

X. THE FINAL VERDICT WILL BE WRITTEN BY THE PEOPLE

I WANT TO apologize for coming here unprepared to make a speech. I have been busy the last few days getting ready to go away to camp. My number came up and so I am having something like the experience of millions of Americans today. Practically every home in America is waiting to see when the number is coming up that takes away one or more members of the family. All America is going through this experience. It is true that the other boys are being told they are going for one year, but just the other day one of the higher ranking generals of the United States Army told a gathering of conscripts in one of the camps: "Forget about that nonsense of one year; you are in for the duration." And that is the decision of the representatives of the American ruling class down in Washington. They have taken us in "for the duration."

I am over the draft age, so they had to find a special reason for drafting me and our good friend and comrade William Wiener, and they found special reasons for drafting quite a few more. But these reasons are of the same validity and the same character of which every fascist dictatorship has proceeded to silence the opposition.

They say that I am going because I committed a crime. It is true that it was many years ago, and it did not injure anybody. I only used some names to which I was not legally entitled in order to get certain rights of travel to which I was entitled—a technical question, no harm to anybody involved. But by fine-spun legal sophistry which has been endorsed by the Supreme Court, this whole technical

business, which even Herbert Hoover had discarded, was dug out of the pigeonholes by the Roosevelt Administration as a convenient pretext for giving the signal for a general all-around offensive against the rights and liberties and well being and peace of the whole American people. They say I used a fraudulent passport. It happens that the passport was in my own name and merely secured me entry into the United States to which I was completely entitled with or without a passport. Nobody was deceived, nobody injured.

But there are some false passports which do great injury. I was just recalling a while ago that there is an old song that used to be very popular in America from that Gilbert and Sullivan opera—I think it is *The Mikado*—where the Lord High Executioner sings about making the punishment fit the crime. If my kind of crime rates four years in prison, I wonder what should be the punishment for a man who got a false passport by deceiving the whole American people? I refer to Franklin D. Roosevelt, who got his passport for a third term by promising to keep America out of this imperialist war, and then violating that promise.

If my passport offense rates four years, what is the punishment that fits the crime of Franklin D. Roosevelt against the American people? I think the punishment that will inevitably be inflicted for that crime—the supreme punishment—will be written by history, which will write down that name as the man who betrayed the peace and prosperity of the American people.

They used to say in the old days—how long ago it seems—when the Administration was bucking the economic royalists in America, that Mr. Roosevelt was a traitor to his class. Well, now the prodigal has returned. He has gone back to his class. The fatted calf was killed in honor of his return. Some millions of American boys are going to be thrown into the sacrifice to make it a real celebration, and today he truly represents his class.

But it is a class which has long outlived its role in history. It has nothing more to contribute except war, conscription, dictatorship, destruction of the rights and livelihood of the people, catastrophe,

famine, pestilence and chaos, which are spreading rapidly over the face of the earth and drawing ever closer to our own shores.

THE FUTURE BELONGS TO THE PEOPLE

We are not overwhelmed by this prospect, however. The forces of war and reaction seem to be overwhelmingly strong and we who stand out against it seem to be quite a small minority group. But we are not dismayed by this. Strange as it may seem, to those who see only the surface of events, it is not we of this small minority who lie awake at nights. I sleep quite soundly myself. I have the impression that most Communists sleep quite soundly at night. And yet I hear that there is a great epidemic of insomnia among the bourgeoisie.

Down in Washington bed clothes are being torn by fat bodies tossing around. Perhaps you think the conscience of these gentlemen is troubling them. Here and there, there is a vestige of conscience playing its part. However, most of them got rid of their conscience long ago.

The thing that keeps them awake, the thing that denies them rest is that they have been trying to look into the future. They gaze into their crystal ball and, try as they will, they cannot figure out where the world is going to. They cannot see any future except the intensification of starvation, war, pestilence, destruction, chaos. They hire their scribblers, their Norman Thomases to soothe the people with stories of the beautiful world that is going to come after the war, but they bought that stuff so they don't believe it themselves.

They can see no future and they know that the day of reckoning is coming. They know that the people will not forever remain patient; they know that for all their great powers they are completely helpless in the face of the sweep of events. They are even beginning to realize that the more energetically they carry out their policies, the more surely they come to collapse. They are beginning to realize that their trouble is some fatal internal contradictions. They can no more escape from them than a man can lift himself

by his boot-straps. And they realize that the people are beginning to understand that the only way out of this bloody mess that imperialism is creating in the world is the way out of capitalism, the way to a new, socialist world.

The majority of the American people do not understand socialism; they do not as yet understand that war and capitalism are inseparable. We still have to teach them that, but we have powerful aids in this teaching today. The government in Washington is helping us to teach the American people this way out. The whole capitalist press is helping us to teach the people this great lesson today. In spite of the fact that the newspapers are filled from beginning to end with lies designed to hide this great truth, it emerges clearer and clearer even in the pages of the capitalist press.

We face the future with great confidence. The future always presents itself as a small minority. It is only with the development of a great historic crisis that new majorities come into being and new courses are taken by history. Not every minority becomes a majority and it is not because we are a minority that we are the representatives of the future. I could name you plenty of minorities that have very little chance in the future. But we have very solid reasons for believing that we are the minority that represents the future.

It is first of all because we are that minority which is working, fighting, organizing to achieve what the overwhelming majority of the American people want—to get out and stay out of the imperialist war. And also another solid reason is our calm confidence in the future, that we represent that party and that program which is already realizing that future in the socialist one-sixth of the earth, the Soviet Union.

But here in the midst of a world where the great powers, the great aggregation of the political leadership of the human race, the great aggregation of wealth, the great institutions of science and learning, the churches, the movies, the newspapers, the radio, the armies, the navies, and the air fleets are all mobilized for destruction, killing, bombing, machine-gunning, torpedoing, blowing the world to bits, throwing whole continents into pestilence and death—all they can

say to their own people is: fight on to victory. And victory means beginning the cycle all over again. In the midst of that, here is a great country, one-sixth of the world, which, despite the most elaborate conspiracy and provocation that history has ever seen, has managed to keep itself out of this bloody chaos, has already managed to rescue 23,000,000 of its most immediate neighbors.

THE SOVIET UNION

While the destruction goes on in the rest of the world the Soviet Union is building its new economy at a rate never witnessed before in history, and it keeps up this rate in the midst of a world at war. At the recent Conference of the Communist Party, they began to elaborate a new stage in the development of that new society; they began to draw up a fifteen-year plan. They are now finishing the Third Five-Year Plan. That of the next fifteen years is going to be a plan made in one piece, and in those fifteen years, the Soviet Union is going to overtake and surpass, economically as well as in every other respect, every other country in the world, including the United States.

Of course, we have heard of plans and plans and plans, and to speak of a plan in most cases means to speak of some empty promise, like Roosevelt's fraudulent promise to keep America out of this war. But through three Five-Year Plans in the Soviet Union we have learned to expect the plans not only to be fulfilled; the plans are overfulfilled.

We are not yet in a position to do for our country what the Communists have been able to do for the great territories of the Soviet Union. The same sort of program for America would bring much quicker and greater results because in this country we already have the material pre-conditions for socialism, the material conditions that they can create only over long years and with painful effort, there. Here, these conditions were created by capitalism before it grew old and senile and died on its feet and began to stink.

Once the American people take control of their own destiny, take

control of their own country, take control of their own economy and eliminate these war-making parasites who strangle our country economically, who corrupt it culturally and politically, and who now threaten to destroy it in the imperialist war—once we get rid of these parasites, America can over night be transformed into a garden of prosperity and security and peace.

We know that the American people will not forever and not for long submit to this kind of system and this kind of leadership. Our own ruling class can launch us into this war but they cannot end it. The American people can end it; the American people will end it, and the American people will find the way to this all the quicker because the American people have produced already a Communist Party, a party with roots among the masses, a party that can never be separated from the American masses, a party that will always be at work amongst the American masses, a party that will organize and lead the American people to peace and to socialism.

Speech delivered at Mecca Temple, New York, February 24, 1941. This was one of four protest meetings held in New York on February 24, at which Earl Browder spoke. Similar "Free Browder" rallies were held throughout the United States.