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NOTE AND DOCUMENTS

Paul Robeson in Canada: A Border Story

Laurel Sefton MacDowell

IN 1952, THE GREAT AMERICAN ACTOR, Paul Robeson, was invited to sing at the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (Mine Mill) convention in Vancouver. The State Department intervened and refused to allow Robeson to leave the United States even for Canada, where a passport was not needed, and its officials stopped him at the border in Washington state. Union delegates were outraged, and marched to the American Embassy in Vancouver to protest the incident. To register their indignation in a satisfying way, the union hooked up a device so that by long distance telephone Robeson was able to sing and speak to the delegates for seventeen minutes the next day from the Marine Cooks and Stewards' Hall in Seattle. He sang the old union song about the Wobbly martyr Joe Hill and told the convention that his government was keeping him confined under "a sort of domestic house arrest."¹

The convention approved Mine Mill leader Harvey Murphy's suggestion, that a spring concert at the "Peace Arch" be held to condemn the actions of the State Department. That May, with the FBI and the RCMP present, the union presented the first of four Robeson concerts at the Peace Arch on the Canada/US border in Blaine, Washington. In light of the recent crisis resulting from the terrorist bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York, followed by tighter security measures at airports, surrounding immigration policies, and along the Canada-US border, it is

¹Martin Bauml Duberman, *Paul Robeson: A Biography* (New York 1989), 399.

timely to recall a little known incident in the history of Canadian-American relations that involved the entertainer Paul Robeson.

Robeson was an extremely talented Black American. Before World War II and the Cold War, Robeson was an exceptional athlete in several sports including football, a first class student, and the valedictorian at Rutgers University. He had a law degree from Columbia, though he never practiced, was widely read, and was a linguist who communicated well in several languages. Blessed with a wonderful deep voice, a large stature, and a natural presence, he developed into a great actor, best known for his portrayal of *Othello* in London and New York productions. He also became a powerful concert-performer of spirituals, musicals, folk songs, and songs of protest. His friends and colleagues included creative Black and White artists; some were part of the Harlem Renaissance movement in 1920s New York and others were performers in North America and Europe.² To a degree Robeson was recognized as a fine actor and singer in his own country and in Canada he also had devotees, but his greatest successes were in Europe.

The son of an ex-slave who became a minister, Robeson grew up in the South. The state of race relations in the US, which was largely segregated prior to the American civil rights movement in the 1960s, resulted in discrimination of the bluntest kind, and inflicted repeated indignities on Robeson personally on a daily basis. Early in life, he grew staunch in the belief that he could achieve his personal goals by developing his talent, maintaining his appealing personality, and trusting in the basic goodness of people. In that way he hoped to diminish stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination against Black Americans. He tried to lose himself in international "folk" music, but as he gained experience in life and fame but not fortune, he became politicized. He supported W.E.B. DuBois, an early civil rights leader, and anti-colonial movements that were beginning to stir. In the Great Depression in the 1930s, Robeson was pro-union during Roosevelt's "New Deal," and supported the CIO industrial unions that were more responsive to black workers' needs than the older craft unions.

Over the years, Robeson increasingly lost faith in the American dream; its tarnished reality for him was hard to bear. Robeson's music became part of his political activism, which made the American security interests suspicious of him, and as early as 1941 the FBI began to receive agents' reports about his activities. Robeson became sympathetic to the Soviet Union, because its leaders articulated an ideal of a non-racist society, which allowed a person to be valued without prejudice. We now know that this rhetoric was a delusion, but the Soviet Union treated Robeson well whenever he visited or performed there. He was sympathetic to Communism, though he was neither a Communist Party member nor a revolutionary. But, a famous American praising the Soviet Union, particularly during the Cold War, was anathema to the American government, and he was victimized.

²Jervis Anderson, *This Was Harlem, 1900-1950* (New York 1982), 114-6.

By 1945 Robeson, now a famous actor, was known as a political radical, an advocate of peace and racial equality, and a promoter of social justice. His pro-union position became less acceptable after the war when an employer backlash against the labour movement was supported in Congress with the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act (1947), which limited unions' organizational abilities and banned Communists from union leadership positions. The radical minority in the labour movements of Canada and the US was purged in the late 1940s, as Communist-led organizations were seen as a threat to "free" trade unions. That minority remained loyal to Robeson and maintained contact with him, even as he came under FBI surveillance, his phone calls were tapped, and his rooms bugged.

The atmosphere in the US changed between Roosevelt's New Deal in the 1930s and the Cold War era of the late 1940s. America entered World War II on the side of the Allies in June 1941, after Japan attacked Pearl Harbour. As a result of Germany's assault on the Soviet Union, the Allied leadership consisted of three unlikely political colleagues brought together by the crisis — Winston Churchill, Joseph Stalin, and Franklin Roosevelt, with Canada's Mackenzie King available for an occasional photo session, as at the Québec Conference.

This alliance began to unravel in 1945, as events ushered in the Cold War. Churchill's speech on 5 March 1946 in Fulton, Missouri, described the change as an "iron curtain" descending to divide the world into supporters of the US or supporters of the Soviet Union, of Democracy versus Communism. Thereafter a series of events escalated animosities: the expansion of Soviet influence in Eastern Europe, which involved a coup in Czechoslovakia, established a "sphere of influence"; the American president's promulgation of the "Truman Doctrine" in 1947, calling for aid for Greece and Turkey to prevent those nations from going "communist" signaled opposition; the division of Germany and Berlin, and the Marshall Plan that fed Europe and helped former enemies rebuild their economies, to maintain non-Communist regimes in those states, indicated the new postwar realignment; the Communist revolution in China in 1949; and the partition of Korea in the 1950s after a fresh outbreak of hostilities, demonstrated clearly that the tensions of the Cold War were new global political realities.

These events affected everyone, including Robeson, who supported the Progressive Party in 1948, and increasingly spoke out against the treatment of Black Americans in the US. In the Cold War years, America perceived Communism as a worldwide threat, and increased security measures. The Smith Act (1940) was pressed into service, and twelve Communist Party leaders were indicted in 1948. Robeson publicly supported accused persons in the name of free speech. The American government passed the McCarran Act (1950), which allowed it to go after "subversives" by suppressing dissent, establishing concentration camps to detain suspects in a national emergency. Progressive party leader Henry Wallace condemned these policy approaches as efforts "to frighten all the American people into conformity and silence" and insisted that "our present laws against treason and

sabotage are adequate for a democracy, but they aren't adequate to establish a smoothly functioning police state."³

The Communist threat was seen increasingly to be internal as well as external, an idea that Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy exploited politically. His actions and those of the House Committee of Un-American Activities (HUAC) became progressively more emotional, extremely undemocratic, and they ruined many individuals' lives. For every Alger Hiss, whom historians, after years of controversy, have determined was indeed a Communist and a spy, there were many people like Robeson, who was sympathetic to Communism and progressive social and racial policies, but sought reform in the US, not revolution. Robeson opposed America's tighter security measures, remained true to his convictions, and continued to perform.

Robeson visited Canada numerous times, and on each occasion he espoused through his music an international philosophy that supported freedom struggles by all peoples, including Black Americans, for whom he increasingly served as a spokesperson. In June 1942, Robeson was a guest artist in a "Salute to Canada's Army" held in Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto. (Document 1) The concert came at a time when Canada, the United States, and the Soviet Union were allies in the war against Nazism, and Communists supported Mackenzie King's government and an "all-out" war effort. The program reflected this political environment; it listed "patrons" of various political persuasions, was produced by *Canadian Tribune*, whose editor and future Communist (Labour Progressive Party — LPP) MPP, A.A. MacLeod, opened the concert. Robeson was the main performer but UAW Director George Burt spoke briefly about "Labor's Salute to Canada's Army." The program, with Karsh's photo of Lieutenant-General Andrew McNaughton on the cover, contained an Eaton's ad that promoted records of Paul Robeson's voice, a Karsh photo of Robeson, and a description of him as a singer of "songs of the people" who was known to millions around the world as "a fighter for justice and the brotherhood of man." It had ads from both labour and non-labour groups, and the concert's proceeds went to the Canadian Red Cross Society. In wartime, temporary unity amongst unlikely partners, was in the interest of winning the war, and Robeson, as a man of peace, was willing to participate.

In 1945, Robeson was more politically partisan when he appeared in Toronto at a LPP (the Communist Party of Canada's new name) gathering where he spoke and sang "Joe Hill." During the 1945 UAW strike at Ford in Windsor, the union sponsored a concert in December, where Robeson played the Capitol theatre. The packed performance was to help provide a Christmas dinner for Ford workers, and brought in \$1,500 in ticket sales, out of which Robeson and his pianist, Lawrence Brown, only charged their expenses. Director George Burt later thanked the entertainer profusely, commenting: "Those who were fortunate enough to hear you,

³Duberman, *Robeson*, 328.

some for the first time, are still talking about the concert. The Ford workers were particularly pleased because they know of no other artist who would give his services so unselfishly in this cause."⁴

In 1947, just before a concert in the US, the HUAC cited Robeson, along with a thousand others, as a person supporting the Communist Party and its front organizations. The city council in Peoria, Illinois, responded by opposing his concert-booking there and denying him a place to sing. A Supreme Court Justice ruled that Albany, New York could not bar Robeson from singing, as it sought to do, because of his alleged sympathies with Communism, but stipulated that Robeson confine himself to his musical program. One month later, the police commissioners in Toronto followed this American example and permitted Robeson to sing on the condition that he not speak at his concert.⁵ Despite such restrictions, Robeson returned to Toronto and performed at Massey Hall on 4 and 6 December 1948, with the Jewish Folk Choir. (Document 2) The program consisted of the choir performing alone, then Robeson performing solo, and finally together they sang music ranging from classical to folk.

In 1950, amidst the fall of Hiss and the rise of McCarthy, President Truman dispatched ground troops to Korea. Americans rallied to the president, but Robeson in June spoke to a Civil Rights Congress rally at Madison Square Garden, protested American involvement in Korea, and urged Black Americans to focus their fight for freedom at home. In the new climate the government decided to muzzle him. It voided his passport, which denied him the right to travel abroad, and gave no specific reasons for the action except that travel by Robeson was "contrary to the best interests of the United States." Robeson took legal action to try to regain his passport, but in 1951 a Federal court upheld the State Department, even as Robeson participated in the peace movement, helped organize legal appeal cases relating to harassment against Black Americans, and attended a celebration of the release from prison of three of the "Hollywood Ten."⁶ Thus Mine Mill's organization of a Peace Arch concert was one of the first organized efforts to support Robeson in his fight to

⁴George Burt to UAW locals in the United States, 4 December 1945; J.P. McCool, financial secretary, to Catharine Duncan, women's auxiliary, 14 December 1945; Harry Rowe, International Rep UAW, application for exemption from payment of excise tax, Folder 7, Box 136; George Burt to Paul Robeson, 9 January 1946, Folder 8, Box 136, United Automobile Workers, Region 7 Collection, Wayne State University Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan.

⁵Duberman, *Robeson*, 319-20.

⁶The most famous group of blacklisted individuals, known as the Hollywood Ten, consisted of one director, Edward Dmytryk, and nine screenwriters: Alvah Bessie, Herbert J. Biberman, Lester Cole, Ring Lardner Jr., John Howard Lawson, Albert Maltz, Samuel Ornitz, Adrian Scott, and Dalton Trumbo. Over 300 other Hollywood writers, actors, and directors were blacklisted after HUAC called them to testify. For further information see Edward Dmytryk, *Odd Man Out: A Memoir of the Hollywood Ten* (Carbondale, IL 1996).

regain his passport, and to protest the State Department's actions as an infringement of civil liberties.

On the American side, associates with the publication *Freedom*, helped by arranging the Peace Arch concert as part of a two-month tour in the US. They had no money, and it was unclear in the American political climate whether even "progressives" would risk hostility by attending a Robeson concert. The tour attracted small audiences and was hindered by official harassment, such as last minute cancellations of places to perform.

The most successful part of the tour was the Peace Arch concert itself, which 40,000 people attended to listen to the famous actor/singer, and to demonstrate by their presence the importance of freedom of speech in democratic countries. "So great was the automobile traffic," a union press release announced, that "the border had to be closed for two hours, something unprecedented in the history of Blaine."⁷ The success was "largely because of the response from the Canadian side of the border." Thanks to the efforts of Mine Mill, "twenty-five to thirty thousand Canadians turned up on the Vancouver side for the concert; no more than five thousand mobilized on the American side."⁸ As the partial transcript of the concert (Document 3), which was made into a record, indicates, the day began with the singing of the American and Canadian national anthems. Harvey Murphy welcomed the huge audience on behalf of his union, who came to hear "the outstanding American world citizen," and to demonstrate the fraternity of the two North American peoples who had a "common mission ... to march forward with the other peoples of this world for peace and security for all of us." Robeson himself, from a temporary platform on the back of a truck just inside the American edge of the Peace Arch area, then expressed how moved he was by "my beloved friends in Canada" who were supporting him in his wish to sing freely. "What is being done at this Peace Arch today," he believed, "will ring out — is already ringing out — around the world." In his remarks to the audience he stressed "the likenesses — the common human spirit that we see in the various peoples' songs," and particularly in the songs of freedom and peace from many countries. His international theme was an important aspect of the inclusive left movements around the world before the Cold War divisions of the 1950s and resurgent nationalism in the 1960s, forgotten for several decades before "globalization" protests reminded participants of the continuity between themselves and earlier "radicals."⁹

⁷Press Release, 24 July 1955, File 9, Box 18, International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers Union Papers (hereafter MMP), University of British Columbia Archives, Vancouver (hereafter UBCA).

⁸The American Press estimated *total* attendance at 5,000, while the Canadian Press put the figure 7 times higher. Duberman, *Robeson*, 400.

⁹Anthony Carew, Michel Dreyfus, Geert Van Goethem, Rebecca Gumbrell-McCormick, and Marcel van der Linden, *The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions* (Bern, 2000), 18.

In March 1953, the union decided to sponsor a second Peace Arch concert in August, which despite inclement weather, 25,000 attended. At this mostly “White” event, Robeson drew a smaller audience, from all Mine Mill locals and the general public and, as before, “almost all of that from the Canadian side of the border.”¹⁰ The union was left with a \$525 debt after the concert, and while its Kimberley local protested that the concerts should pay for themselves, the bulk of Mine Mill demonstrated its support for the event by sending in donations to pay the small deficit.¹¹

The Mine Mill union had always supported cultural activities for its members, but its support of Robeson was also political because he was sympathetic to the Soviet Union and critical of American policy. Publicly the union presented the concert as a blow for civil liberties — Robeson’s and the general public’s — and it protested the effect of the American government’s policy of limiting what Canadians could hear, speak, and sing, apparently with the acquiescence of the Canadian government. But the union had experienced its own problems as a result of Cold War anti-communism. In the US, it was evicted from the CIO as a Communist-dominated union; many of its leaders were Communist Party members expelled from office as a result of the Taft-Hartley Act. One effect of such anti-communism was that as American Mine Mill leaders crossed the border to Canada, tensions increased between the union and the Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL). In 1949 the CCL expelled Mine Mill as part of an effort to rid itself of its oppositional radical minority.¹² In Canada, there was no Taft-Hartley Act, but like their American counterparts, Canadian trade unionists were no longer tolerant of the labour movement’s left-wing. Thus Mine Mill’s rhetoric about civil liberties, while genuine, also reflected its interest in broader civil liberties for its leaders, so that they could work politically without constraints, and create a better climate for their views. As one union pamphlet read, “It is our answer to the McCarthyites who seek to dictate to Canadians their particular brand of thought control.”¹³ They used the rhetoric of freedom and democracy in the same way Communists had during the Communist Party free speech campaigns in the late 1920s in Toronto against police repression, in the anti-internment campaigns on behalf of the “anti-fascists” during World War II, and in a pro-civil liberties campaign on behalf of Soviet spies in Canada, who were investigated as a result of Igor Gouzenko’s revelations after his defection from the Soviet Union in Ottawa in 1946.¹⁴ This consistent position by Communist

¹⁰Duberman, *Robeson*, 411.

¹¹Wm Longridge to secretary, Local 480 Trail, B.C., 22 March 1954; Kimberley Local 627 to Longridge, 8 April 1954, File 8, Box 18, MMP, UBCA.

¹²Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist Party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour, 1935-1956* (Toronto 1973), Chapter 6.

¹³Canadian Mine Mill Council to R. Haddow, District 10, IFLWU, 22 June, 1954, File 8, Box 18, MMP, UBCA.

¹⁴For more information on these issues see Laurel Sefton MacDowell, *Renegade Lawyer: The Life of J.L. Cohen* (Toronto 2001), chapters. 2, 7, and 8.

activists was self-interested, but it inadvertently helped protect the civil liberties of others as well. The larger audience attracted to Robeson's concerts wanted to see him, undoubtedly, but many were also concerned about guarding civil liberties in a period when policy-makers determinedly escalated security measures.

John Gray, Robeson's manager, was anxious to prepare for another concert in 1954, as the American government still held Robeson's passport. A global campaign of support for its restoration, and thus Robeson's freedom of movement, involved major personalities from Britain. They launched a "Let Robeson Sing" campaign that grew so quickly that, by 1957, it was an embarrassment to the American government. Peace groups in France, Uruguay, Austria, Israel, South Africa, Iraq, and Finland sent protests to the State Department against Robeson's continued "domestic arrest."¹⁵ A planning committee organized a cultural salute to Robeson with an evening of song and drama in New York, including South Africans, West African students, the Workers Alliance of Guatemala, British writers such as Doris Lessing, and French trade unionists.¹⁶ Robeson's many supporters argued that peoples outside the US wanted to hear the famous Black American singer. Around the world, thousands came to Robeson's defense; he had international appeal and interests, reflected in an entertainment program that drew upon music from different parts of the globe.

The third Peace Arch concert on 1 August 1954 was again presented as a fight for civil liberties, for the right of free movement for Robeson, trade unionists, and progressives across the border, and an effort to win back Robeson's passport. The crowd of about 30,000 bolstered Robeson's flagging morale, and provided him with a little income. The union sold a souvenir program to defray costs; it contained ads from supporters such as the United Electrical Workers, Mine Mill locals, ladies auxiliaries across Canada, and the Canadian Textile Council. It also sold a Robeson record *I Came To Sing* that it made from his 1952 Peace Arch concert, and first released in 1953. The concert made a profit of less than ten dollars, but "kept us out of the red," and by May 1955, of the 2,000 copies of Robeson's record, Mine Mill had only 300 left, one of which was sent to a fan in Australia.¹⁷

The State Department remained adamant that it would not restore the passport until Robeson filed an affidavit stating his relationship to the Communist Party, which he refused to do. In 1954 and 1955, the climate began to shift slightly. In 1954, McCarthy was censured, the Supreme Court expressed new concern for the rights of political dissenters, and *Brown v. the Board of Education* struck down segregation in American public schools. Robeson hoped to be able to accept several

¹⁵Duberman, *Robeson*, 424.

¹⁶Mine Mill Council minutes, 20 May 1954, File 8, Box 18, MMP, UBCA.

¹⁷Canadian Mine Mill Council to R. Haddow, District 10 IFLWU, 22 June 1954, File 8, Box 18; E.L. Walker to John Gray, 27 April 1955, File 9, Box 18; E.L. Walker to M.B. Macmillan, 13 May 1955, File 9, Box 18, MMP, UBCA; *Canadian Tribune*, 23 March 1953; 4 May 1954.

appealing job offers in Europe, and again applied for a passport. He was allowed to travel to Canada, shortly before he sang at the fourth Peace Arch concert in August 1955, and his accompanist Lloyd Brown wrote to the union that, "Paul is happy to have his first Canadian concert since the lifting of the ban under the auspices of your union."¹⁸ Later in the month, the passport was again refused. Robeson's intense disappointment, as well as the toll taken by agents' surveillance for a decade, adversely affected his health.

For the last Peace Arch concert in 1955, the union's press statement stressed that the concerts were attended annually by thousands from both sides of the border, and were dedicated to world peace and international brotherhood. Once again, crowds gathered in a park and a farmer's field in the space between the borders, and the union was well prepared to deal with them. As the organizers told Robeson's manager, "we are having the buses pick up along to the route to the Arch this year, and the pick-up points are stated on the tickets." The union advertised the concert in bus stations, in the local press, and placed ads in Seattle. It sold a program again, with Robeson's picture on the cover, with ads from labour and other groups welcoming Robeson to Canada. As Harvey Murphy wrote, "the concert this year was a real success" and "Paul never sang better in his life."¹⁹ To the audience, Robeson expressed his optimism that the political climate was improving, with Americans increasingly rejecting McCarthyism. Barriers to free speech still stood, but they were weakening, and as Robeson said, "soon they must fall, and you and I together — people everywhere — shall sing the songs of peace and brotherhood, the songs of human triumph." And indeed the program included "Freiheit," the song of the Thaelmann Brigade during the Spanish Civil War, and "Zog Nit Keynmol" a Yiddish song of the Warsaw ghetto. (Document 4) The union claimed that insofar as Robeson could travel to Canada, the Peace Arch concerts had "won him for Canada; we must still help to free him for the rest of the world!"²⁰

In February 1956, Robeson left the US for the first time in six years to address the Mine Mill convention, "where he had been invited by his old friends" in Sudbury. Lloyd Brown assured his hosts that Paul had been delighted to accept the invitation, and that he was rested, had lost weight, and was fine.²¹ Robeson told the convention that his art was a weapon in his struggle for "my people's freedom and for the freedom of all people" and said he would be singing and slugging "for a long time." He thanked the union for its understanding, support, bravery, and friendship during many difficult years, which "have helped sustain my strength and courage." People all over the world were fighting for his right to travel and sing, "but I shall never forget this union, for you made possible these few days that I have had of true

¹⁸Lloyd Brown to Mine Mill Council, 11 August 1955, File 9, Box 18, MMP, UBCA.

¹⁹Harvey Murphy to Lloyd Brown, 15 August 1955, File 9, Box 18, MMP, UBCA.

²⁰Robeson's "Message," n.d., File 9, Box 18, MMP, UBCA.

²¹Lloyd Brown to Harvey Murphy, 13 December 1955, File 9, Box 18, MMP, UBCA.

freedom.”²² After Sudbury, he performed at a sold-out Toronto concert in Massey Hall, which began with a standing ovation and ended with a frailer Robeson saying his purpose in life was “to fight for my people that they shall walk this earth as free as any man.”²³ (Document 5) It was an eclectic showcase of Robeson’s unique talents, for he sang traditional, classical and folk music, and did readings from *Othello*, classic writers like Shelley, and contemporary poets and playwrights such as Langston Hughes.

Despite a slow recovery from an operation and a serious bout of depression, in 1956 Robeson appeared before HUAC, which had subpoenaed him. In his statement Robeson told the committee that reactionaries had denied him access to the lecture podium, the concert hall, the opera house, and the dramatic stage and had now haled him to appear before this Committee. As a spokesman for “large sections of Negro Americans,” and a person active for the independence of colonial peoples of Africa, he had spoken out against the oppression of Americans and “I will continue to speak out. My struggle for a passport is a struggle for freedom, — freedom to travel, freedom to earn a livelihood, freedom to speak, freedom to express myself artistically and culturally.” Many invitations from other countries, which did not fear what he said or sang, indicated that his travels did not harm America, but in fact won it friends especially for “‘the real America’ for the American Negro, our workers, our farmers, our artists.”²⁴ He irritated the Committee sufficiently, by refusing to discuss his politics and by defending the rights of Blacks in America, that it asked the House of Representatives to cite him for contempt, which it refused to do.

Meanwhile the Supreme Court refused to hear Robeson’s appeal concerning his passport, making him “the only living American against whom an order has been issued directing immigration authorities not to permit him to leave the continental confines of the United States.”²⁵ He was too ill to perform at the Peace Arch that year.

In 1958, on Robeson’s 60th birthday, his friend Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru of India, hailed his birthday celebration as a fitting tribute, “not only because Paul Robeson is one of the greatest artists of our generation, but also because he has represented and suffered for a cause which should be dear to all of us — the cause of human dignity.”²⁶ Finally in June, the Supreme Court ruled in another case that the Secretary of State had no right to deny a passport to any citizen because of political beliefs, and that the Passport Division could not demand that an applicant sign an affidavit concerning membership in the Communist Party. Robeson’s ordeal was over.

²²Paul Robeson’s speech to the Mine Mill convention, Sudbury, Feb. 1956, File 9, Box 18, MMP, UBCA.

²³Duberman, *Robeson*, 437.

²⁴*Vancouver Herald*, 19 July 1955, in File 9, Box 18, MMP, UBCA.

²⁵Duberman, *Robeson*, 445.

²⁶Duberman, *Robeson*, 461.

What is the meaning of this footnote in history? It involves several themes in the postwar period — anti-Communism in the US, political conflict between Communist and non-Communist unions, the Canadian government's support for its close ally in the Cold War, the US, and its implicit acceptance of American policy, as well as its more tempered response to Communism.²⁷ Canada did not have a McCarthy to agitate against Communists, and it had a stronger left wing on the political spectrum to articulate a practiced pro-civil liberties position. Communists consistently defended civil liberties for their own self-protection and self-interest, and the CCF did also, while at the same time repeatedly declaring its disagreement with Communist policies and tactics. Though Communists and Socialists fought each other within the labour movement and during elections, on civil liberties issues they worked together along with some liberals to support a more open and tolerant society, to increasingly deplore the actions of the American government, particularly the work of McCarthy and HUAC, against some of its progressive citizens.

In these days of heightened security, it is worth reflecting on Robeson's saga. Tighter Canada-America border security as well as the two countries' increasing closeness in policy terms and personal relations are apparent. But it is also clear that Canada and the US are not identical today or in the past, either in the way they approach security issues, or implement foreign policy debates or immigration policies. Though only a footnote in history, the Peace Arch concerts reveal features of the Canadian-American relationship that are illuminating. Today, as Canada and the United States discuss coordinated policies to protect themselves from terrorism, we again confront relations that involve the world's longest previously undefended border. Legislation that grants greater power to politicians, police, border guards, and customs officials, is proposed, debated, and passed, which places limits on individual civil liberties. Thus, the importance of remaining vigilant to avoid abuses of individual rights is again brought to the political forefront, and the need to protect our national distinctiveness is obvious.

The Peace Arch concerts each year attracted many more Canadians than Americans because although Canada was an ally of the US and opposed the Soviet Union during the Cold War, its less overt anti-Communism avoided the outspoken nastiness of McCarthyism, the intolerance of the HUAC, and the rigidity of the Smith and McCarran Acts, even though the RCMP collected records on Communists every bit as detailed and biased as those of the FBI. Like the Europeans who pressured the American government to restore Robeson's passport, Canadians also believed his civil liberties were unnecessarily infringed.

²⁷Reg Whitaker and Gary Marcuse, *Cold War Canada: The Making of a National Insecurity State, 1945-1957* (Toronto, 1996), frontispiece. While critical of the Canadian Cold War policies, the authors found "some evidence for Canadian moderation," but argue that the "smug Canadian self-image is exaggerated."

When Robeson's passport was restored after eight years of surveillance and harassment, his career and his health were ruined. The constraints imposed on Robeson were not enforced because he was violent, or a criminal, or a danger to the state, but because he was a critic, and his ideas antagonized the American government. As a person of integrity, he held to his views with determination and courage, and refused to conform. It was unacceptable to be pro-Communist and sympathetic to the Soviet Union during the Cold War, even though such persons were in a very small minority. It was equally invalid for a Black leader to be vocal in his opposition to racial discrimination and American segregation policies in the years before the 1960s civil rights movement. The broad constituency of protestors on both sides of the border that attended the Peace Arch concerts believed in an open border, racial tolerance, and in democracies that were strong enough to allow for political diversity and basic civil liberties, including the right to travel. They also were present to listen to what California music critics called "the greatest natural basso voice of the present generation," and a "great and gentle warrior" whose personal presence, whether he was excelling academically, in sports, as an actor, a political activist, or a leader of his people remained dignified, charismatic, and "singularly powerful."²⁸

After Paul Robeson's death in January 1976, some of his old Canadian friends and admirers, such as Harvey Murphy, formed a Paul Robeson Commemorative Committee. It was sponsored by many diverse groups and individuals, and on 25 April 1976 put on *A Tribute To Paul Robeson* at Harbord Collegiate in Toronto. (Document 6) One year later a second concert took place at Central Technical School. (Document 7) Both programs celebrated Robeson's life as a world citizen, a man of peace, a freedom fighter, an anti-racist, and a person who "immeasurably enriched" the lives of others all over the world. It was a tribute many of those who attended Robeson's concerts in and adjacent to Canada in the 1940s and 1950s would have understood well.

²⁸Duberman, *Robeson*, 455, and 550.

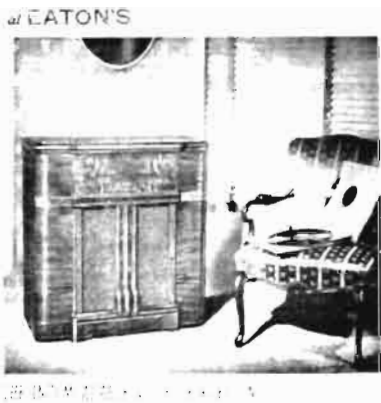
DOCUMENT 1



Salute to Canada's Army!

Maple-Leaf Gazette Merry Peering, June 20th, 1941

Maple-Leaf Gazette Merry Peering, June 20th, 1941



PAUL ROBESON

Advertisement for Paul Robeson, featuring a portrait and text.

T EATON CO

Yankee Soldiers in Africa - "A Dagger Pointed at the Heart of the Beast"



King of the Mountain - "The Mountain King"

Salute to Canada's Army!

PATRONS

His Worship Mayor Fred J. Conboy
 Sir William Mulock
 Mr. Justice P. H. Gordon
 Mr. John W. Buckley
 Colonel J. W. Langmuir, O.B.E.
 Very Reverend Peter Bryce, D.D.
 Sir Ernest MacMillan

Hon. Arthur W. Roebuck, M.P.
 Mr. A. Y. Jackson
 Mr. E. Macaulay Dillon, K.C.
 Mr. Drummond Wren
 Mr. Clarence S. Jackson
 Hon. Leopold Macaulay, K.C.

PROGRAMME

Queen's Own Rifles Band — Second Reserve Battalion
 Captain J. J. Buckle, Director.
 By kind permission of Lt.-Col. Baptist Johnston, Commanding Officer

GOD SAVE THE KING

1. MR. A. A. MacLEOD - - - - - Chairman's Remarks
 Editor, Canadian Tribune.
2. SELECTIONS BY THE CHOIR.
 Combining: The Lysenko Choir—conductor, Mr. Alexander O'Chiena; the Negro Choral Group—conductor, Mrs. Grace Price-Trotman; the Russian Volga Choir—conductor, Mr. Peter Ushkevitch; the Jewish Folk Choir—conductor, Mr. Emil Gartner, and the Lithuanian Choir—conductor, Mr. Alexander O'Chiena.
 Accompanist: Mrs. Fagel Freeman Gartner.
3. HIS WORSHIP MAYOR FRED J. CONBOY - - - - - Introducing Mr. Robeson
4. MR. PAUL ROBESON.
 Accompanist: Lawrence Brown.
 In keeping with his familiar practice, Mr. Robeson will, himself, announce his various songs.
5. LABOR SALUTES CANADA'S ARMY - - - - - Mr. George Burt
 Regional Director, United Automobile Workers of America.
6. CANADA'S ARMY SALUTES LABOR - Major-Gen'l C. F. Constantine, D.S.O.
 Officer Commanding Military District No. 2.
7. SELECTIONS BY THE CHOIR.
 Accompanist: Mrs. Fagel Freeman Gartner.
8. MR. PAUL ROBESON - - - - - The Armies of Freedom
9. MR. PAUL ROBESON.
 Accompanist: Lawrence Brown.
 As before, Mr. Robeson will announce his own songs.

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DOCUMENT 2

The Jewish Folk Choir

EMIL GARTNER—Conductor

with

PAUL ROBESON



SATURDAY and MONDAY EVENINGS

8:30 P.M.

DECEMBER 4 and 6, 1948



MASSEY HALL

TORONTO

JEWISH FOLK CHOIR

Emil Gartner, *Conductor*

and

PAUL ROBESON

PROGRAM

I

JEWISH FOLK CHOIR

- a) Palestinian Nights *Chajes-Low*
Soloist: Shirley Newman, soprano
- b) Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child *arr. Fisher*
- c) Ovnt Glok (Eastern European Folksong) *arr. Schaefer*
Soloists: Shirley Newman and Rose Belman, sopranos, Frank Palmer, baritone
- d) Nishka *Schaefer*

II

PAUL ROBESON

III

JEWISH FOLK CHOIR AND PAUL ROBESON

- Excerpts from "Boris Godounov" *Moussorgsky*
 - a) Coronation Scene
 - b) Farewell and Death of Boris

INTERMISSION

IV

JEWISH FOLK CHOIR AND PAUL ROBESON

- Kol Nidre *arr. Levandowsky*

V

JEWISH FOLK CHOIR

- a) Lidice [*In Memoriam*] *Alan Bush*
- b) Un Du Akerst (Eastern European Folksong) *arr. Schaefer*
- c) Shir Haemek *Lobri*

VI

JEWISH FOLK CHOIR AND PAUL ROBESON

- a) Vi Der Kaiser Lebt *arr. Gartner*
- b) Freiheit *Daniel-Gartner*
- c) Swing Low, Sweet Chariot *arr. Bartholomew*
- d) Bye And Bye *arr. Burleigh*
- e) Joshua Fit The Battle Of Jericho *arr. Brown*

Lawrence Brown at the piano for Paul Robeson
Fagel Gartner at the piano for the Jewish Folk Choir

6.22 TALAIAL EA LAL G.ATÁ BARI CÁL
ZÁLATA TLXII EA LAL G.ATÁ BARI GHIŁ LÁTOXÍ

- U) MUMIA MII ZÁZCO AII LILU.....ALACIA' TLXII
- L) EA. ACL CAI.....ALACIA' TLIL.
- O) OUIIC ZÁI' OUIA DÁLÁD.....ALACIA' ENLÁRÁDÁI
- E) ALILUÁ.....LXI.ÁZ.TÁLÁI
- N) UU LAL DÁDÁL ZÁCO.....ALACIA' TÁLÁI

N.L.MÁL GÁZCO CÁL XII GHIŁ LÁTOXÍ

9'

- F) M.L. UÁD ZÁCL.
- E) MII LI DÁDÁD.....M.L.ÁL
- M) Z.L.ÁÁ TL

N.L.MÁL GÁZCO CÁL

9'

CZ LLI ALACIA' ZÁMILÁDÁI.

N.L.MÁL GÁZCO CÁL XII GHIŁ LÁTOXÍ

9'

M. C. Á. L. L. Á. D

- C) L. ZÁDÁDÁDÁI MII OUIA AII CÁLÁI
 - M) L. DÁLÁDÁI DÁDÁ
- M.L.ÁRÁI AII "CÁLÁI TÁLÁI".....DÁDÁDÁI.

N.L.MÁL GÁZCO CÁL XII GHIŁ LÁTOXÍ

8'

GHIŁ LÁTOXÍ

6'

- L) U.ÁD M.L.ÁL
- GÁZCO GÁZDÁL' ENLÁI
- DÁDÁDÁI: M.L.Á. DÁDÁI MII LÁU DÁDÁI' DÁDÁDÁI
- O) M.L.Á. DÁDÁ M.L.ÁL
 - E) DÁDÁ GÁZ M.L. UU Á DÁDÁDÁI DÁL.....ALACIA' B.MÁL
 - N) OUI.Á.Á. M.L.Á.Á.....UU.Á.ÁI

N.L.MÁL GÁZCO CÁL

7'

G. L. Á. C. L. Á. D :

GHIŁ LÁTOXÍ

M I I

6.22 TALAIAL' L.L.Á.Á
N.L.MÁL GÁZCO CÁL



PALESTINIAN NIGHTS

Chajes-Low

How beautiful are the nights in Canaan; the silence is filled with music and fills my heart with song.

OVNT GLOK (Evening Bells) *Text: Edeshtat. Music: arr. Schaefer*

"O, Muse, call me no more with your sweet sounds, as I, your poet, can no longer write. Confined in my lonely prison cell, I hear for the last time those tolling evening bells. I am condemned to die, and soon my executioner will come. How rocky was my stormy road. Hunger, frost, anguish and slander was my fortune. Now I hear the evening bells, carrying my death in their sound. Yet how I yearn to live, to dream and sing and fight all oppression and slavery! But my day of work is at an end!"



NISHKA

Text: Kotler. Music: Schaefer

Guess who he is?—He is Nishka (Not A) Not a tailor, not a farmer, not a carpenter, not a bricklayer, he is not a . . . ! Yet he makes a very fine living. But wait, one thing which he is truly an expert at is . . . eating! And—he is constantly filled with joy and thankfulness that mother gave birth to him.



BORIS GODOUNOV

Text: after Pushkin. Music: Moussorgsky

Moussorgsky's interpretation of the artist's mission was, in his own words: "To show Life, wherever it is, Truth, however bitter; speaking out boldly, frankly, point-blank to men—that is my aim. The artistic presentment of beauty alone is sheer childishness, fit for babes and sucklings of art. To trace the finer characteristics of human nature and of the mass of mankind—that is the mission of the artist."

The story of the opera takes place in Moscow, at the end of the 16th century.

Boris, brother-in-law of Czar Feodor, aspires to succeed him as ruler of Russia. To do this, he murders the one rightful heir who stands in his way—the child Dmitri. The opera portrays how Boris, from the moment he is crowned Czar, is gradually being crushed by profound remorse; he sees the murdered child everywhere until, finally, his feelings of guilt and fear bring about his end. He embraces his son, and, praying for forgiveness, dies.

Moussorgsky's works, Boris Godounov in particular, are among the greatest in all musical history. For sheer dramatic power and profound realism, this operatic masterpiece has no equal.



KOL NIDRE (Traditional)

arr. Levandowsky

This, perhaps Jewry's most solemn prayer, is offered on Yom Kipur, the Day of Atonement. Dating back to the eleventh century, the prayer was traditionally recited thrice, each time with increasing force. Today, most cantors continue in the meaning of this tradition by chanting the prayer three times, each time one semitone higher. The noble and majestic melody of *Kol Nidre* has been traced as far back as the sixteenth century.



LIDICE

Text: Nancy Bush. Music: Alan Bush

Alan Bush is president of the British League of Composers. Nancy Bush, his wife, wrote the text.

*When the last marching step had gone,
And the outstretched hands, clenched in agony, were motionless,
Silence returned to Lidice.
Voiceless, the threads of smoke crept up from smould'ring wood and shattered stone
The charred beam falling to the ground alone disturbed the empty noon.
Men and women, friends and lovers,
Now had left the valley lonely,
And the despairing child's last cry
As he looked back, an echo, an echo only.
Here, ranged along this shallow pit
The men of Lidice once stood.
And here their last glimpse of the world.
Was this green curve of field and wood.
From the frail cavern of the skull
Their sightless eyes confront the sky*

(Please turn to Page Six)



*And stare undaunted from the dust —
Proud men who did not fear to die.
Man's priceless treasure here lies spilt,
But from this bitter ash of pain
An unquenched spirit stirs and springs,
Renewed to live and burn again.
Now silent Lidice lies still
And stirs not, yet its stone proclaim
To all the world a matchless and immortal fame.*



UN DU AKERST

arr. Schaefer

*And you plow and plant the seed,
And you clad the world you feed,
And you hammer, spin the yarn,
But what, my people, do you earn?
Who sets with food your tables bare?
Where is your festive dress to wear?
Nor where is your weapon bold?
Say, what joys are yours to hold?*



SHIR HAEMEK

Text: Eliez. Music: Lobri

Song of the Chalutzim on the fertile valleys of Israel:

*The earth is afire
The rainbow aflame! Light! Light!
The hand plows,
And the heart will reap.
The Emek with all its fields
Is drunk in jubilant toil!*

VI DER KAISER LEBT (How does the Czar live?)

from Ch. Kotylansky's Collection of Folk Songs

This folk song cleverly and satirically portrays the poor Jew's conception of the life of the rich and powerful. Since the Czar to him personifies the acme of power and wealth he wonders how the Czar lives. To the poor, the most luxurious drink was tea with lots of sugar, and the greatest delicacy was potatoes with butter (*bulbes*).

How does the Czar drink tea? Why! A cone of sugar is filled with hot tea, the tea is stirred in the cone and so served to the Czar. And how does the Czar eat bulbes? Why! A company of artillery men shoot the spuds from a cannon through a vat of butter directly into the Czar's mouth. And how does the Czar sleep? A room is filled with feathers, the Czar is put there to sleep, and three regiments of soldiers stand guard outside and shout: QUIET! QUIET! (SHA!).



FREIHEIT (Song of Freedom) *Text: Karl Ernst. Music: Peter Daniel*

Battle-Hymn of the International Brigade in Spain:

*Spanish heavens spread their brilliant starlight
High above our trenches in the plain;
From the distance, morning comes to greet us,
Calling us to battle once again.
Far off is our land,
Yet ready we stand!
We're fighting and winning for you,
Freiheit!*



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DOCUMENT 3

CONCERT AT THE PEACE ARCH

(first side) Water Boy 1st line

NARRATOR: "This is Sunday, May 18, 1952, at Peace Arch Park on the U.S.-Canadian border. Breaking all records for public gatherings in the Northwest, 40,000 men, women and children from British Columbia and the state of Washington are massed in this sunlit field to hear Paul Robeson. The vast throng has just finished singing 'Oh Canada' and the 'Star Spangled Banner', and now here is the chairman, Harvey Murphy, trade union leader..."

HARVEY MURPHY: "Ladies and gentlemen, trade unionists, brothers and sisters from the United States and from our own Canada, I welcome you here today on behalf of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers. (APPLAUSE)...We meet here today to welcome the outstanding American world citizen. (APPLAUSE)...I know that you came here to hear a singer, but you also came here to demonstrate the brotherhood and fraternity of the peoples of the United States and Canada---that we have a common mission in this world to march forward with the other peoples of this world for peace and security for all of us and (APPLAUSE) for our children...And we are happy that we were the means of bringing you together, but I know that Paul Robeson--that name--what that stands for is what every decent man and woman in the world stands for." (APPLAUSE)

PAUL ROBESON: "I want to thank you for being here today. I want to thank Harvey Murphy and the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers. I can't tell you how moved I am today. It seems that nothing can keep me from my beloved friends in Canada. (APPLAUSE). I stand here today under great stress because I dare--as you do, all of you--to fight for peace and a decent life for all men, women and children wherever they may be. And especially today I stand fighting for the rights of my people in this America in which I was born. (APPLAUSE). You have known me through the years. I am the same Paul--fighting a little harder because the times call for harder struggles. This historic occasion today probably means that I shall be able to sing again as I want to--to sing freely without being stopped here and there. What is being done at this Peace Arch today will ring out--is already ringing out--around the world. I thank you deeply...(APPLAUSE). I have with me at the piano my friend of many years, whom you know, Lawrence Brown. Mr. Brown joins me in one of his own arrangements: 'Every Time I Feel the Spirit.'" (APPLAUSE).

SONG: "Every Time I Feel the Spirit"

-----END OF FIRST SIDE-----

202 LABOUR/LE TRAVAIL

(second side)

SONG: "Over the Mountains"

(APPLAUSE)

SONG: "Old Man River"

(APPLAUSE, CHEERS)

-----END OF SECOND SIDE-----

(third side)

HARVEY MURPHY: "Now I have great pleasure in having this song which is so much connected with the hard rock miners' union. You all know it; you have heard it. It's a song of the struggle of the hard rock miners and a song that is dear to all the mine, mill and smelter workers: 'Joe Hill.'" (APPLAUSE)

SONG: "Joe Hill."

(APPLAUSE)

SONG: "Loc Lomond" (first chorus, 2nd verse, 2nd chorus)

-----END OF THIRD SIDE-----

(fourth side)

PAUL ROBESON: "This next song is one that comes from the very depth of the struggle of my people in America. One that might have been sung by my own father. A few nights ago I sang in Brooklyn to the General Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in which my father labored for many years as a minister, in which my brother is now the pastor of Mother Zion in New York. This church has a great history. Frederick Douglass printed his paper, 'The North Star', in the cellar of the Zion Church in Rochester, New York, Harriet Tubman, one of the great abolitionists and founder of the Underground Railroad by which many of my people came to freedom in Canada in those days--yes, Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth and my father must have sung this next song. "No more auction block for me, no more pint of salt for me--though many thousands are gone, freedom we must have."

SONG: "No More"

SONG: "Oh No John"

-----END OF FOURTH SIDE-----

(fifth side)

PAUL ROBESON: "I haven't got the time to sing all of your requests--I'll sing a couple of more in a moment--but I want to leave some feeling of what has influenced me so much. Travelling about the world, I have seen and experienced the oneness of mankind. Not the differences but the likenesses--the common human spirit that we see in the various peoples' songs. I cannot sing these songs today, but I will read just a few words from some of them, to leave some feeling of how I feel close, as we all should, to many peoples of the world. There is this song from the great Chinese people: it says, "Arise you who refuse to be bond slaves, stand up and fight for liberty. Arise, arise, march on, march on. (RECITES FROM CHILAI). You remember that, Chilai. That is what the Chinese sang when they got a few of those victories. (APPLAUSE). This is from another great people whose history--of Moses and Joshua and David--is very close to the Negro people. This comes from the same brave people who fought back in Warsaw, in that epic of the Warsaw Ghetto. (READS FROM THE YIDDISH) (APPLAUSE). And this comes from a great Soviet composer, calling for peace between all the peoples of the world--from Shostakovich who says that the 'Wind of peace, the breeze of peace, makes wave the banner of victory, the banner that's bathed in blood, but the road to peace dawns in our country and we stand on guard unbending. Now are our meadows in flower, spring we wait as ne'er before, rose each day our strength and power. Peace, Peace will conquer War.'" (RECITES IN RUSSIAN). "Peace will conquer war!" (APPLAUSE)

SONG: "L'Amour de Moi."

-----END OF FIFTH SIDE-----

(sixth side)

SONG: "Night"

(APPLAUSE)

SONG: "Curley Needed Baby"

-----END OF SIXTH SIDE-----

DOCUMENT 4

Souvenir Programme
PAUL ROBESON
Fourth Peace Arch Concert



July 24 -- 1955

A MESSAGE FROM PAUL ROBESON



It is indeed a real privilege for me to return this year for another concert at Peace Arch Park, and to meet once again the people of the Northwest — Canadians and Americans — whom I have come to know and admire.

I send my warmest greetings to the British Columbia District Union of the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers whose sponsorship of this annual event symbolizes their steadfast devotion to the cause of Labour and to the cause of humankind — Peace.

This year the skies are brighter everywhere, as the peoples' will for peace makes itself felt. We have reached a turning point, and the onrush of events — from Bandung to Geneva — is an invincible tide against the cold war and the threat of atomic holocaust.

Here in the United States we see many hopeful signs of a changing political climate, and democratic peoples of all lands rejoice to see that McCarthyism is being rebuffed increasingly by the American people. Yes, and in view of recent court decisions, and the granting of passports to others who were previously refused, I look forward to an early victory in my long struggle to win the right to cross over the border at which we gather — the right to travel to many lands, to join with audiences throughout the world in the exchange of national cultures.

Today the barriers still stand, but they are weakening and soon they will fall, and you and I together — people everywhere — shall sing the songs of peace and brotherhood, the songs of human triumph.

Dear friends, I clasp your hands. I love you all.

Paul Robeson

Greetings to

PAUL ROBESON

May he sing in Eastern Canada soon!

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Vice-Pres.: Jean Pare

Sec'y.-Treas.: George Harris

Org. Dir.: Ross Russell

Paul Robeson . . .

To introduce this great singer to any audience anywhere in the world is about as useless a procedure as bidding men to greet the sun. For to myriads of people everywhere he is as familiar a household word as that sun itself, himself a sun of hope and inspiration to the oppressed of all lands, races, and creeds.

We have honoured him annually at this Peace Arch since 1952, the year the American State Department refused to let him leave the U.S. to sing in Vancouver at a concert arranged by the B.C. District Union of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers. Some thirty thousand Canadians attended the Peace Arch Concert on May 18 of that year, and only slightly less have heard him every year since.

This year sees a slight revision of the State Department's policy. Mr. Robeson is to be allowed to visit Canada, but no other country. Thus these Peace Arch concerts have had their effect; the McCarthyites realize at last that Paul Robeson, in chains, can still sing for freedom, and his persecution lowers not his own prestige, but that of the country which tries to silence him.

Paul Robeson's boyhood environment, as the son of the minister of a church with an illustrious record in the story of the Underground Railway of slavery days, doubtless conditioned him for the fearless struggler for freedom of all the oppressed that he was later to become. In the basement of his father's church Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglas, great abolitionists, had written their pamphlets and edited their papers, and with others cared for the weak and wounded at this station of the Freedom Road to Canada.

At college the young Robeson was an honour student; he became class valedictorian at Rutgers, and in 1917 and 1918 was the choice for All-American end in football. Then came law at Columbia University.

It is possible that an incident at this period lost the United States another Clarence Darrow, but if so, the gain was enormously greater than the loss.

For while taking this law course, living next to the YMCA in Harlem, he was "dragged in," as he expressed it, to take a part in amateur theatricals. On the opening night Robert Edmond Jones and Kenneth MacGowen were in the audience.

"It seems they spotted me then for "Emperor Jones" that O'Neill was thinking of reviving," states Paul, "and it took plenty of persuasion to get me to consider doing the Emperor, but they broke me down, as you know."

And fortunate it was that they did persuade him, for it was while acting, singing a few lines instead of speaking them, that his magnificent singing voice was discovered.

When the Second World War ended, Paul Robeson was acclaimed as the greatest artist of the American concert stage and drama. He held honorary degrees from four great universities, had been awarded the Springarn Medal for outstanding achievement; Gold Medal for the best diction in the American theatre (1944) from the American Academy of Arts and Science; the Donaldson Award for best acting performance (1944); the Abraham Lincoln Medal for most notable and distinguished services in human relations (1943); and many other awards and recognitions. He also had an income from stage, screen, and his singing, which ran into the hundredsof thousands.

(Continued on Page Seven)

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Border Concert Program

I

SONG OF PEACE	Beethoven
MINE EYES HAVE SEEN THE GLORY	American Traditional
LULLABY	Schubert
THE ORPHAN	Moussorgsky
L'AMOUR DE MOI	Old French
THE FLEA	Moussorgsky

II

FOLK SONGS OF MANY NATIONS

WEeping WILLOW	Kodaly
SONG OF FRIENDSHIP AMONG PEOPLES	Modern Hungarian
THE LITTLE GIRL	words from a poem by Nazim Hikmet of Turkey
OH, NO JOHN	English
ZOG NIT KEYNMOL	Song of the Warsaw Ghetto—Yiddish

III

SONGS OF STRUGGLE

WORK ALL THE SUMMER	American Negro
UN CANADIEN ERRANT	French-Canadian
FREIHEIT	Song of the Thachmann Brigade in Spain
JOE HILL	American
QUIET DON	Russian
OLD MAN RIVER	Kern

Personal Greetings

W. Gawrycki	Gladise Bjarnison
A. Muzichenko	Les Walker
V. Belobrodski	Greetings from a few friends
A. Sawchuk	(H. V. - E. F.)
N. Hatoff	M. I. Sochasky
N. Bitz	Brad Levine
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Copper Mountain, B.C.

The People of Canada Have Every Right to Hear Paul Robeson

Our fraternal greetings and best wishes to all who struggle
for peace, progress, and democracy.

General Executive Board

United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union

138 EAST CORDOVA STREET

VANCOUVER, B.C.

TA. 3254

Paul Robeson (Continued)

But when Mr. Robeson announced that he was through with singing to the five-dollars-and-up audiences, and would henceforth sing and speak to the people at popular prices of a dollar or less; when it became apparent to the privileged that his magnificent voice was no longer for their exclusive pleasure, and to the ivory-tower poseurs of art that Robeson the Artist was also Robeson the Man, and had opinions on many things, such as peace, poverty, and race discrimination, then the Dollar Curtain descended on Paul Robeson as they endeavoured to still his voice, rather than to share it with the multitude.

His passport was revoked in 1950, following a triumphal tour through Europe.

To be sure, last week it was announced from Washington that Paul Robeson would be free in future to come to Canada as often as he cares to, and stay as long as he wishes. But that is not enough.

Paul Robeson should be free to sing to his admirers in every country where he is wanted, to all who love him, and that means throughout the world, for in no country and among no races is he without the honour and the respect of all, at least among the lowly if not among the rulers of mankind, too many of whom are like those of his own land.

So the struggle for passport rights for Paul Robeson, singer and world leader, will go on until reaction in Washington crumbles, and the Welsh miners, the Stalingrad workers, and the oppressed peoples of Africa can hear him sing again.

We have won him for Canada; we must still help to free him for the rest of the world!

U.E. greets Paul Robeson . . .

The workers of Canada, and particularly the organized workers, are indeed grateful to the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers for their initiative and perseverance in breaking through the golden curtain, lowered by the United States monopoly corporations in their attempts to prevent the voice of Paul Robeson being heard by the Canadian working people.

Paul Robeson is an outstanding figure in the world of music and also in the struggle of the people for peace.

The Peace Arch Assembly where Paul Robeson will sing and address the gathered thousands from the west coast is becoming an annual event of great importance to the working people of our two countries, and the members of UE extend to Paul our warmest greetings and salutations on the staunch fight which he is putting up on behalf of democracy for the people of our two countries.

C. S. JACKSON

CANADIAN PRESIDENT,
UNITED ELECTRICAL WORKERS



14th Annual

LABOR PICNIC

SUNDAY, AUGUST 7 — 11 A.M.

CONFEDERATION PARK

E. Hastings - N. Burnaby

PROGRAMME

- 11 a.m.—OPENING
- 11.30 - 1 p.m.—
Track and Field Meet
- 12 - closing—
 - Dancing
 - Bingo
 - Horse Shoe Pitch
 - Checkers Tournament
 - Kiddies' Corner
 - Merry-Go-Round
 - Ponies

12.30 - 2.30 p.m.—

BAND CONCERT

**Dal Richards'
Band**

- 2 p.m.—GREETINGS
- 2.30—FAMILY RACES

4 p.m.—
Crowning "Miss B.C."

TALENT CONTEST

HAIL

Paul Robeson

MAN OF PEACE
AND FRIENDSHIP
ARTIST OF THE PEOPLE

Greetings

to

Paul Robeson

Whom we honour for his efforts on behalf of Peace, Security,
and the Brotherhood of Man.

Meetings or Dances

Don't forget that at 339 West Pender we have halls suitable for
gatherings of any type or size.

Marine Workers & Boilermakers Industrial Union

LOCAL No. 1

339 WEST PENDER

VANCOUVER, B.C.

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SUPPORT

PAUL ROBESON

in his fight for a passport which will allow him to sing for the
people of the world!

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OF

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Czechoslovak Circus Comedy
- Wed. Mar. 21 EVENING OF CHEKHOV
Three Satires by A. P. Chekhov
- Wed. Apr. 4 BIG FAMILY
Le Père Corneille, 1952
- Wed. Apr. 18 ROMEO AND JULIET
The Complete Ballet by Prokofiev
- Wed. May 2 NAZAR STODOLYA
New Version of Play by Shostakovich

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an evening with

PAUL

ROBESON



Programme

1. PAUL ROBESON

- ARR. BY I. SMYWN *Didn't My Lord Deliver
Daniel*
- QUINTER *Over the Mountains*
- BLAKE-STANFORD *Jerusalem*
- ARR. BY BASH *A Mighty Fortress*
- ARR. BY HERVETZ *Song of Peace (from Beet-
hoven's Ninth Symphony)*
- SCHUBERT *Cradle Song*
- MOISEWITSKY *Orphan*

2. PAUL ROBESON

- ARR. BY KENNETH *Go Down Death*
- ERIKL *Kaddish*
- MINTHORNLEY *The Seminarian*
- BASH *Chorale*
- CHINESE FOLK SONG *In a Place Far, Far Away*
- MINTHORNLEY *Polly Go to Sleep
(children's song)*
- MINTHORNLEY *Prayer and Death (from
Botis Godunov)*

INTERMISSION

3. ALAN BOOTH

- KABALYREY *Sonatina in C, Op. 13 No. 1*
Allegro assai e lusingando
Andantino
Presto
- GUARREN *Dance Negre*
- CIOPIN *Scherzo in E, Op. 34*

4. PAUL ROBESON

- WYBRAK *Going Home (Largo, New
World Symphony)*
- ARR. BY BOATMAN *On My Journey*
- ARR. BY DUBLEIN *My Lord What a Morning*
- YIMBII FOLK SONG *Zog Nii Keynmol*
- CANADIAN FOLK SONG *Un Canadien Errant*
- ROBINSON *What Is America to Me?*
- KEAN *Of Man River*

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SCENES FROM SHAKESPEARE'S OTHELLO

*(Classic readings to be selected
from the works of*

SHELLEY
BLAKE
SCHILLER
DUNBAR

*Selections from contemporary
poets and playwrights*

PABLO NERUDA
LANGSTON HUGHES
BARRIE STAVIS
ETC.

A THEATRICAL PRESENTATION
IN
TRIBUTE TO PAUL ROBESON

*Performance and
Narration*

ARDEN BESS
JIM BURT
VERA CUDJOE
LEN DONCHEFF
MARIA ENRIQUEZ
AMAH HARRIS
and Black Theatre Canada Juniors
TIM LEARY
JOAN LEWIS

Song

PETER CORMICAN
CHARLES JORDAN
JEWISH FOLK CHOIR
Conducted by Ben Shek
BEVERLY-GLENN COPELAND
EARL ROBINSON

Percussion

TONY PIERRE
GLADSTONE SOLOMON
BEVERLY THOMAS

Dance

DIONNE BRAND
ERROL BROOKER
SHELLEY SPARKS
MICHAEL QUAINANCE

Sunday April 25 — 8 o'clock
Harbord Collegiate Auditorium
286 Harbord Street, Toronto
Admission \$3.00

Toronto's
TRIBUTE TO PAUL ROBESON
has been coordinated by the
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A TRIBUTE
TO
PAUL ROBESON

A THEATRICAL PRESENTATION

SUNDAY, APRIL 25TH, AT 8 PM

HARBORD COLLEGIATE
AUDITORIUM
286 HARBORD STREET
TORONTO ONTARIO

PAUL ROBESON

World Citizen -- 1898-1976

His songs and his words rang like the bell of freedom across the world. Son of a black slave, twice an All-American football star, a graduate lawyer and scholar with Phi Beta Kappa honours, world renowned actor and singer, a life-long battler against racism, bigotry, fascism and war, one of his favorite quotations was from the famed Soviet composer, Shostokovich: "Peace will conquer war."

Whether on stage playing the magnificent Othello, in concert, or mingling with the people . . . as he loved to do . . . his majestic presence, his indomitable courage, his warmth and humour evoked love and the highest human responses from all but his enemies. From them he received implacable hatred.

Wherever Paul went, he carried the message of peace and friendship between all peoples. With his incomparable artistry he was able to reach out to millions of people in all lands. "But my art," he was fond of saying, "is a weapon, always for freedom and human dignity." On his death bed, his dying wish was that the funeral should be in the evening "so the working people might come."

Despite relentless efforts by his persecutors, the racists, bigots and McCarthyites, to silence him, they could not succeed. He was known and loved for his uncompromising stand in Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, South America, the Caribbean and by the people of Canada and his own land, the United States.

You are invited to attend an evening of song, theatre and dance to commemorate his life. The world was immeasurably enriched for his having lived in it.

"His legacy belongs to those who will pick it up," his son, Paul, has said.

Paul Robeson Commemorative Committee
214 Beverley Street, Toronto, Ontario

"We who labour in the arts, we who are artists, we who are singers, we who are actors, we must remember that we come from the people, our strength comes from the people and we must serve the people and be part of them."

Speech to a group of artists
in Britain on the formation of
the Actors Equity (Union)
during the 1930's

"I thought I would do something for the Negro race in films — show the truth about them and about other people too. I used to do my part and go away feeling satisfied, thought everything was O.K. Well, it wasn't. The industry is not prepared to permit me to portray the life or express the living interests, hopes and aspirations of the struggling people from whom I come . . . You bet they will never let me play a part in a film in which a Negro is on top."

Paul Robeson -- 1936

"I choose to stretch out my hands across the oceans to the brave peoples of many lands, across the borders to Latin America, to Neruda in Chile, to the brave peoples of Africa and Cuba and Mexico, and to Asia to the peoples of the New China as they build a new life for 500 million people. And just as did Jefferson when he stretched out his hands to the revolutionaries of France so long ago, so today I stretch out my hands across the continents to shake the hands of the brave Soviet peoples. That is my right as an American."

Peace Arch concert, May 1963
when he sang to 40,000 Canadians
at the border, after being barred
from leaving the United States

"I don't want to be difficult because I am a peace fighter and I want everybody to be won to my side. But in my whole concert career I usually don't invite the critics. In the first place they don't like what I sing. They don't want me to sing Joe Hill. They don't want me to sing songs of love and brotherhood. They want me to sing songs of war."

Toronto, 1956

218 LABOUR/LE TRAVAIL

A TRIBUTE TO PAUL ROBESON

April 25
1976
Toronto

Program

Artists and Speakers

CHARLES JORDAN
accompanist Josie Shapiro

ARDON BESS

PHILLIP AKIN

VERA CUDJOE

BLACK THEATRE CANADA JUNIORS

JAMES B. DOUGLAS

PETER CORMIGAN
accompanist: Josie Shapiro

Dancers

DENISE ASHEY

ERROL BROOKER WENDY ST. CYR

JENNIFER EDWARD ETIENNE

Ode to Paul Robeson by Pablo Neruda

MARIA ENRIQUES

AMAH HARRIS

Percussion

TONY PIERRE BEVERLY THOMAS

GLADSTONE SOLOMON

Directed by

TIM LEARY

Technical Assistance

Charlie Avni, Sholem Dolgoy, Roman Droniuk, David Foreman, Gord Keith, Angus McLellan, Lynn Mills, Kelly Pykeman, Whitney Richardson, Peter Robinson, Geoffrey Saville-Read.

Graphic Artists

Doug Calder, Mike Constable, Bob Kell, Joe McAleer, Cy Morris, Pat Parkinson

Special thanks to

Harry Joy Studios, Toronto Arts Production, Toronto Free Theatre

The narrative in this evening's program was arranged by Ray Stevenson and Tom Hendry from Paul Robeson's book "Here I Stand" and from personal reminiscences of some of Paul's Canadian friends.

Intermission

TORONTO JEWISH FOLK CHOIR

Conductor MELVYN ISEN

JOAN LEWIS

'Are you now or have you ever been'

Investigator Arena.....JAMES BURT

Paul Robeson.....ROBERT O'REE

Chairman Walters.....BILL PETERS

LEN DONCIEFF

BEVERLY GLENN-COPELAND

EARL ROBINSON

*This tribute has been organized
and arranged by*

PAUL ROBESON COMMEMORATIVE COMMITTEE
of Toronto:

Harvey Murphy, chairman; Dora Stewart
coordinator; Ray Stevenson, program
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*Proceeds to PAUL ROBESON ARCHIVES NY
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DOCUMENT 7



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MEMBERS OF:

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Shevchenko Male Chorus
Toronto Ensemble Theatre
and other individual artists
Directed by Don Mooljee
Scenario by Ray Stevenson

SPONSORED BY:

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African National Congress

**MESSAGE FROM AFRICA
AND PAUL ROBESON'S
FIGHT FOR FREEDOM**

Sunday April 17, 8:00 p.m.
Central Technical School Auditorium
Bathurst and Harbord Streets
Admission: \$3.50 — Tickets at the door
(Open at 7:00 p.m.)

FOR INFORMATION: 656-2715

**MESSAGE FROM AFRICA
AND PAUL ROBESON'S
FIGHT FOR FREEDOM**

An evening of word, song, poetry and drama
dedicated to the life of Paul Robeson and
solidarity with today's front line fighters against
racism.

SPECIAL GUEST:

James Phillips, Renowned
Voice of African
Liberation

Sunday, April 17, 1977
8:00 p.m.

Central Technical
School Auditorium
Bathurst and
Harbord Streets
Toronto, Canada



"FREEDOM IS A HARD-BOUGHT THING"
(From A Speech By Paul Robeson)

"The era of white supremacy, the imperialist domination by a handful of Western nations, is rapidly coming to an end. A new era is being born. The plunder of Africa by the nations of Europe, which brought our ancestors to this hemisphere as slaves, was the beginning of the era that brought most of Asia, too, under white domination. Now when that era is ending, it is inevitable that our own destiny is involved. Freedom is a hard-bought thing and millions are still in chains, but the strain toward the new day drawing near."

THE FREEDOM CHARTER
(A Mighty Weapon For African Liberation)

The following is the introduction to the charter adopted by the African National Congress at Kiptown, South Africa in June, 1956.

We, the People of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know: that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people;

that our people have been robbed of their birthright to land, liberty and peace by a form of government founded on injustice and inequality;

that our country will never be prosperous or free until all our people live in brotherhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities;

that only a democratic state, based on the will of all the people, can secure to all their birthright without distinction of color, race, sex or belief;

And therefore, we, the people of South Africa, black and white together — equals, countrymen and brothers — adopt this Freedom Charter. And we pledge ourselves to strive together, sparing neither strength nor courage, until the democratic changes here set out have been won.

Paul Robeson's outstanding contribution to the struggle against racism has placed him in perpetuity among the front rank fighters for people's freedom.



Source: All of the documents except Document 3 are located in Box 62, File: Souvenir Programs, Robert S. Kenny Collection, Thomas Rare Book Library, University of Toronto. Document 3 is located in Box 18, File 8: National Office — Paul Robeson — Mine Mill Seasonal Concerts, Mine Mill Papers, University of British Columbia Archives.

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