difficult to detect. I believe that there is a difference and that in the future, with time and education, the difference might become greater, but sometimes nowadays the resemblances are more striking than the differences.⁵¹

⁵⁰My Day, 28 February, 1948.

⁵¹My Day, 17 March, 10 April, 1948.

Following the P.C.A.'s summer convention, Eleanor Roosevelt once again raised the issue of Wallace's Communist connections. In her Ladies Home Journal column she wrote, "I do not see how any American who does not wish to see communist control grow in this country can support this third party." In a letter, she compared her knowledge of communist tactics and infiltration to Wallace's ignorance:

In the United Nations I have worked closely with the Russians and I have some understanding of how the Kremlin not only thinks but controls its representatives. By working with the youth movement in the early days of the depression I learned to understand communist tactics and what their discipline is. Their powers of control and infiltration are plainly visible in the Progressive Party's platform. I wish Mr. Wallace had had some of the same experiences and I wish heartily that all of you good people who are now frightened to death of war, could be brought to see that what you are doing is the best way to get us into a war.⁵²

In his nearly year-long campaign for the presidency, liberals, as well as conservatives, portrayed Wallace as a Moscow puppet. Although Mrs. Roosevelt agreed with this assessment of Wallace, she opposed red-baiting on other issues. For example, she considered the Truman loyalty program a violation of government employees' civil liberties. Mrs. Roosevelt also criticized the Mundt bill that, if passed, would have required Communists to register. Fearing this law could be abused to prosecute all dissenters, Mrs. Roosevelt

⁵²"If You Ask Me," Ladies Home Journal, August 1948; Box 3060; Eleanor Roosevelt to M. Mortimer, August 6, 1948, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

wrote on May 27, 1948, "to start trying to keep down the free expression of thought is to follow the very course which we condemn in totalitarian governments." Confident of the FBI's ability to investigate subversives, Mrs. Roosevelt disputed the need for the House Committee of UnAmerican Activities. She considered the smearing of "such good people" as Laughlin Currie and Alger Hiss to be "unforgivable" and held the Thomas Committee responsible for the death of Harry Dexter White.⁵³

During the fall of 1948 Mrs. Roosevelt attended the General Assembly session in Paris. She had refused to support Truman's candidacy prior to the Democratic convention. In the fall she released a belated, rather bland endorsement of Truman. Her reluctance resulted more from personal dislike than from policy differences. Nevertheless, Eleanor Roosevelt played an important role in his campaign, contributing to a liberal defense of Truman's foreign policy and to the dis-

⁵³My Day, 4 February, 21, 27, 29 March, 1947; 27 May, 1 June, 24 July, 16, 19 August, 8 September, 1948. "If You Ask Me," Ladies Home Journal, February, April, 1948. Commenting on the loyalty tests, Mrs. Roosevelt wrote Truman on November 13, 1947, "My reaction is anything but happy. I feel we have capitulated to our fears of communism and instead of fighting to improve Democracy, we are doing what the Soviets would do in trying to repress anything which we are afraid might not command public support, in order to insure acceptance of our own action." To General Marshall she wrote, "I am not happy about the president's loyalty test, because any communist would sign to it and the rest of us feel a little besmirched as we sign, and not quite sure our country is strong." President Truman defended the program in his letter of November 26, 1947 to Mrs. Roosevelt. He promised it would not be a witch hunt because most Americans are loyal. Truman claimed reports of infiltration in sensitive areas, the Canadian spy ring, and the possibility that innocent people might have been entrapped by enemy agents required the program. [Eleanor Roosevelt to Harry Truman, November 13, 1947, Harry Truman to Eleanor Roosevelt, November 26, Box 4560, Eleanor Roosevelt to George Marshall (n.d.; probably November 1947), Box 4763, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.]

crediting of Wallace. Truman's upset victory gratified her. At a Paris press conference she considered Wallace's poor showing as a sign that the American people supported "liberal democracy over communism."⁵⁴

⁵⁴Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, Chapter VI.

CHAPTER VI

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT AND THE FRAMING OF THE
UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

In the spring of 1946, Eleanor Roosevelt chaired the United Nations Human Rights Commission. This temporary committee recommended that a permanent eighteen-member commission be established to frame a human rights declaration. The General Assembly ratified this suggestion. President Truman then appointed Eleanor Roosevelt United States Ambassador to the United Nations Human Rights Commission.

In January of 1947, at its first session, the Human Rights Commission elected Eleanor Roosevelt chairman. She and the delegates from the western, Communist, and eastern countries began an open debate concerning the future document's content. The Chinese representative insisted the philosophy of Confucius be incorporated in the declaration; the Catholics, the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas; the liberals, the views of John Locke and Thomas Jefferson; and the Communists, those of Karl Marx. As Chairman, Mrs. Roosevelt reminded her colleagues that they were charged with writing a declaration acceptable to all religions, ideologies, and cultures.

When it appeared that a consensus could not be reached, the commission formed a drafting committee, chaired by Mrs. Roosevelt, to prepare a document for the upcoming June session. The prospect of writing such a declaration, Eleanor Roosevelt confessed in My Day, "may not seem to terrifying" to her colleagues, Dr. P. C. Chang of China, Dr. Charles Malik of Lebanon, and Dr. John Humphrey of Canada, "all of whom are

learned gentlemen. But to me it seems a task for which I am ill-equipped." Nevertheless, Mrs. Roosevelt still believed she could help her colleagues put their "high thoughts" into words the common man "could understand." "I used to tell my husband," Mrs. Roosevelt recalled, "that, if he could make me understand something, it would be clear to all the other people in the country--and perhaps that will be my real value on this drafting commission." The drafting committee met at Eleanor Roosevelt's Washington Square apartment. They examined samples of human rights declarations compiled by the Secretariat. Humphrey prepared a draft declaration which did contain western, eastern, and Marxist rights. The commission then approved Humphrey's document at its June session.¹

The commission, however, failed to reach an agreement on whether the declaration should be binding, or symbolic. Acting on instructions from the State Department, Mrs. Roosevelt proposed both in January and June the framing of a "general declaration of rights and principles" that would only have to be ratified by the General Assembly. It would then be followed by the enactment of "one or more conventions on human rights and freedoms" which would bind the signatory nations to honor the enumerated liberties. The British, supported by the non-

¹James P. Hendrick, "An International Bill of Rights," Department of State Bulletin, 18 (February 15, 1948), pp. 195-199; James Frederick Green, The United Nations and Human Rights (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1956), pp. 24-26; Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, pp. 55-64; New York Times, 12 June, 1947; My Day, 12 February, 1947.

western commission members, opposed the American plan. Arguing that the drafting of an international bill of rights with no enforcement powers would be an empty gesture, the British ambassador suggested that the commission concentrate on writing conventions.²

Throughout these early debates, Mrs. Roosevelt stubbornly defended the American plan. As Marjorie Whiteman, one of her legal advisers, recalled,

In her view the world was waiting, as she said, "for the Commission on Human Rights to do something" and that to start by the drafting of a treaty with its technical language and then to await its being brought into force by ratification, would halt progress in the field of human rights. She spoke out, in those early days, that the world expected, and needed, a guide to the direction that these "fundamental human rights," referred to in the Charter of the United Nations, should take. Granting that a Declaration would not be legally binding, she cautioned that the Commission must proceed with care in the preparation of texts. A Declaration, she pointed out, would not require ratification, it could be approved first by the Economic and Social Council and then adopted by the General Assembly, and thus be a great document with the seal of approval stamped thereon by the Members of the United Nations Organization, a document incorporating the ideals and aspirations of human beings the world over.³

Domestic politics also explain Mrs. Roosevelt's refusal to

²Hendrick, Lash, Green, op. cit.; New York Times, 12 June, 1947; My Day, 13, 18 June, 1947.

³Marjorie M. Whiteman, "Mrs. Franklin Roosevelt and the Human Rights Commission," American Journal of International Law (October, 1968), pp. 918-919; Lash, Eleanor, The Years Alone, p. 66.

support the passage of more ambitious conventions. She and the administration anticipated the Senate would oppose treaties binding the United States to honor the civil rights of its people or to guarantee full employment.

Mrs. Roosevelt renewed her appeal to begin with the non-binding declaration at the commission's Geneva Session held in December, 1947:

. . . the United States considered that the Commission should not proceed to draw them up until it was sure that such Conventions could be accepted and applied in all good faith by the participating States. Flagrant, prolonged and repeated violations of those Conventions could not fail to harm the United Nations. That did not mean, however, that her delegation would not be willing to examine the draft Convention or Conventions if the Commission so desired.⁴

The Commission again rejected her proposal, because, as she wrote in *My Day*: "They felt that the world is expecting a definite commitment which would force the governments to change their laws, if necessary, to conform to an international bill or covenant. . . ."⁵ The delegates decided instead to split up into three subcommittees. The first, chaired by Mrs. Roosevelt, was charged with completing the declaration, while the other two were requested to prepare, respectively, the conventions and methods of implementation. The final product of all three's labor would then be designated "the International Bill of Rights."⁶

⁴United Nations Economic and Social Council, Commission on Human Rights, Summary Record of the Third Meeting, E/Cn.4/SR. 5, pp. 8-9.

⁵My Day, 8 December, 1947.

⁶James Pomeroy Hendrick, "Progress Report on Human Rights," Department of State Bulletin, 8 (August, 1948), p. 159.

Holding both day and evening sessions, Mrs. Roosevelt's committee finished its task on December 17. Finding the draft-declaration repetitious and legalistic, Mrs. Roosevelt proposed at the following June session the preparation of a shorter text "which would be readily understood by all peoples." Under her direction the articles were simplified, and then reduced from 33 to 28. The commission approved the final draft declaration and then reported it to Committee Three for consideration. It failed to complete action on the conventions and the method of implementation.⁷

During the Commission sessions, Communist delegates, led by the Soviet Union, opposed the inclusion in the declaration of the liberties listed in the American Bill of Rights and the French Declaration of Human Rights. Regarding those as remnants of archaic bourgeois thought, the eastern nations wanted to confine the charter to social and economic rights. The non-western delegates, the British representative, a trade unionist, and Mrs. Roosevelt agreed that the document should include socialist-inspired articles guaranteeing full employment, adequate housing, decent health care, and cradle-to-grave social security. Mrs. Roosevelt had persuaded the skeptical State Department to permit her to support the listing of these rights in a document Washington originally hoped would only reflect Enlightenment thought. But she recognized that east and west could interpret the newer rights differently.

⁷Ibid., Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, p. 71; My Day, 4, 5, 13, 18 June, 1948.

In the Soviet Union, for example, the right to work

means the assignment of workers to do whatever task is given to them by the government without an opportunity for the people to participate in the decision that the government should do this. A society in which everyone works is not necessarily a free society and may indeed be a slave society; on the other hand, a society in which there is widespread economic insecurity can turn freedom into a barren and vapid right for millions of people.⁸

Professor A. P. Pavlov, the Russian ambassador to the spring 1948 drafting session, attempted, in the words of Mrs. Roosevelt, to "write a bit of Communist philosophy in the document." The Soviet Union abstained from the Geneva vote on the draft declaration because it contained traditional western rights the Stalinist government abhorred. Pavlov therefore introduced the following spring a series of amendments designed to restrict the scope of freedoms of the press, speech, and assembly, by denying these liberties to "fascist and anti-democratic elements." Pavlov also requested the addition of the amendment "corresponding to the laws of the state" to such articles as freedom of religion and the right to travel. Mrs. Roosevelt and her fellow western delegates accused Pavlov of trying to nullify the individual rights in the document. The full Human Rights Commission rejected Pavlov's amendments in a vote that reflected the hardening ideological lines of the cold war. It then reported to the General Assembly the comprehensive Human Rights bill for

⁸Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, pp. 61-68.

consideration in the fall of 1948.⁹

Soviet conduct at the United Nations continued to infuriate Mrs. Roosevelt. Finding they have often "misbehaved" in a "purely obstinate manner," she wrote Bernard Baruch:

. . . they insist on making attacks and then when any one is foolish enough to answer them by attack in return they insist on answering again, with the result that no work in hand is done. Committee #3 should be discussing questions on its agenda and not questions which come up in Committee #1. We are told by the Russians that the United States is making atom bombs to destroy the other nations of the world. The pretext for that is the discussion of the Article on the right to life. I think you would be interested and amused just following through in the different committees if you were here.¹⁰

During one General Assembly session, she recalled whispering to Senator Tom Connally that the Russians "seem to think they can wear down their opposition by never giving up a point." In My Day, she wrote, "You settle with the Russians only if you depart completely from your own position and accept theirs." The word "compromise," Mrs. Roosevelt continued, "does not exist in the Soviet vocabulary." They must learn that "negotiation means give and take. . . ." If not, she promised, they "will destroy the UN and will send them and ourselves back to isolation."¹¹

⁹My Day, 26 May, 11, 23 June, 1948; James Simsarian, "United Nations Action on Human Rights in 1948," Department of State Bulletin, 20 (January 2, 1949), pp. 18-21; Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, p. 74; Roosevelt, On My Own, pp. 78-79.

¹⁰Eleanor Roosevelt to Bernard Baruch, October 19, 1948, Box 81, Bernard M. Baruch Papers, Princeton University Library.

¹¹Roosevelt, On My Own, p. 61; My Day, 23 June, 6 August, 21 October, 1947.

In a fall 1947 Committee Three debate, Mrs. Roosevelt said she had "never yet heard a representative of any of the U.S.S.R. group acknowledge that in any way their government can be wrong." The Russians "are very young," she observed, "and the young rarely do acknowledge anything which may have done that may not be quite right." She advised the Soviets that "with maturity we grow much more humble, and we know that we have to acknowledge very often that things are not quite perfect." Eleanor Roosevelt concluded her friendly lecture to the Communists by expressing the hope

that we are going to see a gradual increase in good will rather than a continual backwards and forwards of telling us what dogs we are and how bad we are. I see no use in that at all. I am weary of it all, and all I can say to my colleagues is that I hope we can work with good will.¹²

On another occasion, after hearing Pavlov accuse the U.S. of warmongering, Mrs. Roosevelt answered,

I do not want to make more bad feelings here . . . I want to try to have us, when we have to say that we do not agree, say it on the idea, and as courteously as we can. [We should] be perfectly honest and frank about our objectives, not attach ourselves more than is necessary, and recognize that nobody in the world is perfect.¹³

¹²E. J. Kahn, "The Years Alone," The New Yorker, 24 (June 12, 1948), p. 39.

¹³Sandifer, "Mrs. Roosevelt As We Knew Her," p. 77.

It was in the Human Rights Commission's discrimination debates that the Soviet Union found, in the words of the New York Times, "their match in Mrs. Roosevelt." On one occasion Eleanor Roosevelt cleverly responded to her attacker with, "Now, of course I'm a woman and don't understand all those things," and then suggested that the United States and Russia exchange experts to study each nation's racial practices. Mrs. Roosevelt was well aware that the Soviet Union, as was also true of the United States, had not succeeded in solving its own racial problems. In another debate, Mrs. Roosevelt recalled in On My Own having this splendid exchange with Pavlov:

More than once Dr. Pavlov arose with a flourish, shook his white locks angrily and made a bitter attack on the United States on the basis of some report or even of some rumor that had to do with discrimination against Negroes, particularly in our Southern States. Of course, I always replied vigorously, pointing out that, despite discrimination of one kind or another, the United States had done a great deal to improve the social and economic status of the Negro, but Dr. Pavlov never admitted any such improvement. On one occasion I took the pains to explain that I had spent a good part of my life fighting against discrimination and working for educational and other measures for the benefit of Negro citizens of the United States. But to everything I said, Dr. Pavlov replied by sticking out his black beard and barking:

"Yes, you worked, But where did it ever get you?"

Once, when I was irritated by his remarks to the point where I could no longer stand it, I interrupted him to say, as sternly as I could: "Sir! I believe you are hitting below the belt."

In witnessing Mrs. Roosevelt's performance in this exchange, one member of the State Department wrote, "Never have I seen¹⁴ naivete and cunning so gracefully blended."

Shortly before the United Nations General Assembly prepared to consider the human rights declaration in Paris, Mrs. Roosevelt addressed the Sorbonne on September 28, 1948. Speaking in French during the height of the Berlin blockade, the Human Rights Commission chairman reminded her audience that the communist nations, the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, the Ukraine, and Byelorussia had abstained on the final draft of the declaration. She warned the Eastern bloc that "the acceptance and observance of these rights lies [at] the root. . . of our chance for peace in the future. . . ." Mrs. Roosevelt accused the Communist nations of tampering with the definitions of "democracy," "freedom," and "human rights" to make these words "synonymous with suppression and dictatorship." The Soviet attempt to cripple the declaration with its amendments, she charged, "forcefully illustrates the importance of the proposition that we must ever be alert not to compromise fundamental rights merely for the sake of reaching unanimity and thus lose them."¹⁵

Following her Sorbonne address, Mrs. Roosevelt saw both Committee Three and the General Assembly reject amendments

¹⁴Roosevelt, On My Own, p. 63; Lash, Eleanor, The Years Alone, p. 69.

¹⁵Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, "The Struggle for Human Rights," Department of State Bulletin, 19 (October 10, 1948), pp. 457-66.

similar to those Pavlov had introduced the previous June in his effort to cripple the declaration. In presenting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the General Assembly for the final approval, Mrs. Roosevelt said:

In giving our approval to the declaration today, it is of primary importance that we keep clearly in mind the basic character of the document. It is not a treaty; it is not and does not purport to be a statement of law or of legal obligation. It is a declaration of basic principles of human rights and freedoms, to be stamped with the approval of the General Assembly by formal vote of its members, and to serve as a common standard of achievement for all peoples of all nations.

We stand today at the threshold of a great event both in the life of the United Nations and in the life of mankind, that is the approval by the General Assembly of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recommended by the Third Committee. This declaration may well become the international Magna Carta of all men everywhere. We hope its proclamation by the General Assembly will be an event comparable to the proclamation of the Declaration of the Rights of Man by the French people in 1789, the adoption of the Bill of Rights by the people of the United States, and the adoption of comparable declarations at different times in other countries.¹⁶

Eleanor Roosevelt proudly observed the General Assembly ratify the Declaration on December 10, 1948. Regrettably, the Communist block abstained on the final vote.

E. J. Kahn of the New Yorker covered Mrs. Roosevelt's participation in the Human Rights Commission proceedings. He

¹⁶Statement by Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Department of State Bulletin, 19 (December 19, 1948), pp. 751-752.

suggested that the major reason for her popularity resulting from the debates "may be that in an era conspicuous for the self-interest of both nations and individuals, she has become more and more widely recognized as a person of towering unselfishness." Kahn further observed that Mrs. Roosevelt "doesn't represent a faction. . . She never cares if there's nothing in it for herself. She has absolutely no pride of station, and no personal ambition."¹⁷

The Soviets did not share Kahn's opinion. Izvestia accused Mrs. Roosevelt of being a "hypocritical servant of capitalism." The Literary Gazette added:

Mrs. Roosevelt's senile weakness for loquacity has been combined with a special and anti-Soviet tinge. It is obvious from her articles and speeches that indeed she does not think too much about what she says and writes.¹⁸

In the Human Rights Commission, Mrs. Roosevelt announced that she was pleased

to find in Soviet newspaper I was called a school mistress. Now I take that as a very high calling so I really was much flattered. But I hope that my Soviet colleague will not take it amiss if I suggest that in this Committee perhaps he has given us a fair sample of being a school master and we have been the scholars.

Eleanor Roosevelt tried, in this incident, to be humorous, but according to Sandifer "a speech with a light touch is completely lost on [Pavlov]. He is a sober minded fanatic."¹⁹

¹⁷Kahn, "The Years Alone," p. 30.

¹⁸J. Reddy, "First Lady of the World," American Mercury, 68 (June 1949), p. 659.

¹⁹Sandifer, "Mrs. Roosevelt As We Knew Her," p. 71.

Eleanor Roosevelt bore little animosity towards the Russians. "Sometimes, when I listen to the nonsense the Communists keep saying, I get momentarily discouraged." Then, she continued,

I remember that they themselves don't believe a word of it. They are just carrying out orders. Why, they'll tell you as much. Many's the time Professor Pavlov, the Soviet delegate, has come to me and said: "Mrs. Roosevelt, would you mind postponing the meeting? I haven't received my orders from Moscow yet." Then I remember still another thing: These people are reporting back to Moscow all the time. And they're very good reporters. Sooner or later I think their reports will convince the Kremlin that it's on the wrong track.²⁰

Following the ratification of the Declaration by the General Assembly, the Human Rights Commission undertook the difficult task of writing the covenants. Eleanor Roosevelt represented the United States on the commission until President Eisenhower replaced her in January of 1953.

²⁰Newsweek, 34 (August 22, 1949), p. 22.

CHAPTER VII

THE LIBERAL COLD WARRIOR:

DEFENDING CONTAINMENT, ATTACKING MCCARTHYISM, 1949-1952

In responding to the deterioration of American-Soviet relations, Eleanor Roosevelt warned in early 1949 that Russia "intended to control as many nations as possible by imposing on them Communist ideas. . .as well as the same type of police state which at present governs itself." Only a Russian decision, Eleanor Roosevelt wrote, "to stop annexing new territory and broadening the area of Communist thought in the world would convince us that she really did not intend to go to war."¹ Because the United States never received such assurances, Mrs. Roosevelt found it necessary to endorse N.A.T.O. and the Korean intervention; however, she did advise Americans not to make alliances with the right in order to defeat the left. She therefore opposed "unleashing" Chiang Kai-shek, and recognizing, arming and extending loans to Franco Spain. Eleanor Roosevelt also emerged as one of Senator McCarthy's leading critics.

¹My Day, 7 April 1949, 12 January 1950. Mrs. Roosevelt also started to suggest that the Soviet Union bore the responsibility for the Cold War. She refreshed her readers' memory in her January 24, 1951 column: "If we think back we will realize that it is the Soviets who did not reduce their armies after World War II. It is the Soviets who have infiltrated into as many countries as they could possibly reach, and then armed those countries with matériel which they produced. It is they who have virtually taken control in those countries and have directed military preparations. It is the Russians who in their zone in Germany have established and trained a police force of 100,000 young Germans, armed them and thoroughly indoctrinated them with their Communist influence."

I

At the 1949 A.D.A. convention, Reinhold Niebuhr remarked that the liberals "tore their souls" before deciding to endorse the N.A.T.O. treaty. Thinking that N.A.T.O. would undermine the U.N., bolster undemocratic governments and be interpreted by Moscow as an unfriendly gesture, Representative John Blatnick, the Chicago Sun Times, and The New Republic were all reluctant to defend the alliance. Freda Kirchwey, Helen Gahagan Douglas and James Loeb, on the other hand, argued that the alliance was as essential as the Marshall Plan to contain Communism.²

Eleanor Roosevelt was initially hesitant to support N.A.T.O. In February of 1949 she informed Dean Acheson, "I worry about the Pact." Although she originally thought that N.A.T.O. violated the spirit of the United Nations, after studying the text, she decided that it did not. In My Day, she predicted that N.A.T.O. "may give the democracies sufficient sense of security to face calmly and with less fear the alliance of the Soviet Union and its bordering states." In addition, N.A.T.O. would provide Western Europe with the strength it lacked before World War II:

I have always supposed that the Atlantic pact arose from the fact that many people

²Hamby, Beyond Liberalism, pp. 357-358.

felt that Hitler would never have gone to war had he known that there would be an organized and potentially strong military power against him. This is what the Atlantic pact was designed for, and there's no reason to believe that it will not serve its purpose in the case of future aggression. In other words, we were looking for a deterrent to the use of force, and we felt the Atlantic pact could be used in that way.³

Europe, in Eleanor Roosevelt's view, provided a basis for collective action. The Chinese Civil War did not. "If the Nationalists had sincerely sought to offer a moderate alternative to Communism," Eleanor Roosevelt explained in January of 1949, "China would not be experiencing its civil war." She praised the State Department White Paper on China for acknowledging that further aid to the Nationalists would be futile. She accepted the inevitability of a Communist victory but wondered whether Mao Tse-tung could control his huge nation without outside aid. Eleanor Roosevelt therefore suggested that the United States offer Peking economic assistance in order to protect the new regime from "foreign influences" --presumably Moscow.⁴

The Korean War made serious consideration of this proposal impossible. Eleanor Roosevelt accused the Russians, not the

³Eleanor Roosevelt to Dean Acheson, February 24, 1949, Box 3819; Eleanor Roosevelt to Clark Eichelberger, December 18, 1948, Box 3475, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers; My Day, 21 March, May 4, 1949.

⁴My Day, 7 January, 1 August, 10 September, 1949; 14 January, 30 March, 8 August, 1950.

Chinese, of instigating the war. She believed that North Korean aggression compelled the United States "to uphold the United Nations and to prevent any nation, whether Communist or not, from starting aggressive action against another part of the same nation." "The Soviets have to learn," she wrote on July 1, 1950, "that they cannot infiltrate and carry out internal 'coups.' We have learned to understand that method all too well, from past experiences in Europe." Eleanor Roosevelt invoked the lesson of appeasement to justify the decision to resist the invasion: "Had the United Nations permitted this to go on their weakness would have been comparable only to the weakness of the League of Nations in its last days." In the future, she warned, the U.N. "would have found its task impossible. . . ." Leading liberals echoed Mrs. Roosevelt's 1930's analogy. Frank Kingdon praised Truman's decision not "to take the road to Munich." The Nation compared the Communist invasion to Hitler's aggression. The anti-Communist liberals also shared with Mrs. Roosevelt the fear that if the U.N. failed to save South Korea, its credibility would be seriously undermined. Willard Shelton, for example, wrote in The Nation that "the fall of South Korea. . . would deal the international organization a blow from which it might not recover."⁵

⁵My Day, 1, 6, 7, 8 July, 5, 8, 31 August, 7 September, 1950; Hamby, Beyond Liberalism, pp. 402-403. Eleanor Roosevelt's charge that the Russians instigated the Korean War appears to be accurate. Khrushchev suggested in his memoirs that Stalin gave the North Koreans the green light to attack the south. [Lafeber, America, Russia, and the Cold War, third edition, pp. 102-103.]

The initial American success in liberating Korea restored confidence in the United Nations. Now, Eleanor Roosevelt hoped the U.N. forces would become

the interpreter of democracy. Through the U.N. will come vital assistance already being generously subscribed by many nations to the devastated areas of Korea. Relief will, of necessity, have to be administered at first by the armed forces in Korea. These young men have the obligation to interpret the policies and purposes of the U.N. to the Korean people. It will be a very practical demonstration they will carry on, and one that will come close to the hearts of the people living in the devastated areas. The way they carry out their work may be the deciding factor in the success of the whole United Nations policy.

Eleanor Roosevelt neither endorsed nor opposed the decision to cross the parallel into North Korea, but discounted the possibility of a Peking intervention in the war. The Chinese entry therefore surprised her. To her mind it revealed that the Peking regime had become Moscow's puppet in Asia:

At this moment the people of the United States want peace. But as they watch the Russians let the Chinese soldiers die they wonder what truth or fair play there can be in a government of a nation that furnishes the weapons of war to a satellite but lets that satellite pay the price with the lives of its men. This keeps the Russians safely intact for what they will tell their own people is a purely defensive war.

The Chinese decision further clarified "for many of our own people, who were anxiously hoping we could recognize the Chinese Communist government, why it is impossible to do so as long as they are aiding an aggressor." Eleanor Roosevelt

again cited the lessons of the thirties to justify resisting the new Soviet-Chinese threat to collective security. "Once upon a time," the grandmotherly Eleanor Roosevelt began her simple history lesson,

there was an opportunity to prevent the invasion of Manchuria by the Japanese and the United Kingdom would not join us in helping to do so. Later, Hitler was appealed to by a British statesman, who undoubtedly with the best of intentions was trying to save the world from war, but nothing was accomplished except to give Hitler more time for preparation and to lull into temporary quiet the fears of the rest of the world.

The threat today is analogous to the threat of Hitler and it cannot be met by appeasement. Every time we yield to a little more enslavement here or there in the world, we are one step nearer to our own enslavement.⁶

Mrs. Roosevelt, however, vehemently opposed the demand made by General MacArthur and his conservative supporters to expand the Korean War into China. This disastrous proposal would, she believed, "bleed" the United States, which was exactly what the Kremlin desired. When General MacArthur publicly called for Nationalist units in the Korean War, Mrs. Roosevelt asked why the United States should ally itself with an unpopular regime. "Again we seem to be lining up on the side of reaction," she wrote, "because we cannot approve of

⁶My Day, 2 October, 8 October, 1, 5 December, 1950.

Communism which is on the opposite side." On April 12, 1951, Eleanor Roosevelt cabled Truman her praise for ousting MacArthur: "My congratulations on your courage it seems to me you have done the right thing." Most Republicans disagreed with Mrs. Roosevelt. She feared their partisan use of the firing "would make trouble with our allies, would make diplomatic action practically impossible, and might possibly start World War III." When Senator Robert Taft promised that "unleashing" Chiang Kai-shek on the mainland would prevent World War III, Mrs. Roosevelt reminded the Ohio Republican that MacArthur, in making his suggestion, appeared to be looking for a showdown with the Chinese, not the avoidance of war. To Taft's statement that it would be cheaper to fight with other nations' men (implying the Chinese Nationalists), Eleanor Roosevelt responded: "Senator Taft would help us more if he would think of constructive ways to peace rather than the use of more troops in an ever-widening area."⁷

Mrs. Roosevelt continued to defend the administration's Korean War policies against savage Republican attack. "The achievement of peace," she lamented in July of 1952, "would neither take place by winning on the battlefield nor at the conference table. Peace would come only when Moscow ordered the North Koreans and Chinese to agree to a negotiated settlement."⁸

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Eleanor Roosevelt to Harry Truman, April 13, 1951, Box 4560, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers; My Day, 4, 7, 12, 13 April, 10, 13 May, 11, 14, 26 June, 29 August, 1951.

⁸My Day, 5, 11, 14 July, 1952.

II

In July 1949 Francis Cardinal Spellman startled the nation when he publicly denounced Mrs. Roosevelt. "For whatever you may say in the future, your record of anti-Catholicism stands for all to see," the nation's leading Catholic prelate proclaimed,"--a record which you yourself wrote in the pages of history which cannot be recalled--documents of discrimination unworthy of an American mother." Spellman's attack was presumably inspired by Mrs. Roosevelt's opposition to federal aid for parochial schools, her support of birth control and divorce, and her condemnation of the New York City Board of Education for removing The Nation from school libraries after the magazine ran a series of allegedly anti-Catholic articles. Eleanor Roosevelt, however, attributed Spellman's outburst to her opposition to Franco Spain.⁹ In her eyes all dictators were evil, whether Communist or anti-Communist, or pro-church or anti-church, especially the fascist Franco.

Mrs. Roosevelt believed that Spellman was especially angry with her for having persuaded the administration to abstain on a United Nations Political Action Committee resolution recommending member nations resume diplomatic

⁹Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, pp. 115-158. To Ambassador Claude Bowers, Eleanor Roosevelt wrote on August 3, 1949: "My stand on Spain and the defeat of Tammany by Franklin Junior, are really what annoyed the Cardinal and his associates more than the Barden Bill, I think." [The Barden Bill, which was defeated, tried to introduce federal aid to education.] (Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Box 4743). Mrs. Roosevelt also informed Harold Ickes that the "'real' reason for Spellman's displeasure was my Spanish position" (August 11, 1949, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Box 3978). To her friend Betty Hight she wrote, the "real count" against her was "that they have heard I was responsible for not returning ambassadors to Spain in the last meeting of the General Assembly." (Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, p. 157).

relations with Spain. The radio station of the Madrid government shared the Cardinal's indignation. Its commentator asked, "Is Mrs. Roosevelt a sort of Stalin in petticoats?" Eleanor Roosevelt humorously responded, "I have absolutely no influence on United States foreign policy . . ." But Mrs. Roosevelt publicly praised the American decision to abstain. It distressed her

to see the majority of nations within the U.N. willing to accept any gesture that would seem to ignore the fact that this is the only one of the triumverate of Fascist dictators who still remains in power. The people of Italy and Germany have a chance to build truly democratic nations. Whether they do so or not depends upon themselves. No sword hangs over their heads. Franco, being still in power, still wields the sword of Fascism over the heads of Spanish citizens who differ with him.¹⁰

Eleanor Roosevelt further opposed the suggestion made by Senators Taft and McCarran that, because the U.S. had diplomatic relations with such dictatorships as Russia, it should return its ambassador to Spain. She reminded the senators that the Soviet Union had fought the fascists and was already a member of the United Nations. Mrs. Roosevelt also asked whether it was "wise to accept a man who openly backed Hitler and Mussolini, and who accepted their help in getting control of the Spanish government. . . ." Mrs. Roosevelt then questioned the Taft-McCarran assertion that the U.S. needed Spain for strategic reasons:

¹⁰Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, pp. 155-158; My Day, 31 January, 1949; New York Times, 3 June, 1949.

In the first place, we are working for peace and not for war. That is what the Atlantic Pact is designed for. In the second place, we could not trust a Hitler, or Spain controlled by a Hitler, in a future war any more than we could in the last.¹¹

Cardinal Spellman further deplored Mrs. Roosevelt for not defending Cardinal Mindszenty, the anti-Communist Hungarian prelate who had found refuge in the American embassy in Budapest. He asked:

Why, I wonder, do you repeatedly plead causes that are anti-Catholic? Even if you cannot find it within your heart to defend the rights of innocent little children and the heroic, helpless men like Cardinal martyr Mindszenty, can you not have the charity not to cast upon them still another stone?"¹²

Newsweek characterized this accusation as unfair because Mrs. Roosevelt denounced the persecution of the Cardinal.¹³ What the magazine missed, which Spellman undoubtedly knew, was that Mrs. Roosevelt had criticized Mindszenty for having

controlled a million acres of land . . . 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.

All these facts, if they are true, would point to the conclusion that the

¹¹My Day, 11, 16 July, 1949.

¹²Newsweek, 34 (August 1, 1949), p. 18.

¹³Ibid.

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.¹⁴

In her letter to Spellman following his attack, Eleanor Roosevelt reminded him that she had condemned the Hungarian cardinal's imprisonment, but she added:

I cannot, however, say that in the European countries the control by the Roman Catholic Church of great areas of land has always led to happiness for the people of these countries.¹⁵

Harold Ickes believed that Spellman instigated the controversy with Mrs. Roosevelt to force her resignation from the U.N. Spellman's plan backfired: Mrs. Roosevelt received overwhelming support from most Americans. Conservative Catholics, however, supported Spellman. The Catholic World suggested that Mrs. Roosevelt was not a representative of Protestantism, but rather of "a large group we call liberals." It accused her of "entertaining strong leftist tendencies" and believing that "men can make this a better world without having to trust in help from on high."¹⁶

Eleanor Roosevelt did modify her opposition to diplomatic relations with Spain. In March 1950 she explained why:

¹⁴My Day, 31 January, 1949.

¹⁵Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, p. 159.

¹⁶Harold Ickes to Eleanor Roosevelt, August 11, 1949, Box 3798, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers; J. B. Sheerin, "Church, State, and Mrs. Roosevelt," Catholic World 69 (September, 1949), pp. 401-405.

We exceeded our authority in trying to interfere in internal affairs and therefore since so many nations are now returning ambassadors, willy-nilly, I think it is probably better to rescind the resolution and let people resume ordinary diplomatic relationships which does not in any way imply approval of the government in power, since it is somewhat inconsistent to have Ambassadors in Moscow, Yugoslavia, etc., and in the Argentine and not have them in Spain.

But she continued to oppose loans and military assistance to Spain.¹⁷

III

Following the grand jury indictment of Alger Hiss for perjury, Eleanor Roosevelt placed her prestige on the line when she announced on December 27, 1948:

I am going to believe in Alger Hiss's integrity until he is proved guilty. I know only too well how circumstantial evidence can be built up, and it is my conviction that the word of a man, who for many years has had a good record of service to his government, should not be too quickly disbelieved.

A number of liberals, such as Bruce Blivan and James Wechsler, did not share this opinion and soon pronounced Hiss guilty.¹⁸

In questioning Whittaker Chambers' credibility, "One gets the feeling," Eleanor Roosevelt wrote in June of 1949,

¹⁷Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, pp. 157-158.

¹⁸My Day, 27 December, 1948; Hamby, Beyond Liberalism, pp. 379-386; Allen Weinstein, Perjury: The Hiss-Chambers Case (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), pp. 512-517.

"that Mr. Chambers is on trial and not Mr. Hiss." As the Hiss trial progressed, she expressed astonishment that Chambers, a former communist,

should be believed at all. He has now admitted that he perjured himself before the Grand Jury and before the House Committee on Un-American Activities last February when he declared under oath that he didn't remember who gave him the micro-film about which there has been so much excitement.

Also, he seems to have no hesitancy about telling various unsavory facts about his private life, which make him seem less and less valuable as a witness.

When Hiss was convicted in January 1950, Mrs. Roosevelt observed:

A man who has professed innocence is involved by a man who by his own admission is a perjurer and a former Communist. It seems rather horrible to condemn someone on the word of someone else who admits to guilt . . . One thing troubles me, if you have been disloyal and your conscience troubled you, the only way you could go scot free would be to accuse someone else of the thing you were accused of.

Nearly two years later, Mrs. Roosevelt admitted that she realized during the trial that "Hiss was not telling the truth." But she reiterated that she believed he was not

guilty of the things that Whittaker Chambers accused him of. I dislike extremely our proneness to accept as gospel truth whatever a reformed communist hands us and certainly you cannot believe that Chambers is a good man. Hiss was judged and I never questioned the judgment and he is paying the price for whatever mistakes he made. I am quite sure that he did no harm at Yalta and he certainly

did no harm while he was Mr. Dulles' adviser.¹⁹

In contrast to their division on the Hiss case, the cold warrior liberals united to combat McCarthyism. Eleanor Roosevelt entered the fracas raised by Senator McCarthy's charges when she defended Dorothy Kenyon in March of 1950. Mrs. Roosevelt accused McCarthy of being "ill informed" in charging that Miss Kenyon, formerly a distinguished New York judge and an advisor to the State Department, had been a leading communist. This charge, Mrs. Roosevelt considered to be "one of the funniest things ever suggested" which any woman "will dismiss this accusation with a smile . . . If all the Honorable Senator's 'subversives' are as subversive as Miss Kenyon, I think the State Department is entirely safe and the nation will continue on an even keel."²⁰

Dismissing McCarthy as a comic figure failed to stem his growing appeal. Eleanor Roosevelt tried another tactic in September 1950 when she condemned Republican Senator William Jenner for questioning the loyalty of President Truman and General Marshall. She playfully suggested that perhaps Jenner's poor upbringing might account for his hysterical behavior:

He must never have been taught as a little boy that all of us, regardless of the party to which we belong, owe a certain respect to the man who holds the Presidential office in our country. We may attack the President's

¹⁹My Day, 8, 28 June, 1949; 25 January, 1950; New York Times, 28 January, 1950; Eleanor Roosevelt to Mr. McDonald, Box 4014, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

²⁰My Day, 11 March, 1950.

policies and his party, but it is rare that anyone or any political party writes the things which Senator Jenner apparently permitted himself to write about the President.

She cited Jenner's "outrageous" attack on General Marshall as evidence that the Senate had fallen far below the standards most Americans expected from that legislative body. The way to defeat communism, Mrs. Roosevelt advised, was to perfect democratic institutions at home--"not by the type of intemperate and scandalous character-smearing which is occasionally attempted by irresponsible and, usually, little-known representatives in the legislative branches of our government."²¹

Eleanor Roosevelt was well aware of the tensions that produced McCarthyism. Confused, frustrated Americans, she observed, found it easier to blame individuals or political parties for failures in Asia than to take a rational look at the world. She accused the Wisconsin senator of damaging bipartisan foreign policy and weakening the American image abroad. The communists were now given "the pleasure of seeing us at each other's throats. . . . What rejoicing it must bring in the Kremlin when they can say: 'The U.S. is divided; they find communist sympathizers everywhere.'" She probably would have agreed with her friend Harold Ickes' suggestion that Stalin give McCarthy the "biggest and shiniest medal in the USSR."²² Mrs. Roosevelt battled the McCarthyites on several fronts from 1950 to 1952. She spoke out in favor of the China Hands,

²¹My Day, 18 September, 1950.

²²My Day, 22, 28 March, 6 October, 11 November 1950; Hamby, Beyond Liberalism, p. 399.

defended the United Nations from neo-isolationist attacks, and fought against the attempt by Senator John Bricker to prevent ratification of the United Nations human rights covenants.

In defending the China Hands, Mrs. Roosevelt wrote on August 3, 1951, that "one of the things that is weakening us today in the eyes of the world is the constant attack by certain misguided isolationists in this country against public servants." She accused McCarthy of conveniently ignoring why the China Hands had advocated the formation of a coalition government for China:

. . . in the years 1943 and 1944, . . . it was felt by a good many people that the important thing was to have a strong China and therefore to bring her Communist group into the government under Chiang Kai-shek. Only in that way, it was felt, could civil war be averted and the full strength of China be united against Japan. The objective was to make China the leading nation of Asia.

The China Hands who recommended this policy

did not know the USSR as we have come to know her during the last five years. Nor were they weighing their words for fear of being attacked as Communists. They were just honest public servants studying a complicated situation. They gave their opinions and made suggestions for what they were worth, knowing quite well that it would be the responsibility of someone in the United States to read all their reports, that it was up to Washington to see the over-all picture and make the final decisions.

Because the McCarthyites smeared these officials as communists, Eleanor Roosevelt feared that members of the

foreign service

are getting the feeling that it is better to keep one's mouth shut and not to think about things. They fear to do anything except to state the necessary facts because one might make a mistake and what one said might be misinterpreted.

"We might as well have robots in positions of trust," Eleanor Roosevelt suggested in her defense of Philip Jessup, the embattled author of the China White Paper, "if we do not expect our public servants to discuss every possible subject from every angle."²³

When the Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee voted 3 to 1 to reject Jessup as one of the delegates to the United Nations General Assembly, Senators Guy Gillette and H. Alexander Smith believed Jessup to be loyal but still opposed his confirmation. Eleanor Roosevelt questioned the logic of Gillette's argument that the ambassador had lost public confidence because unsubstantiated charges had been levelled against him. This, she believed, would convince

those who wish to smear public servants . . . that it makes no difference whether what they say is false or true. If they say it often enough and loud enough so that it reaches only an infinitesimal number of people, then the man has lost the public's confidence and should not be appointed to office. From my point of view, this gives Senator McCarthy what he wants with an aura of respectability wound around it, and I think that highly dangerous.

²³My Day, 3, 13, 18 August, 1951; 1 April, 11 October, 1952.

She was equally indignant with Smith's explanation that he could not approve the appointment of Jessup because he believed the diplomat responsible for the fall of China.

Now does Senator Smith feel that he must always vote against a public servant as representative in the U.N. or in any other public office who has made a mistake or who has been in opposition to the policies that he himself would favor?

It would be difficult to find public officials with whom all the members of Congress would always agree. It would be even more difficult to find any human being in public office who never makes mistakes. It seems far-fetched to me to turn down an individual as a member of the delegation to the General Assembly because you do not approve of the Administration's policies in China as long as that Administration is still in office.

Smith too, she thought, was strengthening McCarthyism:

The net result is that you have told Senator Joseph McCarthy that you don't agree with his accusations but you have let him obtain the result that he desired. In addition, you serve notice on anyone who might be asked to serve in a public capacity that they must be prepared never to make a mistake and to please all Senators by their actions, or else they run the risk that when they come up for confirmation in some appointment they may be turned down.²⁴

Mrs. Roosevelt also came to the defense of John Carter Vincent. When the civil service loyalty review board, citing

²⁴My Day, 22, 23, October, 1951.

the testimony of Louis Budenz, recommended the firing of Vincent, Mrs. Roosevelt suggested:

Mr. Budenz's word surely cannot be any more trustworthy than Mr. Vincent's. There must be ways of proving or disproving any actual charges of disloyalty. A man's career should not be ended with a cloud of "reasonable doubt" hanging over him after he has given the best that was in him to his country through many years of service.

I begin to wonder whether it is possible in the present mood of the country to get a fair trial for anyone. To have been even a fellow traveler back in the early '30s was nothing astonishing, and it was less astonishing in the early '40s when the Russians were our allies in a war and we were glad to have them as allies. They saved the lives of countless of our boys.²⁵

²⁵My Day, 18, 26 December, 1952. Mrs. Roosevelt also defended O. Edmund Clubb in her April 1, 1952 column. She frequently masked her objection to a policy in the third person. (Even in such a remote part of the world one is apt to hear in a quiet way some discussion about what is going on at home, particularly in the State Department, and I was interested to hear some remarks about Oliver Edmund Clubb's resignation. The person I was talking to said that it seemed a pity that someone who had been such a firm rock to whom many Americans and other Westerners turned in Peking during the troubled months of the siege and the Communist occupation should have been forced out. Those to whom I spoke said he had been an able and experienced expert in our service and that his departure was a loss to the department and to the country. It was also a pity, they said, that neither the press nor the public seemed to have any realization of the valuable services he had rendered the country and that no mention was ever made of his solitary confinement after Pearl Harbor in Indo-China while he waited to be repatriated or that for 15 months he sat in Peking watching the formation of the new Communist government, analyzing it and providing the government with the major amount of its intelligence for that period in Chinese history.

Mrs. Roosevelt also wrote this strong defense of the Institute of Pacific Relations (My Day, August 17, 1951):

This attack against the Institute of Pacific Affairs is being made in the atmosphere of today with no perspective of the times in which the Institute was originally organized and which it functioned. There was a time when many of us wanted something to be done to improve conditions in Asia. We were not afraid of the USSR in those days, and we did not feel that everything that happened in any country in that area

Besides their attacks on the foreign service, the McCarthyites and neo-isolationists criticized the United Nations. Herbert Hoover, for example, called on the U.N. to purge its communist states if it wanted the U.S. as a member. Eleanor Roosevelt reminded Hoover and his supporters that the United Nations still remained the only forum in which the opposing sides in the cold war could meet and discuss their problems.²⁶ Conservative columnists such as John T. Flynn and Fulton Lewis Jr., and the Chicago Tribune's owner, Colonel Robert McCormick, accused U.N.E.S.C.O. of advocating the un-American concept of "world citizenship." In the summer of 1952, Senate isolationists tried to bar funds for U.N.E.S.C.O., and the Los Angeles school system banned U.N.E.S.C.O. pamphlets from its

was the result of Communist movements. Then we did not even look with suspicion on each and every member who served on a board with us, and neither were we careful to explain every implication of an opinion we might express.

This careful examination of our associates and this careful explanation of every thought is a recent development. It has only come with the realization that our friends and we, ourselves, may be subject at any time to attacks which will attribute to us false meanings and untrue affiliations because of faulty expressions on our part, or unawareness of the affiliations of our co-workers.

Some people who joined organizations with the hope that these organizations were going to do good work in an area where there was need, later found that Communists took over the organizations; therefore, they were obliged to resign. This was not so in all cases. But today fear has become so great that people are afraid to say that they once tried to do certain things through an organization, if that organization has since been put on the subversive list.

This is, of course, foolish fear, except for one thing--unscrupulous people can use the affiliation to smear a person's character. Unless the public has a long memory, they will at first, at least, accept the smear as a truthful accusation."

²⁶My Day, 1, May, 1950.

libraries. Mrs. Roosevelt answered the attacks at a New York internationalist gathering in November of 1952.

I have a book now, one of the booklets that UNESCO offered the schools, which a man sent me, asking, "Will you please read this? I have read the other booklets which were attacked, and I have decided that the attacks were not valid but I am not sure about this. They do use the term 'world citizenship,' in a way that perhaps isn't very good." Now I shall have to read the pamphlet with care but I know exactly how I am going to feel because I am tired of being told that it is dangerous to use the term "world citizenship." I believe that all of us should have the kind of love for our country that we have for the little piece of land where we were born or the little area where we have lived. To love our own country is a natural thing--I don't think it can be taken away from any of us. But we must learn to really care for people throughout the world and to realize that we are at the same time citizens of a greater community. We must try to make our country worthy to live in and at the same time take part in the world community. Unless we can do that, I think we and our children are lost, because the world is getting to be a closer and closer community.²⁷

Mrs. Roosevelt also urged the nation to oppose Senator John Bricker's amendments to block ratification of the covenants on human rights. Isolationist disenchantment with the U.N., the McCarthyites charge that the U.N. was infested with communists, and the southern fear that the covenants would force integration all account for the popularity of Bricker's proposal. Eleanor Roosevelt accused the Ohio Senator of mis-

²⁷My Day, 1, 5 May, 1950; 2 July, 14, 26 November, 1952; New York Times, 4 July, 4 October, 1952; "Why the United Nations is Unpopular--And What Can We Do About It?" Speech to the Citizens' Conference on International Economic Union, November 19, 1952, Box 4596, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

representing the treaties by suggestions that, if the senate ratified them, the U.S. would be subject to a "super-state." She found his argument that the covenants contained Russian principles ludicrous because the Soviet Union had opposed them. If the United States heeded Bricker, Mrs. Roosevelt warned, this "would be behaving exactly like the Soviets."²⁸

Mrs. Roosevelt's support of the administration's foreign policy, as well as her opposition to Henry Wallace's 1948 campaign, led some contemporaries and later historians to accuse the anti-Stalinist liberals of contributing to the rise of McCarthyism. The error made by these critics is that they equate all forms of anti-communism with McCarthyism and deny the possibility of being opposed to both Stalin and McCarthy at the same time. This was the A.D.A.'s goal as well as Eleanor Roosevelt's during the early McCarthy period. In August 1952, Mrs. Roosevelt received a letter in which she was asked:

In view of your past record of sponsoring organizations with Communist leanings, some of which even booed your late husband, I cannot conceive of you making a speech against a red-blooded American like Senator McCarthy. He has earnestly tried to free our government of Communists. What have you done in that line?

Mrs. Roosevelt printed her lengthy answer in My Day:

²⁸My Day, 14, 15 April, 26, 28, 29 May, 1952; New York Times, 20 April, 1952.

First, I would like to point out that I have not as yet made a speech against Senator McCarthy.

The only organization I ever sponsored which had any degree of Communist control was the American Youth Congress in the early thirties. There was a very good reason for working with those young people and the bulk of the membership was not then, and was never later, Communistic.

A group among them were Communists then and perhaps may have remained so--that I do not know. But I would like to remind people in general and especially my correspondent that this was a particularly difficult period for young people.

They were coming out of college in great numbers and finding no jobs. Democracy was failing them and many of the most intelligent thought Communism would solve their problems.

Sooner or later many of them found out how intolerable Communist control was and they became better citizens of our democracy than ever before. They did not inform against their former colleagues, they simply gave up Communism and went to work as citizens of our democracy.

They were the more valuable because they knew what was wrong with Communism and they understood and cherished the democratic form of government and the democratic way of life.

Back in the thirties, however, these young people--even those who booed the President--needed friends. They were rude, true, but also desperately unhappy and frustrated. It was fortunate that the White House understood this.

My devotion to my country and to democracy is quite as great as that of Senator McCarthy. I do not like his methods or the results of his methods and I would like to say to my correspondent that I think those of us who worked with young people in the thirties did more to save many of them from becoming Communists than Senator McCarthy has done for his fellow citizens with all his slurs and accusations.

I know the danger of Communism. I know it perhaps better than many other American citizens because for nearly five months of every year for the last six years, I have sat in meetings with the Communist representatives of the U.S.S.R.

I despise the control they insist on holding over men's minds. And that is why I despise

what Senator McCarthy has done, for he would use the same methods of fear to control all thought that is not according to his own pattern--in our free country.²⁹

Any scholar who could read this column and still argue that the anti-Stalinist liberals encouraged McCarthy misses the balance Mrs. Roosevelt demonstrated in seeing the need both for an anti-communist diplomacy abroad and the preservation of civil liberties at home.

²⁹My Day, 29 August, 1952.

CHAPTER VIII

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT AND THE
GLOBALIZATION OF CONTAINMENT, 1949-1952

Intervention in the Korean War "globalized" containment. Liberals, such as Eleanor Roosevelt, advocated in particular that the administration "globalize" the Marshall Plan. They believed that Adlai Stevenson's 1947 statement, "a full belly is a better obstacle to communism than a bayonet"¹ should govern American diplomacy in the Third World. Eleanor Roosevelt emerged as a leading proponent of foreign aid. As a special friend of Israel and India, she hoped these two democracies would serve as models for American assisted economic development.

I

At a White House meeting in early 1943, Chaim Weizmann had asked Eleanor Roosevelt to support the establishment of a Jewish state in the Middle East. Although his appeal impressed her, she conceded to a friend that she had heard equally persuasive arguments from anti-Zionists. For example, Dr. Isaiah Bowman, the president of Johns Hopkins University and head of the State Department's advisory group on Palestine, had told her that Palestine could never absorb an increase in the Jewish population and that a future Israel would require an Anglo-American security presence to protect

¹Walter Johnson, ed., The Papers of Adlai E. Stevenson, Volume II: Washington to Springfield (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1972), p. 380.

Jewish settlements. Eleanor Roosevelt was well aware of the Arab opposition to a Zionist state. Durward Sandifer recalled her describing in great length, F.D.R.'s ill-fated meeting with Saudi Arabia's King Ibn Saud:

She said this was one of the few cases in which the President felt his conversational powers failed to produce any results. He could find nothing in which the old King was interested. He opened by talking about trees, the reforestation of the west, and the control belts. "They would be good in the desert," the President suggested. The King heard him through and then said, "Trees, I am not interested in trees. Talk to my brother there, he knows about trees." Then the President talked about farming, elaborating the subject to great length, and the great benefits modern farming methods could bring to Arabia. "Farming," the King said, "I am not interested in farming. If you want to talk about farming, talk to my tenth son there. He knows about farming." And so on with several subjects. The old King was interested in nothing but fighting, and in maintaining the fabric of Arabian life as he had known it, the life of the nomadic tribesmen. That, it seems, is the basic reason for his unswerving hostility to the Jews in Palestine. He resents the change in life which the industrialization they bring is gradually bringing about in Arab life. If his sons want to change after he is gone it is alright but not while he is here. He has 42 sons.²

Eleanor Roosevelt also believed that Jews should strive for assimilation, not separation. Nevertheless, she sympathized with the Zionist position that the Holocaust, followed by the western nations' reluctance to admit refugees, proved that the Christian world would never accept the Jews. At a

²Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, pp. 109-113; Sandifer, "Mrs. Roosevelt As We Knew Her," p. 4.

displaced persons' camp in early 1946, Eleanor Roosevelt learned what Israel represented to the survivors of Hitler:

. . . in the mud of Zilcheim, I remember an old woman whose family had been driven from home by the war madness and brutality. I had no idea who she was and we could not speak each other's language, but she knelt in the muddy road and simply threw her arms around my knees.

"Israel," she murmured, over and over, "Israel! Israel!"

As I looked at her weatherbeaten face and heard her old voice, I knew for the first time what that small land meant to so many, many people.³

Deeply moved by this encounter, Eleanor Roosevelt returned to the United States convinced that the refugees should at least be admitted to Palestine. In a letter to James McDonald, she praised the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry for recommending that Great Britain grant the Jews 100,000 entry permits. Eleanor Roosevelt further suggested that the United States

should have the courage to tell the Arabs that we intend to protect Palestine, but I suppose that is asking too much of us at the present time, though it would only take a small air-force and it would seem to me to keep them in order.⁴

But Mrs. Roosevelt was hesitant to support the Zionist demand for a Jewish state in Palestine. In her April 10, 1946 My Day, she struggled with the perplexing dilemma of whether to

³Roosevelt, On My Own, p. 56.

⁴Eleanor Roosevelt to James McDonald, April 28, 1946, James McDonald Papers, Columbia University Library.

endorse partition:

The suggestion that the country be partitioned seems to me no answer to the problem, since the main objection originally to Palestine becoming a home for the Jews was the grave doubt entertained by many as to whether the land would be able to support any more people than were already there. It is understandable that the Arabs are not anxious to have the Jews as neighbors. The Arabs are a nomadic people, leading simple lives, and those who have moved into the orbit of the Jewish people have found the competition difficult and the standard of living higher than that to which they were accustomed. The Jews, however, are not asking for a vast increase in land. They ask to keep what they have, with slight additions for economic needs, and to be allowed to take in refugees.⁵

Eleanor Roosevelt repeatedly criticized the British for refusing to implement the recommendation of the Anglo-American committee. She deplored the action of the Royal Navy in turning back refugee ships enroute to Palestine. In a late August 1947 column, Mrs. Roosevelt asked her readers to visualize the scene of Jews on a ship in a French port ordered to disembark and to return to a detention camp three miles from Bergen-Belsen. In a letter to an English friend Mrs. Roosevelt accused the British of supporting the Arabs in order to obtain "more favorable considerations where oil concessions are concerned." "A good many people feel," she added, to another friend in London,

that both the United States and Great Britain and Russia are motivated very largely by their

⁵My Day, 10 April, 1946.

interest in oil and not so much by their fears of injustice to the Jewish people or of harm coming to the Jewish people. I think even subconsciously we do things that we don't mean to do and few of us have enjoyed pure motives.

She still held the British most responsible; when dealing with Palestine, she wrote in her April 26, 1947 My Day, the labor government of England "might as well be . . . Tory."⁶

The Labor government Eleanor Roosevelt so criticized decided in April 1947 to turn the question over to the United Nations. On November 29, the General Assembly ordered the division of the Holy Land into a Zionist and Arab state. Eleanor Roosevelt now endorsed partition as the only sensible alternative to the British mandate. She further believed that, if the U.N. could enforce this decision, its credibility as a peace-keeping force would be enhanced. Mrs. Roosevelt therefore advocated an international police force protect the new Jewish state. In February 1948, she expressed this view to President Truman and to Secretary of State Marshall.

⁶My Day, 26 April, 23 August, 1947; Eleanor Roosevelt to Florence Willert, December 19, 1946, Florence Willert Papers, Yale University Library; Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, pp. 116-124. In a telegram to President Truman, Eleanor Roosevelt described the plight of the refugees in the ship in France. Truman responded by accusing the American Zionists of instigating this incident. He wrote: "The action of some of our U.S. Zionists will eventually prejudice everyone against what they are trying to get done. I fear very much that the Jews are like all underdogs--when they get on top they are just as intolerant and as cruel as the people were to them when they were underneath. I regret this situation very much because my sympathy has always been on the other side." (Telegram, Eleanor Roosevelt to President Truman, August 22, 1947; President Truman to Eleanor Roosevelt, August 23, 1947, Box 4560, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.).

She also signed a statement with Herbert Lehman, Senator Elbert Thomas, and Sumner Welles declaring that the growing tension in Palestine "makes it imperative that arrangements be made immediately for a United Nations international police force to go to Palestine to prevent any breach of the peace as provided for under Articles 30 and 42."⁷

In early March, the administration, through Ambassador Warren Austin, proposed that the United Nations set aside partition in favor of a temporary trusteeship. The decision to abandon its commitment to support the November 29th resolution resulted from fears of offending Arab oil interests, and, during the height of the cold war, of having to possibly deploy American troops to protect the new nation.⁸

In a letter to Truman, Eleanor Roosevelt threatened to resign from the United Nations delegation because she would have to criticize publicly this policy change. Truman refused to accept her resignation. He tried to reassure Mrs. Roosevelt that the trusteeship would only be temporary. Eleanor Roosevelt remained unconvinced. The administration's refusal to honor its commitment, Mrs. Roosevelt wrote in My Day, "led to increased resistance by the Arabs. They were sure they could have their own way without any consideration of the wishes of the U.N." By taking "the weak course of sacrificing the word we pledged," Eleanor Roosevelt accused the U.S.

⁷Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, pp. 124-127; New York Times, 24 February, 1948; New York Herald Tribune, 19 February, 1948.

⁸Lash, op. cit.

government of "weaken[ing] the United Nations and prevent[ing] it from becoming an instrument to keep peace in the world." Furthermore, Eleanor Roosevelt predicted that a trusteeship would ultimately fail:

Under the new suggestion that the UN create a new mandate for Palestine until some peaceful solution can be worked out between the Jews and Arabs, I cannot help wondering who is going to see to it that an armistice actually is carried out. There are extremists on both sides of this question. Palestine is accustomed to violence and bloodshed. Announcing an armistice is not going to bring it about.

It seems to me that the UN and we, as a great nation, are going to be faced with exactly the same problem that we had in supporting partition. One of the questions at issue has always been immigration into Palestine by the Jews. If the new mandate government permits any immigration, the Arabs will object; if it permits no immigration, the Jews will object. And in the meantime, miserable, desperate people will sit in camps in Europe and on Cyprus. With each day, they become less able to be valuable citizens anywhere.⁹

In mid-April, the Security Council rejected the American plan. A new debate now raged within the administration on whether the United States should recognize the new government of Israel when the mandate terminated on May 14. Secretary of State Marshall and his undersecretary, Robert Lovett, opposed the establishment of immediate diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv for the same reasons they had urged Truman to oppose partition. Both also placed credence in the intelligence reports predicting that Arab armies would swiftly defeat

⁹Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, pp. 127-132; My Day, 26, 27 March, 1948.

the Zionists in the anticipated war. Once again, Eleanor Roosevelt locked horns with Truman's closest advisors. Besides arguing that the United States was morally committed to uphold a United Nations decision, she feared that the Russians would recognize Israel before Washington did. Perhaps Mrs. Roosevelt's lobbying for Israel contributed to Truman's decision to bypass State Department objections and recognize Israel on May 14.¹⁰

During the Arab-Israeli War, Mrs. Roosevelt urged that Americans support the new nation fighting for its survival against, in her eyes, feudal Arab Sheikdoms armed by their London customers. She found the Zionist struggle "reminiscent of all other pioneer movements where people have tried to establish themselves in new places to flee oppression and interference elsewhere." When Mrs. Roosevelt heard in the summer of 1948 that the United Nations mediator, Count Folke Bernadotte, supported by General Marshall, proposed that the new state of Israel relinquish its claim to the Negev desert, she implored Bernard Baruch to persuade the secretary to reject this portion of the peace plan:

I wish you would do some work in putting pressure on Secretary Marshall so that he will consider his approval of the Bernadotte Plan was not tantamount to complete acceptance of all the recommendations contained in it, but only as being a good basis for negotiation. . . . It seems highly unfair to me to turn the whole of the Negev over to the Arabs. The portion of Galilee given to the Jews is not fertile and I do not think it fair compensation because in Jewish hands the Negev would be

¹⁰Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, pp. 132-133.

developed and may turn out to be the only place where they can receive immigration. I have expressed these thoughts in the delegation meetings but I do not think I carry much weight. I have only one real backer and that is Ben Cohen. Neither of us was consulted before the Secretary made his announcement to the press of the acceptance of the Bernadotte report. We were simply handed a statement to read in the session after he had given it out to the press.

On her radio show she had former Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr. outline for the audience why the Negev would be so crucial for Israel's security and growth. Right before the election, Truman did overrule Marshall on the Negev border issue.¹¹

In her case for Israel, Mrs. Roosevelt contended that a friendly Israel would improve the United States' strategic position in the Middle East. She warned Truman in the fall of 1948 that the Soviet Union had been making "friendly advances" to Tel Aviv. Despite Jewish memories of Russian persecution, she believed that, if no other nation offered help, the Israelis would turn to Moscow. For this reason, she suggested that Truman assist Israel by lifting the arms embargo and offering loans. Following the 1949 armistice, Mrs. Roosevelt lobbied for foreign aid for Israel and asked Americans of all creeds to support the United Jewish Appeal:

I believe that a country, in which deserts have been reclaimed and where in spite of the tremendous influx of immigrants the standards

¹¹My Day, 27 May, 1948; Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, p. 135; Eleanor and Anna Roosevelt Program, November 12, 1948; Anna Roosevelt Halsted Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.

of health have been raised and education is being provided for the majority of the people, cannot help but be a growing democratic force in the area in which it is established.

If this is so then whatever is done in Israel will serve in the long run to help stabilize an area of the world that needs peace for its future development. A strong and democratic Israel can mean a strong and democratic Middle East, and for that reason I am willing and anxious to help the UJA.¹²

Sitting on the United Nations Committee Three, which had jurisdiction over refugee matters, Mrs. Roosevelt was also intimately concerned with the Palestinian plight. She urged that aid be immediately sent for over 300,000 refugees temporarily residing in camps bordering Israel. On October 29, 1948, Mrs. Roosevelt introduced in the General Assembly a joint Anglo-American resolution calling on the United Nations to allocate over \$29 million for refugee assistance. Although she advocated international help for the Palestinians, she believed that the responsibility for improving their lives lay with the states they fled to, not Israel. She further rejected repatriation. Mrs. Roosevelt asked: "Why should the new state of Israel take people who would be dangerous citizens, antagonistic to them and their ideas, back into the country?" Because she displayed such an attitude, Eleanor Roosevelt was unpopular in the Arab World. "It came as a shock to me," Durward Sandifer wrote

When a woman from the Syrian Embassy said,
"I think Mrs. Roosevelt must be a very wicked

¹²Eleanor Roosevelt to Harry Truman, September 12, 1948; Box 4560, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers; My Day, 6 June, 1951.

woman." At first, I was stunned, and then, remembering that I was speaking with an Arab, said that I understood that she would disagree with Mrs. Roosevelt in her attitude toward Israel, but that she was not "wicked," that they simply had a different viewpoint on what was right. The Syrian woman felt deeply that Mrs. Roosevelt did not appreciate Arab culture, that she had been largely responsible for much suffering among the displaced Arabs. Mrs. Roosevelt symbolized to her the sources of the "wrong doing" against the Arabs.¹³

When visiting the Middle East in February 1952, Eleanor Roosevelt received a cool, but polite reception in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. The poverty in the refugee camps shocked her, especially when she learned that camp officials provided no work for the displaced persons and made no effort to integrate the people, many with skills, into the host nations' economies. "You see there is unemployment in most of the Arab countries," she recalled one of her guides telling her, "and it is felt that we cannot permit these people in the camps to seek work that would put them in competition with the citizens of our country."¹⁴

Following her short stay in the Arab nations, Mrs. Roosevelt crossed the Mandelbaum Gate in divided Jerusalem to spend four days in Israel. She recalled in On My Own, "Going from the Arab countries through the Mandelbaum Gate was to me, like breathing the air of the United States again . . . I somehow felt that I was among people with a

¹³My Day, 21 August, 6 October, 1948, 7 April, 1949, 12 June, 1951. Department of State Bulletin, 19 (November 7, 1948), p. 575; Sandifer, "Mrs Roosevelt As We Knew Her," p. 72.

¹⁴Roosevelt, On My Own, pp. 97-102.

purpose, people dedicated to fulfilling a purpose." Mrs. Roosevelt conferred with the young nation's leaders, including David Ben Gurion and Golda Meir. She visited projects that aided the assimilation of new immigrants, improved the people's health, irrigated the desert, and offered the youth vocational training. "What astounds one in Israel," Mrs. Roosevelt observed in My Day, "is that the spirit is like the American spirit. There is imagination to accomplish great projects and no fear of undertaking them."¹⁵ So began an infatuation with Israel that would remain with Mrs. Roosevelt for the rest of her life.

II

In his inaugural address of January 1949, President Truman introduced his Point 4 program. His promise of economic assistance to the non-western world revived among liberals the possibility of a resurrected "New Deal For the World." J. Donald Kingsley, Director General of the International Refugee Organization, told Clark Clifford, "I think it will be the judgment of history that--while Roosevelt created the New Deal in America--Truman extended it to the world." Truman himself, expressed to David Lilienthal his dream of building

TVAs in the Euphrates Valley to restore
that country to the fertility and beauty

¹⁵Roosevelt, On My Own, pp. 102-103; My Day, 20, 21, 22 February, 1952; New York Times, 16, 22 February, 1952.

of ancient times; of a TVA in the Yangtze Valley and the Danube. These things can be done and don't anyone tell you different. When they happen, when millions and millions of people are no longer hungry and pushed and harrassed, then the causes of wars will be less by that much.¹⁶

Eleanor Roosevelt shared Truman's vision. In the developing nations, Mrs. Roosevelt wrote in July of 1950, "Freedom means nothing to a man with an empty stomach. He will accept a dictator if with the dictator comes the promise of food and shelter." Point 4, Eleanor Roosevelt predicted, would eliminate hunger and misery; it would further give the United States "a tremendous advantage and all the talk of the Communists will mean very little compared to the actual improvement in conditions. . . ." The promise of only military assistance, she pointed out, would open the U.S. to

the accusation of interference with the will of the people of the country in managing their own government. But where we recognize the real need of the people and try to give them such assistance as will help them to gain greater security, and therefore independence, we strike at the root of their suspicions of us, and nothing the Soviet agents can say will change the facts experienced by the people.

That is why it seems to me that our economic assistance is more important than our military assistance, and that is why the Point Four program is important.¹⁷

Eleanor Roosevelt also suggested that Point 4 should not be considered charity but rather "a pure economic proposition and a good proposition at that." When conservatives in the

¹⁶Hamby, Beyond the New Deal, p. 371.

¹⁷My Day, 27 March, 24 July, 1950.

House of Representatives tried, in July 1951, to cut Point Four funds, Mrs. Roosevelt warned, "If these countries fall under the communist spell, we will without any question find ourselves losing our standard of living, we will find ourselves in a more restricted world with less and less opportunity to sell our goods and more and more suspicion directed against us." Through using the "open door" argument, Eleanor Roosevelt hoped to win business and conservative support for Point Four.¹⁸

Conservatives, however, opposed sending foreign aid to neutralist countries. For example, in early 1951 they introduced in Congress legislation to ban food shipments to India. Taking such action, Mrs. Roosevelt predicted,

would give all the other peoples of Asia the impression that we were not really interested in the well-being of the people, but only in giving where we could obtain returns. Those returns would be political and economic. By refusing wheat to India now we will strengthen the belief in Asia that our real interest is an imperial policy of control and that our humanitarian protestations are hollow words.

Mrs. Roosevelt asked those advocating the ban, "I wonder

¹⁸My Day, 13 April 1950; 5 February, 8, 13 March, 23 July, 1951. A sampling of other Eleanor Roosevelt "Open Door" statements follow: On April 13, 1950 she wrote that Point 4 "may mean for us the difference between being able to hold and improve our present standards of living or sinking to a much lower level. Production must expand and we must develop better marketing and distributing machinery. Only thus can we keep full employment in this country." "The Point 4 program is one which will eventually be of economic value to us because," Mrs. Roosevelt wrote on July 24, 1950, "with increased productive capacity here, there must be increased buying capacity throughout the world."

if these gentlemen have stopped to think how we would feel if we differed with another nation and needed help on humanitarian grounds and our political differences of opinion were used against us when we were begging to keep our people from starvation?"¹⁹ She also defended India's neutralist diplomacy. Because India was close to China and Russia, she explained in My Day, the New Delhi government needed good relations with its communist neighbors, but would eventually learn "that one is for or against communism, just as one is for or against God, and there is no such thing as placating a Communist power."²⁰

Eleanor Roosevelt visited India in March, 1952. Before her arrival in New Delhi, she received a briefing paper from Ambassador Chester Bowles, a prominent international New Dealer. He suggested that the U.S. continue to send economic assistance--especially food--to India, "without any strings attached." "A dynamic, democratic, successful India," Bowles asserted, "will substantially buttress the cause of freedom not only in India but in Asia and in all parts of the world."²¹ Chester Bowles impressed the New Delhi government with his understanding of India's problems and his refusal to equate Indian neutralism with pro-communism. Eleanor Roosevelt achieved similar results on her tour.

¹⁹My Day, 5 February, 8 March, 1951.

²⁰My Day, 30 August, 1951.

²¹Briefing Paper for Eleanor Roosevelt by Chester Bowles, India File, Box 4659, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

When arriving in New Delhi, Eleanor Roosevelt told reporters "the average American has so far been so engrossed in his own affairs that he knows little about other peoples. He is, however, eager to learn about India and I am here to learn."²² Through visiting government-sponsored projects designed to improve living standards, Eleanor Roosevelt observed an effort to fulfill the dreams of the international New Dealers. "What impressed me the most," she told a Bangalore audience

is that you have very tremendous problems, and that you are tackling them in the same way we did in the U.S. when my husband first became President . . . you are trying for a new economic development aimed at raising the standard of living of the masses of people and you are trying to set up new social services to attain greater education and better health. All these aims are essential for the good functioning of democracy.²³

Eleanor Roosevelt further learned that India's neutralist foreign policy resulted from Nehru's determination to concentrate only on economic development. "You are taking exactly the same attitude as that we took in the early thirties," Mrs. Roosevelt said in Hyderabad. But in Bombay she added, "I have come to feel that if India wants to remain neutral, she can, but not neutral in spirit."²⁴

²²The Statesman (New Delhi), 28 February 1952; India Press Clipping Book, Press Information Bureau, Bureau of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, Trip File, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

²³The Mail (Madras), 8 March, 1952, Press Clipping Book.

²⁴The Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 10 March, 1952; The Hindu (Madras) 3 March, 1952; Press Clipping Book.

Whenever she encountered Indian distrust of American diplomacy, Eleanor Roosevelt patiently explained to her hosts the difficulties the U.S. faced in formulating its foreign policy. The cold war, Mrs. Roosevelt told a New Delhi press conference, "frightened the people instead of making them understand very well that they were strong enough not to be afraid." Living in such a tense environment, she argued, made Americans

somewhat hysterical about anybody who opposed anything that we felt had to be done. We were very apt not to think about their situation or their point of view. We simply thought they were not with us. It is utter nonsense, of course. The whole world is not always going to do everything exactly the way you do it yourself.²⁵

In such statements, Mrs. Roosevelt tried to apologize for those Americans who linked Indian neutralism with communism. She expressed confidence that the growing strength of Indian democracy could diminish such fears and also improve American-Indian relations.

Mrs. Roosevelt encountered criticisms of the American foreign policy. She repeated her traditional defense of the Korean intervention and suggested that the U.S. could never recognize the Peking government as long as the Chinese remained in the war. She defended the U.S. against charges of imperialism:

²⁵The Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 2 March, 1952, Press Clipping Book.

If you look back you will find America has so far never wanted to dominate other nations. Most of the people, for one reason or another, have happened to be temporarily under our jurisdiction and are getting out of that jurisdiction. If you study the American record, I don't think you will be afraid of any domination by us.²⁶

When Indian leftists questioned the sincerity of Point 4 programs, Mrs. Roosevelt answered that the Russians had an ulterior motive behind their foreign aid programs, but she did say in New Delhi: "Communism is fought with guns, but with bread too."²⁷ In protesting Eleanor Roosevelt's visit, socialist students at Allahabad University cited this statement as part of an

imperialist scheme of using bread as a weapon of interference in internal politics of other countries. All patriots will resent it and regard it as derogatory to our national prestige. There are various shades of political opinion in our country which is evident from the picture that has emerged after the general elections. Any suggestion, particularly by a foreigner, howsoever indirect, of using guns against any section is simply intolerable.²⁸

The students' city newspaper, the Allahabad Leader pointed to another inconsistency in Mrs. Roosevelt's position

²⁶The Hindustan Times, 10 March, 1952, Press Clipping Book.

²⁷The Leader (Allahabad), 19 March, 1952; The Bharat (Bombay), 4 March, 1952, Press Clipping Book.

²⁸Ibid. Against the advice of the Indian authorities, Mrs. Roosevelt met with the students. She patiently answered their questions. The March 20 issue of the Allahabad Leader reported her impression of the meeting: "Mrs. Roosevelt, however, said that she was not surprised at the misconception that led to the remarks made in the pamphlets in question.

A section of Indian opinion had begun to distrust the U.S.A. Mrs. Roosevelt seems to be aware of this fact. She denied in a speech at Hyderabad that the U.S.A. wants to dominate other nations . . . But the fact cannot be ignored that today she is pursuing a policy which will prolong colonial rule in non-white countries which are still unfree. The U.S.A.'s support of France which is trying to crush the nationalist movements in Indo-China, Tunisia and Morocco is an instance in point.

Despite this criticism, the editorial still praised Mrs. Roosevelt:

America needs to be told that the most effective way to prevent the expansion of U.S.S.R. imperialism in Asia is to respect the aims and aspirations of Asian nations and not to bolster colonialism. No American is more competent to educate American opinion than Mrs. Roosevelt.

But it will be a mistake to look upon Mrs. Roosevelt merely as a guest American. She is much more than that. She is a citizen of the world. Mrs. Roosevelt thinks of international problems not in terms of American interests but in terms of the interests of justice and peace. If we have more people who, like Mrs. Roosevelt, belong to the world there is no international dispute which cannot be settled peacefully.²⁹

Eleanor Roosevelt impressed the other Indian newspapers as well. The Bombay Bharat noted that she possessed

almost an instinctive understanding of India's much-misunderstood stand in the international

There was nothing new in it. A sense of frustration was but natural among the young men when a country was faced with unemployment and other economic difficulties. A similar feeling of frustration, she said, had been visible among the young people of America when her husband, the late Mr. Roosevelt, was elected to presidency for the first time. Things, however, came to normalcy with the betterment of the living conditions in her country.

Mrs. Roosevelt wanted the students to bear in mind that she was not representing the American government but had come to India as an independent visitor to study the conditions obtaining in this land."

²⁹Ibid.

field. In the few days she has been here, she would seem to have gone to the root of the issue in so far as she has been able to discover that if there is any neutrality in this country, it is not a neutrality of the spirit.³⁰

The Bombay Forum agreed; but it reminded its readers that Mrs. Roosevelt's visit should be assessed within the context of the deterioration of American-Indian relations. The paper's editorial on Mrs. Roosevelt's trip first criticized American diplomacy:

On international politics, America has taken the most uncompromising stand against Communism . . . We are right now living through the hardship caused by rearmament and the freedom-loving nations of Asia are aghast at the manner in which the U.S.A. has aligned herself with the hated forces of imperialists and reaction in Asia. Besides there is always suspicion round the corner that the American aid is not so philanthropic as it is paraded to be, but a hideous and calculated scheme to chain the economies of the newly-freed nations of Asia to the chariot wheels of "dollar imperialism."

It then praised Eleanor Roosevelt for being both imaginative and tactful in trying to allay such suspicions. But

Her answers throw no new light on the American foreign policy--her condemnation of Communism is but an expression of the usual American attitude. But there is an air of grace, goodwill and understanding about this lady, which do not seem to be the strong point of the most American some-bodies. For instance, she had stated in Bombay that the getting of aid from Communist countries by India would not affect the position of the American aid. How many Congressmen in her own country all share this opinion?³¹

Besides having to defend the United States from charges of being a colonialist nation, Mrs. Roosevelt was frequently asked in India to explain American racial practices. This

³⁰The Bharat (Bombay), 4 March, 1952, Press Clipping Book.

³¹Forum (Bombay), 9 March, 1952, Press Clipping Book.

proved embarrassing for her because she personally believed that the U.S. had failed to move fast enough to end segregation. She appealed to her Indian audiences to be patient with the United States in its difficult attempt to establish civil rights. But, back home, she cited racism as the single domestic issue that damaged American chances for winning Third World peoples to its side in the cold war. She told the 1950 Americans for Democratic Action convention:

We have, for instance, to make sure that we have civil rights in this country. There was a time when we could look on that question as a purely domestic one--that we could take all the time we wanted to educate ourselves to solve the problem. It isn't any longer a domestic question--it's an international question. It is perhaps the question which may decide whether democracy or communism wins out in the world.

Incidents such as a race riot in Cicero, Illinois, the refusal to bury a black soldier killed in Korea in an all-white veteran cemetery in Phoenix, Arizona, and the picketing of a Paul Robeson concert--all, Mrs. Roosevelt believed, compromised the American position in the cold war. When Governor James F. Byrnes, a former Secretary of State and Supreme Court Justice, promised the whites of South Carolina to resist integration, Mrs. Roosevelt angrily wrote:

He must well be aware that discriminatory practices in this country, segregation in particular, have repercussions on our leadership in the world. He must have kept in touch sufficiently with representatives in the United Nations so that he knows how much use the Communists will make of a statement such as this from a responsible man who has held many offices. [He must realize that] the world does not stand still. He must realize that today thousands of people who formerly had no

representation in any council of nations now must be heard. They are sensitive to the thinking of other nations, particularly of the white nations of the world, so nothing passes unnoticed.

We, as a nation, are engaged in a serious struggle for the minds and hearts of many of the colored peoples of the world who are being appealed to strongly by the Communists with promises of complete equality. What does Governor Byrnes think of a statement such as he is reported to have made will do to the minds and hearts of these people?

We are too apt to think only of ourselves and the effect of what we say on our immediate constituency. Yet, a man of Governor Byrnes' background has a grave responsibility to educate the people of his part of this country to a realization that what they do and say affects the standing of the United States before the world.

On her radio show, Mrs. Roosevelt recalled how the communist use of the racial issue embarrassed her in the United Nations:

. . . and almost always the delegates of the USSR and her satellites would ask: "But how about your treatment of Negroes in your country?" "How about your Ku Klux Klan lynchings?" When the Russian delegate asked me those questions, I had no answer. What do you say, standing before a committee of a world organization, when you are asked about the Ku Klux Klan? You can not excuse it, for there is no excuse for it. You can only say, as I said to the United Nations, that most Americans despise the Ku Klux Klan, that for every hooded Klansman there are thousands of Americans who cherish our traditional freedoms and who desire only to live in peace and brotherhood with their neighbors. I wonder if Dr. Green [a Klan leader]--who talks of upholding the constitution--is proud of the fact that his organization was used more than any other weapon by the Russians to attack our country before the countries of the world?!³²

³²My Day, 7 September 1949; 10 March, 10 April, 1951; 14 January 1952; Congressional Record, Appendix, 1950, A2969; Eleanor and Anna Roosevelt Program, December 22, 1948, Anna Roosevelt Halsted Papers.

Throughout World War II, and well into the Cold War, Eleanor Roosevelt advocated A New Deal For the World. With communism now the enemy, she believed the United States should strengthen democratic and liberal forces in such diverse countries as France, Israel, and India. Mrs. Roosevelt also tried to make her public aware that Jim Crowism in the south damaged the American image in the Third World. This became the liberal's cold war program when Eisenhower assumed the presidency in January of 1953.

CHAPTER IX

THE EISENHOWER YEARS:

MCCARTHYISM, ASIA, AND THE MIDDLE EAST

On June 22, 1952, Eleanor Roosevelt addressed the Democratic national convention. She warned her audience that attempts by the McCarthyites and neo-isolationists to weaken the United Nations would "condemn ourselves to endless struggle for survival in a jungle world."¹

Adlai Stevenson's nomination pleased Mrs. Roosevelt. She had endorsed him the previous spring but was unable to participate in the draft-Stevenson movement because of her U.N. commitments. Following the convention, Mrs. Roosevelt offered to campaign for the Illinois governor but his staff, for unexplained reasons, ignored her offer.² In her endorsement of Stevenson, Eleanor Roosevelt stressed his experience in foreign affairs. In contrast to Eisenhower, whom Mrs. Roosevelt characterized as merely a "glamorous, successful General," Mrs. Roosevelt believed Stevenson

has a better world understanding than almost any other man in this country, and more important, he actually knows men who have

¹New York Times, July 23, 1952. In this speech Mrs. Roosevelt warned: "There is a small articulate minority in this country which advocates changing our national symbol which is the eagle to that of the ostrich and withdrawing from the United Nations.

This minority reminds me of a story of a shortsighted and selfish man who put green goggles on his cow and fed her sawdust. The cow became sick and died. I warn you against the vision of the American people.. We must have eagle eyes.

These men who lack vision are poor in hope. They turn their backs on the future and live in the past. They seek to weaken and destroy this world organization. They are expressing a selfish, destructive approach which leads not to peace but to chaos and might eventually lead to World War III."

²Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, pp. 208-215.

been in their governments in practically every country in the world. This is a great asset and it seems to me that thoughtful people will be glad to have a candidate with such background and preparation.

In My Day Mrs. Roosevelt praised Stevenson's ability to

make the people understand the complicated situations before us so well, and in such simple and beautiful prose. . . . For this reason I think that the overriding concern about peace, and about preserving the well-being that the people now enjoy in this country, will make them vote for Governor Stevenson when they face the momentous decision on November 4.³

Eleanor Roosevelt was especially incensed with Eisenhower for refusing to condemn Senator McCarthy. At a Stevenson rally in New York City, Mrs. Roosevelt said that she had "never felt so sorry for anyone before" when Eisenhower chose to share a campaign platform with Senator William Jenner, who had joined McCarthy in smearing General Marshall:

I know that it must have been terrible to face yourself--to realize that you have been persuaded that you must go out and stand beside a man who had said things about someone who had been your best friend, someone who had really given you the opportunity to rise to great position.

Yet he [Eisenhower] stood by the side of Jenner, who said that General Marshall's life was a living lie.

Mrs. Roosevelt then accused Eisenhower of "begging the question" when he stated that he disapproved of McCarthy's methods but

³My Day, 24 October 1952; September 21, 1952, Statement for Stevenson. Box 4028, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

agreed with the Wisconsin Senator's goals.⁴

Eisenhower's victory disappointed Mrs. Roosevelt. She submitted the traditional letter of resignation required of all ambassadors when a new administration takes office. Responding to conservative pressure, Eisenhower and Dulles decided to accept Eleanor Roosevelt's letter. This decision to remove Eleanor Roosevelt from the Human Rights Commission illustrates an early example of Eisenhower's capitulation to the McCarthyites in his party.⁵

Now freed from holding public office, Eleanor Roosevelt volunteered to work for the American Association for the United Nations. She undertook for them a national speaking tour to defend the U.N. from neo-isolationist attack. Frequently, she encountered opposition. A plane flew over Miami with a banner reading "Eleanor Go Home." In Milwaukee pickets greeted Mrs. Roosevelt with signs suggesting that the U.N. was communist. Estelle Linzer, the A.A.U.N. official who accompanied Mrs. Roosevelt on the speaking tour described one incident in which Mrs. Roosevelt defended U.N.I.C.E.F. aid to Polish Children:

She said, "Now, look, someday those Polish children are going to grow up because they're fed, they won't die. And they're going to sit across the table from American children,

⁴New York Times, 29 October, 1952.

⁵Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, pp. 214-219.

grown up. And the one thing they're going to remember is that they were kept alive by an organization which had American support, and was started by Americans." Her argument was the best way to defeat enemies or communism, whatever you want, to take the long view and see what it's going to be like in the future. People would write letters, you know, about feeding Polish children, saying, "Those children are communists." She said, "I've never met a child who was a communist." She used to tear down their arguments.⁶

Eleanor Roosevelt also became honorary chairman of the A.D.A. Joseph Rauh recalled why he, Joseph Lash, and James Wechsler offered her this office:

She would give us added strength in the fight against McCarthy because McCarthy would have to, in a sense, attack Mrs. Roosevelt as a communist. That, we felt, would strengthen our situation because, while there might be idiots in the right-wing who thought Mrs. Roosevelt was a communist, liberals, middle-of-the-roads and conservatives knew better.⁷

"In identifying herself with the A.D.A. more dramatically than ever before," the New York Post wrote,

Mrs. Roosevelt suggests to the reactionaries and to the timid alike that the time for the counter-offensive of decency is at hand. Perhaps better than anyone else, she is capable of communicating to millions the wise reminder that free men have "nothing to fear but fear itself."

⁶Interview held with Estelle Linzer by Thomas Soapes, Oral Historian, on February 24, 1978, The Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, pp. 24-25.

⁷Interview held with Joseph Rauh by Thomas Soapes, Oral Historian, on January 31, 1978, The Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, p. 12.

In the light of such history, Mrs. Roosevelt's acceptance of the A.D.A. post is a peculiarly appropriate way of sounding the call to the home-front fight for freedom. For A.D.A. is not the property of any political party, and the defense of liberty is in the highest sense a non-partisan issue. Whatever their political allegiances, men of goodwill--abroad as well as at home--will be cheered by the news that Mrs. Roosevelt has taken this place of leadership in A.D.A.⁸

Mrs. Roosevelt also assumed the chairmanship of the liberal public policy organization, the National Issues Committee (N.I.C.). Following a world tour that took her to Japan, Greece, Turkey, and Yugoslavia, Mrs. Roosevelt, in August 1953, questioned Eisenhower's foreign policy leadership:

Everything I have seen and heard on the long journey I have just completed . . . convinces me that our friends throughout the world are beginning to lose confidence in America and that we are in serious danger of suffering far-reaching reverses in the world-wide fight against totalitarianism and for democracy. . . .

To a very serious degree, President Eisenhower's position on foreign policy has been undermined by forces which simply have not accepted America's responsibility for leadership of the free world. These forces are strongly organized and, on a dozen fronts in and out of Congress, are driving to destroy the technical assistance program, NATO, the United Nations and every other manifestation of international cooperative effort.⁹

⁸New York Post, 25 May, 1953.

⁹National Issues Committee Press Release, August 12, 1953, Box 4643, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

Throughout the Eisenhower years, Eleanor Roosevelt fought against the "forces" she described in this statement, forces she felt were determined to destroy the liberal containment policies of Truman. She defended N.A.T.O., the U.N. and foreign aid. Despite attempts by the administration and the Republican right-wing to punish India for its neutralist policies, Mrs. Roosevelt remained a supporter of the Nehru government. She also continued to be one of the leading American friends of Israel.

I

During 1953, Adlai Stevenson also toured Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. He discovered, as did Mrs. Roosevelt on her world tour, that American prestige had suffered because of McCarthyism. While in Burma, Stevenson learned that Senator McCarthy had just recently prevailed upon the United States Information Agency to investigate his and Mrs. Roosevelt's writings "for any Communist leanings." One Burmese official asked him, "How do you Americans think you can ever be a world leader if you act this way?" Another told Stevenson: "I look on Senator McCarthy as conducting a Spanish inquisition."¹⁰

Similarly, on her trip, Eleanor Roosevelt discovered "there was hardly a meeting of any kind in Asia at which

¹⁰Walter Johnson, ed. The Papers of Adlai Stevenson, vol. V (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1974), p. 184. A reporter asked Stevenson at a press conference in Burma to comment on McCarthy's investigation of him and Mrs. Roosevelt. The former governor answered: "I shall be very much flattered to ever be identified with that great and good lady." [p.192].

[McCarthy's] name did not come up and some question put to me about the result of his action in the curtailment of freedom." When asked in Japan whether communism could be defeated without resorting to totalitarian tactics, Mrs. Roosevelt replied that this was precisely the problem "Mr. McCarthy was presenting before the American people" At a press conference in Yugoslavia she expressed astonishment that wherever she had visited--even a small collective farm--the subject of McCarthy came up in conversation. "McCarthy's methods, to me, look like Hitler's," Mrs. Roosevelt added, "and perhaps that's why the people here, who are accustomed to the methods of Hitler and Stalin, display such an interest in him."¹¹

After returning to the United States in August, Eleanor Roosevelt criticised McCarthy's two investigators, Roy M. Cohn and G. David Schine, for having "left legendary tales in their trail" in their effort to censor books and examine the loyalty of American officials in consulates and U.S.I.A. libraries. Roy Cohn's father personally protested this attack on his son. Mrs. Roosevelt repeated for the judge's benefit what she had learned in Europe:

The first question you are asked in Europe is "What about Senator McCarthy?" and the second question is, "Is it customary in your country to go over 200 books in a few hours and remove them from a library?" These questions

¹¹My Day, August 30, 1953 Eleanor Roosevelt to Dean Harry Carman, May 26, 1953, Harry Carman Papers, Columbia University; New York Times, 21, 25 July, 1953.

are based on the trip taken by Mr. Cohn and Mr. Schine. Also you are asked in Europe if people are investigated in the U.S. as rapidly as these two young gentlemen did their investigations. When you reply by saying that what Senator McCarthy has done is not very important in the minds of most of the American people but that some people think he is doing a patriotic duty, the Europeans say, "Ah, but you did not watch a Hitler or a Stalin come to power." That is difficult to answer and that is why I said that this trip which these young men took so hurriedly and for purposes which Mr. McCarthy dictated, did harm to our prestige in Europe.¹²

On numerous occasions, Eleanor Roosevelt accused McCarthy of using totalitarian tactics reminiscent of both Hitler and Stalin. After reading one of the senator's tantrums during an interrogation of a witness, she wrote that "it sounded like a scene . . . in which secret police were trying to intimidate a Moscow prisoner." She predicted that, if such congressional investigations persisted, "we are going to

¹²My Day, 30 August, 1953; Eleanor Roosevelt to Judge Albert Cohen, November 20, 1953, Box 5056, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers. Judge Cohen responded to Mrs. Roosevelt's letter: "I am certain that freedom loving Americans cannot have the slightest objection to inquiries made along these lines. Where persons holding positions of trust on the pay-rolls of the United States Government decline to answer questions such as these on the ground that the answers might incriminate them (Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution), no freedom loving American, I am sure, would wish to have such a person continue to hold office in our Government." (December 2, 1953). Mrs. Roosevelt answered: "I think our fundamental difference lies in the fact that you feel the work your son is doing is valuable and constructive and I disagree. The particular question you suggest he is obliged to ask is permissible. I have never seen your son in action and therefore must speak from reports of other people, but I am told his manner is that of the prosecutor who thinks his victim is guilty. That does not seem to be fair in situations which depend on interest and careful analysis of motives as well as facts." (December 8, 1953).

find ourselves in an atmosphere akin to that of communist countries, for we are using the very weapon which those countries use."

Eleanor Roosevelt also warned that the McCarthy hearings could "achieve for us the kind of diplomatic service which fascist and communist countries actually have." She praised retired Ambassadors Norman Armour, Robert Woods Bliss, Joseph C. Grew, and G. Howland Shaw for their letter to the New York Times accusing the loyalty investigations of undermining morale in the foreign service and inhibiting the honest discussion of policy. Their letter, she hoped, "will make many people stop and think." "We must, of course," she added, "not harbor Communists in important government positions, but we must not, through the way we hunt them down, destroy the security of every government official so that he feels he has no chance of clearing himself under false attack."¹³

Mrs. Roosevelt continued to defend the China Hands. In her November 22, 1954 My Day, she expressed outrage with the treatment John Paton Davies, Jr., received from Dulles:

Although he has been cleared over and over again after at least eight investigations, the five-man board which recommended to Secretary of State Dulles that he be dismissed has now come up with something called "defects of character."

These charges are trumped up against a man who has had 23 years as a foreign service

¹³My Day, 19 February, 15 September, 1953, 21 January, 4 June, 1954.

officer, with only three years short of retirement and pension. And all this happens apparently because one must not give Mr. McCarthy any possible controversial figure to attack in the State Department. We still seem so frightened of this bogey man in the Senate, though of course Senator McCarthy's possible displeasure will not be given as the reason for Mr. Davies' dismissal.

On another occasion, when McCarthyites red-baited the Protestant clergy, Mrs. Roosevelt simply wrote, "we should all wear placards saying 'cleared by Senator McCarthy.'"¹⁴

Senator McCarthy accused Mrs. Roosevelt of having befriended an alleged communist in the government. The Chicago Tribune, July 28, 1954, quoted the Wisconsin senator as saying of Dorothy Kenyon,

I didn't know then that she [Judge Kenyon] was a Communist. Since then I find she was. According to the testimony of two reliable witnesses, former members of the Communist party, she was a member of the party. She had only one job--to attach herself to an individual high in public life and to influence the writing of that individual.

He identified Mrs. Roosevelt as the individual in question. Eleanor Roosevelt announced for the record in My Day that she had never been close with Judge Kenyon and had never discussed politics with her. She concluded her column

¹⁴My Day, 15 September, 1953, 22 November, 1954.

expressing her confidence in Kenyon's loyalty.¹⁵

Other personal acquaintances of Mrs. Roosevelt incurred the wrath of the senator. When two southern friends, Virginia Durr and Aubrey Williams, were accused of being communists, Mrs. Roosevelt wrote this defense which illustrates her compassion for liberals who had collaborated with communists during the popular front days:

Mrs. Clifford Durr I knew when I was in Washington, and she was devoted to progress in this country. She believed that discrimination against anyone was harmful in our nation--and she came from the south! She also believed in the rights of labor.

.

Aubrey Williams I knew well and worked closely with him when he was head of the National Youth Administration. He also said he was not a Communist at any time and nothing that I ever saw would suggest that he could have been. I am beginning to think, however, that if you have been a liberal, if you believe that those who are strong must sometimes consider the weak, and that with strength and power goes responsibility, automatically some people consider you a Communist.

Today this responsibility because of strength and power belongs to labor as much as to capital but that has not always been the case and there was a time when the rights of labor had to be fought for. If everyone who fought for those rights was a Communist, then there are more Communists than we can count in this country.¹⁶

The right wing struck back. An article in the February 1954 American Mercury cited her affiliation with the American

¹⁵My Day, 16 August, 1954.

¹⁶My Day, 26 March, 1954.

Youth Congress and her defenses of Alger Hiss, Lauchlin Currie and Harry Dexter White, as evidence of pro-communist leanings.¹⁷ The U.S. News and World Report revived the American Youth Congress issue in August 1954. On August 20 the conservative news weekly published an interview with Martin Dies entitled "They Tried to Get Me Too." Dies claimed that he had told President Roosevelt that the nation was infested with Communist subversives. He then described a lunch he had with Mrs. Roosevelt in which they discussed the loyalty of Joseph Lash:

She said, "Well, I guess you know why I've asked you to lunch here."

"Well," I said, "I presume it's about Joe Lash. I guess, of course, that you know Joe Lash perjured himself before our Committee."

"Yes, I know." She said. "He told me that he misrepresented things and he is very sorry."

"Well, did he tell you he was a Communist," I asked, "when he told us under oath that he wasn't?"

"Yes," she said, "he's confessed to me that in his youth he had joined the Communist Party."

Dies also said that Mrs. Roosevelt asked him to assist her in getting Lash a position with Naval Intelligence. Finally, Dies accused the White House of obtaining a draft deferment for Lash. "So," concluded Dies in "THE CASE OF JOE LASH" section of the interview, "that was the sort of thing that Roosevelt was surrounded with. Until you understand that

¹⁷Nora De Toledano, "In Defense of Mrs. Roosevelt," American Mercury, 78 (February, 1954), pp. 69-71.

you simply don't understand what went on during that critical period."¹⁸

The U.S. News and World Report chose to print this interview in a form damaging to Mrs. Roosevelt. On top of the page in which Dies discusses his meeting with F.D.R., the U.S. News and World Report printed in large letters:

" . . . I told Roosevelt Communists were
stealing everything"

The following page was headed:

" . . . Mrs. Roosevelt would sit by them knitting"

The editors lifted this quotation from the section in which Dies describes Mrs. Roosevelt knitting at one of H.U.A.C.'s hearings where members of the American Youth Congress testified. When glancing quickly at the top of pages 58 and 59, where these quotations appear, one could easily join them together to read:

" . . . I told Roosevelt Communists were
stealing everything . . . Mrs. Roosevelt
would sit by them knitting"

The editors thus used a McCarthyite trick to suggest Mrs. Roosevelt minimized the communist threat.

Eleanor Roosevelt quickly responded. The U.S. News and World Report printed her letter to him along with the congressman's reply. Mrs. Roosevelt wrote:

I never admitted to you, because I could
not have, since Mr. Joseph Lash never
admitted to me that he had been a Communist.

¹⁸U. S. News and World Report, 37 (August 20, 1954), pp. 56-59; Dies never gave the dates of his meeting with both the President and Mrs. Roosevelt.

I knew that in the Youth Organizations he had been close to many Communists and he had helped me greatly to learn about Communist lines of thought, and that I might have told you, but Mr. Lash was never a member of the Communist Party.

She further recalled requesting the meeting with Dies to protest the red-baiting conduct of H.U.A.C.'s counsel J. B. Mathews and to inform the congressman that the communists in the Student Union, an organization within the American Youth Congress, had expelled Lash. Eleanor Roosevelt ignored the Naval Intelligence accusation but she denied the White House had pressured the draft board to defer Lash. Lash, ultimately, did serve in the armed forces.

In his rejoinder, Dies quoted Lash's January 21, 1942 H.U.A.C. testimony:

The Chairman. "To what extent do you agree with the Communists, to what extent is your association with them and moving in that circle, on what points do you agree with them and on what points do you disagree? I am trying to get the extent of it, not do you now but did you at that time, I mean?"
Mr. Lash. "Oh, I thought you were referring to the present. At that time substantially I agreed with their position, Mr. Chairman."

"I submit," concluded Dies, "that Mr. Lash's admission before our Committee that he associated with Communists and was in substantial agreement with Communists, was a confession that he was a Communist."¹⁹ Through guilt by association, assisted

¹⁹ U.S. News and World Report, 37 (August 27, 1954), pp. 94-95.

by the sympathetic U.S. News and World Report, Dies tried to prove that Mrs. Roosevelt, as first lady, harbored communists.

In her autobiography, Eleanor Roosevelt cited her experience with the American Youth Congress as a valuable lesson that helped her deal with the Russians and the popular-front left. The right used this as evidence of her pro-communism, thereby trying to punish her for her defense of civil liberties during the McCarthy era. "This is a country of free speech and free thought," Mrs. Roosevelt wrote on March 25, 1954, "but there is a danger that without complete understanding of the menaing of the words we use we may make some grave mistakes."²⁰ McCarthyism was such a mistake. Eleanor Roosevelt struggled throughout the fifties to educate the American people in the meaning of free thought and free speech. It is ironic that Mrs. Roosevelt, in her human rights speech at the Sorbonne in the fall of 1948, had accused the Soviets of tampering with the definition of democracy in order to strengthen their police state. She sadly discovered that many fellow Americans did the same.

II

Mrs. Roosevelt's book, India and the Awakening East, was published in the spring of 1953. She appealed to the American people to understand that the world's hungry could never

²⁰My Day, 25 March, 1954.

relate to the abstract appeals of democracy because "freedom to eat is one of the most important freedoms and it is what the communists are promising the people of India." Those in the Third World who became communists, she continued, lacked the knowledge "that would enable them to detect the speciousness of the communist promise; they do not realize that the communist system is a brake not only on material but spiritual advances."²¹ After the signing of the South East Asian Treaty Organization pact in the spring of 1954, Eleanor Roosevelt, who questioned the administration's emphasis on military alliances to contain communism, repeated her book's message. The Asians, she wrote in My Day, were unaware of "the ideological pattern of communism--the domination of a man's mind." They were receptive to Marxism because ". . . it is far more important to the masses of these people if it is just made possible for them to eat."²²

Eleanor Roosevelt opposed the arming of Pakistan by providing India's enemy with military assistance, she accused the government of abandoning the only hope the United States had to keep the sub-continent free of communism. "Is it not a mistake," she asked, "to think that you can only arm yourself against communism through military strength? I think that an idea has to be fought with a better idea."

²¹New York Times Book Review, July 26, 1953, p. 1.

²²My Day, 9 September, 1954.

She further accused the administration of "jeopardizing the friendship of 370 million people in order to establish a military agreement with seventy million."²³

Mrs. Roosevelt feared that Washington was pushing India closer to Moscow. In August 1953 she joined Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. and James E. Doyle in signing an A.D.A.-sponsored statement protesting Washington's decision to oppose the seating of India at the Far Eastern Conference called by the United Nations to try to settle the Korean dispute. In demanding that American foreign policy be rescued "from imminent bankruptcy," they cited this effort to punish India for not enthusiastically backing the Korean War as "a new form of American isolationism--the self-isolation of the U.S. from its closest and most important friends and allies."²⁴

Such self-isolation was evident as well in the campaign by the Committee of One Million to oppose the entry of Communist China into the United Nations. Although Mrs. Roosevelt agreed that, so long as China remained in the Korean War, it should be barred from the world body, she refused to sign the petition because,

²³Eleanor Roosevelt, "A Constructive Policy for India and Pakistan," February 26, 1954, Box 4599, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

²⁴Press Release, A.D.A., August 27, 1953, Box 4044, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

. . . I do not believe in making pronouncements when you do not know about future conditions. There is no possibility of admitting the Chinese People's Republic in the near future, but in this petition there is no time limit set.

In her July 9, 1954 column she elaborated:

If a Senator or a group of Senators make the announcement that under no circumstances will Red China ever be recognized diplomatically by the United States or recognized as a member of the U.N. while we remain in that organization, I think we are behaving like the child who says, "If I can't have my own way, I'll take my toys and go home."

No one has suggested that any country at war with the U.N. should be accepted for membership; and there are qualifications which nations must show they are at least trying to achieve before they can become members. But we are negotiating for a peaceful Asia, we hope for peace in Korea, we hope for peace in Indo-China and in the whole area of Burma and Malaya and Thailand. If we are to be successful, we must negotiate from strength.

And announcing beforehand that there are certain things we will not accept seems to me immature. To speak in this way gives no real leeway to our negotiations. And yet we are dealing with matters which require great forethought and statesmanship, because to settle things by negotiation is sometimes much harder than to settle them by force.²⁵

In her writings Mrs. Roosevelt frequently dismissed her opponents as "childish." Exploiting the maternal image she had cultivated for decades, Eleanor Roosevelt trusted that her readers would accept her judgment of her right-wing political enemies as immature adolescents.

²⁵Eleanor Roosevelt to Marvin Liebman, February 4, 1954, Box 4599, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers; My Day, 9 July, 1954.

When Eleanor Roosevelt wrote this column in July 1954, Dulles and Nixon had advocated American entry into the Indo-Chinese War. She opposed such action without United Nations authorization, asserting: "we will never persuade the Asians that this is not a case of the colonial powers against the freedom of peoples." After the fall of Dienbienphu, however, Mrs. Roosevelt called on the west to demonstrate "an even firmer position on the part of all those who oppose the threat of Communist control spreading to any area in Asia."²⁶ Mrs. Roosevelt therefore endorsed the Formosa resolution, calling it the "price we pay for being the richest and the strongest nation in the world." The

²⁶My Day, 19 April, 6, 18 May, 1954; "If you Ask Me," McCall's Magazine, July, 1954, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers. Eleanor Roosevelt continued to advocate economic aid as the best alternative to military assistance to defeat communism. On August 28, she wrote in her column: "I was interested to see in a Tuesday newspaper that we were going to step up the United States Information Agency's work in Indo-China. A cultural drive is being carried on in Southeast Asia by the Chinese Communists and we are going to try to meet this drive through our information program by stressing two central points.

"We will assert that the U.S. supports an Indo-Chinese people's program for full independence and unity. Then an effort will be made systematically to expose the realities of life behind the Iron Curtain. But if we are able to drive these two things home, it would be a very good thing because in two years Indo-China will hold an election, and both North and South Indo-China will be asked to decide between the Communist world and the free world.

"I can't help believing it would be a more effective job, and better understood, if our government could put in some very able Point 4 administrators who would help in the tangible problems that confront the people in the whole of Indo China. If we could show that we had raised the standard of living, I think it would have greater effect than any words we can invent to tell the story of conditions in communist countries."

United States "cannot sit by quietly and see new areas swallowed up by constant communist aggression. To take Formosa would be the beginning of the use of force by the Communist Chinese."

Although Eleanor Roosevelt supported the defense of Formosa, she opposed guarantees for Quemoy and Matsu, the two off-shore islands in Nationalist hands. In May 1955 she joined 47 other liberals, including Elmer Davis, Reinhold Niebuhr, Benjamin V. Cohen and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., in signing an A.D.A. petition urging President Eisenhower to "take immediate steps to extricate the United States and the world from the present menace of war in the Formosa Straits." They requested the president not to commit American forces to defend the offshore islands and "not [to] permit them to become a cause of war." The New York Daily News, in an editorial entitled, "Ike's Liberal Kibitzers," with a photograph of Mrs. Roosevelt in the customary left corner box, accused her and her friends of "consciously or unconsciously" playing the "Chinese Reds game in the United States."²⁷

Appeasement, in the view of the right, included refusing to defend Quemoy and Matsu, supporting the neutralist Indian government, extending foreign aid to neutralist and socialist non-western nations, backing the United Nations, and opposing Senator McCarthy's patriotic investigations. Eleanor Roosevelt

²⁷My Day, 6 December, 1954, 28 January, 8 February, 9 April, 1955; "47 Liberals Urge U.S. to Avoid War Over Matsu," May 2, 1955, Box 4755, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers; New York Daily News, 11 May, 1955.

disagreed. During the height of the McCarthy era, she argued that all these positions strengthened communism because they destroyed the American credibility as a leader of the free world.

III

In the mid-fifties, Eleanor Roosevelt considered Israel "one of the strongholds of democratic government."²⁸ She also believed that the Zionist-Labor model of economic development could be applied to other non-western nations. Again visiting Israel in March of 1954, she was particularly impressed with the state's vocational schools, hospitals, kibbutzim, reclamation projects, and social services. Perhaps Mrs. Roosevelt observed in Israel the fruition of the dreams of the international new dealers.²⁹

From meetings with Israel's leaders, Mrs. Roosevelt learned that Israel sincerely desired peace but would, if the need arose, resort to force for self-protection. In a letter to an English friend, written from Tel Aviv, Mrs. Roosevelt justified Israel's recent attack on Gaza because the major powers refused to guarantee the Jewish state's borders.³⁰

In January 1956 Dorothy Thompson wrote a column about the suffering of the Palestinian refugees. The column's

²⁸My Day, 28 January, 1954.

²⁹My Day, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31 March, 1, 2 April, 1955.

³⁰Eleanor Roosevelt to Sir Arthur Nutting, March 26, 1955, Box 4197, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

anti-zionist tone angered Mrs. Roosevelt. She objected to Miss Thompson's title "Israeli Concessions Needed for Peace." "No concessions," Eleanor Roosevelt wrote, "would satisfy either the Soviets, who do most of the instigation there, or the Arabs, who state quite frankly . . . they will never recognize Israel." Mrs. Roosevelt also defended Israel's refusal to readmit the Palestinians. Although she agreed with Miss Thompson that the refugees deserved world sympathy and help, she reminded her readers that it was the Jerusalem Mufti who ordered his people to leave their homeland and the British who aided their departure by providing them with transportation. Eleanor Roosevelt then disputed Dorothy Thompson's assertion that the Israeli Arabs were treated as second class citizens. From her trips, she claimed to have observed the Arabs participating in Israel's democratic government.³¹

Eleanor Roosevelt continued to warn of Soviet intrigue in the Middle East. She considered in late November 1955 the Czech arms sales to Egypt "a blessing in disguise" because this taught the west that the Russians had but one goal: "the removal of Western influence in that whole area." To Bernard Baruch she expressed her fear that if Washington failed to strengthen Israel, "the one area which at least understands what democracy means . . . the Kremlin will use that area . . . as a corridor to India and Africa."³² In a

³¹My Day, 19 January, 1956.

³²My Day, 24 November 1955; Eleanor Roosevelt to Bernard Baruch, December 12, 1955, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

letter to former President Truman, she requested that Truman join her and Walter Reuther in signing a petition calling on Washington to provide defensive weapons for Israel:

I am sure that you feel as I do that the situation in the Near East is highly critical, largely brought about through Soviet planning and action, and if they succeed in getting rid of our bases in North Africa and getting rid of Israel which is the only democratic area in the Near East which can make a stand against them, they will have a bridge to Pakistan, India, and the rest of Asia.³³

Truman gladly agreed to sign.³⁴ The three leaders praised Israel for having shown

how the desert can be transformed by human skill and perseverance. Israel has demonstrated the tremendous possibilities for economic and social development in this area, where there is both belief in and the practice of democracy. Peace would make these skills and achievements available to the whole Near East and help the region to achieve a new flowering, unparalleled since Biblical days.

³³Eleanor Roosevelt to President Truman, January 13, 1956, Box 4560, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

³⁴In his letter informing Mrs. Roosevelt that he would sign the petition, President Truman reminisced about the potential of introducing an international New Deal program to the Near East:

While I was President of the United States, I had a survey made of the whole Near East. Gordon Clapp went to the Valley of the Tigris and the Euphrates and came back with the report that it is perfectly feasible to restore those old canals constructed and used by the ancient Babylonians and the people of Ninevah under Sennacherib. With that irrigation the land could support from twenty to thirty million people. He said that there are 160 billion

They defended Israel's policy of refusing to readmit the Arab refugees and called on the United States to assist communism in the Middle East by guaranteeing Israel arms:

The cynical invitation to an arms race, the spreading of confusion and the exciting of mutual fear and hostility by the shipment of Communist arms to Egypt can be offset only by the clarification of our position, persistent efforts towards mutual confidence, and our active efforts towards achieving peace. We must counteract every attempt by the Soviet Union to upset the present precarious balance of power in this area. This requires that the United States should now provide the defensive arms needed by Israel to protect itself against any aggression made possible or incited by the introduction of Communist arms.³⁵

The administration rejected the advice of a past President, a former First Lady, and a respected labor leader; instead, to Mrs. Roosevelt's dismay, Washington decided to send arms to the Saudi Arabian government. Eleanor Roosevelt angrily charged the government with encouraging an arms race in the Middle East when it should be more concerned with improving the standard of living of the area's people.³⁶

Nasser's seizure of the Suez Canal shifted attention, for the moment, away from Israel's immediate security needs. In an August 28, 1956 letter to Adlai Stevenson, in the midst of his election campaign, Mrs. Roosevelt

barrels of oil in sight in the Arabian desert and also that it is quite possible to run a syphon from the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea Valley which would create enough power to make Israel a completely industrial nation.

(Harry S. Truman to Eleanor Roosevelt, January 19, 1956, Box 4560, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.)

³⁵New York Times, 29 January, 1956.

³⁶My Day, 21 May, 1956.

accused the Russians of instigating this crisis while John Foster Dulles "piously talks about living up to the principles of the United Nations." "The Soviet Union must be chuckling to itself," Mrs. Roosevelt added three days later in My Day,

as it looks at the Egyptian president practically stymying eighteen nations, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. The Soviets seem able to create situations where they risk nothing themselves and yet manage to embarrass other nations by simply holding themselves in the background.

Although Eleanor Roosevelt criticized Dulles, she also "piously" appealed to the U.N. to resolve the dispute. Like Dulles, she opposed any unilateral attempt by the western powers to retake the canal.³⁷

On October 29, in the last days of the campaign, the Israeli army commenced its attack on Sinai. Four days later, British and French troops entered the conflict. The General Assembly passed, on November 2, an American-sponsored resolution calling for an immediate cease-fire and the withdrawal of foreign troops from Egypt. The United States and the Soviet Union voted together for this resolution while Washington's closest allies, Great Britain and France and Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East, opposed it. "I could not believe my eyes!" Eleanor Roosevelt exclaimed in My Day.

³⁷My Day, 31 August, 1956; Eleanor Roosevelt to Adlai Stevenson, 28 August, 1956, Box 4247, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

How could we have had worse leadership than that which brought us to this present situation? Do we want to continue with the kind of leadership that has led to a war in which, if we are not with our old allies, we have to side with the Kremlin and the dictator of Egypt? What a decision to have to make!

Where has our influence, which ought to help shape such decisions in the world, failed so that we find ourselves today in such a position?

I listened to the President on television and noticed that he never mentioned a most important point, namely that the Kremlin has succeeded in dividing the West and we are, indeed, weakened. Does he not realize the seriousness of the situation he and John Foster Dulles have created?

I feel sure that every woman in this country will feel it her obligation to beg her friends and neighbors--man and women, young and old--to change this leadership as quickly as possible.³⁸

"I think if we elect Adlai Stevenson and Estes Kefauver next Tuesday," Eleanor Roosevelt concluded this column, "we will not find ourselves in situations of this kind."³⁹

On Sunday morning, November 4, Eleanor Roosevelt and Senator Margaret Chase Smith became the first two women to appear on C.B.S.'s television program Face The Nation. Speaking for the administration, before Tuesday's presidential election, Senator Smith branded Israel as an aggressor nation for its October 26 Sinai attack. "I would like to say," replied Mrs. Roosevelt, "that I think it is quite clear and simple that Israel acted in self-defense." Nasser, she continued,

³⁸My Day, 2 November, 1956.

³⁹Ibid.

. . . clearly threatened Israel, and she knew that the strength was building up, military strength, provided a little of it by us to certain states when we refused to provide it to Israel, but largely by the Soviet Union, who have suddenly now become strangely on the same side in certain things with us, and so I think we have to realize that Israel acted, I think, in self defense . . .

When asked whether this meant that she endorsed the concept of a preventive war, Eleanor Roosevelt answered that she did not

like the concept of preventive war at all, but . . . when there comes a point where you are openly threatened, there is a good legal backing to say that you act in self defense when you wipe out an area of sources from which constant attacks had been coming.

MR. HINES: But approaching this thing legally, ma'am, is it proper to react to threats by words with force?

MRS. ROOSEVELT: You must realize that there has been going on a situation where attacks have been going back and forth for a very long period of time. And for that reason, while I never think two wrongs make a right, just the same I think you have to take into consideration the parts and the provocation and what it meant to see force being built up by other countries in the way of materiel, over a long period of time, and the fact that--take the United States itself in days gone by--if it had been put as a younger nation in that position, there was no U.N. in those days, but I think we would have had some thoughts of whether we could survive. And I think that is what happened to Israel.⁴⁰

Mrs. Roosevelt emphasized that she could not see "how anyone can have confidence in either President Eisenhower or Secretary

⁴⁰Face The Nation, November 4, 1956, pp. 6-9, Box 4243, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

Dulles' policies." "Standing together with the Dictator of Egypt and the Communist Soviets," she once again charged, ". . . is an odd situation to find the United States in."

Peter Lisager then asked Mrs. Roosevelt

since it was Britain and France who actually broke the alliance and moved against Egypt, what else could the United States do but go to the U.N. and propose a cease fire and the withdrawal of British and French troops from that area?

"Nothing," Eleanor Roosevelt replied,

if you reach that point, but it seems to be an extraordinary situation that your closest allies act--if you didn't know what they were going to do, then it seems to me an extraordinary lack of influence. We have lost touch with our allies. We have lost our influence with our allies. We are weak. We are alone. We are weak.

Mr. Nixon says we have suddenly electrified the world by making ourselves free. What we have done is to become very much weaker. And I can't think but you must say one or the other. Either we knew what they were doing and couldn't do anything, or didn't do anything, and couldn't have any influence, which means that the American people were fooled, because only a week before the President had told us that everything was going well and there was good news from the Near East; or else we didn't know, and then we had allowed our relationships to deteriorate to a point which I think was extraordinary.⁴¹

In a letter to Lord Arthur Elibank, written after election day, Mrs. Roosevelt defended France and England's decision to

⁴¹Ibid; pp. 10, 13, 14.

retake the canal because "they had grown desperate in feeling that no leadership was coming from us."⁴² Eleanor Roosevelt was also incensed with the administration for banning oil sales to both countries until their troops left Suez. "Our government blithely seems to ignore the fact," Eleanor Roosevelt wrote in early December 1956,

that the collapse of the economy in Europe is going to have serious repercussions over here. I have often wanted us to be the leaders in wise policies, but it never seems to me wise to lead in making your friends suffer and in making it easier for your enemies to move in and fill vacuums because you will not help.⁴³

Eleanor Roosevelt continued to justify Israel's attack on Egypt; for example, in mid-November, she wrote, "Israel could not sit like a duck in the middle of the pond and wait for the hunters. She had to try to defend herself before the arming of surrounding states was complete." During the truce negotiations between Israel and Egypt, Mrs. Roosevelt supported Israel's demand that the United Nations guarantee its borders in exchange for a military pull-back. The final agreement pleased Mrs. Roosevelt, but she doubted that Nasser would indefinitely permit an international police force on his territory to ostensibly protect Israel.⁴⁴ She therefore advocated the American

⁴²Eleanor Roosevelt to Lord Arthur Elibank, November 14, 1956, Box 4221, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

⁴³My Day, 3 December, 1956.

⁴⁴My Day, 19, 26 November, 1956; 4, 7, 28 January, 1957. Another example of Mrs. Roosevelt's defense of the Israeli

arming of Israel and supported efforts, such as the landing of the Marines in Lebanon, in the summer of 1957,⁴⁵ to prevent Nasser from expanding his power in the Middle East.

attack appears in this exchange with Norman Thomas. Thomas wrote her on November 5, 1956:

"I find it hard, however, to follow your reasoning on Israel and your seeming defense of Britain and France as reported in the New York Times, Sunday, November 4th. To be sure, Israel had provocation, as Ambassador Eban made clear. That doesn't justify the little country in deeply wounding the U.N. which, with all its faults, was largely responsible for Israel's legal existence. Eban should first have made his case to the U.N. and Israel should have reserved her right of action until after further evidence of the U.N.'s unwillingness or inability to act."

Eleanor Roosevelt answered on November 8: "As far as Israel is concerned, I feel their action was clearly a matter of self defense. The border incidents have been going on for a long time and the Arab states have done nothing but insist that Israel did not exist and that they would drive her people into the sea. Nasser's repeated threats to do this made it necessary for Israel to take some steps to wipe out her chief enemy in the most dangerous areas--the Gaza strip and the Sinai desert." [Box 4249, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.]

⁴⁵In the summer of 1957 Eleanor Roosevelt supported the landing of the Marines on Beirut's beaches during the Lebanon civil war. Before the actual intervention, she explained to her readers on July 5 that the deteriorating Lebanese situation differed from the past one in Suez because "there our allies attacked Egypt. Lebanon is asking for help against aggression, and if we interfere unilaterally we would be doing so at the invitation of a government under attack.

In the case of Lebanon it is not an open attack but infiltration, although on a large scale. Men from Syria and arms from Czechoslovakia, furnished by Syrians and used by Syrians in Lebanon, are flowing across the Lebanese border. U.N. observers actually are not enough help to prevent this." She accused the Soviet Union and Nasser of trying to expand into Lebanon. Nasser had already been successful in Iraq where left-wing members of the army seized the government and executed the king. Now, Mrs. Roosevelt feared, Lebanon would be next. In endorsing the decision by Washington and London to send troops into the Middle East, she wrote, "I think both the United States and the United Kingdom did the only thing possible. They moved in quickly to prevent the overthrow of other existing governments by force and subversion." [My Day, July 5, 1956.]

CHAPTER X

THE EISENHOWER YEARS:

THE 1956 ELECTION, THE VISIT TO RUSSIA, AND
NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

Following his defeat in 1952, Adlai Stevenson and Eleanor Roosevelt formed a lasting friendship. They agreed on most issues. Both, for example, repeatedly condemned McCarthyism. In foreign affairs, they held their former colleague on the first delegation to the United Nations, John Foster Dulles, responsible for the decline of American prestige abroad. During their world tours, Stevenson and Roosevelt, in contrast to Dulles, made favorable impressions on Third World leaders. After listening to a speech Stevenson delivered in India, an American reporter overheard an Indian Communist leader remark:

Dash it all! First we have Bowles to contend with; then Mrs. Roosevelt had to come here-- now we have Stevenson. And they're all so dashed human and attractive that it undoes months of propaganda on our part.¹

Adlai Stevenson cherished Eleanor Roosevelt's friendship. He respected her position as the elder stateswoman of the Democratic party and the liberal community. Frequently, Stevenson called on Eleanor Roosevelt for advice. Before his decision to run in 1956, Eleanor Roosevelt recalled having this conversation with Stevenson:

"Don't you feel," he asked in reference to the coming national convention, "that there are others who would do better than I as leader of

¹Johnson, ed., The Papers of Adlai Stevenson, Vol. V, p. 218.

the party?" I pointed out that perhaps the most difficult problems of the day were in the field of international relations and I added: "I cannot think of anyone else who has the ability to do the job you could do in meeting the most vital needs of today."²

"I don't know what is going to happen in the next nine months," Eleanor Roosevelt wrote an English friend on January 20, 1956, "but I am doing what I can to get Mr. Stevenson the nomination."³ Stevenson's experience in foreign affairs was the major reason for her decision to endorse him. At the Democratic National Convention Eleanor Roosevelt worked to defeat the draft Harriman movement. She claimed at her press conference that Stevenson was more knowledgeable in Asian and African affairs than Averell Harriman.⁴ Stevenson won the nomination and Eleanor Roosevelt undertook on his behalf an extensive speaking tour, highlighted by her relentless attack upon the administration's foreign policy.

Eleanor Roosevelt charged the administration with "losing friends all over the world because of our own stupidity and lack of understanding." Rather than conceding that he had made errors, Mrs. Roosevelt sarcastically remarked in Oakland, Pennsylvania and on other occasions, Eisenhower told the American people "nice bedtime stories that the world was a very good place to live in. We were getting good

²Roosevelt, On My Own, p. 160.

³Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, p. 243.

⁴New York Times, 13 August, 1956.

results from our foreign policy. We have a wonderful secretary of state. [He] never made any mistakes." Frequently, Mrs. Roosevelt cited such mistakes. On October 1, in Charleston, West Virginia, she said:

Little things are often important in relation to other countries--using the wrong word--handling people without understanding of background--lead to real trouble when we are trying to make them see things from our point of view. On my trips around the world I have been confronted in country after country with stories of little things. The story of Dulles going to see Egypt's ruler just when Great Britain had finally negotiated to leave, and presented him with two pistols. Of course Great Britain was angry. It is an amusing thing to tell, but it didn't make friends for us! And when the Secretary of State was in Israel and was presented with a remarkable Bible, beautifully bound--he said "of course this includes the New Testament?" Ben Gurion got red up the back of his neck. These things are not really funny, they are the things that lose friends for us in the world.

Two days later she added in Detroit:

We have not been tactful in many areas, and I think especially of India. I have a special interest in India and think it is a country that could be made a real friend, but we have been losing India and her people. Not just Nehru, but the people. Ever since, without consultation with anyone, not even the Prime Minister of India, we gave arms to Pakistan. Just at the time when India and Pakistan had been finally brought together to talk to each other for the first time.

The United States needs "someone in the White House who knows what's going on in the world," Eleanor Roosevelt told a Mankato, Minnesota audience. She believed her candidate, Adlai Stevenson, did.⁵

⁵Speeches: Oakland, Pa., October 18, 1956; Mankato, Minn.,

Governor Stevenson's proposal that the United States halt nuclear testing became a central issue. The administration called this recommendation a threat to national security, despite reports that Eisenhower's own advisors and the Atomic Energy Commission's nuclear scientists had suggested a test suspension. Eleanor Roosevelt lauded Stevenson for having "made a wise suggestion . . . one that could [not] be put aside under the guise of security . . ." She expressed confidence that both the United States and Russia possessed the technology to detect secret explosions. Although she admitted that an element of risk would exist as each side would have to trust the other to honor the agreement, Mrs. Roosevelt backed Stevenson in warning that the dangers in continued testing would be far greater. For the U.S. to make such a proposal, Mrs. Roosevelt added, would also improve the American standing in the non-western world.⁶

Along with the test ban, Stevenson recommended that the United States eventually replace the draft with a sophisticated volunteer army. The Republicans, once again, accused him of threatening to undermine national defense. Eleanor Roosevelt disagreed. She had never liked the draft; now, for the first time, she thought that for technological reasons the draft would soon prove obsolete. In Beckley, West Virginia, she said:

October 15-16, 1956; Audio-Visual Collection, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library; Dinner Meeting, Charleston, West Va., October 1, 1956; Dinner Meeting, Detroit, Mich., October 3, 1956; Box 3057, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

⁶Ibid.

We have to learn how to keep ahead, how to use these weapons effectively, and with maximum efficiency. We have to have people who will stay in our armies. To train a boy for two years and then turn him out is wasteful. We must have a small, but highly trained, effective army. . . .

I talk with my grandson and my young friends and they say that the 2 year draft upsets their lives--if it was actual war they would feel it was all right and their duty, but in peacetime they feel that instead of making them more patriotic it just doesn't make sense. They say that in three or six months they could have learned everything, much of what is considered discipline doesn't make sense to them. That 3 or 6 months of intensive training and a two weeks refresher course each year would give us a bigger army on call than now with our draft system.⁷

Following Stevenson's defeat, Mrs. Roosevelt congratulated him on a "magnificent fight." "No one could have done more," she added, "but the love affair between President Eisenhower and the American people is too acute at present for any change to occur."⁸ To Lord Arthur Elibank she wrote that

somehow the people felt a soldier is safer in times of trouble. I can't agree because the thinking people in this country know it is the utter bankruptcy of the President's policies which brought us and the world into the present situation . . . I am as discouraged as anyone can be about our foreign policy and the realization that we must go on with it in the next four years is rather appalling.⁹

⁷Luncheon Meeting, Beckley, West Va., October 1, 1956, Box 5057, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

⁸Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, p. 264.

⁹Eleanor Roosevelt to Lord Arthur Elibank, November 14, 1956, Box 4221, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

II

Shortly after Stalin's death in March of 1953, Mrs. Roosevelt warned that Premier Malenkov's "peace offensive" sought to "lull the western world into a feeling that the leopard had changed its spots. Then we need not spend so much on war preparations." Eleanor Roosevelt simply did not trust the Russians. "The Soviets won't be educated for the kind of live and let live world we hope for in many a long year," she wrote on April 6, 1953. Three years later Russian conduct in the Middle East and in Hungary provided Mrs. Roosevelt and her fellow cold war liberals with additional evidence that the Soviet Union would remain a troublesome, belligerent power.¹⁰

Nevertheless she preached peaceful coexistence. One way she hoped to improve understanding was through the exchange of visitors with communist nations. In July 1953 Mrs. Roosevelt toured Yugoslavia. She was impressed with the communist country's mixed economy in which the people owned private property and were provided with capitalist incentives for increased productivity. Eleanor Roosevelt interviewed Tito for Look Magazine and inserted excerpts of this interview in On My Own.

"He calls himself a social democrat," she wrote of Tito to her son,

¹⁰My Day, 7 March, 6 April, 1953.

and says that he became a Russian communist because of his term in prison and the belief that the Soviet Union alone cared about the well being of all the people. When he found that the Russians are as selfish and imperialistic as imperialist nations, he decided that his nation must develop in its own way and he did not want what existed in Yugoslavia to be called Titoism because he felt that might hinder the development of each nation according to its own way. Pretty interesting as a statement, isn't it, but don't spread it around because it is part of my article.¹¹

In Look, Mrs. Roosevelt summed up Tito's fears of the Soviet Union as remarkably similar to those of the United States:

He talked first of Russia, cautioning against the West's overestimating the occasional apparent signs of weakness in the Soviet Union. He kept reminding me that there was a great army in Russia. He pictured the Soviets as always pretending to the role of protectors of weaker nations, so as to keep their influence in the satellites intact. He emphasized that any apparent threat against Russia itself would serve only to unite the Russian people.

Mrs. Roosevelt tried to press Tito to repudiate international communism. This, Tito would not do; but he "emphatically assured [her] that the break with the Cominform had brought an end . . . to Stalinist methods in Yugoslavia." "From Tito on down," she concluded, "nowhere in Yugoslavia did I find any evidence of any intention to rejoin the forces of world communism."¹² Nevertheless, Mrs. Roosevelt recognized that

¹¹Eleanor Roosevelt to "Johnny," July 20, 1953, Box 4607, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

¹²Eleanor Roosevelt, "Why are we co-operating with TITO?" Look 18 (October 5, 1954), pp. 80, 82.

Yugoslavia was a police state ruled by a ruthless dictator. Tito failed in his interview to persuade Mrs. Roosevelt that he was really a democratic leader:

"I am not a dictator," he insisted. "We have a group--all of us were Partisans during the war--that works closely together and prepares for each step to be taken." When a law has been prepared it is published in the newspapers; then various organizations, especially the trade unions, send the government large numbers of letters containing criticisms and suggestions for changes. These criticisms are carefully analyzed, Tito said, and the law is redrafted and again published in the newspapers so that the people will again have an opportunity to express themselves about it before it is sent to Parliament for consideration.

"But you have a one-party political system," I said.

"Yes, but there is virtually always more than one candidate for nomination so that the people have a choice." Then, with a smile, he added: "There is no great difference between our system and the American system. We have one party but you have only two--just one more!"¹³

Eleanor Roosevelt entitled the Look article, "Why are we co-operating with TITO?" Because he opposed the Soviets, she answered, "this puts Tito and Yugoslavia on the same defensive footing as we of the western world are. In simple realism, more people in the United States are more afraid of the Soviets than are afraid of Yugoslavia." In spite of its break with Moscow, Mrs. Roosevelt still reminded her readers that Yugoslavia was part of the communist world; "but also," she astutely added, "let us not become so obsessed with the words that we disregard Yugoslavia's importance to us as a

¹³Roosevelt, On My Own, p. 154.

powerful enemy of Soviet imperialism which is the greatest menace to the free world."¹⁴

After numerous applications, Mrs. Roosevelt received permission to visit the Soviet Union in late August 1957. She went to Moscow, Leningrad, Asian Russia. She also visited a number of collective farms. Although she praised the communists for modernizing their country, she realized that her Russian guides only showed her model projects.¹⁵

Eleanor Roosevelt identified the influence of Pavlov on Soviet society as "The Most Important Thing I Learned About the Soviet Union," the title of a chapter in On My Own. After visiting a laboratory conducting research on studies of Pavlovian reflexes, she suggested "that he may well prove to be far more famous in history as the father of a system that seems to be turning the masses of Russians into completely disciplined and amenable people." The Pavlovian system, Mrs. Roosevelt continued, therefore strengthened the Leninist state:

Because of live-long conditioning, the government can depend on the mass of the people--there will always be exceptions--to react in a certain way to certain stimuli. The Russians today are a disciplined, well-trained people; not a happy people perhaps, but not at all likely to rise up against their rulers.¹⁶

¹⁴Roosevelt, "Why are we co-operating with TITO?" pp. 82-83.

¹⁵Roosevelt, On My Own, Chapter IX.

¹⁶Roosevelt, On My Own, pp. 207-210.

In a letter to an American friend, Mrs. Roosevelt wrote that she found evidence of such Pavlovian conditioning in her futile attempts to discuss politics with the Russians:

They are conditioned under Mr. Pavlov's theory of conditioned reflexes from the time they are two months old. The most intelligent, kindly man, whether a scientist, a general or a teacher, will end by telling you that it was our aggressive acts which brought on whatever they have done to "try to preserve Syrian neutrality." Then they finally take refuge in the remark that they know nothing about politics.¹⁷

The visit culminated with an afternoon meeting with Premier Khrushchev at his summer dacha in Yalta. Anna Lavrova, one of the Russian interpreters at the Yalta conference, served as Mrs. Roosevelt's translator. Roosevelt's Russian-speaking personal physician, Dr. David Gurewitsch, sat in on the meeting to tape the session. After two and a half hours of conversation, Eleanor Roosevelt wrote in On My Own that she became convinced that Khrushchev understood the dangers a new war would bring to civilization. She described him as "honest," "tough," "shrewd," and "cautious."¹⁸ In the text of the interview which appears in On My Own, Khrushchev emerges as a dogmatic Russian communist who refused to admit that the Soviet Union deserved its share of responsibility for the cold war. At various points during their discussion,

¹⁷Eleanor Roosevelt to Rose Parsons, September 25, 1957, Box 4282, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

¹⁸Roosevelt, On My Own, Chapter 21.

Khrushchev grew so angry with Eleanor Roosevelt's queries and comments that he turned red and began to shout. Mrs. Roosevelt retained her composure, even when her host viciously attacked the west and promised the inevitable victory of communism over capitalism.¹⁹

The disarmament question dominated their conversation. Eleanor Roosevelt asked the Soviet premier how his country could expect the United States to agree to nuclear disarmament without inspection when Russia had refused to demobilize following the war. In his answer Khrushchev described the Russian suffering during World War II. For this reason, he argued, the Soviet Union would always need a large army.²⁰ Although Eleanor Roosevelt told him she sympathized with Soviet security needs, she claimed the Russians

have nothing to fear from the west. It was arranged at Yalta that there was an understanding that naturally Germany was to be defeated . . . they did not want Germany to be built up as a military force and they wanted a wall of countries in between that I understand to be free countries but closely allied to the Soviet Union. They actually were thinking of their protection. As it turned out, certainly Great Britain, France and Germany are not a military menace today. Now I don't say they might not be if they build up, but they are not today. I think it is possible to discuss very calmly how a country like the Soviet Union can be secure . . . and still not have an army that can be an offensive army because it frightens the rest of the world.²¹

¹⁹Ibid.; The Franklin D. Roosevelt library has the full taped interview. In On My Own, Mrs. Roosevelt edited the tape topically. My discussion will rely on On My Own unless the tape is cited.

²⁰Roosevelt, On My Own, pp. 219-220.

²¹Taped interview.

This response angered Khrushchev. He reminded Mrs. Roosevelt that after World War I allied troops had invaded Russian territory. "That is why," he concluded, "we must have an army."²²

Of all the issues discussed, the recent Middle East crisis provoked the most heated exchange. Eleanor Roosevelt accused the Soviet Union of instigating the Suez crisis by sending arms to Egypt. Khrushchev denied responsibility. He then charged the United States with arming N.A.T.O. and, in the Middle East, Pakistan. Mrs. Roosevelt concluded the discussion of this issue by trying to be both conciliatory and adamant.

I said I agreed that many countries in the West received arms from us and that I could see how the Soviet Union would feel that such arms were provided to be used against them, but I pointed out that we had been forced to fear that the Russians had military intentions against the west.

"What were the arms supplied for?" Mr. Khrushchev persisted. "We never had them for tea parties."

I recalled the Soviet actions at the time of the blockade of Berlin and said that they seemed to be trying to push us out of that city. I remarked that mistakes might have been made by our government but that the Russians too made mistakes. "Having been here," I added, "I realize that your people do not want war."²³

The recorded segment of the meeting ended with Khrushchev lecturing Mrs. Roosevelt on the inevitable victory of communism over capitalism. She then [off the record] appealed

²²Roosevelt, On My Own, p. 221.

²³Ibid., p. 223.

to the Soviet leader to permit Soviet Jews to emigrate to Israel, and she defended Israel's policies in the Middle East. On both issues Khrushchev repeated the well-known Soviet position. He denied that anti-Semitism existed in the Soviet Union and accused Israel of being the aggressor in the Middle East. As Mrs. Roosevelt prepared to leave, Khrushchev asked her: "Can I tell our papers that we have had a friendly conversation?" "You can say," she replied, "that we had a friendly conversation but that we differ." "Now!" Khrushchev exclaimed, grinning broadly, "At least we didn't shoot at each other!"²⁴

At Yalta, both Eleanor Roosevelt and Premier Khrushchev agreed that their countries should achieve nuclear disarmament. But Mrs. Roosevelt questioned the grandiose, self-serving calls for disarmament by the Soviets which were only calculated to win favor with the non-western world. She charged that the Kremlin's opposition to inspection prevented the Soviet Union from making a substantial contribution to disarmament.

On November 15, 1957, the first National Committee for A Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE) petition appeared in the New York Times. SANE's membership consisted of pacifists, peace

²⁴Ibid., pp. 228-230. In September 1959 Khrushchev visited the United States. He made a special trip to Hyde Park to place a wreath on Franklin D. Roosevelt's grave. When a reporter asked Mrs. Roosevelt whether she planned to hold talks with Khrushchev, she answered (in her characteristic manner) "He has no interest in me whatsoever. I have no power. That gentleman likes power." Mrs. Roosevelt was correct. The Khrushchev Hyde Park visit was a hurried one in which he participated in the memorial ceremonies for F.D.R. Mrs. Roosevelt then gave him a short tour of the grounds, and he left, refusing lunch, because of schedule commitments. [Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, pp. 273-274.]

advocates, liberals and scientists. Eleanor Roosevelt joined such old friends as Harry Emerson Fosdick, Clark Eichelberger, Norman Thomas, and Paul J. Tillich in sponsoring the advertisement which began, "We Are Facing A Danger Unlike Any Danger That Has Ever Existed." The petition expressed confidence that public opinion could persuade governments to support disarmament. The following excerpt illustrates its use of Declaration of Independence rhetoric:

The sovereignty of the human community comes before all others--before the sovereignty of groups, tribes, or nations. In that community, man has natural rights. He has the right to live and to grow, to breathe unpoisoned air, to work on uncontaminated soil. He has the right to his sacred nature.

If what nations are doing has the effect of destroying these natural rights, whether by upsetting the delicate balances on which life depends, or fouling the air, or devitalizing the land, or tampering with the genetic integrity of man himself; then it becomes necessary for people to restrain and tame the nations.

Six months later, SANE's second petition, also signed by Mrs. Roosevelt, again called on the big powers to cease testing. It also made symbolic use of a phrase associated with the American revolution. The petition's heading read: "The World's Peoples Have a Right to Demand No Contamination Without Representation."²⁵

²⁵"We Are Facing A Danger Unlike Any Danger That Has Ever Existed; The World's People Have a Right to Demand No Contamination Without Representation, Box 4260, SANE Papers, Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

The SANE petitions sought to shock the American people into supporting disarmament by graphically describing the effects of nuclear fallout. They were also mildly critical of the government's disarmament policy. On April 11, 1958, a SANE petition in the New York Times, signed by Mrs. Roosevelt, demanded that the United States postpone future nuclear tests:

The Soviet Union states it is calling off further nuclear tests. The easiest way for us to convert this announcement into a moral disaster for the United States is to stand pat on this issue. The least we can do today--if we hope to restore America's moral standing in the world--is to postpone our tests while we negotiate a satisfactory agreement.

But SANE, as Mrs. Roosevelt, supported the American position on inspection:

We Must Call For A United Nations Inspected
Ban on Tests

We must challenge Moscow's bid for proposing a permanent end to tests under effective inspection. Khrushchev said on April 4: "Russia is willing to accept supervision." Let's call his hand.

In the fall of 1958, Eleanor Roosevelt, Albert Schweitzer, Trygve Lie, Martin Luther King, Clarence Pickett, Bertrand Russell, and Norman Cousins signed another SANE appeal demanding "the permanent internationally inspected ending of nuclear weapons tests."²⁶

²⁶New York Times, 11 April, 1958; To The Men at Geneva, October 31, 1958, Box 4260, SANE Papers, Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

In October 1959 Eleanor Roosevelt celebrated her 75th birthday. "Talking with Eleanor Roosevelt," James MacGregor Burns and Janet Thompson Burns wrote in a New York Times Magazine article commemorating the occasion, "one senses that time has both strengthened and hardened her." Her idealism, they detected,

has been tempered by the tests of frustration and success in world affairs. Eleanor Roosevelt, in short, has gone the way of many old New Dealers, who have lost some of their political innocence. She has not changed an inch in her burning devotion to human rights and her belief in people. But the sweetness, gentleness and compassion of former times has to a little extent given way to toughness.

In assessing American foreign policy for the article, Mrs. Roosevelt demonstrated such toughness--or, as the authors wrote, "an almost hard-boiled realism." "We should give up the fiction that Formosa represents China," Mrs. Roosevelt observed.

It would be better to have Red China in the U.N. on the basis of supporting U.N. principles. Then the force of world opinion could be brought to bear on her through the U.N. when she takes military action, as in Tibet and Laos.

In evaluating the European defense, Mrs. Roosevelt declared that "NATO is a fiction." The Soviet threat, she argued, was no longer military but rather economic and cultural; unfortunately, she believed, "America is still overemphasizing the

military. Eleanor Roosevelt then advised the American people to

take a fresh look at some of our domestic policies in relation to world problems. Africa and Asia are moving into the Soviet cultural orbit. They hear about our agricultural programs--that we're keeping land out of production. And, when over there millions of people are going to bed at night with empty stomachs, they cannot understand. One thing we can do is work with the U.N. and the Food and Agriculture Organization to grow the things that are needed.²⁷

Mrs. Roosevelt looked forward to January 1961, when she hoped, her friend, Adlai Stevenson, would be the next president and would be able to solve these problems.

²⁷James MacGregor Burns and Janet Thompson Burns, "Mrs. Roosevelt at a Remarkable 75," New York Times Magazine (October 4, 1959), pp. 38-39.

CHAPTER XI

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT
AND THE NEW FRONTIER, 1960-1962

The Democrats must welcome into their ranks, Eleanor Roosevelt told party leaders on December 7, 1959, "every kind of liberal," especially the young who "may be conscious of new things we have to learn. The Nation," she continued, needed not only "the wisdom of older people," but also "the courage and vision of younger people."¹

Many of Eleanor Roosevelt's liberal friends believed Senator John F. Kennedy offered these traits. Eleanor Roosevelt refused to assist the Kennedy campaign. She distrusted Kennedy because of his ambivalent stand on McCarthy. She further disliked Kennedy's father, one of the outspoken isolationists in her husband's administration. Moreover, Eleanor Roosevelt still hoped Adlai Stevenson would enter the race.

In contrast to Stevenson, Kennedy had avoided criticizing McCarthy. "Because it is important in politics to win," Kennedy's friend, James Landis told the Columbia University Oral History project,

he would have lost a tremendous number of votes, especially in the South Boston area and so on, if he had taken on McCarthy. He avoided it. It was a little difficult to get other people to see why he should avoid it, but I think he would have lost if he had taken on that issue. He never

¹New York Times, 8 December, 1959.

justified McCarthy at any time. But '52 was a fairly conservative year and at that time McCarthy was riding pretty high.²

John Kennedy told Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., "Hell, half of my voters in Massachusetts look on McCarthy as a hero."³ Besides refusing to criticize McCarthy, Senator Kennedy missed the historic 1954 censure vote. Although he was seriously ill in a hospital, liberals admonished him for refusing to comment on the censure issue when he returned to the senate. Eleanor Roosevelt, for example, wrote in her July 1957 McCalls magazine column:

When Senator Kennedy returned after his illness the press reported that he was asked if he would have agreed with the censure of Senator McCarthy by the Senate. Senator Kennedy, the press reported, replied that that was in the past and he did not see why it should be brought up. I felt this was an equivocation and regretted that he had not been forthright in saying where he stood.⁴

Eleanor Roosevelt disclosed in a March 1958 Saturday Evening Post excerpt from her book, On My Own, that she had refused to support John Kennedy's quest for the vice presidential nomination at the Democratic convention because of this incident. Following the publication of this article, James Landis

²The Reminiscences of James Landis, Columbia University Oral History Project, p. 608.

³Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House (New York: Fawcett Cress Book 1967), p. 20.

⁴"If You Ask Me," July 1957, Box 3067, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

tried to persuade Mrs. Roosevelt to reassess her negative opinion of the senator. Eleanor Roosevelt refused; she rather inserted in On My Own a footnote explaining that her feelings toward Kennedy had not changed since the Saturday Evening Post article:

He has recently said that he had made statements upholding the vote of the Senate but this is not exactly what I think is called for. I believe that a public servant must clearly indicate that he understands the harm that McCarthyism did to our country and that he opposes it actively, so that one would feel sure he would always do so in the future. This is, however, of minor importance as what I have said is purely a record of the past which the Senator himself can correct.⁵

On a December 1958 ABC-TV interview, Mrs. Roosevelt once again raised the McCarthy issue. In finding it ironic that Kennedy had written Profiles in Courage, she said she

⁵Roosevelt, On My Own, p. 164. This is the passage which appeared both in the Saturday Evening Post and in On My Own: "During the lively contest for the Vice-Presidential nomination between Senator Estes Kefauver and Senator John Kennedy a friend of Senator Kennedy came to me with a request for support. I replied that I did not feel I could support him because Senator Kennedy had avoided taking a position during the controversy over Senator Joseph McCarthy's methods of investigation. Senator Kennedy was in the hospital when the Senate voted censure of Senator McCarthy and, of course, could not record his position. But later, when he returned to the Senate, reporters asked him how he would have voted and he failed to answer directly.

'Oh, that was a long time ago,' the Senator's friend told me. 'He was unable to vote and it is all a thing of the past. It should not have anything to do with the present situation.'

I replied that I thought it did. 'I think McCarthyism is a question on which public officials must stand up and be counted.' I added, 'I still have not heard Senator Kennedy express his convictions. And I cannot be sure of the political future of anyone who does not willingly state where he stands on that issue.'

would hesitate to place the difficult decisions that the next President will have to make with someone who understands what courage is and admires it but has not quite the independence to have it.

Mrs. Roosevelt also questioned, on this broadcast, the propriety of Kennedy having his father "spending oodles of money in the country on his behalf" and presumably having "paid representatives in every state." Kennedy requested in a letter to Mrs. Roosevelt that she provide evidence and cite names. Eleanor Roosevelt refused to divulge her sources, all of whom she claimed to be reputable Americans. Despite another futile exchange of letters, she stubbornly clung to her suspicion that Joseph P. Kennedy planned to purchase the presidency for his son.⁶

John Kennedy therefore failed to obtain the backing of Mrs. Roosevelt before the convention. She originally announced her neutrality in the spring of 1960: a position the Kennedy supporters interpreted as a holding action for Stevenson. Their fears proved correct. Eleanor Roosevelt endorsed Stevenson on June 7, 1960. She explained to her public why:

Since the Summit Conference, however, I have not had a letter in my political mail mention-

"Senator Kennedy came to see me in Chicago and I told him exactly the same thing. He replied in about the words he had previously used in talking to reporters, saying that the McCarthy censure vote was 'so long ago' that it did not enter the current situation. But he did not say where he stood on the issue and I did not support him."

⁶Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, p. 280.

ing anybody but Governor Stevenson, and in my many personal contacts more and more people talk of him. The reasons given are that the position in the world now requires maturity, it requires experience, and that the only man meeting the requirements since the failure of the Summit is Adlai E. Stevenson. He has talked with and won the respect of the leaders of many nations. He has been educating himself in world conditions by first-hand knowledge--Africa, Asia, the Near East, South America are all places he has visited, and many of the men carrying responsibilities in these countries he has talked with, and as you meet with them you realize that his qualities of character and mind have won respect. This is what I think the people who have been writing and talking to me since the Summit Conference feel.

In stressing Stevenson's "maturity and experience," she sought to contrast him with his younger rival whom she suggested be granted the position of vice president on the Democratic ticket. She expressed the hope that Kennedy, as vice president, would be given "the opportunity to grow and learn."⁷

Nowhere in this statement did Eleanor Roosevelt refer to Kennedy's stand on McCarthy. She evidently thought that Kennedy's inexperience in foreign policy was the strongest argument against him. In her June 11 column, Mrs. Roosevelt added that two recent developments in the campaign were responsible for her endorsement of Stevenson:

One was a statement on the part of Professor Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. of Harvard and

⁷Statement by Mrs. E. Roosevelt endorsing Adlai E. Stevenson as Standard Bearer of the Democratic Party, June 10, 1960, Adlai Stevenson Papers, Box 797, Princeton University Library.

Professor Henry S. Commager and Joseph L. Rauh, Jr. They said that as Stevenson was not a candidate they were coming out for Kennedy. At the same time Chairman Paul M. Butler told a California group for Stevenson that, since Stevenson was not a candidate, they were not entitled to any headquarters space in the area where other Democratic candidates would be accommodated during the Democratic National Convention.

She then asked Stevenson to "clarify his position on being a candidate."⁸ Stevenson responded, as he had done previously, that he would not actively pursue the nomination but would "serve my country and party whenever called upon." Eleanor Roosevelt interpreted his statement as an announcement of availability though Stevenson's persistent denials continued to disappoint her.⁹

At the convention Mrs. Roosevelt spoke for Stevenson before state delegations. She again stressed Stevenson's knowledge of foreign policy, his political experience, and his maturity as the essential traits needed to govern the United States. Following the Kennedy victory on the first ballot, Eleanor Roosevelt quietly left the convention hall, refusing any direct communication with the nominee except for a brief, cold telephone conversation at the airport.¹⁰

On August 15, John Kennedy traveled to Hyde Park to make his peace with Mrs. Roosevelt. They spoke candidly about the role Stevenson would have in the campaign. After

⁸My Day, 11 June, 1960.

⁹My Day, 13 June, 1960; New York Times, 13 June, 1960.

¹⁰Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, pp. 291-296.

Kennedy informed her that he had requested Stevenson head a research group on foreign policy, Mrs. Roosevelt told him, according to her memorandum of the meeting, that this would not be sufficient. Kennedy would have to

demonstrate that he and the Stevenson liberals were working together. All of us know that unless Adlai felt their philosophies were similar he would not accept the Secretary of State post. Therefore, I felt that he had to prove by working in the campaign and appearing on the same platforms, and perhaps by references and quotation, that there was close cooperation. Bringing both Chester Bowles and Adlai in whenever he could would mean that these were the men he was counting on for advice. He agreed and said he would try to do this.

From this meeting, Eleanor Roosevelt apparently assumed Stevenson would be the next Secretary of State. Kennedy, however, did not make such a commitment but Mrs. Roosevelt wrote that "she had the distinct feeling that he is planning on working closely with Adlai." She also noted that

here was a man who could learn. I liked him better than I ever had before because he seemed so little cock-sure, and I think he has a mind that is open to new ideas.¹¹

Two days after seeing Kennedy, Mrs. Roosevelt repeated this observation in My Day:

I think Senator Kennedy is anxious to learn. I think he is hospitable to new ideas. He is hard-headed. He calculates the political effect of every move. I left my conversation

¹¹Memo: Conversation with Kennedy, August 15, 1960. Box 4415, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers.

with him with the feeling that here is a man who wants to leave a record of not only having helped his countrymen, but having helped humanity as a whole.¹²

For this reason, Eleanor Roosevelt announced her intention to campaign for the Democratic candidate.

During the fall campaign, Mrs. Roosevelt described Kennedy as a poised, knowledgeable, and cautious young politician who deserved to be president. In her columns following the televised debates, Mrs. Roosevelt contrasted these strengths with Nixon's fearsome cold warrior image. Of all the issues discussed, Mrs. Roosevelt was the most troubled with Nixon's position that the defense of Quemoy and Matsu was vital to American security, a position Kennedy skillfully rejected. She, however, expressed regret that neither candidate discussed the disarmament question.¹³

II

At a November 15 press conference Eleanor Roosevelt interpreted the narrowness of Kennedy's victory margin as a sign that "many people do not know what the world is about because for eight years nobody's been telling them." When questioned about whom she would like to see serve in the new cabinet, Eleanor Roosevelt curtly responded, "It's his administration," but shrewdly added that she believed Adlai

¹²My Day, 17 August, 1960.

¹³My Day, 28, 30 September, 12, 14, 17 October, 1960; Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, pp. 299-301.

Stevenson and Chester Bowles would be the best future team in foreign affairs, with the former as Secretary of State and the latter as United Nations ambassador.¹⁴ Three days after the press conference, Abba Schwartz, who served during the campaign as liaison between the Kennedy staff and Mrs. Roosevelt, met with her to solicit advice on future appointments. Eleanor Roosevelt told him that she had been receiving mail from former Stevenson supporters angered by the prospect that Kennedy would not appoint Stevenson Secretary of State. Schwartz wrote in a memorandum of the meeting that Eleanor Roosevelt understood the difficult problems Kennedy faced in making this decision. He reported to Kennedy that Mrs. Roosevelt told him

(1) that she was a bit "fed up" with people who didn't understand the burdens and problems which face Mr. Kennedy; (2) that she had told Jack Kennedy on several occasions that she felt Adlai was an excellent person in the field of foreign affairs; but (3) that it would not only be presumptuous on her part, but grossly improper, for her or anyone else to tell Jack Kennedy whom he should choose as his Secretary of State, since the President must take into account many factors in deciding the membership of his cabinet, such as (1) the question of personality and whether he can work closely with the particular individual concerned; (2) his concept of his own role in the field of foreign affairs; and (3) political problems particularly in relation to 1964.¹⁵

These factors proved to be the major reasons why Kennedy did

¹⁴press Conference, November 15, 1960, Kansas City, Mo., Audio-Visual Collection, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.

¹⁵Memorandum of Conversation with Mrs. F.D.R., November 18, 1960, Abba Schwartz File, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.

not appoint Stevenson Secretary of State. Even though this decision hurt Mrs. Roosevelt, she expressed confidence that Stevenson in the United Nations and Bowles in the State Department would guarantee for the liberals a voice in the new administration.

Eleanor Roosevelt attended Kennedy's inauguration.

"I wanted to tell you," she wrote the new President,

how I felt about your inaugural address. I think "gratidude" best describes the kind of liberation and lift to the listener which you gave. I have re-read your words several times and I am filled with thankfulness. May we all respond to your leadership and make your task easier.¹⁶

Eleanor Roosevelt died nearly two years later. Although old age and an undiagnosed illness slowed her down considerably, Mrs. Roosevelt wrote, with some interruptions, her column, travelled abroad, and delivered an occasional speech. She continued to be deeply concerned with the direction of the nation's foreign policy.

Upon taking office, the Kennedy administration faced the problem of coping with communism in Cuba and stopping its spread to the rest of Latin America. Mrs. Roosevelt agreed with the administration that Castro was a ruthless dictator and that his victory signified the expansion of Russian power in the western hemisphere. Nevertheless, Mrs. Roosevelt recognized that American business interests had a

¹⁶Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., Robert Kennedy and His Times (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978), pp. 424-425.

record of exploitation in Cuba. "Out of sheer laziness we supported the status quo," she observed; the United States should have realized that "conditions under which the people lived were intolerable . . . [Castro] came into power to meet a real need of the people, who previously were under a dictator who had exploited them shamelessly without protests from the United States." Mrs. Roosevelt advised her country to "think of Cuba as a lesson and attempt to change our procedure of operation in other Latin American countries so this situation does not repeat itself." "If we do not," she warned, "then we deserve the loss of friends."¹⁷

Eleanor Roosevelt refused to believe the rumors that the United States trained an army of exiled Cubans to re-conquer their homeland. She predicted if such an invasion occurred it would fail because of Castro's popularity. Following the Bay of Pigs fiasco, which proved Mrs. Roosevelt's warning to be accurate, she perceptively wrote:

From the newspaper accounts it would seem that our Central Intelligence Agency was not very well informed as to the internal situation in Cuba. One account suggested that on the one hand we had underestimated Castro's hold on the people of Cuba, and, on the other, that those who might have wanted to revolt would be unable to do so, since the government had become a police state.

I wonder if we are not falling back on this second idea and ignoring the fact that there may be large groups of people in Cuba who find themselves in better condition today than they were under Batista. It is difficult, of course, to find out. Yet, from what one reads, the exiles seem to be drawn largely from the intellectual and business groups of Cuba, whereas conditions among the poorer people may be such that Castro has been able to improve the hopes they

¹⁷My Day, 4, 6 January, 1961.

hold for a better life. In that case, the greater number of people would not be inclined to join with the rebels. Since a successful invasion in this instance depended upon an uprising among the masses in Cuba, it should have been evident to our people that this undertaking was premature.¹⁸

Eleanor Roosevelt hoped the United States would profit from its failure in Cuba. On June 21, 1961, she wrote in My Day:

We have not given the example of being concerned when we were engaged in international business ventures with the conditions under which the workers lived. We have often exploited instead of improved these conditions. And this is something we cannot continue to do. A percentage of all profits should go into improving housing, schools and medical care for those who work for us anywhere in the world.¹⁹

Henry Wallace made a similar appeal when he was Vice President. Eleanor Roosevelt supported him then; now, she welcomed the Alliance for Progress. For in this program Mrs. Roosevelt surely observed the fruition of the New Deal For the World. She also continued to advocate increasing aid to the rest of the developing world. As in the past, she suggested that foreign aid could open up new markets for the United States.²⁰

Foreign aid, by itself, Mrs. Roosevelt argued, would not defeat communism in the Third World as long as the United States denied its black population their civil rights. She had pointed to the contradiction between a racist society and a fight for world democracy as far back as World War II.

¹⁸My Day, 12, 24 April, 1961.

¹⁹My Day, 31 March, 1961.

²⁰My Day, 31 March, 1961.

Mrs. Roosevelt ended her career with a plea for civil rights legislation. After seeing photographs of southern police with dogs attacking black demonstrators in Mississippi, Mrs. Roosevelt warned the South that "this picture went around the world, that there was probably no small village in Asia or Africa where one may not come across it in years to come."²¹

A number of Mrs. Roosevelt's friends in the civil rights movement, especially the Quakers, were also deeply concerned with disarmament. Since the 1930s Eleanor Roosevelt had cooperated with the peace movement. Still, although she shared their pacifist hope for ending war, when it came to disarmament, Eleanor Roosevelt remained a realist. She supported military preparedness before World War II and the Baruch disarmament plan during the Truman and Eisenhower administrations. In the 1956 campaign, Mrs. Roosevelt endorsed Adlai Stevenson's test ban proposal only because she trusted the claims of the scientists that the United States could detect a secret Soviet atmospheric test. When Kennedy became president, such a test ban became for him a priority issue; however, he was forced to face the possibility of indefinite testing by both sides when the Russians unilaterally resumed testing in September 1961. Eleanor Roosevelt accused the Soviets of breaking their word:

As the Russians continue their nuclear
blasts from day to day one cannot help feeling

²¹My Day, 3 April, 1961, 1 January 1962.

that this is done to force upon the people of the world the recognition of the pursuit of scientific knowledge and of the power wielded by the Soviet Union. From our western cowboy days we have many stories of the things people did under the threat of a gun held to their ribs. Sometimes the purposes were good, but more often they were bad.

In the present effort by the Soviet Union to give the peoples of the world a taste of the old type of lynch law, which in civilized countries has been out of favor for a long time, the Soviets are going backward in what we suppose is an effort to produce panic, particularly in the U.S. Something one is very familiar with, however, never creates panic. When one has outgrown such threats, these threats may create contempt or may create amusement, but never panic. Mr. Khrushchev, please take note!²²

This attack reveals Mrs. Roosevelt's continuing distrust of the Soviets until her death.

Even though she remained a cold warrior, Mrs. Roosevelt still hoped diplomacy could solve the outstanding cold war issue. In a November 1961 letter to President Kennedy, she urged him to persevere in his determination to negotiate with Russia a nuclear test ban and an end to the Berlin deadlock.²³ But Eleanor Roosevelt knew all along that to achieve true peace in the world

we need to set our own house in order. We need to have an example of peace and goodwill among men to share with any people we may find on other planets. Otherwise, we might much better stay at home and struggle to learn the difficult lesson of peaceful living.

I know full well that this peace must begin in the heart of every individual. We

²²My Day, 15 September, 1961.

²³Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, p. 319.

cannot allow ourselves the luxury or the stupidity of hating each other in small groups, whether of family or community, when we are trying to learn the greater lesson of living together in great national groups where different racial characteristics and barriers of language make it infinitely more difficult. But these are the challenges of this generation. If we cannot meet them and if we go on simply listening to our leaders make greater and greater threats against each other, I wonder whether unexpectedly we will find that our world is lost because we are not equal to the challenge of our day.

This statement illustrates the influence Jane Addams and the pacifists of the pre-World War II era had on Mrs. Roosevelt. However, she warned the present day peace advocates that

any demonstration for peace should clearly be an effort to show the world our desire to support peace, but should not indicate any weakening in the support of our President in whatever he may think necessary to ask us to do under the present circumstances. If he does not receive this support, and if Premier Khrushchev is not aware of much support, it might weaken the President's hand for negotiation. We are, one might say, in something of a gigantic poker game for the highest stakes that nations have ever played.²⁴

Again, as during the thirties, Eleanor Roosevelt demonstrated a sincere desire for peace but she always understood the realities of power.

In the fall of 1962, Eleanor Roosevelt lay dying in a hospital at the outset of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

²⁴My Day, 9 August, 1961.

"We are almost at war," her Doctor, David Grewitsch, told her. Joseph Lash, who was also at the side of her bed, then described the confrontation. "It'll never come together," she replied, "nobody makes sense."²⁵

²⁵Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, p. 330.

CONCLUSION

Throughout her public career, Eleanor Roosevelt frequently professed ignorance of the issues and refused to acknowledge that she indeed was politically influential. Perhaps her troubled childhood, which Joseph Lash describes so well in Eleanor and Franklin, explains this insecurity. Yet, because of her inferiority complex, Mrs. Roosevelt struggled to grow and learn and was always able to set aside convictions she previously thought correct. For example, she decided in the middle 1930s that pacifism could not save the world from the fascist threat. During the early cold war she realized that the popular front at home and abroad, which she had ^{once} supported, had collapsed because of Russian expansionism. Eleanor Roosevelt also changed her position on Israel. Originally she questioned Zionism but soon realized that only Palestine could absorb the Jewish refugees. In the late fifties Eleanor Roosevelt modified her stand on nuclear disarmament when she decided to support a test ban.

Although Eleanor Roosevelt demonstrated a great deal of flexibility on some issues, she tenaciously believed that the United States should promote the advancement of human rights throughout the world. During the Spanish Civil War she urged the U.S. to aid the Loyalists. From 1939 until Pearl Harbor Eleanor Roosevelt stressed the ideological reasons for assisting Great Britain in winning the war and for rearming

the United States. Along with Vice President Henry Wallace, Mrs. Roosevelt contributed to the formulation of the "New Deal for the World," a win-the-war ideology which promised liberal democracy and economic advancement for all. Following the war, Eleanor Roosevelt's performance in the United Nations on both Committee Three and the Human Rights Commission was applauded by human rights activists. Throughout the cold war, Mrs. Roosevelt continued to raise the human rights issue. She condemned the Soviet Union's repressive policies at home and in Eastern Europe. She further criticized Washington for arming and providing economic support for pro-U.S. dictatorships such as Franco's Spain.

Eleanor Roosevelt hated war. Yet she sadly found herself repeating what she had written in 1937: "even pacifists must stand up and fight for their beliefs."¹ But Mrs. Roosevelt always hoped for peace and advised the United States not to be so rigid as to miss any opportunity to improve the climate for abolishing war.

¹My Day, 19 June, 1937.

APPENDIX

MRS. ROOSEVELT'S DESCRIPTION OF THE
UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Mrs. Roosevelt described the contents of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the excerpt below from an article in Foreign Affairs.

Three Articles in the Declaration seem to me to be of vital importance. Article 15 provides that everyone has the right to a nationality; that is, all persons are entitled to the protection of some government, and those who are without it shall be protected by the United Nations. Article 16 says that individual freedom of thought and conscience, to hold and change beliefs, is an absolute and sacred right. Included in this Article is a declaration of the right to manifest these beliefs in the form of worship, observance, teaching and practice. Article 21 declares that everyone, without discrimination, has the right to take an effective part in the government of his country. This aims to give assurance that governments of states will bend and change according to the will of the people as shown in elections, which shall be periodic, free, fair and by secret ballot.

Some of the other important Articles are broad in scope. For instance, Article 23 says that every one has the right to work, and that the state has a duty to take steps within its power to ensure its residents an opportunity for useful work. Article 24 says that everyone has a right to receive pay commensurate with his ability and skill and may join trade unions to protect his interests.

Other Articles in the Declaration set forth rights such as the right to the preservation of health, which would give the state responsibility for health and safety measures; the right to social security, which makes it the duty of the state to provide measures for the security of the individual against the consequences of unemployment, disability, old age and other loss of livelihood beyond his control; the right to education, which should be free and compulsory, and the provision that higher education should be available to all without distinction as to race, sex, language, religion, social standing,

financial means or political affiliation; the right to rest and leisure--that is, a limitation on hours of work and provisions for vacations with pay; the right to participate in the cultural life of the community, enjoy its arts and share in the benefits of science. Another Article asserts that education will be directed to the full physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual development of the human personality and to combatting hatred against other nations or racial or religious groups.¹

¹Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, "The Promise of Human Rights," Foreign Affairs, 26 (April 1948), pp. 470-477.

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