

**CHANGE
THE WORLD!**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649083619

Change the world! by Michael Gold

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MICHAEL GOLD

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Michael Gold

FOREWORD BY ROBERT FORSYTHE

INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Most of these selections were first published as columns in the Daily Worker. Others are reprinted from the New Masses. "Mussolini's Nightmare" is from Anvil.

PRINTED IN THE U. S. A.
UNION LABOR THROUGHOUT

Designed by Robert Josephy

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FOREWORD by Robert Forsythe

THIS introduction has been started four times, being by turn whimsical, bubbling, ponderous and analytical, and it has ended in each case as a love letter for Mike Gold. There have been critics who have surveyed Mike's writings with thoroughness and, occasionally, with sense, and I suppose I have a duty in the matter but I suffer from a malady which makes me dislike people who dislike Mike and an inability to disassociate him from his work.

If I say that I wish to heaven I had written the essays in this book, I say everything that an introduction could possibly say. Quite aside from my opinion of him as an individual, M. Gold happens to be an artist. I don't think you will find anything better than his "Love Letter for France" and I have for that piece of work and a dozen others in the book a feeling of envy which may not become me as a rival essayist but surely qualifies me as the writer of this preface.

Perhaps the most common indictment of Mike is that he writes more with his heart than with his head, and I can never hear that brilliant commentary without looking steadfastly about for a fence paling with which to brain the critic. My grudges are apt to disappear with the coming of dusk but I still treasure a feeling of pleasure over the passing of *Vanity Fair*, which once nominated Mike for oblivion on the ground that he shouted too loudly or

was too anguished or mannish or something. The notion of that particular period seemed to be that Sacco and Vanzetti were possibly innocent but why lift the voice. Mike has always lifted the voice and he has worn his heart on his sleeve and he has dared to feel deeply about important matters, which is still the sin cardinal in politer literary circles.

Perhaps the best example of Mike's essential rightness is his famous attack upon Thornton Wilder. Strictly speaking Gold is no critic at all but the Wilder review was so vitriolically correct that it literally created a new school of writing and badly mangled the old one. No decent critic would have written such a review. He would have *iffed* and *anded* and *butted* it around until it resembled something by Mr. Ernest Boyd and would have had exactly as much weight as a literary pronouncement in the *Christian Science Monitor*. There will be theses written in years to come proving, and perhaps rightly, that Mike went too far. That will never alter the fact that when Mike penned that particular bit of dynamite it was so perfect that it took on the aspect of a message from above.

I can still recall the shock given the editorial staff of a so-called Quality magazine which had been strangely prompted to ask Mike for a statement on what Communism would mean to America. They confessed that he made out an excellent case, but why, they moaned, did he have to go about it in that violent way. Upon reflection they decided that it would be impossible to use the article but would be glad to let him place it elsewhere and would pay him thirty dollars for the trouble he had gone to. "Thirty pieces of silver," said Mike, a little puzzled by the symbolic meaning of it all.

The supreme virtue of Mike and what makes him so

distasteful to people who resent his ideas is that he can be most gloriously right even when he is a little wrong. That is where the heart comes in. You can't go far astray when you employ an organ which beats with something besides fear. Because of that heart he can take chances that would ruin another writer. His most deeply felt pieces would be maudlin in the hands of anybody else. He reacts deeply, he writes passionately and honestly and he doesn't pull his punches for fear of making a spectacle of himself. That is the essential Michael Gold but as you will see from the present essays, he has fancy and wit as well. When I think of his article, "What Cheer, British Empire?", I become downright churlish with envy.

The fact that most of these pieces were done as Mike's daily column in the *Daily Worker* only adds to my wonder. Anybody caught mentioning the circumstance as an apology will be dealt with by me personally. Daily or not daily, they are superb and, without getting into the field of invidious comparisons, I don't think anybody has written better columns in recent years.

When Sinclair Lewis in his Nobel Prize address included Mike among the few American writers who deserved world attention, he paid a great compliment to his own powers of discernment. *Jews Without Money* is an American classic, not only the best book ever written about the New York slums but a literary achievement of high distinction. If there is any lingering doubt as to where I stand in the case of Gold against the World, I suggest that the reader start with the first essay and continue through to the end and lift the voice aloft in proper hosannas. Only rarely is there an opportunity to become devout in a cause so worthy.