



A dramatic Satire
dealing with the
Un-American
Investigations
conducted by
Mr. Martin Dies

Prepared and Written for

THE AMERICAN LEAGUE
FOR PEACE AND DEMOCRACY..

Performed at CARNEGIE HALL N. Y. C.
ON DECEMBER 1ST .. 1939

MARTIN DIES IN THE LAND OF BEYOND TIME

A Skit

"The spirit of the times may alter, will alter. Our rulers will become corrupt, our people careless. A single zealot may commence persecutions, and better men be his victims."
--Thomas Jefferson

Time and place: The Land of Beyond Time

CHARACTERS

Martin Dies

A. Mitchell Palmer

John Wilkes Booth

Aaron Burr

3 D. A. R.'S

A Secretary

SCENE: A committee room, represented by a large table behind which are two chairs. To the left of the table are three chairs in a row.

MARTIN DIES enters from the right. He has not the slightest idea where he is, and tries to get his bearings.

DIES: Where am I anyhow? Where is my committee? And where is J. B.?
Gosh, I wish J. B. were here. (calls) J.B.! Hey, J. B.!

(Enter A. MITCHELL PALMER)

PALMER: Are you lost, stranger?

DIES: Hey, buddy! Where am I?

PALMER: You're in the Capital of the Land of Beyond Time.

DIES: The what?

PALMER: The Land of Beyond Time.

DIES: Listen, buddy. I'm in no mood for ~~for~~kidding. Can you direct me to the House Office Building. I'm Dies.

PALMER: Did you say Dies?

DIES: That's right.

PALMER: Not the great Martin Dies?

DIES: Right.

PALMER (shaking his hand) Say, I'm certainly glad to see you. This is big news. Wait till the boys hear you're dead.

DIES: Did you say - dead?

PALMER: Sure, That's why you're in the Land of Beyond Time.

DIES: (looks around fretfully) But I don't wanna be dead. (Paces about petulantly) I don't wanna be dead (turning back to Palmer) Listen, I can't die now. There are millions of people still to be investigated.

PALMER: Oh, don't take it so hard, old man. This Land of Beyond Time is not a bad country when you get used to it. You and I can do big things here. A. Mitchell Palmer and Martin Dies! Boy, what a combination!

DIES: Did you say A. Mitchell Palmer?

PALMER: That's me. I thought you'd recognize the name.

DIES: A. Mitchell Palmer of the famous Palmer red raids of 1919-1920?

PALMER: You're looking right at him.

DIES: Oh, boy, how I envy your record? - The way you'd arrest a couple of thousand men, women and children in a single raid.

PALMER: Oh thanks, old man. You'd 've been pretty hot stuff yourself if you'd been spared a little longer.

DIES: Yeah, if I could only 've finished the job. You know what I had lined up for next week, Mitch? I was gonna publish the complete mailing list of the YMCA.

PALMER: Oh, that's a shame , Martin.

DIES: (surveying the room) Say, what kind of a dump is this -
whatcha call it, the Land of Beyond Time?

PALMER: Absolutely virgin territory. Me and you can do big things
amound here.

DIES: Yeah? Tell me about it. Are there lots of un-American activities?

PALMER: Sure.

DIES: Swell. I'd go nuts in a place without un-American activities.
Have a cigar.

PALMER: Listen , Martin. You're gonna love this place. It's got
it all over the earth.

DIES: How do you mean?

PALMER: It's got a fourth dimension.

DIES: What's that?

PALMER: That means time don't exist no more. Understand? You don't
have to stay in the 20th century. You can be in the 19th Century or the 18th
Century. Or whenever you like at the same time.

DIES: No?

PALMER: Sure.

DIES: You mean we can investigate the reds as far back as we want to?
All through American history?

PALMER: That's the idea, Martin.

DIES: Boy! Could we even go into the 21st century?

PALMER: (hesitatingly) Well, yeah, we could, but - -

DIES: But what?

PALMER: Well, if you don't mind, I'd rather not.

DIES: Yeah, maybe you're right. We'd better let well enough alone.

(MacPARLAN has entered stealthfully and stands far off to the right obviously eavesdropping)

DIES: Mitch, I'm gonna like it here. I can see the headlines already. Martin Dies routs the Reds through the Ages. I can just see myself sitting behind this desk and - - (he suddenly notices MacPARLAN. Whispers to Palmer) Hey, Mitch (indicates the presence of MacPARLAN)

PALMER: Oh, he's just one of my boys (calls): Hey, Mac, we see you.

MacPARLAN (snaps his fingers in disgust): Oh shucks.

PALMER: I want you to meet a new pal. Martin Dies - just arrived from the earth. Martin was doing big things down there.

MacPARLAN (shaking his hand) : That's so?

PALMER: MacPARLAN's a labor expert.

MacPARLAN: Yes sir, finest and best of my kind. James MacParlan, the original Pinkerton industrial relations counsel. The guy what got the goods on the Molly Maguires and sent ten of them to the gallows in 1874.

DIES: What do ya know!

MacPARLAN: Why, Mr. Dies, I expect I was an expert in handling labor troubles before you were born.

DIES: That's fine. I'm gonna need a man like you.

MacPARLAN: What's up. We gonna smash a union?

DIES: Sure, Unions, reds, foreign agents, liberals - the works.

Are ya with us?

MacPARLAN: At your service.

DIES: O. K. (seats himself behind the desk) First we gotta have some witnesses. That's your job, Mae.

(MacPARLAN flashes his Pinkerton badge)

PALMER: Why that boy's got witnesses spotted from here to Mars.

DIES: Then go forth and get 'em, Mac. Scour the gutters and the madhouses of the Land of Beyond Time and bring us back their choicest fruit. (He hits the table a sharp rap with the gavel). Get going.

(MacPARLAN hurries off right)

(DIES hits the table again with his gavel and sits down).

DIES: Mitch, I'd feel a lot easier if old J. B. Matthews was here. That guy was a real sweetheart. (Three ladies of the D. A. R. march in from the right in single file and halt in front of the three chairs.)

(Dies whispers to Palmer)

DIES: Who are the dames, Mitch?

PALMER: The D.D.A.R.'s.

DIES: D.D.A.R.'s. What's the extra D for?

PALMER: Dead Daughters of the American Revolution.

DIES: (Stealing a glance at them) Dead, eh? That's funny. They look just the same when they're alive. (DIES rises and bows to them). Sit down, girls. (The three sit automatically with one motion and begin to knit.)

DIES: The show'll begin in just a minute. Always glad to have you girls lend your moral support.

(JOHN WILKES BOOTH comes in costume. Enters with majestic stride followed by MacPARLAN.)

DIES: Ah, the first witness. Step right up, my friend. You name, please?

BOOTH: John Wilkes Booth.

DIES: And your profession?

BOOTH: (with his best stentorian tones) An actor.

DIES: (to Booth) So you're an actor, eh, Mr. Booth? I used to kinda fancy myself as an actor once. One time when I was - - (with a sudden look of horror) Hey, wait a minute. Are you from the Federal Theatre?

BOOTH: Heavens, no sir. That was long after my time.

MacPARLAN: If you please, Mr. Chairman. This witness can give us some very valuable information. It was Mr. Booth's good fortune to come in close touch with the first kingpin of communism in America.

DIES: (Chews his cigar excitedly) Let's have his name, Mr. Booth.

BOOTH: Lincoln.

DIES: And his first name?

BOOTH: Abraham.

DIES: Ah! A Jew!

BOOTH: He claimed to be of English descent.

DIES: Well, don't put too much stock in that. Now this fellow Lincoln. Can you cite any of his seditious utterances or actions for the edification of this committee?

BOOTH: Lots of them. This Lincoln was always trying to stir up the worker against his employer. Class against class.

PALMER: Can you prove that statement, Booth?

DIES: Yeah. This committee is not gonna have any reckless or unsubstantiated charges brought in here.

BOOTH: If the committee pleases, I would like to introduce into the record a statement in Lincoln's own words. It reads (he reads from a paper) "Labor is prior to and independent of capital. Capital

is only the fruit of labor, could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is a superior of capital. And deserves much the higher consideration."

DIES: (chewing his cigar more vigorously) Red as Moscow! We're gonna uncover something pretty big here.

(SECRETARY enters quickly from the left.)

SECRETARY: Telegram for you Mr. Dies.

(SECRETARY exits.)

DIES: Here's a wire addressed to the committee. "Protest outrageous attacks your committee in calling as witness notorious assassin John Wilkes Booth to smear the hallowed memory of our great President Abraham Lincoln who saved the union in its darkest hour." Signed, Grand Army of the Republic. Say, who are these guys anyhow?

PALMER: (looks at the telegram) Grand Army of the Republic. Must be a communist front organization. (to Booth) What do you know about this outfit?

BOOTH: The Grand Army of the Republic, sir, is one of Abraham Lincoln's transmission belts.

DIES: Make a note of it. We'll look into them. I don't like that reference to our great President who saved the Union. Where there's a union you're bound to find something that's gotta be suppressed.

(Jumps to his feet shaking the telegram). What I resent about this telegram, ladies and gentlemen, is this vile slander, this baseless insinuation upon the unblemished character of our witness here who has patriotically come forth to tell what he knows about a plot against our institutions. The charge that Mr. Booth is an assassin, a murderer, is obviously a communist attempt to besmirch his good name, and I shall personally see that he is cleared of it. (BOOTH bows politely.)

PALMER: Go on with your information about this Lincoln.

BOOTH: If you please, sir, so deep and devious were the machinations of this man and his co-conspirators that he actually crept into the White House and stayed there five years.

DIES: Frightful!

PALMER: It's like a bad dream!

DIES: Now, did this Lincoln have any foreign connections?

BOOTH: Indeed he did, sir. In 1865 when the conservative and right-minded people of the country were in revolt against his tyrannical dictatorship, he received a document from London signed by the International Workingman's Association, pledging their support to his nefarious aims.

PALMER: This is shocking!

BOOTH: Yes, gentlemen, but the most shocking thing about this document is that it was drafted by none other than the notorious Karl Marx.

DIES: Karl Marx! The grandpappy of them all! And what did Lincoln do about this communication?

BOOTH: He acknowledged it with thanks.

DIES: I'm speechless!

PALMER: Now gentlemen that is where we begin to close in on the conspiracy. The International Workingmen's Association is nothing but another name for the First International and that is the predecessor of the Second International and later of the Third International.

DIES: Which is also known as the Comintern with headquarters in Moscow.

PALMER: Exactly!

DIES: In other words this Lincoln openly admits he was in communication with the ancestors of the Comintern.

BOOTH: True, gentlemen!

DIES: Did you ever see Lincoln's communist card?

BOOTH: No, gentlemen, but I can prove by his own words that he followed the Comintern line.

DIES: Let's have them.

BOOTH: I quote: "To secure to each laborer the whole product of his labor as nearly as possible, is a worthy object of any good government."

PALMER: If that isn't word for word from Marx, then I don't know anything about communism.

MacPARLAN: Did he give any other indications of his attachment to the Comintern?

BOOTH: Yes, sir. He said "The strongest bond of sympathy, outside of the family relation, should be one uniting all working people of all nations, tongues and kindred."

DIES: When did he say that?

BOOTH: On March 21, 1864 at a meeting of the Republican Workingmens Club.

DIES: Republican club! Boring from within, eh? Oh boy, I gotta warn J. Parnell Thomas.

BOOTH: But that's not all, gentlemen! He even claimed that this nation and its government belonged to the people and that they had the constitutional right to change it or the revolutionary right to overthrow it.

DIES: Terrible!

PALMER: It's awful!

DIES: He's even more dangerous than Harry F. Ward! What finally happened to Lincoln, anyhow?

BOOTH: I shot him.

ALL: You shot him!

BOOTH: (Pulls a revolver from under his cape and enacts the scene.) I slipped up behind him in his box at Ford's Theatre in Washington and fired - BANG! Then I leaped down on the stage and shouted "sic semper tyrannis! sic semper tyrannis!"

DIES: Hey, Booth, Hey! Put that thing away. You're gonna hurt someone.

(The D.A.R.s applaud the performance.)

DIES: Quiet, girls!

PALMER: (whispers to Dies): This is gonna look bad on the record, Martin. We should have investigated his police record.

DIES: Don't worry yourself, A. Mitch. I'll fix it up!
(to BOOTH). Now, you understand, Mr. Booth, this committee is out to find the facts, and it doesn't publicly condone killing a man even if he is a radical. But we understand and sympathize with the great stress and strain you must have been under, watching Lincoln's un-American activities year after year. I take it that finally you were driven to do this deed from a slight excess of patriotic zeal, is that right?

BOOTH: Naturally, sir.

DIES: We understand perfectly, Mr. Booth. Mac show the gentleman out and see that he has a bodyguard.

(The 3 D.A.R.s jump up and run to Booth with pad and pencil.)

3 D.A.R.'s: May we have your autograph, Mr. Booth?

DIES: (Shooing them back to their seats): Now, girls, Mr. Booth is a very busy man.

(BOOTH and MacPARLAN exit right.)

(DIES goes back behind his desk wiping the sweat from his brow.)

DIES: Whew! You sure meet some queer people in this business. Say, Mitch, how do you think the public is takin' this?

PALMER: Aw, you can never trust the public.

DIES: You said it! I think I'd better take time out and talk to the reporters.

PALMER: I don't see any around.

DIES: What! Oh, Mitch, that's a terrible oversight. Where are we gonna get without headlines!

PALMER: I'm sorry Martin.

DIES: (begins to warm up his voice) Me, me, me, me.

PALMER (Frightened): What's the matter?

DIES: I feel a radio speech comin' on. Gimme a microphone. Hey, somebody bring me a mike.

(MacPARLAN runs in from the right.)

MacPARLAN: (breathlessly): I got him! I got him!

DIES: Got who?

MacPARLAN: The perfect witness.

DIES: Yeah?

MacPARLAN: Wait till you hear. Oh, man, a real sweetheart!

PALMER: Who is he?

MacPARLAN: An expert. A guy that got mixed up in un-Americanism and then renounced it.

DIES: You mean he can put the finger on his old friends?

MacPARLAN: The best in the business.

DIES: Then what are we waiting for? Let's have him!

MacPARLAN: (Calls off right) Hey! You can come in now!

Oh, Martin, you're gonna love him.

(From the right comes the dashing figure of AARON BURR.)

DIES: Come right in sweetheart! -- I mean - what's your name?

PALMER: Why, Martin, don't you know who this is? It's Aaron Burr!

DIES: Aaron! Welcome! (Shakes his hand vigorously) Have a cigar!

Sit down!

(The 3 D.A.R.s jump to their feet and begin to sing:
"Hail, Columbia.")

DIES: (Whirls on them furiously) Girls! For the last time!

(They stop singing abruptly and sit.)

DIES: Hey! Somebody get Mr. Burr a chair. What is this
anyway?

(MacPARLAN quickly supplies a chair).

DIES: Are we glad to see you, honey!

PALMER: All my life I've wanted to get the low down on this
Jefferson.

DIES: (Lighting Burr's cigar) You're just what the doctor
ordered. A real surprise witness: Where are them photographers anyhow?
What a shot! Me and Aaron Burr! (Hurries back to his desk and beats
with his gavel). Quiet, everybody! Quiet! (He sits and leans forward
with eager expectation). Mr. Burr, we understand you have the goods on a
a certain Mr. Thomas Jefferson.

BURR: (Puffing his cigar). Now, now. Not so fast, gentlemen.

DIES: Listen, Aaron, don't torture us.

BURR: It is quite true that I have enough on this man to send him to limbo for eternity but - there's got to be something in it for me.

DIES: Shhh. We understand each other, Aaron. (Leans forward and whispers): We'll put you on the committee.

BURR: I have a few gambling debts to settle, you understand.

DIES: Perfectly. Now, Mr. Burr, I have reason to believe that this Jefferson was a real big shot red. Is that right?

BURR: One of the biggest.

PALMER: Can you prove that?

DIES: Yeah. We can't have any unfounded accusations that can't be backed up.

BURR: Gentlemen, I ought to know. I was Vice President when he was President.

DIES: Right from the feed box! And during this time of your term in office, you and Jefferson were carrying on un-American activities?

BURR: The very worst.

DIES: And later you saw the error of your ways and broke with him.

BURR: Quite so. He went too far. His first act when he got into power was to turn out of jail all the radicals who had been imprisoned by the Alien and Sedition acts.

DIES: That's what we need, Mitch - them good old Alien and Sedition Acts. (To BURR) What was the breed of these radical pals of Jefferson?

BURR: Mostly a lot of rag tag and bob-tailed farmers and workingmen and printers - under the influence of the French Revolution.

DIES: You mean Jefferson was getting his orders from Paris!

BURR: Quite so.

DIES: And did this Jefferson ever try to start a revolution in America?

BURR: Try to! Man alive, he did!

DIES: Oh, this is too much!

PALMER: Do you feel faint, Martin?

DIES: No, I can take it. Go on, Mr. Burr. Let the dirt fly.

BURR: From his very childhood Jefferson was a malcontent.

He read radical books, he listened to fiery speeches in the Virginia House of Burgesses. He applauded Patrick Henry who said treason is something to make the most of and he went to Philadelphia, met with a crowd of conspirators, and wrote a revolutionary manifesto declaring that all men are created equal and have a right to alter or abolish their government.

DIES: Did the rats get thrown in the jug where they belonged?

BURR: No, they started a war against the existing government.

DIES: I can't stand it! (He pulls his hair wildly.)

BURR: But a hitch came.

DIES: (Leans forward quickly) Yes?

BURR: They needed a commander-in-chief.

DIES: Yes?

BURR: None of them would do because they were all too well known as revolutionists.

DIES: You mean they needed a front man on the letterhead.

BURR: Quite so. A dignified good-looking man.

DIES: Who was he?

BURR: You'd never guess.

DIES: Who?

BURR: George Washington!

(DIES' cigar pops from his mouth. He jumps to his feet.)

DIES: (Wildly) It's colossal! Get me a microphone! (He runs around to the front of the desk.) Hey! Somebody get me a mike!

(The SECRETARY comes running in with a stand mike and puts it before him.)

DIES: (Grasps the microphone) Fellow citizens of the Land Beyond Time: I promised you an investigation of un-American activities through the ages, without fear or favor, and I have kept my promise. Look what I've done to Abraham Lincoln! I have proved that he dedicated his life to stirring up race hatred and class hatred at the behest of foreign agitators. And Thomas Jefferson! I've shown beyond a shadow of doubt that he was an agent of a foreign government carrying out orders of an international network of reds. And now Washington, George Washington. Some of you, loath to harden your hearts like flint at the spectre of sedition may say: 'Spare us the Father of our Country; he knew not what he did; he was used by crafty men.' But I say to you, the fellow-traveler is equally guilty with his mentor. No, my radio friends, you must not spare our national heroes! I have stripped them naked of all their false raiment. You are the judges! Give them the works!

(He staggers back against the desk with heroic exhaustion. PALMER runs up to his side.)

PALMER: Let me shake the hand of the greatest investigator of all the ages! Why, do you know what you have done, Martin? You have proved that the very foundation of America is UN-AMERICAN!

(PALMER seizes DIES' hand. MacPARLAN and BURR applaud, the D. A. R.s break forth into "HAIL, COLUMBIA" and a kneeling photographer snaps flashlights as the scene dims out.)

F I N I S