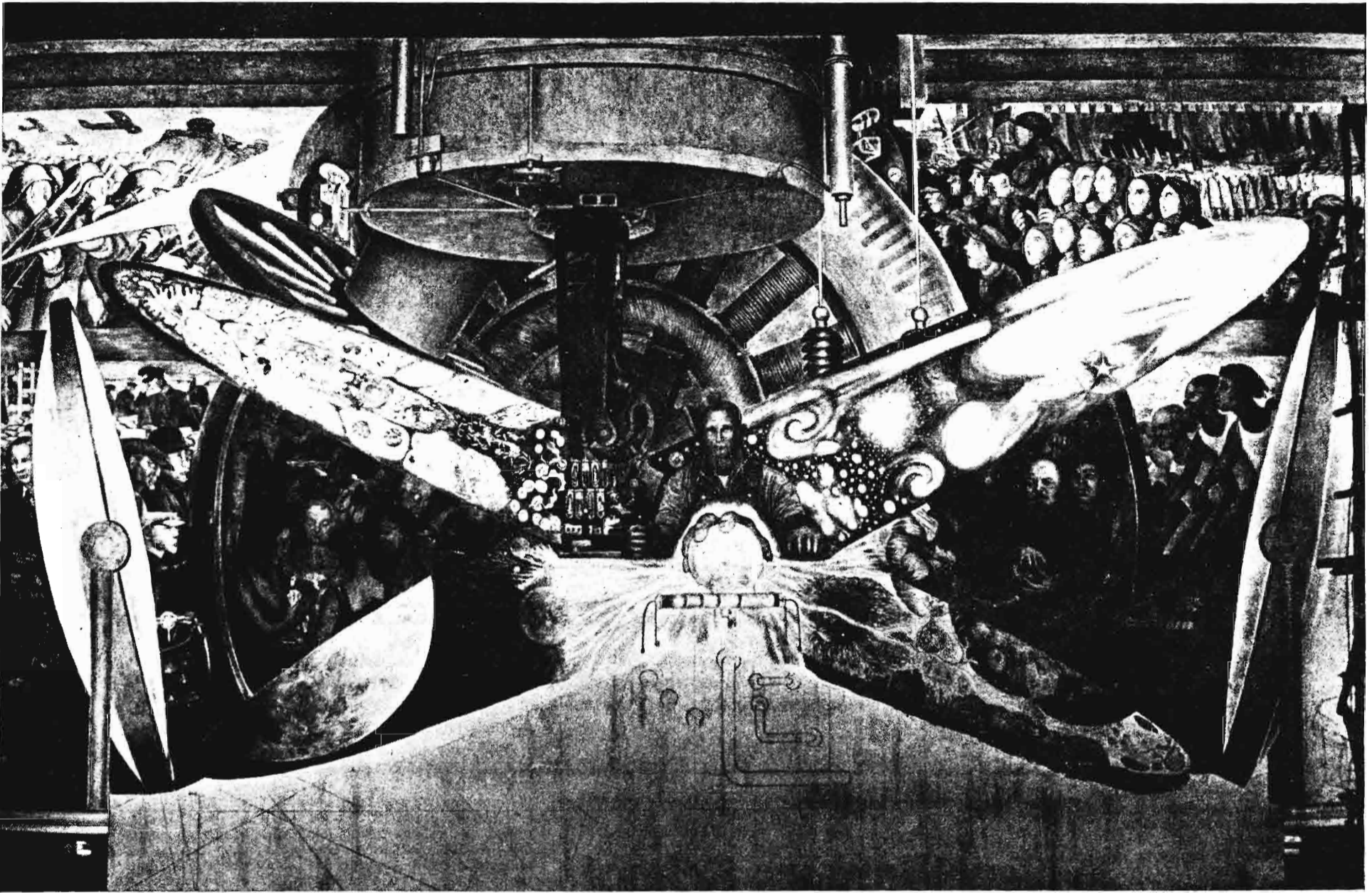


# Workers Age

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THE UNFINISHED MURAL

This unusual photograph and the detail photos printed in this section were taken surreptitiously by one of Rivera's aids after the Rockefellers had forbidden the completion of the mural or even its reproduction

or photographing. Unfortunately, a good third of the main wall and both side walls are not included. The parts cut off, due to the technical difficulties of photographing, include an unemployment demonstration

with police just starting to break it up, part of the war scene, the student scene, part of the May Day demonstration, a group of workers issuing from their factory and listening to a working class prop-

agandist. The side walls contained pictures showing the liquidation of religion and the liquidation of tyranny. A description of the plan of the picture is contained in Diego Rivera's article.

## THE RADIO CITY MURAL

For the last twenty years I have thought that the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat had need of its own artistic expression, especially in the field of the plastic arts, for a work of art can say the most complicated things in the most simple and direct form that will speak clearly to all that have eyes to see. Furthermore, it is highly important to create a class taste, not merely for the advantages it may bring to the worker in his personal life but even more for the clarification of his class position and strengthening of his confidence and determination to struggle. With this aim, my comrades and I painted in Mexico a long series of mural paintings which were useful for the masses of workers and peasants of Mexico. It seemed to many that our work was successful merely because in Mexico there existed a well-developed tradition of popular arts among the masses. Therefore, it became desirable that we test our theories among the workers of the United States who are not influenced by any tradition of peasant art. This motivated my eager acceptance of the opportunity to paint walls here in the United

States. The most important and complete of my American paintings is the series of frescoes in Detroit in which I realized as correctly as possible an analysis of the relations of the worker to the means of production and the natural forces and materials involved, creating a beauty appropriate to the proletariat. The real reason why my work in Detroit aroused so much attack was because it was completely and implicitly a product of dialectic materialism and its opponents, tho they had never heard the term, felt instinctively outraged by the nature of the painting.

It was for this reason too that the workers reacted in its favor without any request or explanation on my part, proving thus that proletarian art, born of the roots of popular art, is immediately accessible to the proletariat of a country in which such popular arts are not developed and proving further that it is not true that the proletariat has "bad artistic taste," but rather an immediate appreciation of beauty, provided it has contact with its life and expresses its needs.

\* \* \*

by Diego Rivera

### The Case Of Rockefeller Center

Those who gave me the work at Radio City knew perfectly well my artistic tendencies and my social and political opinions. And the Detroit affair had just served to make very clear the nature of my reaction to the environment of the United States. They did much urging to persuade me to accept the work, which I finally did only on condition that they would give me full liberty to paint as I saw fit. My interpretation of the theme and my sketches for the painting were discussed and approved. The theme they assigned was: Man at the crossroads, looking with uncertainty but with hope to a better world. My interpretation, naturally, portrayed the crossroads with the road to the left as the socialist world, that to the right, the world of capitalism. The steel worker, in the midst of a connected system of machines which give him control of energy and means of knowledge of the various aspects of life, the infinitely great and the infinitely small, and a simulta-

neous vision of the most distant and the nearest things, and power over the forces of nature and the vegetable products and mineral wealth of the earth. The axis of the composition was determined by the cylinders of a telescope and microscope, and their two visual fields, crossed like a pair of scissors with a luminous sphere as its central pivot, containing the representation of the atom and the cell, controlled by the hand of mechanical power between the two arms of the worker which were placed upon electric controls, while his vision was directed forward. At the sides, arranged in horizontal zones like the floors of a building, were, at the left, an image of a May Day demonstration in Moscow, projected by television, and below, the workers of a factory gathered during the lunch hour to listen to a working class leader. At the right, in the upper part, war—at attack of infantry equipped with masks and flame-throwers, and supported by tanks and areoplanes. And, below that, as a consequence, a demonstration of unemployed workers in Wall Street corner South Street, with the mounted police just in the act of

attacking and dispersing the demonstration; in the background, crossed, an elevated structure and the steeple of a church. In the ellipses, representing the microscopic and telescopic views, on the side nearest the war, the wounds and the microbes of decomposition and infection and those of the typical plagues and diseases of war. On the lower edge of the ellipse, the microbes of venereal disease, syphilis, etc., and adjoining a sector showing a scene of gaming, drinking and dancing of members of the bourgeoisie, reminiscent of Marx's observation that such a scene was the overflowing scum of capitalist decay. Beneath this, in the astronomic field, was represented the moon, dead planet, and near the center, the sun, in eclipse. In the same field, on the left, constellations and nebulae in ascending evolution. Near this, a group of young women, youth and pioneers of the Communist movement. On that side, in the microscopic field and balancing the sun, focus of vital energy, was represented a cancerous invasion of the human body as the negative element due to a misdirected concentration of

(Continued on next page)



**MAY DAY —**  
(Fragments from the Rivera Mural.)

The background shows the Kremlin Wall and the Tomb of Lenin (visible behind the woman's section). The banners and the

### Fragments of the Big Mural



(Fragment not showing on larger picture)

A group of workers are pouring out of a factory during their lunch hour and listening to a working class propagandist whose hand points them the path in the direction of Lenin. Rivera chose Bertram D. Wolfe, director of the New Workers School, as the model for the teacher-leader for the group of American workers.



— IN MOSCOW

women's kerchiefs are a vivid red—"the coloring has been objected to as too bright," wrote the Rockefeller construction company.

## The Radio City Mural

(Continued from previous page) vital energy. Next the organs, fluids, functions and microorganisms of the functions of nutrition and generation of life. In the sector between those two things was represented the union of the worker, the peasant and the soldier, with the industrial worker as leader, and in the background a group of workers with raised fists. Since, as much for my personal sentiments and opinions as for the historical truth, the outstanding leader of the proletariat is Lenin, I could not conceive or represent the figure of the worker-leader as any other than that of Lenin. In the foreground, two enormous lenses placed at the two sides gave the magnified vision of all this to two groups of students of all races.

#### The Controversy

After the Rockefellers had repeatedly expressed their enthusiasm for the work as it developed on the wall, the pretext was advanced by Nelson Rockefeller that the head of Lenin was unacceptable, despite the fact that it was in my sketch and on the wall in outline for over a month. While the correspondence on this subject was being exchanged a whole plan of attack was being worked out and, one night, after getting rid of spectators, an incongruously large force of guards and attendants covered the picture while the architects were expressing their objections to me in the construction shack. Their objections were not merely to the face of Lenin but to the whole painting, its color, its ideology and its spirit. At 7:10 I left the scaffold; but a phone call from one of the workers to the New Workers School brought a demonstration down to Rockefeller Center on a united front basis by nine the same evening, with improvised banners and mimeographed leaflets, which demonstration was brutally attacked by the police.

Since then there has been a growing movement among the workers organizations and among artists, critics and intellectuals, demanding that we be given the opportunity to complete the work according to our plans and that it be exhibited and reproduced.

As the best answer to the financial dictatorship of the Rockefellers my co-workers and I have decided to make the revolutionary painting accessible to the New York workers which the Rockefellers tried to shut off from them. Therefore, we have decided to use the money that the Rockefellers paid to paint without charge in workers schools. Thus the Rockefellers have been stripped of their assumed mask of liberalism as art patrons and yet are paying for revolutionary art in the workers headquarters much against their will. At the same time, the whole incident has served to stir the interest of great numbers of workers in the development of proletarian art and the storm aroused demonstrates the living character of the art of the working class as

against the art of the bourgeoisie which is no longer capable of stirring controversy.

We are confident that the workers will yet unveil our buried mural and, if it be destroyed or incomplete, they will create out of their own midst the artists of tomorrow who will fulfil our intentions and carry revolutionary art to far greater heights.

### Rivera Murals at New Workers School

I plan to express the relation between the forces of nature and the producers, developing this theme thru its main historical stages, making clear the necessity for complete control of the forces of production by the workers and the need for communist unity in order to attain that control.

## Art and the Worker

(The following paragraphs are taken from Diego Rivera's lecture at the New Workers School, reprinted in the June 1933 issue of the "Modern Monthly".—Editor.)

It is true that in Mexico I painted mainly peasants, because Mex-

—the role of the artist is that of the soldier of the revolution.

It has been said that the revolution has no need of art, but that art has need of the revolution. That is not true. The revolution does have need of revolutionary art. Art is not for the revolutionist what it is for the romanticist. It is not a stimulant or excitant. It is not a liquor on which to get drunk. It is nourishment to strengthen the nervous system. It supplies strength for the struggle. It is as much a nourishment as is wheat.

The sensibility of the revolutionary painter reflects the external world. Cezanne, for example, a bourgeois revolutionary painter who sympathized with the Commune in spite of his being Catholic, translated with a tonality typically his own all that he saw, so that even if he painted a loaf of bread there was in it a reflection of the character of the revolutionary artist. Another painter, on the other hand, might actually choose as his theme a policeman clubbing a worker and yet fail to create revolutionary art, as has too often proved to be the case.

As to landscape—a landscape may very well prove to be a most useful work of art. I do not want to develop any theory of landscapes here but I want to describe a revealing experience in that connection. I was once painting near Poitiers in France, back in 1919, in the barnyard of a French peasant. I worked, because the matter interested me highly, from six in the morning to six at night. One night the peasant approached me. He looked at the painting for a long time. It was then a small canvas. He said, "Is that small canvas all you intend to do, or do you intend to paint a larger painting, something of the size which the barnyard is? If so, if you are coming back tomorrow, even if I have to use the various tools and implements, I shall try to see to it that I put them back in the same position from which I took them so you will find them in the same place tomorrow."

The next day I came back to the same place. I painted a canvas of two arms length. I worked at it all day and in the evening when the peasant came back, he stood looking at it for a long time, and he said, "Now I see that painting is something that can be called work." He began to note the various objects in the painting, and at last he said to me the following: "Well, it is twenty-two years that I have been living in this house, and now that you have painted it I must say that I never really saw my house before. This door is maroon, and you have painted it maroon, but somehow it isn't the same maroon. This roof is a roof of slate, and you have painted it as a roof of slate; when I look at

(Continued on the last page)

## New Workers School

51 Wst 14 Street—New York City

### SUMMER TERM

JUNE 1933

C-o-u-r-s-e-s:

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Four lectures on Fridays, begin June 9, 8:15 P. M.

Each session: 25c

**MARX AND AMERICA.** Instructor: Bertram D. Wolfe

Four sessions on Thursdays, begin June 1, 8:20 P. M.

Fee: \$1.00

**WHICH PROGRAM FOR REVOLUTIONISTS?** Instructor: D. Benjamin.

Five sessions on Thursdays, begin June 1, 7:00 P. M.

Fee: \$1.00

**LANDMARKS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MARXISM.** Instructor: Will Herberg.

Five sessions on Fridays, begin June 2, 7:00 P. M.

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ico is primarily a peasant land, but as for myself, I was born in a mine. I was born an industrial worker. My paintings aroused in Detroit a sympathy and an antipathy such as none of them had ever done in Mexico. As never before I evoked the attack of the conservative and religious elements, and as never before I stirred up a reaction in my defense on the part of the great mass of workers and those intellectuals appreciative of mass art. Therefore I have come to the definite conclusion that it is not true that the taste in art of the American working man is formed and trained by the colored comic strips in the Sunday papers. If painters insist upon presenting to them pictures which do not interest them, naturally they will not be attracted, but if they do as I have done, even if their paintings be bad, as mine may be bad, if they paint things which concern the worker they will get an immediate response—the response I got when my paintings were under attack thru the formation of a united front of some twelve thousand workers in Detroit who adopted a resolution and sent it to the Mayor of the City of Detroit, declaring that if an attempt was made to destroy my work the workers would defend it by whatever means necessary.

This result of my experiment is interesting above all for American painters, because the experience is enough in any case to destroy altogether the idea of the distance which separates the painter from the worker. That idea is false. If the painter succeeds in painting art for the proletariat, the proletariat will understand it. More, the proletariat will defend his art, proletarian art, with the same energy with which he will defend any other thing which he finds necessary for the nourishment and the needs of his class. The role of the artist in the revolution is not that of the fellow traveler; it is not that of the sympathizer; it is not that of a servant of the revo-