

# Art Is A Weapon

By CYRIL BRIGGS

For centuries the Negro has been the butt of ridicule, the object of slander and abuse in the press of the white ruling class. Today, with the acute crisis of world capitalism and the sharpening terror against the Negro People, all the cultural weapons in the hands of the white ruling class are being turned against the Negro. Pseudo science is mobilized to "prove" the inherent inferiority of the Negro in order to "justify" the bestial persecution of the Negro People. The press, the radio, the theatre, all are increasingly utilized to slander us and to justify and condone the growing legal lynchings in the courts and lynch murders by landlord and police gangs.

The white ruling class has always carried out the imperialist motto of "Divide and Rule". It has always sought to poison the minds of the white workers against us. Today, with the black and white toiling masses more and more rallying to a united fight against capitalist misery, the white ruling class finds it more than ever necessary to turn its propaganda guns against the Negro People.

The white ruling class not only utilizes against us the instruments of culture at its disposal, but seeks to disarm the Negro People culturally, as well as economically and politically. It has suppressed the revolutionary traditions of the Negro People. It has prostituted Negro Culture to suit its dictum of Negro inferiority, holding Negro Art to the level of black face clowning. It denies equal education to Negro children, jim-crowing our children into inferior schools in the South and in many sections of the North, drumming ideas of inferiority and docility into the heads of our children; denying proper training and equal pay to Negro teachers. For example, the Southern States spend four to six times as much on white children as on Negro children.

Under the NRA program of lower living standards for the toiling masses and a starvation level for the Negro toilers, art and science, the radio, movies, press, etc., are all fully mobilized to carry through the attacks of the New Deal against the workers, directed with especial virulence against the Negro masses. The so-called "war" against depression" is in actuality a brutal war against the toilers, black and white. And, as in the World War, all the instruments of bourgeois culture are hysterically directed toward the defense of the class interests of the bourgeoisie.

In all class societies, the dominating class rules by controlling the instruments of culture, along with economic and political power. To talk of pure and unbiased art under such circumstances is sheer rot and nonsense. Art is a weapon in the hands of the white ruling class. Art can be, and must be made a weapon in the hands of the toiling masses and the oppressed Negro People in their struggles for bread and freedom.

In contrast to the cultural disarming of the oppressed Negro People under United States imperialism, the cultural revolution in the Soviet Union has given complete cultural, as well as political autonomy to the numerous nationalities that were formerly bitterly oppressed under Tsarist imperialism. The cultural revolution in the Soviet Union is an integral part

of the social revolution by which the Russian toilers, under the leadership of the Russian Communist Party, overthrew Tsarism and capitalism and seized power for themselves. The example of the Russian toilers offers to the black and white toilers and the Negro People of this country the only way out of the capitalist morass of permanent unemployment, mass misery and imperialist war.

Negro artists and intellectuals have a great role to play in the liberation struggles of the Negro People. Every Negro intellectual and artist should use his genius and talent to reflect and support the struggles of the Negro toilers enslaved in factory and field, the victims of forced labor and peonage in the South. The life of Alexander Pushkin, famous Russian Negro poet, is well worthy of emulation by our artists and intellectuals of this period. Pushkin's greatness was not due solely to his literary genius, great as that was. He was a militant fighter against Tsarist oppression. He was deeply sympathetic with the movement (Dekabrists) to liberate the serfs. A descendant of a slave, Pushkin hated all forms of slavery. Liberator Gal NINE

Russian serfdom itself was slavery. He was beloved by the Russian masses. He has left heroic heritage to the Negro People and an example to the Negro intellectuals.

Those Negro artists now grouping themselves around the Liberator, as the leader in the struggle for national liberation, are emulating Pushkin's glorious example. Their aid is making possible the promotion of genuine Negro culture, with its proletarian content (work songs, songs of revolt, etc.). Through their aid it has been possible to organize a Liberator Chorus, a Liberator Theatre Group, Liberator-L.S.N.R. Forum, Liberator Children's drawing classes, etc. New and more varied forms of cultural activities need to be developed, however, and this can only be done by the Negro artists themselves with the help and guidance of the Liberator which, as the leader of the national liberation movement interested in promoting Negro culture in its original form.

## Harlem Workers Hear On Militant

By ISRAEL DINZEY, Jr.

Speaking boldly as an advocate of The International Labor Defense, Comrade Lawrence of the Ozie Powell Branch of the I.L.D., told an audience that packed Lenox Ave. at the corner of 131st Street, on Tuesday night just exactly what the I.L.D. meant to the Negro people. He also strongly expressed his determination to support the I.L.D. to the fullest extent.

This was one of the many fiery speeches that Comrade Lawrence had made on the Scottsboro case. He outlined to his eager listeners how they may lend their support to this militant organization, the I.L.D. He explained to them how through the reading of the "Liberator"

Ruby Elzy, who possesses a voice of rare sweetness, will sing Sunday morning at Community Church services in Town Hall.