

Change the World

by Mike Gold

I AM still receiving letters from writers, college teachers and other professionals who believe I was rude to Albert Maltz.

Rarely in recent years has one encountered such violent feelings. These people are mighty angry and it has set me to wondering.



How can they be so angry against me who attacked Maltz, when they haven't one speck of emotion to spare against the vicious Soviet-hater, James T. Farrell?

I am ashamed to realize that many left-wing intellectuals seem to have forgotten what Trotskyism is—or the part that people like Farrell played in the Moscow trials, the Spanish conflict, the elections of Roosevelt, and similar crises. No, the correspondents never mention this issue at all. Maltz's peculiar discovery (after 15 years in the left wing) was that art and politics lived in two separate air-tight compartments, and that Farrell the author could be tenderly regarded, while Farrell the anti-Soviet warmonger was ignored.

We are living in a dangerous hour for such Ivory-tower exercises. Monopoly-capitalism in this country seems ready to about the works.

Trotskyites have been among the most active intellectuals serving monopoly-capitalism in the war against the Soviet Union. For decades the Eastmans, Lyonses, Chamberlains and Farrells have been a principal source of anti-Soviet atrocity material in this country. A third World War, using the atom bomb, and directed toward the destruction of the Soviet Union and the emerging social-democracies of Europe and Asia, sounds in our ears, like some sinister drumming of a cosmic rattlesnake.

BUT it's a long story that I cannot go into here. Anyone who can remember the war in Spain should remember the disruption, in spying, the armed revolt raised by Trotskyites—not against Franco, but against the people's government of Spain.

Farrell was in on that. He was in on the movement to vindicate the traitors who sold out to Hitler and were tried at Moscow. He backed Chiang Kai-shek in China, against the Yenan people's movement. He has written books and numerous articles to contribute to the reign of terror against Marxist ideas that prevails in the American publishing field. He is ranged beside Winston Churchill and other warmongers today.

Anyone who could grant esthetic immunity to this obvious enemy has lost sight of the Communist polar star.

How Can They Forget the Record of Trotskyist Betrayals?

Let me repeat to the abusive letter-writers: I would respect your criticism, if I could detect in you also some feeling of aversion to Trotskyism and its conciliators. But you do not show such feelings. And there is something rotten in such a situation, I say.

I AGREE with Lawrence Emery and other correspondents that Trotskyism is not the central issue, however. Maltz led us off the main point.

The big thing just now is to shake off the dead hand of Browderism. During the Browder dictatorship the great structure of Marxist-Leninist philosophy was submerged. Our Party's entire publishing apparatus was turned into a giant promotion scheme for an author named Earl Browder—a man infinitely smaller than those he had supplanted.

Thus, the Marxist philosophy which compares in the social sciences to Darwin and Einstein in other fields, was lost for a time to American culture.

We had no guidance from Marx, and therefore could offer no guidance for the bewildered literary forces seeking a way out of capitalist demoralization and breakdown.

Marxism flourished however, during the first half of the 1930's, during the economic breakdown and unemployment crisis. The Communist Party organized

and led the unemployed, it was a period of vast suffering and epic struggle.

Marxism penetrated all the Ivory towers; there were debates in the literary journals, pro and con.

Many books of Marxist critical theory appeared. New writers wrote "proletarian" novels, plays and poems and became a main stream in our national culture, that formed the finest literary epoch our country has known since the Golden Age of Whitman, Emerson and Melville.

It was a fighting art, a Marxist art and frankly a weapon in the class struggle then raging so openly. I was ashamed to note that certain latter-day Marxist literary critics have developed a tendency to patronize the Thirties as our period of crude and primitive beginnings. This is not so. The literature of that period is above anything produced since, in the years of Browderism and sophistication. The Forties are still nothing to brag about in America's literature.

To repeat: We must find our way back to the main highway, to join the people as they march to truth and socialism. We must rebuild the Marxist cultural front, with its literary magazines, theaters, music and art.

Let's not get bogged down in any cafeteria argument over little theoretical abstractions. Let us look at the world again, and plunge literature and art into life and the social realities.