

Hollywood Writers Send Messages to Art Forum

(The following communications from Hollywood were read at last night's "Art Is a Weapon" symposium at Manhattan Center under joint auspices of the Daily Worker and New Masses:)

By JOHN HOWARD LAWSON

AMERICAN imperialism, seeking military and economic control of the world, is determined to use culture as a weapon of reaction. The warmakers plan to place science in a military straitjacket. Research is to wear the uniform of monopoly. Similar regimentation awaits the scholar and the journalist, the writer and the artist, operating in media of communication that are dominated by the power of monopoly.

The artist and the thinker face a very simple choice. It is a choice between death and life. The invitation to serve reaction, whether it comes in the blatant language of Hearst and Rankin, or in the more discreet appeals of the Partisan Review and the Book Section of the Sunday Times, is an invitation to suicide.

The artist and the thinker cannot achieve freedom alone. A free culture is a people's culture. Throughout history the creative individuality has flowered only when it was rooted in the soil of reality. Today reality makes stern demands upon us. Let us make this meeting a powerful reaffirmation of the role of culture. Let us appeal to all writers and artists and scholars to fulfill the responsibilities that life imposes upon us, to dedicate our skill and talent to the cause of labor, to use our art and knowledge as weapons in the struggle for peace, freedom and security.

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By ALBERT MALTZ

IT SEEMS to me that both audience and speakers at tonight's meeting have cause for self-congratulations. For they have assembled together to a common purpose of the highest order: The advancement of a true, free people's culture.

What will that culture be? It seems to me it will be a total way of life, a way of thought, of social activity and behavior, of scientific techniques, of artistic work, all of which are based upon the free comradeship of equal peoples, upon justice equally delivered, upon freedom from economic and social exploitation of one group by another.

The total culture we have in America today is not that. Hearst does not advance true thought. Imperialism does not advance free thought. The sharecropper, living in illiteracy and squalor, working like a field beast in return for minimum subsistence, is an American, but he does not participate in a free or democratic culture.

It is the ironic truth, as well, that where culture is limited—where it is the privilege of the purse rather than the automatic possession of citizenship—there, even for the purse, it is a twisted thing, a stunted culture.

The artist, above everyone else, must recognize this fact. His cultural contribution is direct and immediate, and it can be weighed. He must decide the cultural tradition he wishes to serve: A dying culture founded on privilege, or the rising culture of the people, that will be founded on economic and social equality. He must speak for one or the other, find his roots and inspiration in one or the other.

The meeting tonight, it seems to me, is composed of those who have not tired of the American dream, but who see a bright promise for it. The effort to bring that dream to reality is the honorable struggle of our time. And it seems to me not unfitting that those who have enlisted in this struggle should pause for a moment, look around, lift their heads high and say, "What we stand for is right; what we believe in is good; what we fight for is the best of the past and the best of the future."

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By ALVAH BESSIE

NO MORE appropriate moment could be found for your meeting. The forces of fascism are far from dead, and they are doing their level best to draw the world into the vortex of a new catastrophe.

This is the time when the call must go out to every honest artist—to use his art as a weapon as he has never used it before. A weapon for peace, primarily. A weapon of life, not death. We have had enough of death. From Spain to Stalingrad, Berlin and Tokyo, the best sons and daughters of the people have given their lives that we may live. They have given the cause of peace—of life—into our hands to defend from this moment forward.

Painter—paint! Musician—play! Writer—write! Actor—act! In the time to come we will soon learn what strength lies in our art—in our painting, our music, our writing, our acting.