

Dear Editor

Letters from Readers

Time for Tolerance In Politics and Art

BOSTON, Mass.

Dear Editor:

For my two cents' worth—the reduction of Stalin to human size is good. The inflation had gone so far Soviet authors seemed to feel it necessary to pay homage to “our leader and teacher” in the course of a novel. Why wasn't something done about it before? It is not easy to speak up against party policy. If anyone has an honest difference of opinion, he should not be made to feel like a renegade, but that is often the case. And how far can we go in expressing individual differences without becoming a debating society?

Stalin's dictatorship led to the dictatorship of the CPSU over fellow CP's in other countries, as in the case of Yugoslavia. It reached the point where the CPSU was demanding world respect rather than earning it.

While on the subject of criticism—to make a quick shift to abstract art and Sidney Finkelstein. How can he say that abstract art sets out “to reflect reality”? If these “myths and symbols” have any relation to “reality” it must be the invisible world Cotton Mather defended. . . .

Show me an honest portrait or landscape, and I can give my reaction to it. Show me a lot of crazy lines that look like the swishing of a cow's tail, and I can only say bunk. We don't have to outlaw abstract art at this time of tolerance, but for God's sake let's keep it out of sight. If that stuff is art, every four-year-old child with a box of crayons is an artist. Henry Holiday, Leonardo de Vinci, Frederick Cotman, Francis Davis Millet, Rockwell Kent, and all the rest of them who draw and paint things I can recognize are good enough for me. —F. C.

A Contribution to the Controversy on Art

Editor, The Worker:

The subject of Sidney Finkelstein's letter and of Howard Fast's recent columns on the same subject have been the basis of a great deal of controversy among graphic artists (and in other ways among other artists) for quite a long time. Most artists have arrived at some sort of position or compromise in this controversy. But being artists, if they are not completely inverted, their position is open to change.

And with the prospect of major world change (and therefore change in the relationships between peoples and people) without war, but through peaceful activity, not only ahead of us but actually taking place, change in the views of artists about their work is certainly the order of the day.

Now, as a person who wants to, and on occasion, does look at pictures, I am constrained to judge them in terms of what they have to say to me. I also, occasionally read the statements of abstract artists about their work. Though they sometimes gives me a glimmer of what they are trying to say, none

of their work has ever been come close to being vivifying communication or exhilarating emotional experience, such as I know great art can be. . . .

I believe that artists, not alone as humans, but as true artists must speak to their contemporaries first of all. And a most important part of their art must be in finding ways to make them want to listen even when they're not ready to.

If they console themselves with the thought that the future will understand them or that the esoteric critic or other abstract artists will comprehend what is gibberish to the rest of us, they justify much worse than Fast's accusation that they are decorations producers for the homes of the rich. Though there are those who will fawn on and flatter them (and but rarely pay them) the future will ignore them as does the present.

Only a fool would deny the need for extension of the areas of technique and of their appreciation. But only a blind man will take satisfaction in the feel of fine tools, while rejecting the vision of what those tools can produce.

SAMUEL GROSS

Wants Column on Books for Children

Pine Hill, New Jersey

Dear Editor:

I would like to make a suggestion for a future column. I would like information about books for children. I am particularly interested in books that are in the public libraries and schools.

I have several lists of books by present day progressive writers but most of these are not available in public libraries.

I understand that Dickens, Thackeray, Twain, and other writers wrote a number of excellent books. I would like more information about them, if possible, by age groups.—W.M.

NEW YORK

Dear Editor:

In your article “Moscow Miss Has Style”—BY GUM: I noticed that one thing was conspicuously missing. You mentioned nothing about the price of these fabulous fashions, while on a TV show “Camera Inside Russia” when they showed the fashions they stressed that the prices were fabulous. Way too high for the average Russian worker. This has been a big question in my mind ever since.

P.K. (Age 13)

(Prices accompanying article were omitted because given in rubles and were comparable to those in medium - priced dress shops here).

New Old Age Assistance To \$80 Top in Michigan

LANSING, Mich (FP).—Gov. Williams last month approved a bill increasing top old age assistance benefits at a ceiling of \$80 a month from the present \$70 top, and letting those living in hospitals or convalescent homes get up to \$90.

Old-age assistance with federal aid is for the aged who did not qualify for social security benefits but would otherwise be welfare cases. They number about 70,000 and of these perhaps 24,000 will get the maximum aid.

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