

WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!

PAUL ROBESON

**ON THE
SOVIET UNION**

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PAUL ROBESON

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Publisher's Note

Paul Robeson (1898-1976) was an African-American singer, writer and actor. Son of a runaway slave, Paul Robeson unwaveringly dedicated his life and talents to the people.

He sang for the Welsh coal miners union and the Spanish Republicans, his iconic baritone voice emboldening the brave anti-fascist resistance. He used his renown as a singer in the United States to champion the civil rights movement, boycotting segregated venues in the 1940s.

Robeson's ardent struggle against fascism and his struggle for the equality of African-Americans led him to the Soviet Union, being invited by Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein in 1934. Here, Robeson was enraptured by the flourishing of Soviet culture and music, and also the race relations and fraternity of the Soviet Union as a whole. Here, like millions around the world, he also grew a profound admiration and respect for the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and Joseph Stalin, at its head. Robeson even enrolled his son, Paul Jr., in a school in the Soviet Union.

Following WWII, Robeson continued his

career as well as his activism for peace with the Soviet Union, much to the chagrin of the American imperialists who were terrified to their core of the triumph of the Soviet Union and the people's democracies against fascism. Robeson's resolute activism deservedly won him the Stalin Peace Prize in 1952.

Like many who possessed sympathies for the Soviet Union and the oppressed peoples under the yoke of American imperialism, Robeson was subject to abject repression and harassment during the McCarthyist period of the American regime. Robeson's passport was revoked in 1950 and he was a victim of harassment and surveillance from U.S. government agencies. He was also blacklisted in the entertainment industry but this did little to curb his popularity and fame amongst the peoples of the world.

He eventually received his passport back in 1958 on a Supreme Court decision. Two years earlier, he testified in front of the House Committee on Un-American Activities — a transcript of which is included in this selection — where he bravely defended the Communist Party and Stalin from the invasive interrogation of the committee members, embarrassing the bumbling bourgeois flunkys with his characteristic sharp wit, poetic elo-

quence and fierce intelligence.

Although he passed away in 1976, Paul Robeson's bright vivacity will continue in the hearts of the people for countless years to come: an implacable fighter against imperialist intrigue, a talented musician, a sensational internationalist and an irreplaceable artist of the toiler. His memoirs and articles on the Soviet Union provide deeply valuable and extraordinary insight into an extraordinary man during an extraordinary time.

“I Am at Home”

Interview with the *Daily Worker*

January 15, 1935

Moscow, USSR — “This is Paul Robeson, the greatest American singer!” declared the famous film director, Eisenstein, introducing Robeson to a reception in his honour, attended by nearly all the celebrities in Moscow’s theatre and art world. The reception was given in the “House of the Kino,” palatial clubhouse of the workers of the movie industry.

I repeat the words of Eisenstein, master of ceremonies at the reception, not by way of informing the public as to who Robeson is, for that is well enough known, but to show the tone of the feeling of the workers and the artists of the Soviet Union towards this visiting Negro singer, son of a slave in the United States to show the wholehearted appreciation of these Russian sons of serfs who now are freed by their own efforts.

The reception was long and brilliant and lasted until about 2 a.m. But somehow in the course of it, Robeson found time to answer a few questions from the *Daily Worker* correspondent.

I began with the obvious: "Have you noticed a race question in the Soviet Union?"

An undercurrent of laughter rumbled under Robeson's big mellow voice as he answered: "Only that it seems to work to my advantage!"

And then he explained. He has been studying the Soviet Union for two years, studying the Russian language also for that length of time, has been a regular reader of the *Pravda* and *Izvestia* for months, and knows something about the solution to the race question here. He knows that the Soviet theory is that all races are equal — really equal, socially equal, too, as well as economically and politically. He expressed delight but no surprise when I informed him of the election to the Moscow Soviet of the American Negro, Robinson, working in the First State Ball Bearing Plant here.

But what he admitted he had not been expecting was the simple, wholehearted, affectionate welcome that lay in store for him. Robeson declares himself that he knows he has made a sufficient place for himself by his singing and acting, that even in the capitalist world some of the bitterest aspects of Jim-Crowism and white chauvinism are not applied to him. But it is just this feeling that a

condescending exception has been made of him that is missing here. Here there is just the enthusiastic joy of Russian workers and artists, they or their fathers were also once slaves of the capitalist and the landlord, who now welcome in addition a man they feel is a brother artist from abroad, coming with a real desire to honestly know and understand the new life they have made for themselves.

“I was not prepared for the happiness I see on every face in Moscow,” said Robeson. “I was aware that there was no starvation here, but I was not prepared for the bounding life; the feeling of safety and abundance and freedom that I find here, wherever I turn. I was not prepared for the endless friendliness, which surrounded me from the moment I crossed the border. I had a technically irregular passport, but all this was brushed aside by the eager helpfulness of the border authorities. And this joy and happiness and friendliness, this utter absence of any embarrassment over a ‘race question’ is all the more keenly felt by me because of the day I spent in Berlin on the way here, and that was a day of horror in an atmosphere of hatred, fear and suspicion.”

Commenting on the recent execution after court-martial of several counter-revolu-

tionary terrorists, Robeson declared roundly: "From what I have already seen of the workings of the Soviet Government, I can only say that anybody who lifts his hand against it ought to be shot!

"It is the government's duty to put down any opposition to this really free society with a firm hand," he continued, "and I hope they will always do it, for I already regard myself at home here. This is home to me. I feel more kinship to the Russian people under their new society than I ever felt anywhere else. It is obvious that there is no terror here, that all the masses of every race are contented and support their government."

Robeson commented on the absence of slums, on the huge building of workers' apartments in the factory districts, such districts as are invariably slums in capitalist cities. He declared that he will make an extensive study of the club life of the Soviet worker, especially as the clubs are centres of instrumental and vocal musical training, and of dramatic art.

Robeson has developed a theory, based on his knowledge of Central Asian folk music and drama, and on his recent three months experience in Africa in connection with the filming of a motion picture scenario based on

African life, that a new vehicle of expression, not drama, and not opera, can be evolved from these arts of primitive peoples. He sees certain underlying consistent bases in all this art of primitive civilizations. He hopes to supplement his observations by a study of Chinese folk music and drama.

He has selected the Soviet Union as a most proper centre from which to conduct his research, and as the only country giving him unstintedly the social and other environment in which he can systematically complete his research and work towards this new form of artistic expression. He says that he intends to remain in the Soviet Union until about the middle of January, then will have to return to England for the final completion of the film of African life and to wind up his other affairs there. Then sometime during 1935 he will come with his whole family to the Soviet Union for a prolonged stay, working on his researches and on the first steps of the new form of drama and opera, meanwhile singing and acting in the Soviet theatres and moving pictures.

At the reception given in his honour here, Robeson sang, besides several Negro workers' songs and spirituals, four selections in the Russian language: two from the opera

“Boris Godunov,” one old folk song and a Cossack lullaby. Hearty applause and the voiced opinion of those present testified to his progress in the rather difficult Russian language.

He has deliberately and for a long time been laying plans and preparing to move to the USSR as the most suitable centre for the important work of artistic innovation which he has in mind, and because he had decided on the basis of much evidence that it is a place where a man may do such work with greatest freedom and facility. He said in his interview that he is more than satisfied that the Soviet Union is just such a place.

The Negro People and the Soviet Union

January 1950

I am deeply grateful for this opportunity to join more than half the people of the world in celebrating a great anniversary. Yes, with fully half of humanity — and even this is an underestimation. For it would be a mistake to assume that this 32nd anniversary of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is an occasion of joy and pride and thanksgiving only for the eight hundred million people who live in the Soviet Union and the people's democracies of Eastern Europe and China.

True, these eight hundred million, as direct beneficiaries of the establishment of the Soviet Union and of its policies of struggle for peace and democracy, are rejoicing because of the new economic security and political liberty, the new promise of a fuller and richer life for all, which they enjoy because they live in the Soviet land or in countries of the people's democracies. The feelings of all these people must be very like those of the President of the Chinese People's Republic, Mao Tse-tung.

“If the Soviet Union did not exist,” Mao

wrote, “if there had been no victory in the anti-fascist second World War, if... Japanese imperialism had not been defeated, if the various new democracies of Europe had not come into being, if there were no rising struggle of the masses of the people in the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and other capitalist countries against the reactionary cliques ruling over them, if this sum-total of factors did not exist, then the pressure of the international-reactionary forces upon us would surely be far greater than at present. Could we have been victorious under such circumstances? Certainly not.”

That is the way Mao explains how much the liberation of China is indebted to the decisive influence of the Soviet Union in international affairs. And so with the Romanians and Bulgarians, the Hungarians and Albanians, the Czechs and the Polish people. It is because of this sum-total of factors that they today are the masters of their own lands — a sum-total which means that the world balance of power has shifted in favour of the forces of peace and democracy. And this portentous transformation, which has occurred within three decades, stems mainly from the mighty impact of the events of November 7,

1917.

I travelled recently in Western Europe and Scandinavia, and I know from what I saw and heard in those countries that there, too, the peoples are able to struggle against the total colonization of their countries by Wall Street principally because of this new balance of power. And if the Vietnamese and the Indonesians, if the Burmese and Malay people, indeed, if the people of long-suffering India have advanced to a higher stage of struggle for their independence, it is because of this sum-total of factors and the decisive influence of the Soviet Union.

We of the Council on African Affairs know well, also, that the people of Africa and the West Indies understand who are their real friends in the council of nations. Yes, the Nigerians who only yesterday were told by Creech-Jones of the British Empire that their demand for full self-rule could not be granted because they were not ready — these Nigerians know very well that the peoples in the Asian republics of the Soviet Union less than three decades ago stood on the same cultural and political level as they; yet, in a single generation these so-called “backward” peoples have been able to take their place as free, independent peoples with their own industries

and their own culture.

Yes, all Africa remembers that it was Litvinov who stood alone beside Haile Selassie in Geneva, when Mussolini's sons flew with the blessings of the Pope to drop bombs on Ethiopian women and children. Africa remembers that it was the Soviet Union which fought the attempt of Smuts to annex South-west Africa to the slave reservations of the Union of South Africa. Africa knows it was the Soviet Union who demanded at San Francisco that the Charter of the United Nations contain a guarantee of self-government for the peoples of so-called "trust" territories. And is it not the struggle of the Soviet Union today which prevents the former Italian colonies from being slave-warrens and military bases for Britain and the United States?

Certainly, the changed balance of power in the world today favours the liberation struggles of the African and West Indian peoples. And if the people of Tanganyika and Kenya are not content with the benevolent schemes for turning their land into mass peanut plantations; if the Africans of Rhodesia rebel against the theft of their copper and the exploitation of their labour; if the Bantus and the slave-pens of the Union of South Africa

grow more defiant of the pass laws and the forced-labour system; if the peoples of the Congo refuse to mine the uranium for the atom bombs made in Jim-Crow factories in the United States; if all these peoples demand an end to floggings, an end to the farce of “trusteeship” in the former Italian colonies and all other colonies, an end to colonial exploitation schemes hidden beneath humanitarian pretences; and if the people of the West Indies press for some move leading to independence — to federation in the interests of the West Indian people and not of absentee landlords — as in Truman’s “Point Four” program — if, in a word, the peoples of Africa and the West Indies now shout their demands for self-determination to the entire world, is it not because they have a mighty friend and champion who by example and repeated challenge has proved this friendship?

No, despite all the censorship and repression, the word has gotten around.

The Soviet Union is the friend of the African and West Indian peoples. And no imperialist wolf disguised as a benevolent watchdog, and not Tito disguised as a revolutionary, can convince them that Moscow oppresses the small nations. Africa knows the Soviet Union is the defender and cham-

tion of the rights of all nations — large and small — to control their own destinies.

The Soviet socialist program of ethnic and national democracy is precisely the opposite of the nazi, fascist, South African and Dixiecrat programs of racial superiority. One of Africa's foremost leaders, Gabriel D'Arboussier, Vice-President of the African Democratic Union in France's African colonies below the Sahara, leader of an organization millions strong — representing 20,000,000 Africans, has said this:

“All the anger of the reactionaries directed against the Soviet Union is also directed in other forms against the colonial peoples. The latter have learned, thanks to these reactionaries, that there is a natural alliance between the country of socialism and the oppressed people the world over.”

But I have a deeply personal reason for speaking here tonight. And it is more than the fact that as an artist I know what Soviet culture means for the young artists of today, what great horizons of imagination and creativeness are being pushed back in the Soviet land. And it is more than the fact that I have many dear friends in the Soviet Union whom I met and grew to know during my visits there. I think the real reason I love the Soviet

Union and why I can speak so personally about it is because I am a Negro and an American.

Let me explain.

In America today the Negro people are the core of the struggle against war and fascism. Three hundred years of oppression and terror have brought my people to the forefront in this struggle.

There is no democracy for the masses of my people. The achievements of a few are no answer — in fact, this is being used in reverse — to cover up the injustices to our millions. The millions of Negroes who are denied the right to vote are mountainous testimony.

Unemployment's a constant spectre. Thirty-one percent of the heads of Negro families in America earn less than \$500 per year. An additional 44 percent earn between \$500 and \$1000 annually. 75 percent of my people earn less than one-third of what is necessary to support a family of four.

We are the last hired and the first fired.

Seven-tenths of our farm people are landless, with cotton planted right up to their very doorstep. The overwhelming mass live in houses where the sky, the earth and the trees may be seen without going outside.

Five thousand Negroes have been

lynched. Not one lyncher has been brought to justice. Not one lyncher has been made to pay for this horrible crime.

Maceo Snipes, a World War II veteran, went to vote in Taylor County, Alabama. One hour later he was killed on the doorstep of his home, within sight of his wife and children. His murderers walked away saying, "We told you not to vote."

But the widow of Maceo Snipes told her children, "When you grow up, you'll vote too."

Ninety Negroes have been lynched since President Truman began occupying the White House with promises of civil rights. The most horrible of the blood-lettings took place in Greenville, South Carolina, where 28 men stood in an American courtroom and admitted killing Willie Earl. Several admitted to tying him up. Several others to pouring gasoline over his body. Still others to firing sixty shells into him from six feet away. Even others admitted setting matches to the gasoline, making a flaming pyre.

They were all freed by the jury. And the federal government never intervened. The reason is clear. Tom Clark was the Attorney-General then, the same Attorney-General who later prosecuted any number of liberal

thinkers and resorted to the worst kind of persecution and the most despicable use of our courts in indicting the 12 leaders of the Communist Party.

The Negro people know that they can expect no answer from American imperialism. American imperialism cannot relinquish its Jim-Crow terror while it pursues its Marshall Plans and Atlantic Pacts and its drive toward war.

But there is another side to this miserable picture. A hopeful side. It is the rising militancy of the Negro people's struggle for land, equality and freedom. In meetings that I have had throughout the country with tens of thousands, this rising militancy has shown itself under new leadership, a leadership made up of Negro trade unionists, veterans, working women and youth, ministers of our churches, fraternal leaders and others. This rising militancy has emerged as the core of unity with many groups, with the Jewish people, with trade unions and the foreign-born.

On my southern tour for Henry Wallace, I recall our stops in Memphis, Tennessee, where the fighting organization of the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers joined hands with my people to guarantee that progressive thought and action could find a channel for

expression.

In Winston-Salem, North Carolina, I saw the tobacco workers. I saw progressives and liberals like Larkin Marshall in Georgia, Mrs. Andrew Simkins of South Carolina and Velma Hopkins — all fighters who are leading a valiant struggle for liberation.

It was during Peekskill that this unity was most sharply set forward. There, in Peekskill, trade unionists, Jewish people, foreign-born, Negro and white, stood side by side, fighting off the fascist attack of gangs led by Dewey and Dulles, the real source of force and violence.

I see this rising fighting temper of the Negro people as one of the important reasons for the granting of bail for the “eleven,” for the defeat of the Ober Bill in Maryland. Yes, it even forces Supreme Court Justice Jackson to proclaim the trial of Eugene Dennis as a “political” trial.

I have heard some honest and sincere people say to me, “Yes, Paul, we agree with you on everything you say about Jim Crow and persecution. We’re with you one hundred percent on these things. But what has Russia ever done for us Negroes?” And in answering this question I feel that I go beyond my own personal feelings and put my finger

on the very crux of what the Soviet Union means to me — a Negro and an American. For the answer is very simple and very clear: “Russia,” I say, “the Soviet Union’s very existence, its example before the world of abolishing all discrimination based on colour or nationality, its fight in every arena of world conflict for genuine democracy and for peace, this has given us Negroes the chance of achieving our complete liberation within our own time, within this generation.”

For where, indeed, would the Negro people’s struggle for freedom be today, if world imperialism had not been critically wounded and its forces weakened throughout the world? Where would the fight to vote in the South be today if this new balance of power in the world did not exist?

And I know that the growing unity of these great sections of the American people with the Negro people, the growing power of their struggle to save America from fascism, the very principle of solidarity in the teeth of the enemy owes its endurance and its force in the last analysis to that sum-total of factors which have transformed the world, that sum-total in which the example and might of the Soviet Union is decisive.

To every Negro mother who has her sons

to comfort her, to every young Negro girl who looks forward to marriage, to every Negro youth who enters upon the threshold of this struggle with confidence, I say: "Where would your son be, where would your sweetheart be, where would YOU be, but for Stalingrad?" For in speaking of Stalingrad, it was Roosevelt who in a letter to Stalin spoke of how civilization had been saved by the battle of Stalingrad. And it was the Soviet people and the children who said, "Carry back my love to the Negro people, to the American people for we want peace and honest co-operation."

No one need be or can allow himself to be afraid of declaring himself for real friendship with the Soviet Union Republics and the people's democracies. Today the real patriots of every nation are exactly those who work for friendship with these great nations.

Must we go back over the last three decades to document this fact? Has not the history of every country shown that it was precisely those who sowed hatred against the Soviet Union who proved to be the real traitors to their country? Was it not those who advocated and worked for friendship with the Soviet Union who proved to be genuine patriots?

To those who dare to question my patriotism, who have the unmitigated insolence to question my love for the true America and my right to be an American — to question me, whose fathers and forefathers fertilized the very soil of this country with their toil and with their bodies, to such people I answer that those and only those who work for a policy of friendship with the Soviet Union are genuine American patriots. And all others who move toward a war that would destroy civilization, whether consciously or unconsciously, are betraying the interests of this country and the American people.

Finally, my friends, I want to say that I believe the great majority of the American people will come to realize their identity of interests with the people of the Soviet Union and the growing people's democracies. In this era of change, normal trade relations and peaceful co-operation can be the only answer.

I am and always will be an anti-fascist and a fighter for the freedom and dignity of all men. We anti-fascists — the true lovers of American democracy — have a tremendous responsibility. We are not a small band — we are millions who believe in peace and friendship. If we mobilize with courage, the forces

of world fascism can and will be defeated —
in Europe, in Africa and in the United States.

Because of this, I am, and always will be,
a firm and true friend of the Soviet Union
and the beloved Soviet people.

Thoughts on Winning the Stalin Prize

January 1953

Many friends have asked me how it feels to have received one of the International Stalin Prizes “for strengthening peace among peoples.” Usually, I say — as most prize winners do — “It’s a great honour.” But of course, this award deserves more than just passing acknowledgement.

Through the years I have received my share of recognition for efforts in the fields of sports, the arts, the struggle for full citizenship for the Negro people, labour’s rights and the fight for peace. No single award, however, involved so many people or such grave issues as this one.

The prize is truly an international award. The committee of judges includes the Soviet academician, D.V. Skobeltsyn, president; vice-presidents Kuo Mo-djo of China and Louis Aragon of France; and the following members: Martin Anderson Nexø, the greatest modern Danish humanist; John Bernal of England; Pablo Neruda of Chile, one of the world’s greatest poets; Jan Demborsky of Poland; Michael Sadovnyany of Romania; and A.A. Fadyeev, a leading Soviet novelist.

And the prize winners include outstanding figures from many lands. It is a matter of pride to share the award with such distinguished leaders as Yves Farge of France; Sayfuddin Kichloo, spokesman for the All-Indian Congress of Peace; Eliza Branco, a leader of the Federation of Brazilian Women; Johannes Becher, one of the foremost writers of the German Democratic Republic; Rev. James Endicott, fearless Canadian minister and fighter for peace; and Ilya Ehrenberg, the leading Soviet novelist and journalist.

Most important, it must be clear that I cannot accept this award in a personal way. In the words of an editorial written by A.A. Fadyeev in *Pravda*: "The names of the laureates of the International Stalin Prizes are again witnesses to the fact that the movement for peace is continuously growing, broadening and strengthening. In the ranks of the active fighters against the threat of war, new millions of people of every race and nationality are taking their place, people of the most widely differing political and religious convictions... The awards to Eliza Branco and Paul Robeson reflect the important historical fact that broader and broader sections of the masses of the Western Hemisphere are rising

to struggle for freedom and independence, for peace and progress; peoples that endure the full weight of the attempts of imperialist reaction to strangle the movement of the masses against a new pillaging war, being prepared by American billionaires and millionaires.”

I accept the award, therefore, in the name and on behalf of these new millions who are moving into the organized fight for peace in our hemisphere and especially in the United States.

One of the most decisive steps in the development of the peace movement in our country was taken in connection with the Peking and Vienna Congresses of Peace.

The American Peace movement reached out its hands across the borders to join with the millions of peace fighters in the world peace movement. Gradually it has become crystal clear that the mighty strength of the world movement representing peoples of all lands is strength for us here. As Americans, preserving the best of our traditions, we have the right — nay the duty — to fight for participation in the forward march of humanity.

We must join with the tens of millions all over the world who see in peace our most sacred responsibility. Once we are joined to-

gether in the fight for peace we will have to talk to each other and tell the truth about each other. How else can peace be won?

I have always insisted — and will insist, even more in the future on my right to tell the truth as I know it about the Soviet peoples: of their deep desires and hopes for peace, of their peaceful pursuits of reconstruction from the ravages of war, as in historic Stalingrad; and to tell of the heroic efforts of the friendly peoples in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Albania, Romania, Bulgaria, great, new China and north Korea — to explain, to answer the endless falsehoods of the warmongering press with clarity and courage.

In this framework we can make clear what co-existence means. It means living in peace and friendship with another kind of society — a fully integrated society where the people control their destinies, where poverty and illiteracy have been eliminated and where new kinds of human beings develop in the framework of a new level of social living.

The telling of these truths is an important part of our work in building a strong and broad peace movement in the United States.

Like any other people, like fathers, mothers, sons and daughters in every land, when

the issue of peace or war has been put squarely to the American people, they have registered for peace. Whatever the confusions, however great the hysteria, millions voted for the Stockholm petition, millions more wanted to. At every step the vast majority have expressed horror at the idea of an aggressive war.

In fact, because of this deep desire for peace, the ruling class leaders of this land, from 1945 on, stepped up the hysteria and propaganda to drive into American minds the false notion that danger threatened them from the East. This propaganda began before the blood of precious human beings stopped flowing in the mighty struggle against fascism.

I, myself, was in Europe in 1945, singing to the troops. And already one heard rumblings of the necessity of America's preparing for war against the Soviet Union, our gallant ally. And at home in the United States we found continued and increased persecution, first of leaders of the Communist Party, and then of all honest anti-fascists.

But the deep desire for peace remained with the American people. Wallace was hailed by vast throngs when he resigned from Truman's cabinet in protest against the war-

mongering of the then Secretary of State James Byrnes, now the Negro-hating governor of South Carolina. Seven to eight million peace lovers put Wallace on the ballot in almost all of the 48 states in 1948. The cry for peace forced Truman to take over (demagogically, of course) the Progressive Party platform. In addition, he hinted he would send Vinson, one of his trusted lieutenants, to Moscow, to talk peace.

We know how Truman betrayed the American people in their hopes for peace, how he betrayed the Negro people in their thirst for equal rights, how he tore up the Bill of Rights and subjected the whole American people to a reign of FBI terrorization.

The Korean war has always been an unpopular war among the American people. We remember the unforgivable trickery in the use of the United Nations to further the purposes of “American century” imperialists in that land — quite comparable to the taking of Texas from Mexico, the rape of Cuba, the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Hawaii. At one point American peace sentiment helped to stop Truman from pursuing the use of the atom bomb in Korea and helped force the recall of MacArthur.

Yet in 1952 the American people again al-

lowed themselves to be taken in — this time by Eisenhower. He, too, promised in the campaign to do all he could to end the Korean slaughter. The vote shows that millions of American believed him. But already he has betrayed their trust and moves as fast as possible toward an extension of the war. There are real threats of attempting to support France on a major scale in Indochina. All this comes as no surprise if one looks at those who guide him — Dulles, one of the architects of the whole Far Eastern policy; Dewey, the man so feared in 1948, and certainly unchanged, and the whole array of American big business at its worst.

All these factors become increasingly clear to great sections of the American people and certainly present a tremendous challenge to the peace forces in this land. If we move swiftly, correctly, courageously, a mighty united front of the people can be built for peace. The latent but growing sentiment can be harnessed, organized.

I am especially confident that the Negro people can be won for the fight for peace. Having voted mainly for Stevenson, they have little to expect from Eisenhower, especially an Eisenhower partly dependent upon the Dixiecrat South — sworn enemies of the

Negro people. We know that war would mean an end to our struggle for civil rights, FEPC, the right to vote, an anti-lynching law, abolition of segregation.

And today the Negro people watch Africa and Asia and closely follow the liberation struggles of the rising peoples in these lands. We watch the United Nations and see the USA join with the western imperialist nations to stifle the liberation struggles. We cannot help but see that it is Vyshinsky and the spokesman of the Eastern European people's democracies who defend and vote for the interests of the African and Asian peoples.

I know that if the peace movement takes its message boldly to the Negro people a powerful force can be secured in pursuit of the greatest goal of all mankind. And the same is true of labour and the great democratic sections of our population.

Yes, peace can and must be won, to save the world from the terrible destruction of World War III. The prize which I have just received will spur me on to greater efforts than ever before to serve the cause of peace and to aid in building a triumphant peace movement in the United States.

To You Beloved Comrade

April 1953

There is no richer store of human experience than the folk tales, folk poems and songs of a people. In many, the heroes are always fully recognizable humans — only larger and more embracing in dimension. So it is with the Russian, Chinese and the African folklore.

In 1937, a highly expectant audience of Moscow citizens — workers, artists, youth, and farmers from surrounding towns — crowded the Bolshoi Theatre. They awaited a performance by the Uzbek National Theatre, headed by the highly gifted Tamara Khanum. The orchestra was a large one with instruments ancient and modern. How exciting would be the blending of the music of the rich culture of Moussorgsky, Tchaikovsky, Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Khrennikov and Gliere — with that of the beautiful music of the Uzbeks, stemming from an old and proud civilization?

Suddenly everyone stood — began to applaud — to cheer — and to smile. The children waved.

In a box to the right — smiling and ap-

plauding the audience — as well as the artists on the stage — stood the great Stalin.

I remember the tears began to quietly flow and I too smiled and waved. Here was clearly a man who seemed to embrace all. So kindly — I can never forget that warm feeling of kindness and also a feeling of sureness. Here was one who was wise and good — the world and especially the socialist world was fortunate indeed to have his daily guidance. I lifted high my son Paul to wave to this world leader, and his leader. For Paul Jr. had entered school in Moscow, in the land of the Soviets.

The wonderful performance began, unfolding new delights at every turn — ensemble and individual, vocal and orchestral, classic and folk-dancing of amazing originality. Could it be possible that a few years before in 1900 — in 1915 — these people had been semi-serfs — their cultural expression forbidden, their rich heritage almost lost under Tsarist oppression's heel?

So here one witnessed in the field of the arts — a culture national in form, socialist in content. Here was a people quite comparable to some of the tribal folk of Asia — quite comparable to the proud Yoruba or Basuto of West and East Africa, but now their lives

flowering anew within the socialist way of life twenty years matured under the guidance of Lenin and Stalin. And in this whole area of development of national minorities — of their relation to the Great Russians — Stalin had played and was playing a most decisive role.

I was later to travel — to see with my own eyes what could happen to so-called backward peoples. In the West (in England, in Belgium, France, Portugal, Holland) — the Africans, the Indians (East and West), many of the Asian peoples were considered so backward that centuries, perhaps, would have to pass before these so-called ‘colonials’ could become a part of modern society.

But in the Soviet Union, Yakuts, Nenetses, Kirgiz and Tadzhiks — had respect and were helped to advance with unbelievable rapidity in this socialist land. No empty promises, such as coloured folk continuously hear in the United States, but deeds. For example, the transforming of the desert in Uzbekistan into blooming acres of cotton. And an old friend of mine, Mr. Golden, trained under Carver at Tuskegee, played a prominent role in cotton production. In 1949, I saw his daughter, now grown and in the university — a proud Soviet citizen.

Today in Korea — in Southeast Asia — in Latin America and the West Indies, in the Middle East — in Africa, one sees tens of millions of long oppressed colonial peoples surging toward freedom. What courage — what sacrifice — what determination never to rest until victory!

And arrayed against them, the combined powers of the so-called Free West, headed by the greedy, profit-hungry, war-minded industrialists and financial barons of our America. The illusion of an “American Century” blinds them for the immediate present to the clear fact that civilization has passed them by — that we now live in a people’s century — that the star shines brightly in the East of Europe and of the world. Colonial peoples today look to the Soviet Socialist Republics. They see how under the great Stalin millions like themselves have found a new life. They see that aided and guided by the example of the Soviet Union, led by their Mao Tse-tung, a new China adds its mighty power to the true and expanding socialist way of life. They see formerly semi-colonial Eastern European nations building new people’s democracies, based upon the people’s power with the people shaping their own destinies. So much of this progress stems from the mag-

nificent leadership, theoretical and practical, given by their friend Joseph Stalin.

They have sung — sing now and will sing his praise — in song and story. Slava - slava - slava - Stalin, Glory to Stalin. Forever will his name be honoured and beloved in all lands.

In all spheres of modern life the influence of Stalin reaches wide and deep. From his last simply written but vastly discerning and comprehensive document, back through the years, his contributions to the science of our world society remain invaluable. One reverently speaks of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin — the shapers of humanity's richest present and future.

Yes, through his deep humanity, by his wise understanding, he leaves us a rich and monumental heritage. Most importantly — he has charted the direction of our present and future struggles. He has pointed the way to peace — to friendly co-existence — to the exchange of mutual scientific and cultural contributions — to the end of war and destruction. How consistently, how patiently, he laboured for peace and ever increasing abundance, with what deep kindness and wisdom. He leaves tens of millions all over the earth bowed in heart-aching grief.

But, as he well knew, the struggle continues. So, inspired by his noble example, let us lift our heads slowly but proudly high and march forward in the fight for peace — for a rich and rewarding life for all.

In the inspired words of Lewis Allan, our progressive lyricist—

*To you Beloved Comrade, we make this
solemn vow*

*The fight will go on — the fight will still
go on.*

*Sleep well, Beloved Comrade, our work
will just begin.*

*The fight will go on — till we win — until
we win.*

Testimony of Paul Robeson before the House Committee on Un-American Activities

June 12, 1956

THE CHAIRMAN:¹ The Committee will be in order. This morning the Committee resumes its series of hearings on the vital issue of the use of American passports as travel documents in furtherance of the objectives of the Communist conspiracy...

Mr. ARENS:² Now, during the course of the process in which you were applying for this passport, in July of 1954, were you requested to submit a non-Communist affidavit?

Mr. ROBESON: We had a long discussion — with my counsel, who is in the room, Mr. Boudin³ — with the State Department, about just such an affidavit and I was very precise not only in the application but with the State Department, headed by Mr. Hen-

¹ Rep. Francis Eugene Walter (D-PA), Chairman the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1955-1965.

² Richard Arens, Director of Staff for the House Un-American Activities Committee.

³ Leonard B. Boudin, Paul Robeson's non-speaking counsel.

derson and Mr. McLeod, that under no conditions would I think of signing any such affidavit, that it is a complete contradiction of the rights of American citizens.

Mr. ARENS: Did you comply with the requests?

Mr. ROBESON: I certainly did not and I will not.

Mr. ARENS: Are you now a member of the Communist Party?

Mr. ROBESON: Oh please, please, please.

Mr. SCHERER:¹ Please answer, will you, Mr. Robeson?

Mr. ROBESON: What is the Communist Party? What do you mean by that?

Mr. SCHERER: I ask that you direct the witness to answer the question.

Mr. ROBESON: What do you mean by the Communist Party? As far as I know it is a legal party like the Republican Party and the Democratic Party. Do you mean a party of people who have sacrificed for my people, and for all Americans and workers, that they can live in dignity? Do you mean that party?

Mr. ARENS: Are you now a member of the Communist Party?

¹ Rep. Gordon H. Scherer (R-OH), member of the House Un-American Activities Committee.

Mr. ROBESON: Would you like to come to the ballot box when I vote and take out the ballot and see?

Mr. ARENS: Mr. Chairman, I respectfully suggest that the witness be ordered and directed to answer that question.

THE CHAIRMAN: You are directed to answer the question.

(The witness consulted with his counsel.)

Mr. ROBESON: I stand upon the Fifth Amendment of the American Constitution.

Mr. ARENS: Do you mean you invoke the Fifth Amendment?

Mr. ROBESON: I invoke the Fifth Amendment.

Mr. ARENS: Do you honestly apprehend that if you told this Committee truthfully—

Mr. ROBESON: I have no desire to consider anything. I invoke the Fifth Amendment, and it is none of your business what I would like to do, and I invoke the Fifth Amendment. And forget it.

THE CHAIRMAN: You are directed to answer that question.

MR. ROBESON: I invoke the Fifth Amendment, and so I am answering it, am I not?

Mr. ARENS: I respectfully suggest the witness be ordered and directed to answer the

question as to whether or not he honestly apprehends, that if he gave us a truthful answer to this last principal question, he would be supplying information which might be used against him in a criminal proceeding.

(The witness consulted with his counsel.)

THE CHAIRMAN: You are directed to answer that question, Mr. Robeson.

Mr. ROBESON: Gentlemen, in the first place, wherever I have been in the world, Scandinavia, England and many places, the first to die in the struggle against fascism were the Communists and I laid many wreaths upon graves of Communists. It is not criminal, and the Fifth Amendment has nothing to do with criminality. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Warren, has been very clear on that in many speeches, that the Fifth Amendment does not have anything to do with the inference of criminality. I invoke the Fifth Amendment.

Mr. ARENS: Have you ever been known under the name of "John Thomas"?

Mr. ROBESON: Oh, please, does somebody here want — are you suggesting — do you want me to be put up for perjury some place? "John Thomas"! My name is Paul Robeson, and anything I have to say, or stand for, I have said in public all over the world, and that is why I am here today.

Mr. SCHERER: I ask that you direct the witness to answer the question. He is making a speech.

Mr. FRIEDMAN:¹ Excuse me, Mr. Arens, may we have the photographers take their pictures, and then desist, because it is rather nerve-racking for them to be there.

THE CHAIRMAN: They will take the pictures.

Mr. ROBESON: I am used to it and I have been in moving pictures. Do you want me to pose for it good? Do you want me to smile? I cannot smile when I am talking to him.

Mr. ARENS: I put it to you as a fact, and ask you to affirm or deny the fact, that your Communist Party name was "John Thomas."

Mr. ROBESON: I invoke the Fifth Amendment. This is really ridiculous.

Mr. ARENS: Now, tell this Committee whether or not you know Nathan Gregory Silvermaster.

Mr. SCHERER: Mr. Chairman, this is not a laughing matter.

Mr. ROBESON: It is a laughing matter to me, this is really complete nonsense.

¹ Milton H. Friedman, Paul Robeson's speaking counsel.

Mr. ARENS: Have you ever known Nathan Gregory Silvermaster?

(The witness consulted with his counsel.)

Mr. ROBESON: I invoke the Fifth Amendment.

Mr. ARENS: Do you honestly apprehend that if you told whether you know Nathan Gregory Silvermaster you would be supplying information that could be used against you in a criminal proceeding?

Mr. ROBESON: I have not the slightest idea what you are talking about. I invoke the Fifth—

Mr. ARENS: I suggest, Mr. Chairman, that the witness be directed to answer that question.

THE CHAIRMAN: You are directed to answer the question.

Mr. ROBESON: I invoke the Fifth.

Mr. SCHERER: The witness talks very loud when he makes a speech, but when he invokes the Fifth Amendment I cannot hear him.

Mr. ROBESON: I invoked the Fifth Amendment very loudly. You know I am an actor, and I have medals for diction.

....

Mr. ROBESON: Oh, gentlemen, I thought I was here about some passports.

Mr. ARENS: We will get into that in just

a few moments.

Mr. ROBESON: This is complete nonsense.

....

THE CHAIRMAN: This is legal. This is not only legal but usual. By a unanimous vote, this Committee has been instructed to perform this very distasteful task.

Mr. ROBESON: To whom am I talking?

THE CHAIRMAN: You are speaking to the Chairman of this Committee.

Mr. ROBESON: Mr. Walter?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Mr. ROBESON: The Pennsylvania Walter?

THE CHAIRMAN: That is right.

Mr. ROBESON: Representative of the steelworkers?

THE CHAIRMAN: That is right.

Mr. ROBESON: Of the coal-mining workers and not United States Steel, by any chance? A great patriot.

THE CHAIRMAN: That is right.

Mr. ROBESON: You are the author of all of the bills that are going to keep all kinds of decent people out of the country.

THE CHAIRMAN: No, only your kind.

Mr. ROBESON: Coloured people like myself, from the West Indies and all kinds. And just the Teutonic Anglo-Saxon stock

that you would let come in.

THE CHAIRMAN: We are trying to make it easier to get rid of your kind, too.

Mr. ROBESON: You do not want any coloured people to come in?

THE CHAIRMAN: Proceed...

Mr. ROBESON: Could I say that the reason that I am here today, you know, from the mouth of the State Department itself, is: I should not be allowed to travel because I have struggled for years for the independence of the colonial peoples of Africa. For many years I have so laboured and I can say modestly that my name is very much honoured all over Africa, in my struggles for their independence. That is the kind of independence like Sukarno got in Indonesia. Unless we are double-talking, then these efforts in the interest of Africa would be in the same context. The other reason that I am here today, again from the State Department and from the court record of the court of appeals, is that when I am abroad I speak out against the injustices against the Negro people of this land. I sent a message to the Bandung Conference and so forth. That is why I am here. This is the basis, and I am not being tried for whether I am a Communist, I am being tried for fighting for the rights of my people, who are still second-class citizens in this United

States of America. My mother was born in your state, Mr. Walter, and my mother was a Quaker, and my ancestors in the time of Washington baked bread for George Washington's troops when they crossed the Delaware, and my own father was a slave. I stand here struggling for the rights of my people to be full citizens in this country. And they are not. They are not in Mississippi. And they are not in Montgomery, Alabama. And they are not in Washington. They are nowhere, and that is why I am here today. You want to shut up every Negro who has the courage to stand up and fight for the rights of his people, for the rights of workers, and I have been on many a picket line for the steelworkers too. And that is why I am here today...

Mr. ARENS: Did you make a trip to Europe in 1949 and to the Soviet Union?

Mr. ROBESON: Yes, I made a trip. To England. And I sang.

Mr. ARENS: Where did you go?

Mr. ROBESON: I went first to England, where I was with the Philadelphia Orchestra, one of two American groups which was invited to England. I did a long concert tour in England and Denmark and Sweden, and I also sang for the Soviet people, one of the finest musical audiences in the world. Will you read what the Porgy and Bess people said?

They never heard such applause in their lives. One of the most musical peoples in the world, and the great composers and great musicians, very cultured people, and Tolstoy, and—

THE CHAIRMAN: We know all of that.

Mr. ROBESON: They have helped our culture and we can learn a lot.

Mr. ARENS: Did you go to Paris on that trip?

Mr. ROBESON: I went to Paris.

Mr. ARENS: And while you were in Paris, did you tell an audience there that the American Negro would never go to war against the Soviet government?

Mr. ROBESON: May I say that is slightly out of context? May I explain to you what I did say? I remember the speech very well, and the night before, in London, and do not take the newspaper, take me: I made the speech, gentlemen, Mr. So-and-So. It happened that the night before, in London, before I went to Paris... and will you please listen?

Mr. ARENS: We are listening.

Mr. ROBESON: Two thousand students from various parts of the colonial world, students who since then have become very important in their governments, in places like Indonesia and India, and in many parts of

Africa, two thousand students asked me and Mr. [Dr. Y.M.] Dadoo, a leader of the Indian people in South Africa, when we addressed this conference, and remember I was speaking to a peace conference, they asked me and Mr. Dadoo to say there that they were struggling for peace, that they did not want war against anybody. Two thousand students who came from populations that would range to six or seven hundred million people.

Mr. KEARNEY:¹ Do you know anybody who wants war?

Mr. ROBESON: They asked me to say in their name that they did not want war. That is what I said. No part of my speech made in Paris says fifteen million American Negroes would do anything. I said it was my feeling that the American people would struggle for peace, and that has since been underscored by the President of these United States. Now, in passing, I said—

Mr. KEARNEY: Do you know of any people who want war?

Mr. ROBESON: Listen to me. I said it was unthinkable to me that any people would take up arms, in the name of an Eastland, to go against anybody. Gentlemen,

¹ Rep. Bernard W. Kearney (R-NY), member of the House Un-American Activities Committee.

I still say that. This United States Government should go down to Mississippi and protect my people. That is what should happen.

THE CHAIRMAN: Did you say what was attributed to you?

Mr. ROBESON: I did not say it in that context.

Mr. ARENS: I lay before you a document containing an article, "I Am Looking for Full Freedom," by Paul Robeson, in a publication called the *Worker*, dated July 3, 1949.

"At the Paris Conference I said it was unthinkable that the Negro people of America or elsewhere in the world could be drawn into war with the Soviet Union."

Mr. ROBESON: Is that saying the Negro people would do anything? I said it is unthinkable. I did not say that there [in Paris]: I said that in the *Worker*.

Mr. ARENS: "I repeat it with hundred-fold emphasis: they will not."

Did you say that?

Mr. ROBESON: I did not say that in Paris, I said that in America. And, gentlemen, they have not yet done so, and it is quite clear that no Americans, no people in the world probably, are going to war with the Soviet Union. So I was rather prophetic, was I not?

Mr. ARENS: On that trip to Europe, did you go to Stockholm?

Mr. ROBESON: I certainly did, and I understand that some people in the American Embassy tried to break up my concert. They were not successful.

Mr. ARENS: While you were in Stockholm, did you make a little speech?

Mr. ROBESON: I made all kinds of speeches, yes.

Mr. ARENS: Let me read you a quotation.

Mr. ROBESON: Let me listen.

Mr. ARENS: Do so, please.

Mr. ROBESON: I am a lawyer.

Mr. KEARNEY: It would be a revelation if you would listen to counsel.

Mr. ROBESON: In good company, I usually listen, but you know people wander around in such fancy places. Would you please let me read my statement at some point?

THE CHAIRMAN: We will consider your statement.

Mr. ARENS: "I do not hesitate one second to state clearly and unmistakably: I belong to the American resistance movement which fights against American imperialism, just as the resistance movement fought against Hitler."

Mr. ROBESON: Just like Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman were underground railroaders, and fighting for our freedom, you bet your life.

THE CHAIRMAN: I am going to have to insist that you listen to these questions.

MR. ROBESON: I am listening.

Mr. ARENS: "If the American warmongers fancy that they could win America's millions of Negroes for a war against those countries (i.e., the Soviet Union and the people's democracies) then they ought to understand that this will never be the case. Why should the Negroes ever fight against the only nations of the world where racial discrimination is prohibited, and where the people can live freely? Never! I can assure you, they will never fight against either the Soviet Union or the people's democracies."

Did you make that statement?

Mr. ROBESON: I do not remember that. But what is perfectly clear today is that nine hundred million other coloured people have told you that they will not. Four hundred million in India, and millions everywhere, have told you, precisely, that the coloured people are not going to die for anybody: they are going to die for their independence. We are dealing not with fifteen million coloured people, we are dealing with hundreds of mil-

lions.

Mr. KEARNEY: The witness has answered the question and he does not have to make a speech...

Mr. ROBESON: In Russia I felt for the first time like a full human being. No colour prejudice like in Mississippi, no colour prejudice like in Washington. It was the first time I felt like a human being. Where I did not feel the pressure of colour as I feel [it] in this Committee today.

Mr. SCHERER: Why do you not stay in Russia?

Mr. ROBESON: Because my father was a slave, and my people died to build this country, and I am going to stay here, and have a part of it just like you. And no fascist-minded people will drive me from it. Is that clear? I am for peace with the Soviet Union, and I am for peace with China, and I am not for peace or friendship with the fascist Franco, and I am not for peace with fascist nazi Germans. I am for peace with decent people.

Mr. SCHERER: You are here because you are promoting the Communist cause.

Mr. ROBESON: I am here because I am opposing the neo-fascist cause which I see arising in these committees. You are like the Alien [and] Sedition Act, and Jefferson could

be sitting here, and Frederick Douglass could be sitting here, and Eugene Debs could be here.

....

THE CHAIRMAN: Now, what prejudice are you talking about? You were graduated from Rutgers and you were graduated from the University of Pennsylvania. I remember seeing you play football at Lehigh.

Mr. ROBESON: We beat Lehigh.

THE CHAIRMAN: And we had a lot of trouble with you.

Mr. ROBESON: That is right. DeWysocki was playing in my team.

THE CHAIRMAN: There was no prejudice against you. Why did you not send your son to Rutgers?

Mr. ROBESON: Just a moment. This is something that I challenge very deeply, and very sincerely: that the success of a few Negroes, including myself or Jackie Robinson can make up — and here is a study from Columbia University — for seven hundred dollars a year for thousands of Negro families in the South. My father was a slave, and I have cousins who are sharecroppers, and I do not see my success in terms of myself. That is the reason my own success has not meant what it should mean: I have sacrificed literally hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars

for what I believe in.

Mr. ARENS: While you were in Moscow, did you make a speech lauding Stalin?

Mr. ROBESON: I do not know.

Mr. ARENS: Did you say, in effect, that Stalin was a great man, and Stalin had done much for the Russian people, for all of the nations of the world, for all working people of the earth? Did you say something to that effect about Stalin when you were in Moscow?

Mr. ROBESON: I cannot remember.

Mr. ARENS: Do you have a recollection of praising Stalin?

Mr. ROBESON: I said a lot about Soviet people, fighting for the peoples of the earth.

Mr. ARENS: Did you praise Stalin?

Mr. ROBESON: I do not remember.

Mr. ARENS: Have you recently changed your mind about Stalin?

Mr. ROBESON: Whatever has happened to Stalin, gentlemen, is a question for the Soviet Union, and I would not argue with a representative of the people who, in building America, wasted sixty to a hundred million lives of my people, black people drawn from Africa on the plantations. You are responsible, and your forebears, for sixty million to one hundred million black people dying in the slave ships and on the plantations, and

don't ask me about anybody, please.

Mr. ARENS: I am glad you called our attention to that slave problem. While you were in Soviet Russia, did you ask them there to show you the slave labour camps?

THE CHAIRMAN: You have been so greatly interested in slaves, I should think that you would want to see that.

Mr. ROBESON: The slaves I see are still in a kind of semi-serfdom. I am interested in the place I am, and in the country that can do something about it. As far as I know, about the slave camps, they were fascist prisoners who had murdered millions of the Jewish people, and who would have wiped out millions of the Negro people, could they have gotten a hold of them. That is all I know about that.

Mr. ARENS: Tell us whether or not you have changed your opinion in the recent past about Stalin.

Mr. ROBESON: I have told you, mister, that I would not discuss anything with the people who have murdered sixty million of my people, and I will not discuss Stalin with you.

Mr. ARENS: You would not, of course, discuss with us the slave labour camps in Soviet Russia.

Mr. ROBESON: I will discuss Stalin

when I may be among the Russian people some day, singing for them, I will discuss it there. It is their problem.

....

Mr. ARENS: Now I would invite your attention, if you please, to the *Daily Worker* of June 29, 1949, with reference to a get-together with you and Ben Davis. Do you know Ben Davis?

Mr. ROBESON: One of my dearest friends, one of the finest Americans you can imagine, born of a fine family, who went to Amherst and was a great man.

THE CHAIRMAN: The answer is yes?

Mr. ROBESON: Nothing could make me prouder than to know him.

THE CHAIRMAN: That answers the question.

Mr. ARENS: Did I understand you to laud his patriotism?

Mr. ROBESON: I say that he is as patriotic an American as there can be, and you gentlemen belong with the Alien and Sedition Acts, and you are the non-patriots, and you are the un-Americans, and you ought to be ashamed of yourselves.

THE CHAIRMAN: Just a minute, the hearing is now adjourned.

Mr. ROBESON: I should think it would be.

THE CHAIRMAN: I have endured all of this that I can.

Mr. ROBESON: Can I read my statement?

THE CHAIRMAN: No, you cannot read it. The meeting is adjourned.

Mr. ROBESON: I think it should be, and you should adjourn this forever, that is what I would say...



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