

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - Sept. 13, 1950

Address by
Adrian Scott

at meeting
In Honor of Howard Fast
and Adrian Scott

New York, Sept. 13, 1950 -- Adrian Scott, the last of the Hollywood Ten -- who is leaving for Washington for sentencing on Sept. 15th, made the following address at the Hotel Riverside Plaza Grand Ballroom, Wednesday September 13th.

"Tonight will be the last time I shall be able to talk to you for some months to come. I'd like you to know that when I leave here it will not be in despair or despondency over either the future or myself.

"The fact ~~that~~ ^{many} nine men, and many others, are in prison has been calculated to work a deep and wretched fear in you. We are the examples that you must not be. Look, say the men of reaction, - What has happened to those men -- fired from their jobs, prevented from earning a living, fundamental rights denied them; houses, cars, conveniences lost them; contracts broken, no chance of restitution. Ruined. This could happen to you. Conform. Conform now.

"They reckon, these men of reaction, without knowledge of history and our distinguished predecessors, Zola, Dostoyevski, Tom Paine, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, Roger Williams. We do not, of course, equate ourselves with the accomplishments of these men: We do equate their positions then with our positions now. All were dissenters; some of them went to prison or into exile for their dissent.

"Men of reaction have tried for centuries to imprison ideas, only to find the idea ^{un}hampered by the concrete of a prison wall. The idea grows within the wall and without. It needs no special conditions to thrive. It is indestructible as the law of gravity and infinitely more persuasive, more persistent, more actively demanding release when it is repressed. An idea does not die because someone wishes it to die.

"The ideas conceived and nurtured by Albert Maltz in his career as a novelist, playwright and screenwriter will not be transmuted into their opposite at the dictate of a congressional committee or the pain of imprisonment. Neither will Jack Lawson, Lester Cole and Ring Lardner, Jr., repudiate their attacks on racism in the films Sahara, Races of Mankind, and None Shall Escape. Nor will the other men change their ideas to the gospel according to Adolph Hitler and Francisco Franco. It would be easier to ask these men to remove their heads.

(More)

"These men hold ideas which though unpopular to a minority - the press, the congress and their sychophants - are held in esteem by the majority. They hold that the First Amendment is a meaningful document which must be extensively and fully applied. They believe, by word and deed, that the 15th Amendment has been too long unfulfilled -- that the Negro people are entitled to the equality that the Civil War was waged for. They believe in the full establishment of the Wagner Act and the FEPC, in the articles of the Charter of Human Rights of the United Nations. They believe in a great deal more (along with the majority of the American people) but for leadership in the application of these ideas they have gone to prison -- and they have become dissenters.

"They are in a notable tradition. For this country was born in a spirit of dissent against royalist repression. We now revere the dissenters to the policies of the British King and for their establishment of the first modern democracy.

"All through our history we have honored the dissenter though rarely at the crucial period in which he lived. It is well to recall again and again that Ralph Waldo Emerson, a minister, was stoned in Philadelphia for advocacy of freedom for the slaves; that Abraham Lincoln opposed the Mexican War; that Oliver Wendell Holmes was revered not for his majority opinions but for his dissents -- dissents which later became law.

"We are accustomed to view these men we honor today as lone and isolated men -- like St. George and the Dragon -- fighting without aid to secure their objective. It is a romantic view of history. The realistic view is much more sensible: for every dissenter there is an idea needing expression and behind the dissenter and his idea are countless thousands and millions ready to support both. Abraham Lincoln did not free the slaves alone - there was Garrison and Phillips, Whitman, Emerson. There were the soldiers of the North. There were slaves turned into a militant fighting force -- men not born to the gun, who could not fight, according to the southern aristocrat, and who surprised the aristocrat by routing him in the warfare in which the aristocrat presumably excelled. There were the workers of England led by Karl Marx who supported abolition; for a victory for freedom here meant more freedom there.

"There was a role for everyone, then, because the idea was good: freedom, equality. The Revolution begun in 1776 was extended in 1860 and that very same Revolution is demanding its extension today. This revolution means a greater share in the needs of life: oranges for a child in a Chicago slum, in a Harlem ghetto, in a sharecropper's shanty. Clothes for the ill clad; homes for the
(More)

ill-housed. Full equality for minorities whether racial or political. The right to speak. The right to work; the absence of fear and terror. Peace.

"These are good ideas, powerful ideas. They cannot be denied any more than independence could be denied in 1776 or the abolition of slavery in 1860 or the humanitarian legislation of the New Deal in 1932. Lincoln would approve them. Jefferson would lend his sage advice to them. Tom Paine would write an eloquent pamphlet in support of them.

" And it is important to remember that ideas have a momentum of their own. They speak for themselves and in the oddest places; The Los Angeles Times, a journal noted for and proud of its adherence to reaction, could well be termed subversive for within its columns I have learned that the government of Syngman Rhee is corrupt; reactionary and utterly destructive to the people of South Korea. I have learned that the forces of North Korea turn over the land to the people of South Korea as they move southward; that Secretary Acheson months ago disapproved the inflationary policies of the administration of Syngman Rhee.

"I have read in this same paper the recent appeal of his Holiness, Pope Pius, for Peace. And this confused me very much. For the editorial pages of the Times warned ~~the~~ citizens to be on the lookout for Peace Petitions which were being circulated. Do I assume from the pages of the Times that the peace appeal of one man is honest and the peace appeal of millions of men and women are dishonest and subversive? Sophists may enjoy themselves in titillating debates about subversive Peace and unsubversive Peace. For me, Peace, simple and unadorned, is good enough.

Upon coming to New York I read in the editorial pages of the New York Herald Tribune that that paper objects to the screening of artists and actors by an organ of vilification known as Red Channels; I read in the New York Times that newspaper's objection to the withdrawal of the song, Old Man Atom, which in its way calls for peace.

But I have also read of the blacklisting of Jean Muir, an avowed anti-Communist, whose right to work has been questioned because the quality of her anti-Communism does not match that of her persecutors. So it was in Nazi Germany. First the Communist. Then the Jew. ^{Then the Trade Unionist} Then the liberal. Then the Freemason. Then the Protestant. Then, finally, the German people and the German nation. What followed this spiraling and all-embracing persecution was war.

I do not know Miss Muir, but I respect her right to work and her right to her opinion whatever she chooses it to be. I respect the right of the school
(more)

teachers of this city to have their opinions as they see them, and to hold them without intimidation from the city hierarchy.

But I reject the right of the Board of Education to hire an "expert" to judge the qualifications of other citizens (as they are about to do) and I similarly reject the attempt of management and employees in Radio and Television to set up a screening board to view the political qualifications of other employees to determine whether they shall eat or not eat.

Extra-legal, extra-judicial screening boards are an attempt by well-intentioned and even honorable men to fight back against the wholesale depredations of the fanatical minority; but it is a trap in which inevitably they will find themselves.

In the latter part of the 18th Century, in New Castle on Tyne, in England, there was a witch hunt. The city fathers were appalled at the murder and degradation of the female population of the town. They went to the villagers and urged them to stop. When there was a scream of protest, the city fathers retreated, assuring the villagers that they too believed in witches. But what they had in mind was the premier witch hunter of the age. He lived in Scotland. They would bring him down, pay him 10 shillings for the exposure of a witch, and all would be saved. The villagers agreed. So he came. As an expert he informed the populace that there were only two methods of determining a witch. 1) If a woman had a wart and if this wart refused to bleed when stuck with a pin, she was a witch, 2) If a woman upon examination was found to have a supernumary teat", she too was a witch!

He promptly appointed all former witch hunters as his deputies; and on went the hunt. And now it was organized. And now the city fathers could sit back secure in their decision that the village had been saved. But citizens were killed and women were subjected to unspeakable indignities and finally men with warts were involved -- this was simply a sign to the premier witch hunter of the insidiousness of this particular witch hunt. The end of the story, after great bitterness and tragedy, was a happy one. For a doctor stood up one day and defied the witch hunter pointing out there was no scientific basis for his diagnosis, and he said it again and again until in shame the people withdrew their support and led the witch hunter from the village.

In the entire history of inquisition to fight witch hunters, men at first have used their methods hoping thereby to stem the engulfing tide. It did not work then; it will not work now. It can only result in gigantic tragedy unless
(more)

these bad ideas are confronted with good ideas.

And the ideas are there today and there are people from all stations of life wishing to fulfill those ideas. They are put into action by different motives: some have lost sons and husbands and know the meaning of bereavement. Others know that the Negro and the Jew and other minorities will be tools and scapegoats, victims of the holocaust of war. Still others know that their standard of living will be depressed, their rights denied, and they themselves persecuted. Others will have other motives -- and they number in the millions.

"One is Bessie Smith. Bessie Smith is a sister of one of the Trenton Six now in prison fighting for their lives. She spoke at a meeting recently picketed by American Legionnaires. In a small voice, but one which everyone could hear, she said, " ' I want to speak to you Legion men and you F. B. I. men in the hall. I won't stop speaking until there's justice for the Negro people and you can't stop me! All you can do is kill me! All you can do is kill me."

"Bessie Smith understands the increasing restrictions on the Negro people in this period of crisis; she understands the degrading, gestapo treatment that her brother and his friends have received at the hands of his jailers in Trenton, New Jersey. She knows that they are examples designed to intimidate her and other Negro people into silence. And she is unafraid. And no one will stop Bessie Smith unless the brutality of Nazi Germany is unleashed here.

"Then there is Mike Cole, aged 10, the son of Jeanne and Lester Cole. Some of you have heard the story from Jeanne Cole. It bears repeating. Mike was blackmailed by a contemporary who said he would expose his father in the school paper's headlines unless a weekly tribute was paid and ~~then~~ Mike said "No." He stood up to his persecutor and told him to print, dared him. Of course militancy might have been a factor in the boy-Hearst's decision not to print. But it was not printed. What is the difference between the blackmail of Mike and the recent blackmail of the State Department in its refusal to let Paul Robeson go abroad ~~and~~ earn a living? There is none. Any weapon, any intimidation goes. But the State Department and its juvenile prototype in Los Angeles have reckoned without the character of the boy, Mike, and the man, Paul.

"Finally, I would like to speak about the wives of the men now in prison.

"It is as though, frankly, the men were not in prison at all. The same fight goes on. The wives meet as we have met. They speak anywhere, with militance and eloquence. Yes, they speak for their husbands and their free-

(more)

dom; but they also speak "ideas". They are unafraid because they understand.

"And remember they have children to take care of, to support, meals to be cooked, houses to run. They have a loneliness to combat. And they have younger children's persistent demands and inquiries of a father's absence -- along with persecution and intimidation. They speak for their husbands and their children and themselves and in doing so they speak for other children and other husbands in Kprea, China, France, Britain, and they make no differentiation as to color or station in life. Indeed, they assert that none should be made!

"With Bessie Smith, with Mike Cole, with nine wives, with you, with millions here and abroad, finding roles to be played and speaking on them, there is no room for despondency or despair in me or the others who have preceded me.

"So for now, goodnight; and for a very short while, goodbye. I'll be back. We'll be back."

#

Adrian Scott, "Address at Meeting in Honor of Howard Fast and Adrian Scott," September 13, 1950.
Courtesy Adrian Scott Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming-Laramie.