THE ROOSEVELT MEMORIAL

STANDING POSTURE PREFERRED

A LETTER TO LORD DERBY

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—I have received the following letter from Mrs. Roosevelt in reply to my invitation to come to London and unveil the memorial to her husband:

New York,
January 7, 1947.

Dear Lord Derby,

I thank you for your kind invitation to unveil the monument to my husband in Grosvenor Square on April 12, 1948. Unless something very unforeseen should occur I am indeed happy to accept your request.

Sir Campbell Stuart has shown me a plan of the projected layout of the square, and the setting of the monument. I can quite appreciate the sculptor’s desire for a standing statue having regard to the high buildings and the tall trees.

This question as to whether he should stand or sit is one for you to decide, but I realized from the outset that whatever you do will not please everybody, as there are people just as anxious to remember him standing as those who desire to recall him sitting. I, of course, have not seen the present model in Sir William Reid Dick’s studio, but I appreciate it is impossible to judge the statue by the small print which was put out by your committee to indicate to the public that it would be a standing statue. Mr. Winant, however, has seen the model in question, and tells me it is a striking likeness of my husband in a characteristic pose and portrayed with great dignity. It has satisfied him as a suitable and worthy memorial. I understand six months’ work has already been done upon it, and the whole project has been approved by your Royal Fine Art Commission. For my part I am content with the present standing statue, and I cannot but think it would be wise to let the matter go forward without further controversy.

Very cordially yours,

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT.

I hope that Mrs. Roosevelt’s letter will end once and for all the discussion as to whether the statue should be standing or sitting, for no one is in a better position to say the final word on this subject than Mr. Roosevelt’s widow. I am also anxious to avoid a controversy which brings into the foreground the President’s infirmity, and thereby give pain to those who were closest to him.

Yours sincerely,

DERBY.

President, Franklin Roosevelt Memorial Committee
The Pilgrims, Savoy Hotel, W.C.2, January 27.
Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt
Campobello Island
New Brunswick
Canada

Dear Eleanor:

I have just had a letter from Gardner Jackson requesting me to sponsor a Manifesto re Sacco and Vanzetti. He indicated you and Senator Morse have already done so, but I wanted to be certain that this is the case before making up my mind.

Frankly I am puzzled about this matter. The Manifesto surprised and almost shocked me—principally because of its use of the occasion of the anniversary of the death of these men to make what seems to me to be an irrelevant attack upon Communism. The Communist technique at no time was a fundamental issue in the case. While the facts, as Jackson brings them out, may be true, I don't remember hearing that angle so much as raised.

More than this, the Manifesto seems, in my opinion, to fall far short of the occasion. Jackson says: "We recognize the present version of it is too long and needs working over to remove obscurities. We welcome suggestions to that end, particularly from as skilled a user of exact language as you, so long as meanings are not changed." But since it is the meaning to which I object and its failure to state the fundamental issues, there is little use in my fussing with it. I did not know whether you ever actually had seen it or not.

The idea of the presentation of the plaque at first struck me as favorable, especially Schlesinger's remark that it will be "the historical process in action." On second thought, however, it seems somewhat adolescent, not to say "smarty." (Incidentally are there any bronze reliefs permanently on the Boston Common to which this could logically be added as a historical representation?)

To sum it up, it seems to me that, on an anniversary like this, something deeply serious on a very elevated plane is necessary—a reaffirmation of fundamental principles rather than an attempt to make headlines.
Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt  
August 8, 1947  
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I hope that you will let me know how you feel about this. I don't like to refuse to participate in a movement that is already under way, especially as it is probably the only thing that will be done. I should much appreciate therefore if you will send me a telegram collect telling of your reaction and whether you really are one of the people who are calling upon others to participate.

When Jackson's letter came I was about to write you concerning a trip into Greece and the Balkans on which I am starting in ten days. My primary purpose, as I told Mr. Clayton, is to try and see for myself something of the forces that are operating in the world today—with a view to understanding not only the impact on the peoples over there but more clearly something of their relation here in America.

From my point of view we are living in a world of revolution (by which I do not mean only Russia) and it is up to us to try to get a clear understanding of what the elements are. As things stand now, it is difficult to know what to believe as the evidence one gets and most of the accounts are highly charged either with propaganda or with hate, as well as all manner of other emotions. Mr. Clayton encouraged me to go and has been most helpful in arranging for all manner of contacts through the State Department. Besides this, I am getting letters from a multitude of other sources—-from Phil Murray and other leaders, from educators, churchmen, farm leaders, leaders of cooperatives, scientists, women's and youth groups, etc.—and direct letters of introduction from the Ambassadors here.

If you felt that you could give me something I should deeply appreciate it—I am quite certain it would open many doors—possibly a general letter saying something of the liberal causes I have stood for—perhaps personal ones to any groups and individuals you think might be helpful.

My plans, after I get into a country and have met the top officials, are to get out of the capitals and the big cities and into the country where it may be possible to get some light on what people are thinking, feeling, and enduring—-at any rate some understanding of how they are dealing with their problems.

Don't hesitate to refuse if for any reason you prefer not to do it. I shall understand, of course.

Affectionately yours,

P.S. Colliers, the NY Herald Tribune and one or two others will publish any material I bring them.
P.S. The countries I am going to outside of Greece are:
France, England, Czechoslovakia, probably Italy and Turkey,
and one or more of the following: Poland, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia,
or Hungary.
I cannot say, and I will not say
That he is dead,—He is just away!
With a cheery smile, and a wave of the hand,
He has wandered into an unknown land,
And left us dreaming how very fair.
It needs must be, since he lingers there.
And you—O you, who the wildest yearn
For the old-time step and the glad return,—
Think of him faring on, as dear
In the love of There as the love of Here;
Think of him still as the same, I say—
He is not dead—he is just away!

James Whitcomb Riley

Daisy L. Ainsley