

Paul Robeson Defies Peoria Ban

Dodges Police, Vows To Return For Court Test

Singer Labeled As Pro-Red 'Happy' To Join Henry Wallace

PEORIA, Ill. — Backed by progressive citizens, the liberal press and fellow artists, Paul Robeson, stage and concert star, appeared here Friday night, despite a city council ban, and said he will return to this borderline town at a later date to fight the "fascist order" in court.

Robeson denounced the action of the city council and Mayor Carl O. Triebel, who ruled against his appearance, as "fascist technique." He also took issue with the un-American Activities Committee which pinned a pro-Red label on him earlier in the week. Robeson said he was happy to join former Vice President Henry Wallace and scores of other liberals who have been branded by the committee dominated by Mississippi's Representative Rankin.

Earlier, a scheduled concert in a 1,500-seat hall was cancelled by the sponsors "because advance sales were low." The action came about the same time the city council passed a resolution banning any artist or speaker "who is a propagandist for un-American ideology." Town Mayor Carl O. Triebel overrode the council and said Robeson could sing in the City Hall, but changed his order at the last minute after a meeting with members of a local American Legion post.

24 Cops at Depot

Robeson was en route to the town when the Mayor withdrew permission on the grounds that a Robeson concert might cause a riot. Fourteen policemen were at the depot to keep Robeson from getting off the train, but he arrived unobserved. Instead of attempting to give the concert, he went to the home of A. Jay Martin, CIO Farm Equipment Union organizer. It was there that Robeson blasted the town's action and the un-American Activities Committee statement. He was given a reception by a citizens' committee, and Martin's home was so crowded some of the guests had to be turned away.

Robeson said he could have gone
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to the City Hall to demand his rights, but that it would have been useless in the face of city officials' reaction. He said Peoria has none on record as being taken over by fascists. The singer added that he will return at a later date to test the legality of the ban under the state constitution.

Won't Be Bullied

Saturday, Robeson telephoned the Council on African Affairs in New York saying:

"I do not intend to be bullied in the slightest by these fascist techniques. I know Peoria citizens... will demonstrate their own feelings against this un-American assault in their own way."

"The Peoria incident is not at all accidental," he added. "It follows by two days the House Un-American Committee's selection of me as one of its special targets. Frankly, I feel honored to be in the same company with former Vice President Wallace."

Robeson said he will speak in New York at the Council on African Affairs rally April 25, where he will explain the full meaning of the Peoria incident and issue a statement on the "un-American committee's war against American democracy."