

Frontier Films
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The story of
LISTEN AMERICA!
(working title)

Script by:
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Paul Strand
Leo Hurwitz

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After a night of storm, the sun rises upon the rocks and foam of the harsh Northeastern coast of America, then goes westward in its brilliant path, over forests, long rivers, lakes which reflect the snow of distant mountains. It is the same light which three hundred years ago illumined the riches of an unknown continent; which today warms the broken gravestone of a captain who died in the Battle of Trenton, and the monuments to Jefferson, Washington and Lincoln, their great shoulders stained with the weather of many decades. And it is the same light which moves over the 130,000,000 people of modern America, its cities linked by a web of steel rails and the motors of airplanes passing across the face of the sun.

First a strip of stormy coast, then a confederation of thirteen states, linked together by certain ideals of freedom and human right, written into the Constitution in a Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights: More than a document: Won at the cost of human suffering and bloodshed, it has become alive; it is the way of life of the mass of American people; it is their faith. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

The sun moves; the monuments of the great dead of America look forward with marble eyes across the continent. It is mid-morning; an obscure farmer is plowing the side of a hill in Minnesota. He is tall and gaunt, heroic against the bright

hills of his state. His faith in America moves him in his daily life, as surely as the strength of his horses draws the plowshare through the heavy ground of early spring. He is Fred Hill, the local chairman of a farmer's cooperative.

His son, a blond boy of about ten, is running up the hill to call his father. He stops plowing; and as his son comes up, breathless, he swings him onto the broad rump of one of the horses.

"Some men want to see you, Pa."

"Who wants to see your dad - the feed man?"

"No. Some men in a big car. It's brand new. It's shiny as anything."

Fred lifts out a stone from the furrow, carrying it against his knee to a pile in the center of the field.

"Stay with the horses", he tells his son, and walks down toward the house.

"You ought to see", the son shouts after him. "One man's got a diamond on his finger..."

There are three men waiting in a car down the road from the house. Fred Hill goes in to his kitchen to wash his hands. His wife is tasting the soup from a large pot on the wood stove.

"I never saw them before", she says. "They wanted to know if you were Mr. Hill."

"Can't deny that", says Fred, grinning.

"Then they asked me if you were the Mr. Hill that spoke up at the farmer's meeting last night... I said, you bet!", and she looks at her husband, who is smiling back at her.

"Fix your sleeves", she says as he goes out, and calls after him, "invite them in for a bite, Fred."

She goes back to her potatoes, slicing and quartering

them, the crisp white texture shining in the sunlight. She looks out the window as her husband and the three men walk out of sight. On the distant hill, the boy is pretending to plow, jerking the handles as his father does.

Suddenly the three men run back into the car, slam the doors and speed away. Fred is not there. Mrs. Hill runs out of the kitchen, out on the porch, calling her husband. She does not see him. She runs out onto the road, calling his name, sickened with fear. He has been slugged and ^{has} fallen into a shallow brook, and is trying to rise over the bank which conceals him. His wife turns and sees him, runs down the slippery bank, lifting his bleeding head from the edge of the brook.

And the brook runs by in the sunlight, and many miles away, a shallow river flows through the center of an American town. There is a black iron bridge overhead and the people walk by on it, bent on the errands of their private lives. How should they know that at the moment, a thousand miles away, a farmer was struck down in the midst of his work? The radio forgot it, the afternoon newspapers had no room that particular day.

And how should they know that in Jacksonville, in a cheap rooming house, a landlady was knocking at the door of one of her tenants; that there was a dresser jammed against the door, the window was open, and on the floor was lying an obscure union organizer, his head fallen in a pool of thick ink from a mimeograph machine smashed on the floor beside him?

And in Fort Smith, Arkansas, the small church which had been used by sharecroppers for their meeting was smashed by a

sheriff's posse, the windows broken and the altar overturned. There were guns in the woods, hunting the sharecroppers who were fleeing to their homes. A Negro, wounded in the knee, emerges from a thicket onto a road; he is leaning on the shoulder of a fellow 'cropper. The road they are crossing is clear in the sunlight, and the shiny barrel of a rifle follows them as they move. The wounded Negro is struck first; his companion runs to the side of the road, crawls up the bank, is climbing a barbed-wire fence -- as the deputy takes aim and shoots him down. Bullets spatter on the fence-post.

Minnesota, Jacksonville, Fort Smith: Obscure assaults upon unknown men; a bystander at an anti-Nazi demonstration dragged forty feet along a pier wall. The mounted cop has him by the collar, his feet scrape and drag on the muddy cobblestones. There is a headline for one day, and it is forgotten. And the man in Harlan County, Kentucky, who was dumped from a speeding car and not found for days, his dead face staring upward as evening and morning pass over it.

The 130,000,000 awake as usual, washing and dressing for the day's work. The way of their lives, based on the faith of American freedom and personal security, to them seems undisturbed. The husband, lunch-box in one hand, kisses his wife goodbye; the children set off for school. The millions of America, in its thousand towns and cities, swarm down to the day's work; the factory whistles blow, close or distant; the worker's baby is wheeled out to sleep in the sun.

The wheels in the factories begin their hours of

spinning. Their power roars and thumps, yet in these mills another force is born. When men learn to work together, they learn to think together. Common action makes common interest. Out of the very texture of American life, the pattern of organization emerges. Consumer cooperatives, farmers' cooperatives, industrial unionization; the idea of union takes hold of the American imagination, is backed by the government by the Wagner Act, by the basic guarantee that the Bill of Rights is the law of the United States.

The American people begin to move forward, unaware as yet of the sinister forces which threaten their movement; forces in the guise of innocent business, which make their profits out of hatred, greed and murder. Railway Audit and Inspection Co.; Industrial Service Bureau; respectable names and respectable offices, switchboards, desks, rubber stamps, files; the respectable trade of espionage. You can buy their services; they make a business of it. So much and so much for destroying a local; bill rendered at the end of the month; reports filed daily.

And in their files are the stories of ruthlessness and cruel fraud. The story, for example of Operative K-361, a paid spy, the secretary of a union in Connecticut.

He is sitting in an armchair in his furnished room. He is a middle-aged man, with thick glasses, sitting there tense and nervous, because in a few minutes he must attend the regular Saturday afternoon executive meeting, and he must give them some explanation of why he no longer has the membership record book. The book is on the table, being wrapped in a brown paper bag by Mr. Chisholm. Mr. Chisholm is a natty little man, extremely

well-pressed and dapper, who has acted as the contact man for the spy agency.

He turns to the spy and deftly removes the thick glasses, puts them on the table, smashes one lens with a neat blow from a can opener, and picks out a sliver of glass. The spy puts a hand protectively to his face. Mr. Chisholm pulls it down contemptuously.

"You wanted an alibi, didn't you?", and he holds the spy's head firmly on the table.

He daintily cuts a gash in the flesh of the cheek, under the eye. The spy gasps in pain, then goes to the mirror to examine the cut, and turns around, his hand feeling the sticky blood. Mr. Chisholm, advancing with a length of bandage, tears a strip in the spy's shirt to help complete the picture of assault.

Meanwhile, the other committee members are waiting for the spy in a cheap office downtown. He is already a half-hour late. They are waiting, smoking, impatient; one of them is turning out leaflets at a mimeograph. The door downstairs slams.

The president of the local goes to the door of the room, looks down the staircase. The spy is walking up the two flights, his clothing torn and a bandage around his face and head. He falters, the president runs down, catches him in his arm .

"They grabbed the membership book!, he whispers
The other men are looking down from above.

"What happened?"

"They stole the membership book!"

They look at one another in the realization of that terrible fact.

The membership book lies on the desk of the executive in the spy agency. The executive is having a wonderful time, for Mr. Chisholm is mimicking the spy's fright at seeing the gash in his cheek. While the executive is roaring with laughter, a messenger comes in, and he puts the membership book into his leather pouch and locks it. The list of union members is on its way to the head of the company.

Meanwhile, the president and the treasurer of the union have taken the spy, whom they still trust as a union member, home and put him to bed. The president makes him some coffee, but the spy pretends to have fallen asleep; he leaves the steaming cup on a chair near the bed, and they go out. The spy springs out of bed, locks the door, and takes his typewriter out of his bureau; it already has part of the day's report typed out.

The two men part at the street corner, each man thinking to himself, what will become of me? Will I be fired? What use will the Company make of the membership book? Meanwhile, inside his locked room, the spy is still typing: "And I respectfully ask \$7.50 for a new pair of glasses. They were broke to make it look good. I hope I did the job satisfactory..." He reads what he has typed, holding his broken glasses up like a lorgnette.

The employer, vice-president of the Company, is dictating a letter in his private office. The room is impressive;

A great thick carpet with the desk at one end. The windows look out on high buildings, a bridge, and a distant river. The vice-president is dictating into the mouthpiece of his dictaphone:

"To Mr. Hendry, Detroit Branch: We have been able to secure information for you which will enable you to solve our labor difficulties. Please note the following names for immediate discharge: Benjamin Smith, Peter Karasky, Arthur Bridgman, Joseph Dokov or Dolkov, D-O-T-K-O-V..."

The black mouthpiece of the dictaphone seems almost a distorted outgrowth of the employer's smooth-shaven cheeks. The wax cylinder spins as the names are dictated.

Steel worker in Michigan, granite cutter in a Vermont quarry, fired and blacklisted. Gaunt miner from the silver country in Butte, Montana, "your services are no longer required. Reason: inefficiency".. "Reason: no work"... "Reason: insubordination". Spied on, fired, blacklisted, Pennsylvania molder and California fruit picker.

But they could not break the unions. The notion of mutual organization, the faith of Americans in their right to meet, to speak, and to organize as they see fit, began to win out. Rubber, Steel, and Auto began their upward march of unionization. Then the enemies of democracy decided on other weapons. Espionage was not enough, they must prepare ammunition, miles of barbed wire, tear gas and sickening gas, ax-handles, the latest type of portable machine gun -- and men willing to use them.

Against the tide of collective organization, they armed the pool-room sharks, the criminals, and the well-to-do loafers, and their daily press releases referred to them as "an aroused

citizenry". First espionage, then terror.

Joseph Gelders, in Alabama on a legal mission, kidnapped and slugged by "men unknown". It is a cold rainy afternoon. A car drives up to a lonely filling station at the edge of the town. The attendant fills the tank, then comes around to wipe the windshield. He notices that the rear door has not been shut properly, and when he begins to slam it shut, a man's hand flops out into the crack of the door. The attendant steps back in horror.

One of the men in the front seat turns round and pulls the body back into the car.

"Nothing to be scared of", he says. "Just a New York feller who didn't like our town. Claims to be a lawyer."

And he slams the door shut. The car drives away, leaving the attendant with the money in his hand, still frozen with horror.

Not only espionage but terror:

A grocery store in Memphis, Tenn. The grocer is getting a half a pound of butter for a little girl. He has been in this neighborhood over twenty-five years, the textile workers are his customers, and he has contributed to their union funds. He cuts out the butter, puts it on the scale, which registers a half pound, then jumps violently.

There is the notched end of a crowbar on the scale, held there by a thug.

"We hear you been giving our money away", he says. then swings his crowbar off the scale and smashes it into a basket

of eggs.

The little girl retreats, then runs to the door as the thug goes out.

"If I was you I'd get out of town. Otherwise..."

And the thug leaves. The little girl squashes her nose against the glass of the front door, and the grocer runs up and lifts her out of the way, as the crowbar descends on the plate-glass.

Terror in Alabama, terror in Memphis, terror in California. At about six in the morning, a recruited gang of vigilantes breaks into the Finnish Cultural Federation Hall, ripping clubs out of the bannister as they go upstairs. The photographs of last year's basketball team, the signs requesting: "Do not throw ashes on the floor. This is your property" are dashed to the floor, books are flung out of the window, a piano is overturned and chopped with a fire-ax. And as a last gesture of playfulness, they turn on all the faucets and flood the building.

Terror in Alabama, Tennessee, California, terror in New Jersey, police charging he street-corner meetings near the waterfront; terror in Gallup, New Mexico and in Boston, Massachusetts; a sheriff and his deputies, with handkerchief arm-bands, firing into the picket line at Ambridge; terror over the whole face of the United States, defying the Bill of Rights, ignorant and reckless of human suffering.

A small graveyard near Massilon, Ohio. Standing in the snow around the black grave, are the widow and the two children, and a group of friends. The last shovel of earth is slapped on the mound. One of the men begins to speak:

"Joe Daniels was a personal friend of mine and I want to say he was certainly a fine man."

His voice is very low, he gropes for the right words to say:

"He worked for his family as a man should. He worked for the company fifteen years... and when the union came, he spoke for it. He was the kind of a man that spoke for his rights. It was a terrible thing they did to him."

The widow tries to restrain herself, clasping the little girl who buries her head in her skirt. The man continues:

"They were afraid of Joe Daniels, that's why the company killed him. He was a fine man. He was certainly a fine man."

The widow gives an uncontrollable cry.

The campaign of terror had its effect. For every man injured or killed, there were many hundreds who feared to exercise their liberties. But there were also thousands who began to protest, who began to reassert their belief in the Bill of Rights as a basic document. Some spoke their protest at the edge of a grave, their voices reached few people; but others spoke to thousands; ministers, doctors, liberals, who saw in their peaceful communities the rise of certain forces that smelled of fascism.

In Tampa, for example, the Klan-ruled city and state governments had forbidden any but one party to participate in the elections. Therefore a liberal party had sprung up to contest the Klan candidates in the primaries. They called themselves the Modern Democrats, and led by a man named Joseph Shoemaker, won the municipal elections in Tampa. But their victory was never recorded; by terror and falsification, the Klan candidates were declared victors. But their rule was shaken, and they determined to wipe out the Modern Democrats.

First the police raided a meeting, arresting five persons, including Shoemaker; then Shoemaker and two others were released by the police -- to a posse of Klansmen.

A circle of cars in a lonely clearing in the Florida woods. Their headlights illumine a heavy log that is being adjusted in the center of the circle. A Klansman in the ghastly uniform of hood and gown, throws lumps of tar into a pot over the fire. Shoemaker and Poulnot and Rogers are brought in at last. Poulnot and Rogers are tied face to face under a tree, while Shoemaker is thrown astride the log. Five men hold him down, three others lash him with straps, whips and lengths of chain. Tar is poured into the bleeding cuts. Shoemaker's side is paralyzed, he falls unconscious. They waken him by dipping his right foot in the boiling pot of tar.

The night of November 30th was a black stain on the history of America. Shoemaker died two weeks later, of gangrene of the right foot, and his death aroused the indignation of every element of American society which had any human decency. Labor leaders, Congressmen, leaders of public opinion, demanded an end to this conflagration of terror against the Bill of Rights. Protests flooded Washington, demanding that the Federal power investigate the dark network that has caused these crimes. And the fruit of those demands was the passage of the LaFollette Resolution, SR 286: "to investigate the violations of civil liberties.."

No sooner did the searchlight of the LaFollette-Thomas Committee begin to operate, then the sinister forces began a strategic retreat. Word went out over private wires, hurried

telegrams were delivered, the respectable spy agencies destroyed their records and emptied their files. They were merely concerned with improving employer-employee relationships, eliminating sabotage, or acting as "psychological advisors".

But the Senate Committee, with care and skill, reconstructed the whole incredible story, often out of documents which had been torn to shreds and which the investigators obtained from waste-baskets and pieced together.

And they found one thing: Conspiracy -- conspiracy against the people of the United States; conspiracy against the Bill of Rights. They exposed the menacing facts, the campaign which had all the aspects of a war:

1. Spies in industry: 41,000; payroll \$80,000,000 a year.
2. Munitions used in industrial "warfare": (amount and disposition)
3. Private Armies: deputies, company thugs, vigilantes
4. A General Staff: employers organized to prevent their employees from organizing
5. Casualties: The list of the wounded, the blacklisted, and the dead.

The truth was out, and the people once more felt confidence in the inviolability of their Bill of Rights. They could walk the streets in confidence, their homes were safe, their future was their own.

It is Chicago, a warm, sunny day in the park; the walks are crowded; it is Memorial Day. Wreaths and little silk flags are placed at the foot of memorials to the great dead of America's history. The air is fresh and bland; there is a display of

tulips; the kids shout at their sailboats skimming on the public pond. The people are not aware of another weapon to be used against them. Not espionage, not individual terror, but something much more open and terrible.

Memorial Day, Chicago: There are twenty-five hundred people walking in a loose crowd, going to picket the Republic Steel Company plant. They are singing, the sunlight is bright and warm. Suddenly the front row stops; the hundreds in the rear who can't see what is happening still press forward. There are half a dozen shots. Six men have fallen to the ground, bleeding from the stomach and the back, where the bullets have perforated. The police have attacked, the crowd flees across a mile of broken prairie. Detectives hurl tear gas bombs, the field is covered with little dense, choking clouds; one man's eye is blown out when a projectile explodes a foot away. The 250 police continue to charge in a kind of brutal hysteria, clubbing and shooting, dragging the wounded and dying and heaping them on the floor of the patrol wagons.

10 dead, 40 wounded; victims of a wholesale and deliberate assault on American liberties. The LaFollette Committee collects the facts and the photographs which establish the guilt of the murders beyond a questions of opinion or doubt. LaFollette holds the stills from the newareel in his hands, and speaks a warning to the American people.

"10 killed. 40 injured and maimed. These are terrible figures, yet they represent far worse. For each man killed, there are 1000 intimidated; for each man maimed, 1000

citizens fear to exercise their liberties. These figures represent the hold on whole sections of America of dark and selfish forces, forces which hope to destroy the liberties of our people."

(Listen, America! Quarrymen, steel worker, miner, minister, school teacher, engineer, bookkeeper -- look up from your work, listen to this warning!)

"The Bill of Rights of the American people is a sacred document, fixed in our land and in our history. But it is threatened anew in every generation, and every generation must stand watch and defend it."

And the people of America take warning. They have seen the destruction, the threat, and the conspiracy. The monuments of the past are seen in a new light. The statues of the great dead of history stand in these stormy times as though alive. Their Bill of Rights is ours; it is more than a document; it is a living truth.

Stand watch, America!