

STATEMENT OF

ALBERT MALTZ

to the

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES

I am an American and I believe there is no more proud word in the vocabulary of Man. I believe it despite the fact that other Americans, like Mr. Rankin, pour filth on the word by their hatred of the very idea of democratic brotherhood. I am a novelist and a screen writer and I have produced a certain body of work in the past fifteen years. As with any other writer, what I have written has come from the total fabric of my life -- my birth in this land, our schools and games, our atmosphere of freedom, our tradition of inquiry, criticism, discussion, tolerance. Whatever I am, America has made me. And I, in turn, possess no loyalty as great as the one I have to this land, to the economic and social welfare of its people, to the perpetuation and development of its democratic way of life.

Now at the age of thirty-nine, I am commanded to appear before the House Committee on Un-American activities. For a full week this Committee has encouraged an assortment of well-rehearsed witnesses to testify that I and others are subversive and un-American. It has refused us the opportunity that any pick-pocket receives in a magistrate's court -- the right to cross examine these witnesses, to refute their testimony, to reveal their motives, their history and who exactly they are. Furthermore it grants these witnesses Congressional immunity so that we may not sue them for libel for their slanders.

I maintain that this is an evil and vicious procedure, that it is legally unjust and morally indecent -- and that it places in danger every other American, since if the rights of any one citizen can be invaded, then the Constitutional guarantees of every other American have been subverted and no one is any longer protected from official tyranny.

What is it about me that this Committee wishes to destroy? My writings? Very well, let us refer to them. My novel, "The Cross and the Arrow" was issued in a special edition of 140,000 copies by a war time government agency, the Armed Services Edition,

for American servicemen abroad. My short stories have been re-printed in over thirty anthologies, by as many American publishers, -- all subversive, no doubt. My film, "The Pride of the Marines," was premiered in twenty eight cities at "Guadalcanal Day" banquets under the auspices of the U. S. Marine Corps. Another film, "Destination Tokyo" was premiered aboard a U. S. submarine and was adopted by the Navy as an official training film. My short film, "The House I Live In" was given a special award by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for its contribution to racial tolerance. My short story, "The Happiest Man on Earth" won the 1938 O. Henry Memorial Award for the best American short story. This, then, is the body of work for which this Committee urges I be blacklisted in the film industry -- and tomorrow, if it has its way - in the publishing and magazine fields also. By cold censorship, if not legislation, I must not be allowed to write. Will this censorship stop with me? Or with the others now singled out for attack? If it requires acceptance of the ideas of this Committee to remain immune from the brand of un-Americanism, then who is ultimately safe from this Committee except members of the Ku Klux Klan?

Why else does this Committee now seek to destroy me and others? Because of our ideas, unquestionably! In 1801, when he was President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson wrote: "Opinion, and the just maintenance of it, shall never be a crime in my view; nor bring injury to the individual." But a few years ago, in the course of one of the hearings of this Committee, Congressman J. Parnell Thomas said, and I quote from the official transcript: "I just want to say this now, that it seems that the New Deal is working along hand and glove with the Communist Party. The New Deal is either for the Communist Party, or it is playing into the hands of the Communist Party."

Very well then, here is the other reason why I and others have been commanded to appear before this Committee. Our ideas! In common with many Americans I supported the New Deal. In common with many Americans I supported -- against Mr. Thomas and Mr. Rankin - the anti-lynching bill. I opposed them in my support of O.P.A. controls and emergency veteran housing and a Fair Employment Practices law. I signed petitions for these measures, joined

organizations that advocated them, contributed money, sometimes spoke from public platforms. And I will continue to do so! I will take my philosophy from Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and I will not be dictated to or intimidated by men to whom the Ku Klux Klan, as a matter of Committee record, is an acceptable American institution.

I state further that on many questions of public interest my opinions as a citizen have not always been in accord with the opinions of the majority. They are not now. Nor have my opinions ever been fixed and unchanging -- nor are they now fixed and unchangeable. But right or wrong, I claim -- and I insist upon -- my right to think freely and to speak freely -- to join the Republican Party or the Communist Party, the Democratic or the Prohibition Party -- to publish wherever I please -- to fix my mind or change my mind without dictation from anyone -- to offer any criticism I think fitting of any public official or policy -- to join whatever organizations I please, no matter what certain legislators may think of them.

Above all, I challenge the right of this Committee to inquire into my political or religious beliefs in any manner or degree. And I assert that not only the conduct of this Committee, but its very existence, are a subversion of the Bill of Rights.

If I were a spokesman for General Franco, I would not be here today. I would rather be here. I would rather die than be a shabby American, grovelling before men whose names are Thomas and Rankin, but who now carry out activities in America like those carried out in Germany by Goebbels and Himmler.

The American people are going to have to choose between the Bill of Rights and the Thomas Committee. They cannot have both. One or the other must be abolished in the immediate future.