



Cold War: The Pete Seeger Story

Characters

J. Edgar Hoover

Karl Mundt

Chairman Walter

Toshi Seeger

Pete Seeger

Ruth Schultz

Setting

This reader's theater begins at the HUAC office, where members discuss lists of names of Communists. Later, there is a casual meeting between Pete, his wife, and an author at the Seeger house. Lastly, the script focuses on Pete Seeger's trial during the Cold War in the United States. At the trial, HUAC members are accusatory and domineering. They distrust Pete and act as though he's already been found guilty.



Act I

Hoover:

Karl, I'm glad we are on our way to see Chairman Walter, head of the House Un-American Activities Committee, or HUAC. I can't wait to show him the list of names we have. We now know many of this country's most important Communists. I'm sure Chairman Walter knows just how dangerous these people are.

Mundt:

It's hard to believe that Russia was America's ally during World War II, when they are now our worst foreign enemy. But, let's not fool ourselves. Our main enemies are right here at home. There are Communists all over the United States. They believe in the Soviet way of life, and they support the Soviets in the Cold War. We must stop them and put them in jail. They could destroy our country!

Hoover:

You're right! Chairman Walter must make these commies testify before him and answer every question. And, they must name the other Communists they know. How else will we be sure to find all of them?

Mundt:

That's true. Look, the chairman's office is right here. Let's go in.



Walter:

Hi, Edgar and Karl. It's great to see you. You said that you want to discuss some serious business. What is it?

Mundt:

Hi, Chairman Walter. We wanted to show you the progress we've made in gathering the names for our list. It's taken a long time because there are many dangerous people who live here. We also want to talk to you about what you can do to help us.

Hoover:

We're most alarmed about the left-wing artists and entertainers. Many of these people are "red." They influence large audiences. I don't think they have the right to criticize the United States. And, I'm not sure why they think it's acceptable to cause trouble.

Mundt:

Chairman Walter, we need your help.

Hoover:

We know that some of these people have already been called to testify in front of the HUAC. But, there are a lot more out there. We know some of them. We must find out who the rest are. That's where you can help us.



Walter:

It's been very frustrating. Many of these artists plead the Fifth Amendment when they testify before the HUAC. They don't talk at all. It may not be said out loud, but at least it's an unspoken admission of guilt.

Hoover:

That may be true. But, it doesn't help us identify the other people they know who are Communists. You need to make them answer every question, Chairman Walter. It is not enough for them to confess. They must name the others, as well.

Walter:

I'll do my very best. But, the Fifth Amendment is part of the Constitution. I can't legally force them to speak.

Mundt:

Frankly, I think you have to try harder. You need to threaten these people with long jail terms so that they'll speak.

Walter:

We're already having these artists blacklisted. They can't perform in any public places. And, their ideas can't be aired. People know not to hire them. If they do, they risk being investigated, as well.