

if they are to perceive the essential tasks and not be lost in a confused maze. The whole Party will boldly approach its task confident of victory when we have mastered the principles of revolutionary theory based on practical study of Australian conditions.

The nature of the present struggle against the Axis, the protection of the intellectual and physical wealth

of Australia and the other United Nations brings to the front many new problems.

The Communists fight for victory alongside all progressive people. But our struggle is illuminated by the torch of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. The growth and consolidation of the Australian Communist Party will be a guarantee of victory and peace.

ART AND THE INDIVIDUAL

(KATHLEEN WATSON)

D. DIAMOND, in the November issue of the "Communist Review," correctly analysed the main trends of modern art in relation to the class struggle, but, necessary as it is to understand these, for the artist himself it is not enough. He is moulded by the social conditions of his time, by the thoughts, feelings and experiences of his contemporaries, but he, the individual, is the artist. He cannot passively assimilate and reproduce. He must actively transform his material. So, as it is by the interaction of the environment and the individual that the work of art is produced, the artist must understand the development and role of his own individuality as well as that of his social environment and take as conscious a part in its direction.

The development of an individual into an artist depends on a number of factors. First there is natural aptitude. This is possessed by millions more than can ever develop it under capitalism. Only those who have studied the experience of the Soviet Union over the last twenty years can have any idea of how widespread such aptitudes are. Even there the facilities for their development, magnificent by any capitalist standards, are not yet universal, so that the results achieved do not set the limits of possibility.

This brings us to the second factor—training. The idealist conception of the artist as a genius giving expression to "inspiration" has infected even aspiring materialist artists. Having acquired some understanding of the class struggle and of the role of the proletariat, they imagine that, however crude technically their productions may be, they are proletarian art because the political content is sound—as though a carpenter could not fail to be a good workman because he was a Communist. Sound theory and technique are as necessary in art as in any other sphere.

It is not, however, enough for the artist to study and practise only art to become a good artist. So he will arrive at the "art for art's sake" attitude, the position of the artist who has nothing to say. The idea that the artist distils his works from his own "soul" is true only if by "soul" we understand an individuality developed by continuous search for

truth, by the uncompromising rejection of all shams and hypocrisies and by the recognition in action of the unity of theory and practice. The true artist is also a scientist. He studies and experiments and must impose on himself the same discipline, submitting his conclusions to the test of practice. He is a philosopher who seeks to unify his knowledge and experience. Bohemian irresponsibility and eclecticism do not produce art.

To-day such an approach leads the artist to the philosophy of dialectical materialism and to participation in the class struggle on the side of the working class, not as dogmatic and final conclusions, but as the only position from which further development is possible. When capitalism was still a progressive force the bourgeoisie could produce front-rank artists, as earlier stages of human society, too, could produce their own artists. To-day capitalism can no longer progress, so that it is not possible for an artist to adhere permanently to capitalist ideology and at the same time to develop his individuality and his work as an artist. He must give up the search for truth and retreat to dogma or, at best, into his own individual barrenness.

In so doing he loses the only audience capable of understanding true artistic work. For the attitude that is necessary to the artist must also be the attitude of his audience and the bourgeoisie, chained to their capitalist ideology, however they may understand technique, cannot appreciate art. Only the workers, on the basis of their experience, are capable of appreciating the realism that is inherent in all great art and, as they have shown in the Soviet Union, they are ready not only to be an eager, critical and appreciative audience, but to become artists themselves.

The aesthetes and intellectuals who complain that the Australian people are philistines, ignore the real facts. The workers, it is true, despise "art" which is divorced from reality and, this being the type most easily accessible, are often misled into thinking it alone is art, but there is plenty of scope for those who genuinely want to raise the cultural level of the Australian masses—if they will strive at the same time to raise their own level.