

MARX HOUSE, THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF OUR COMMUNIST UNIVERSITY

(S. MOSTON)

It is just one year since the Central Committee of our Party established Marx House in Sydney. It was anticipated that it would play an important role in consolidating the growth of the Party. The setting up of a special institution to cater for the essential educational needs of the Party marked a significant step forward.

Our Party had grown into a mass working class political Party. This development made new demands on leading cadres. Our comrades had to be equipped with more revolutionary theory to enable them to overcome their difficulties.

The influence of Marx House was not to be restricted to Sydney or even the metropolitan areas. On the contrary, the central organisation would assist the promotion of political education throughout the Party in the country and the cities.

Marx House Committee has constantly borne in mind the functions of a Marxist-Leninist school, in the words of Comrade Dimitrov, "It is practical front rank fighters in the cause of the working class that must leave their walls."

This was the general aim of Marx House. How far have we achieved this?

The Australian Communist Party can proudly claim that a solid basis has been laid for an adequate educational system throughout its organisation. Slowly, but nevertheless steadily, the membership has responded to Marx House. The number of regular classes has increased with each term. At present 16 are held regularly, and it is probable that in April the number will be 20. This is in addition to the schools. The attendances at Sunday night lectures have also considerably improved, until we can say that a relatively satisfactory number of comrades are always present.

The activities in Marx House keep alive the interest of Party members in education, and its great importance. Its inspiration radiates through the membership. From every district, almost every branch in the metropolitan area, comrades come to Marx House. So its influence is felt in the branches. Their desire for education is continually revived. But more than this, Marx House, although a central body, makes it more possible, more easy for branches to establish regular study classes. The *Handbook for Tutors* has been a boon to many comrades. It assists them to select the essential points for discussion, and provides the student with a guide to study.

Tutors are constantly assisted to improve their work through classes and private discussion. Never before in the history of our Party was there such a network of classes. In quantity and quality they promise well for the future.

These classes in Marx House and branches are helping to train cadres for the Party. The development of cadres is of the greatest importance. Continual growth imposes new tasks and responsibilities. We must have the comrades capable of handling these tasks, of raising the political and organisational level of the whole Party, including the new members.

Many new members inevitably bring into the Party all the ideas and confusion of bourgeois society. We

must replace this outlook with a Socialist ideology, make our members class conscious. This will enable them to think and act as working class leaders. Our new workers will benefit from the experiences and struggle of the more experienced comrades. Lenin, in "What Is To Be Done" (page 48 S.W., Vol 2), says: "A movement that is starting in a young country can be successful only on the condition that it assimilates the experience of other countries. In order to assimilate this experience, it is not sufficient merely to be acquainted with it, or simply to transcribe the latest resolutions. A critical attitude is required towards this experience, and ability to subject it to independent tests. Only those who realise how much the modern Labor movement has grown in strength will understand what a reserve of theoretical forces and political (as well as revolutionary) experience is required to fulfil this task."

These words are applicable not only to countries, but also to individuals. A study of revolutionary theory makes available to comrades the generalised experiences of the labor movement of all countries. Our own Party press particularises more on Australia. In classes and discussions, better than any other method, we can study concrete examples. The practical experiences of the whole class and their theoretical knowledge, in addition to those of the tutor, can be brought into use. Thus comrades help each other over their difficulties. It has often seemed to me that classes are a sort of midwife to the creation of a real unity of theory and practice. Where comrades tend to take a one-sided approach, a class and discussion will frequently expose the weakness.

There are few comrades in our Party who in words repudiate the importance of revolutionary theory. But unfortunately, there are still many who do not make the necessary effort to improve their political understanding. What would we think of an officer in the Red Army who refused to profit by the experiences of his fellow officers, who preferred bows and arrows to tanks, aeroplanes, machine guns and other modern equipment? Obviously, we would consider him completely unworthy to hold his position, if not an actual saboteur.

Revolutionary theory provides the working class and its general staff, the Communist Party, with the most modern fighting technique. We must learn to use it. To fail to study is equally as unreasonable in politics as refusing to use modern equipment is in military warfare.

Marx House Committee has maintained in the Party a correct approach to education as to methods as well as its relation to practice. Private study has received its necessary attention. The "How to Study" pamphlet issued should be very useful to comrades in the country and others unable to attend classes or obtain personal advice.

There is no problem in the Party completely unconnected with education. Education facilitates the fulfilment of all our work. It is only through revolutionary theory that our struggle finds the correct path. Our activities must be armed with Marxism-Leninism

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 hypocrites 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.