P.S. to the NEWS
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PICASSO'S LEGACY

One of the interesting legal cases now being fought out is the bitter struggle in France over the estate of the artist Pablo Picasso. The legal tangle and family feuds he left behind when he died would have amused him. When his lawyer, Roland Dumas, warned that this would happen, Picasso laughed heartily at what he called the "terrible complications" of his wife, his son by his first marriage, and his children by his two mistresses, battling over his $200 million estate.

The legal chaos of Picasso's estate is a good reflection of the aesthetic disorder he brought to the art world. He has been the dominant influence on art of the twentieth century, and certainly was the biggest financial success of what is called "modern art."

He popularized a style for which there are no standards and for which it is not necessary to have talent or years of training. A few daubs of paint on a canvas, or a big hunk of twisted metal, can be boosted as great art. A good example is the huge rusty metal monstrosity which Picasso conned the city of Chicago into accepting.

Much of modern art has expunged spiritual values and the beauties of nature and anatomy, and has susbstituted instead a "social realism" which is really a preoccupation with the ugly, the sordid, and the distorted. The famous sculptor Wheeler

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Williams once described social realism as "painting dirty linen and garbage on fire escapes and rubbing that in our eyes all the time."

Much modern art is not designed for beauty or inspiration or even entertainment, but for propaganda. Modern art usually fosters group conflict and portrays capitalism as evil. The Mexican painter Diego Rivera summed it up like this: "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 the servant of the revolution. The role of the artist is that of the soldier of the revolution."

William Z. Foster, former head of the U.S. Communist Party, who was buried with honors in the Kremlin, wrote: "Art is a weapon of the class struggle." And Khrushchev defined the role of art as a weapon in this statement in the NEW TIMES of February 1956: "In the battle which our Party is waging against the moribund ideas and conceptions of the old world, for the dissemination and affirmation of Communist ideology, a major role belongs to the press, literature and art."

This is the ideological framework in which the art and influence of Pablo Picasso should be evaluated. In 1944 Picasso announced that he was a Communist, and in 1949 the Communist World Peace Conference in Paris adopted the Picasso dove as the official symbol of Communist peace movements.

Art is usually the mirror of the civilization that produces it. It would be a great pity if Picasso were an accurate reflection of contemporary values.

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