

Change the World

by Mike Gold

WEEKS before "the Storm Over Maltz" broke out, on Feb. 5, to be exact, I received a letter from an Indiana author which I put aside and intended to print at the first possible opening.

Other letters piled deep over it, and only yesterday it bobbed to the surface again. But the letter is still timely; indeed, a live contribution to the current literary debate for it touches the important point: that under Browderism, we had almost destroyed our left-wing literature.

Please read this letter, this typical letter, of a loyal left-wing author, who pleads for guidance, a literary movement, a home in America to replace the one that bourgeois Browderism tore down:

"Dear Mike Gold:
"Being well able to imagine the many requests that reach your desk, I am adding to their number with the greatest reluctance. I can only plead that in more than 10 years I have never done this before, and will not be put out if you fail to answer me.

"But I believe my problem is shared by most of our aspiring Marxist writers at this time, in that we have almost no



literary centers, no magazine, no advisors, no theoretical help, nothing.

"In addition to the general poverty, I have a special reason for asking your advice.

"About three years ago I finished a novel—a novel of 567 pages, and I don't want to minimize the task of reading it—dealing with the progressive labor and progressive movement of the years 1936-39.

"Loyalist Spain, the General Motors strike of 1936, the movement for anti-fascist collective security form the background of events. The central character is no hero, but a wavering petty-bourgeois youth, in the words of Marx 'fumbling at those above, and trembling at those below.'

"I have tried to approach the subject with utmost fidelity to life, and to show people of the movement and their opponents as they were. At the time I finished the work, I was living in New York. I submitted it to four or five publishers, just through the front window, and they rejected it. I did not submit it to International Publishers or any of the people that might have best been able to judge it. To tell the truth, I was somewhat afraid of my own brain-child. At any rate, I put it aside.

"Recently I had occasion to look at the book again, and was again plunged into the problem of what to do with it. I can

Marxism Demands a Full Left-Wing Culture

conceive of it being a weapon in the struggle, but who will judge it or publish it?

"I would appreciate any suggestion you can make; if not, perhaps this letter can add to the evidence on the plight of the left-wing writer in America."

I STILL read dozens of manuscripts each year, novels, plays, poetry collections where formerly, I used to read hundreds. Out of a hundred such specimens of the raw material of literature, one or two talents can be found, and the work is worth while, if one has the time.

Yes, it is worth while, if one believes that through its people American culture can be rejuvenated, given a great purpose, a great meaning. Only a peoples' culture can free America from the coarse, soul-deadening influence of commercialism.

BROWDERISM was a denial of the Marxian truth that there are only two great fundamental classes in modern society—Big Capital and Big Labor and that the one spells feudalism and fascism—the other leads to progress and democracy.

Writers and artists who recognized this, and who wish to work out labor's own cultural forms, were rejected and dissolved in the Browder reign.

They were told that labor had no inde-

pendent role to play, since monopoly capitalism was objectively a progressive force in the world, and sufficient leader for all of us.

In France, in the underground, the left managed to find paper and courage to print literary magazines and books of poetry and fiction and belles lettres. This was during the Nazi occupation. It is to our shame in the rich United States that we now haven't a single literary magazine or publishing house to furnish guidance and a home for our left-wing artists and writers.

This, I believe, is the main problem at the moment, and not merely a theoretical question. Our left-wing cultural movement has to start to rebuild its shattered house. We must again learn to believe in ourselves, and in the independent role of the American working class and its culture.

We must set to work to create magazines, theoretical debates, groups of people who care passionately and work tirelessly for a people's culture. We must have a publishing house for authors like this Indiana youth.

"We must not be afraid of stating what we are aiming at, and why and how," to quote the great speech of the French Communist, Roger Garaudy. "The worst of errors is the fear of taking a stand." In culture, as in politics.