

**THE INDIAN LEFT AND THE ALL-INDIA PROGRESSIVE  
WRITERS' ASSOCIATION, 1936-47.**

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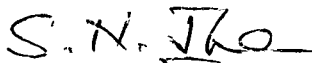
21 July 1988

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled The Indian Left and the All India Progressive Writers' Association (1936-1947) submitted by Renu Bhagat for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy is a bonafide and original work. It has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other university to the best of our knowledge.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for their consideration.

  
Signature of Supervisor

  
Signature of  
Head of Department  
Chairman  
Centre for Political Studies  
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To my Parents  
Prema and Rajendra Bhagat Singh



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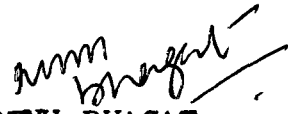
My thanks are also due to Ali Sardar Jafri, Bhisham Sahani, Kirtar Singh Duggal, Mohammad Hasan, Namwar Singh, Rajiv Saxena and Qamar Rais who readily spared their valuable time for me.

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I am solely responsible for any errors in this dissertation.

Date: 21 July 1988.

  
RENU BHAGAT

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIKS	All-India Kisan Sabha
AIPWA	All-India Progressive Writers' Association
AISF	All-India Students' Federation
AITUC	All-India Trade Union Congress
CPI	Communist Party of India
CPI(M)	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CSP	Congress Socialist Party
INA	Indian National Army
INC	Indian National Congress
IPTA	Indian People's Theater Association
PPH	People's Publishing House
PWA	Progressive Writers Association
RIN	Royal Indian Navy
WPP	Workers' and Peasants' Party
ITUF	Indian Trade Union Federation
RTUC	Red Trade Union Congress

## I\_N\_T\_R\_O\_D\_U\_C\_T\_I\_O\_N

The Secretary of State, M.G. Hallet's letter to the Government of India, Home Department, dated the 7th of September 1936 conveyed a warning to local governments regarding the All India Progressive Writers' Association. The text of the letter was as follows:

"Subject: Warning Conveyed to Local Governments Regarding  
the Indian Progressive Writers' Association

From: The Secretary to the Government of India. Home  
Department to All Local Governments.

I am desired to address you in connection with an organization known as the Progressive Writers' Association. This Association held its first conference at Lucknow simultaneously with the annual session of the Indian National Congress in April 1936. Since then S.S. Zaheer and other members of the Executive Committee have been active in forming Local Branches of the Association and such branches are known to exist in Aligarh, Allahabad, Andhra, Calcutta, Delhi, Gujarat, Hyderabad (Deccan), Poona and the Punjab. The Association also has contacts in a number of other educational centres.

2. This Association owes its origin to an Association of the same name formed in London about a year ago. The London Association is closely connected with and to a great extent controlled by the British Section of the International Union of Revolutionary writers. S.S. Zaheer, the Secretary of the Association

in India, was one of the signatories to the original manifesto defining the aims of the Association when it was first started in London.

3. The proclaimed aims of the Association are comparatively innocuous and suggest that it concerns itself with the organisation of journalists and writers and the promotion of interest in literature of a progressive nature. The inspiration, however, comes from and it has close contacts with organizations and individuals who are in some cases avowed and active communists and in others are advocating policies akin to those of the communists. There is reason to believe that the Association has already attracted interest and some support from persons of an intellectual type who are unlikely to have any sympathy with communism or other revolutionary theories. The Association is, however, a typical example of the methods, now being pursued by communists in all countries-in accordance with the current policy of the Communist International. This method is for a few convinced and trained communists to establish contacts with all sorts of organizations and societies having interest in intellectual, cultural and social subjects with the object of spreading communistic ideas and gaining converts. Though it is not suggested that the Indian Progressive Writers' Association as a body is necessarily a subversive or revolutionary organization, it is desirable for the reasons given that its development should be watched with some suspicion and that it should be approached with caution by individuals who do not wish to be involved in extremist left wing politics. I am desired to suggest, therefore, that



suitable opportunities may be taken to convey, preferably in conversation, friendly warnings about this Association to journalists, educationists and others who might be attracted by its ostensible programme.

Yours sincerely,  
Sd/- M.G. HALLET  
Home Secretary,  
Government of India."<sup>1</sup>

After reading the 'Hallet Circular' the questions that immediately rise in one's mind are many - why was this warning conveyed to local governments regarding an organization which at its face value seemed an ordinary association of Indian writers? Was this organization attempting something more radical through the literature it was churning out? Why was the state apparatus seemingly hostile towards its inception and continuation? What was the specific political role of the AIPWA at this crucial juncture of Indian history (1936-47)?

It will be seen that the AIPWA, besides being a literary movement, was also a social and political movement. It functioned in a double context - a political and a literary one. It functioned as an anti-Fascist, anti-Imperialist Front at one level and at the other as a broad front of progressive writers united on the question of producing a new kind of 'progressive' literature which would influence the structuring of political consciousness.

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1. Hallet Circular. File No. 7/9/36 - Home/Political, 1936  
(P.C. Joshi Archives, Jawaharlal Nehru University)

The aim of this research is not merely to make an evaluation of the literature which the movement produced, nor attempt even in outline, a history of the AIPWA. The aim is also to study important features of the way the movement was organized and led during the first part of its existence, from 1936-47. The attempt here is to view the AIPWA as a 'front' organization of the CPI, linking the party to 'progressive' elements of other classes. The AIPWA was one of the auxiliaries of the CPI through which the Communists endeavoured to mobilize the working class and its allies for the tasks of the revolution. It is in this context that the working of the AIPWA is being viewed. An investigation into the political aspect of the AIPWA will seek to establish a viable inter-connection between literary and political consciousness which sought to bring about a fundamental change in the perspective of the Indian people.

In this research the time period under consideration is from 1936 to 1947. Since the AIPWA was formed in 1936 the former limit suggests itself. The analysis stops at 1947 because this year was in many ways a dividing line in the political history of India. India became independent on 15 August 1947 and the course of the polity altered with the adoption of constitutional government and electoral politics. The course and character of the AIPWA also altered as is evident from the changed stance of the May 1949 Hemeri Conference. Here contrary to the broad united Front policy of the PWA, a sectarian approach was adopted. Only the Marxist-Leninist writers were deemed progressive and there was a strong emphasis on socialist realism. With this ideological and political

change in the character of the PWA a major chunk of the litterateurs got alienated from the movement.

In this research special emphasis will be laid on the four conferences of the AIPWA in the pre - independence era:

- (1) 10 April, 1936: The first AIPWA Conference in Lucknow.
- (2) 24-25 December, 1938: The second AIPWA Conference in Calcutta.
- (3) May 1942: The third AIPWA Conference in Delhi (Also known as the Anti-Fascist Conference).
- (4) 24-25 May, 1943: The fourth AIPWA Conference in Bombay.

This study is based chiefly on secondary sources as there are very few primary sources on the subject. Much of the analysis is based on the information got by interviewing the people who had (or still are) been involved with the movement. They are - Ali Sardar Jafri, Bhisham Sahani, Kirtar Singh Duggal, Namwar Singh, Mohammad Hasan (General Secretary of Janwadi Lekhak Sangh), Rajiv Saxena (General Secretary of the National Federation of Progressive Writers), Qamar Rais, V.N. Tripathi and Ali Baquer.

The chapterization of the issues suggests the way in which this study has been attempted. The first chapter begins with the threat of fascism in Europe in the 1920s and 30s and the formation of the Anti-Fascist Peoples Front in response to it. From the adoption of the policy of a United Front by the third Communist International in 1935 it traces the evolution of the CPI's policy of United Front and the formation of various Front organizations (the AIPWA being one of them) as a result of this. The second chapter delves into the political history of the AIPWA and shows

how the association began in 1936 as a result of both internal and external factors. It traces the evolution of the PWA from 1936 to 1947 and makes clear its development both as a political and a literary movement during this time period. It presents the PWA as an association with definite stands on the political questions of fascism, imperialism, independence, national unity, communalism, nationality, partition, language, art and culture. It makes it clear that the issues for which the PWA was fighting were political and the means by which it sought to achieve these ends were literary. In the third chapter these means are further elucidated through the categories of 'critical realism' and 'socialist realism'. The chapter attempts to show the concurrence of all writers on the aspect of criticality in their works. This is sought to be illustrated by a case study of Yashpal's novel "Geeta - Party Comrade."

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## CHAPTER I

### FASCISM AND THE UNITED FRONT STRUGGLE IN EUROPE

This chapter is divided into two parts: (1) Formation of the anti-Fascist People's Front in Europe; and (2) Evolution of the United Front Policy of the Communist Party of India.

#### PART I

##### FORMATION OF THE ANTI-FASCIST PEOPLE'S FRONT IN EUROPE

The year 1919 was a crucial one for Fascism. It was from the chaos of the immediate post war period that fascism first emerged in embryonic outline.<sup>1</sup> Europe in the 1920s and 1930s witnessed the rise of fascist movements and the establishment of fascist regimes. One can pinpoint three issues which were characteristic of this seminal phase -

- (1) Rise of new forces of conservative nationalism.
- (2) The growth of socialist parties and of new communist parties affiliated with the Third International of Moscow.
- (3) The drift towards single party or military or royal or clericalist dictatorships.

The processes of war making and of peace-making in the decade before 1924 transformed the map of Europe. In that transformation ancient states and frontiers were dissolved, new forces of nationalism and democratic fervour released;

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1 Ernst Nolte, Three Faces of Fascism - Action Francaise, Italian Fascism, National Socialism, Translated from the German by Leila-Venneurtz (Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, Limited, 1966), p. 10.

the whole distribution of wealth, advantages, and power in the world was changed, and new machinery for international co-operation created. First in time, were the triumphs of Bolshevism in Russia and of Fascism in Italy; then the upheaval of economic crisis throughout the world between 1929 and 1934; followed by the resurgence of Japan and of Germany as aggressive military powers - all resulting in recurrent challenges to democratic institutions, ideals and policy so recently adopted in many countries.

Civil war, in the latent form of a clash between socialism and fascism inside many countries, or in the open form of international - plus - civil war as in Spain, preceded international war itself. In Spain the forces of nationalism, socialism and fascism, clashed openly. Here the three elements could be seen in an operative reality.

The new international machinery, the League of Nations, proved virtually powerless to prevent or even alleviate these conflicts. First Japan, then Italy and finally Germany flouted the principles of the League & committed acts of aggression. This was chiefly because the League had been granted no power other than that which its supporters choose to put at its disposal. The disturbance and the eventual reversal of the balances of power which had resulted from the victory of the western powers in 1918 were brought about by the deliberate policy of states - pre-eminently Italy, Germany and Japan - which stood to gain by such changes. Though it might be maintained that prosperity collapsed and that democracy was gradually eclipsed it is certain that peace was deliberately demolished in the interests of the single - party

dictatorships and by conscious policies. These events will now be examined in turn.

The unsettled economic and social conditions after the first world war had led to a revulsion against war and military preparedness. Disillusionment with peacetime, and neglect of wartime promises bred a spirit of cynicism in the face of housing shortages, unemployment and poor relief. In Italy the democratic regime, which had been discredited by its failure to maintain internal order was overthrown by the Fascist party led by the Fascist leader Benito Mussolini in 1923. This event had international repercussions of two kinds. The change from democracy to dictatorship was soon to be initiated by several other European states and the advent of Mussolini to power heralded a more aggressive Italian foreign policy. Restless discontent had been characteristic of Italian policy under the post-war democracy. Under Mussolini, this discontent became more ambitious, more self-assertive, more calculating in its determination to turn the needs and embarrassment of other powers to Italy's advantage.

Leaving aside this above mentioned case of Italy, until 1926 postwar democracy entailed the rule, above all, of civilian governments concerned with matters of currency stabilization, international balance of payments, war debts and gold standards. Throughout western Europe conservatively minded men held power, though socialist and even communist movements were rapidly gaining

in appeal and strength. The characteristic conservative figures of the time were Bonar Law and Stanley Baldwin in Great Britain, Raymond Poincare and Paul Painleve' in France. The parliamentary governments destined to grapple with the profound economic and social problems of postwar Europe proved, in general to be uninspiring. It is never easy for parliamentary governments to make unpopular decisions and in most countries public opinion was not in a mood receptive to policies that stressed economy and maintained high taxation, or that demanded further sacrifices and austerity after the hardships of wartime. The survival of war profiteers, and of others whose wealth and position had obviously been enhanced while so many were ruined or out of work, fostered deep social resentments. The growth of socialist parties and - even more significantly of new communist parties affiliated with the Communist International made such resentments political, vocal and effective. The changes in party alignments which resulted from the war made governments unstable and short-lived and made it still more difficult for democratic governments to undertake long-term plans of recovery. The belief grew strong that democracy was a feeble, hesitant, ineffectual form of government for dealing with postwar problems of great urgency. In all the major countries there appeared a conflict between nationalism and socialism.

In the United Kingdom a second Labour government came to power in 1929. The biggest political change was the rapid decline of the Liberal Party and its replacement, as the second



major party in the state, by Labour. In France the elections of 1924 gave victory to the left-wing coalition which first put the Radical Socialist, Herriot, in power and then the independent socialist, Briand. But from 1926 to 1929 the conservative Poincare was brought back to power. In Germany the Social Democrats remained strong but never strong enough to enjoy an independent majority. Every government, therefore, had to be a coalition. In the elections of 1924 the Social Democrats lost heavily and the conservative parties gained. Hitler's National Socialist Party scored its first electoral success. Gustav Stresemann the Chancellor and Foreign Minister till 1929 remained the most important leader in German politics. He was the perfect bridge between the nationalist, militarist and capitalist interests of the Right, who planned only for the resurgence of Germany as a great power, and the more moderate, liberal, democratic, and socialist forces of the left, who wanted to preserve the Weimar Republic and find a basis of reconciliation and peace in Europe.

In all three major countries of the West the elections of 1924 inaugurated a strange interlude of balance and compromise between conservative nationalism and liberal socialism. From 1926 onward nationalism began to triumph over socialism. Quoting Mussolini - "We have created our myth... Our myth is a nation, our myth is the greatness of the Nation. And to this myth, to this grandeur, that we wish to translate into a complete reality, we subordinate all the rest."<sup>2</sup> This accounted, at least in

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2. Benito Mussolini: My Autobiography, (Hurst & Blackett Ltd., Paternoster House, London. 1937).

part, for the failure of international socialism and explained why the working class set off for war on a wave of patriotism, regardless of their long-standing tradition of anti-militarism & of countless revolutions adopted at each and every socialist congress. This trend was marked in France by the ascendancy of Poincare', in Britian by the collapse of the general strike and in Germany by the election of Hinderburg as President of the Weimar Republic. There was a certain political consolidation, on a national basis, in both western and eastern Europe by 1928. Social revolution receded as rightiost governments were reaffirmed in power in Britain, France and Germany. In Italy, Mussolini's regime seemed firmly entrenched. In the smaller countries, too, conservative nationalism tended to triumph. It was in Bulgaria in 1923 that the first fascist coup took place. In the elections of 1923 the militant peasants' party under Stambulisky was voted into office. The Stambulisky government carried through a programme of agrarian reforms, impeachment and trial of the former war ministers and other measures unpopular with the reaction. The government was overthrown & Stambulisky murdered in a military coup d' etat in June 1923 engineered by army officers. In Spain, from 1923-29 there was a military dictatorship under Gen. Primo de Rivera. In 1926 in Portugal and Poland there was a military coup. In the former by 1929 a Catholic head of state was established. In Yugoslavia by 1928 the King assumed dictatorial powers. The tide of authoritarianism in Europe before 1929 tended to be royalist, militarist

and clericalist. The effect of the Great Depression was to intensify this trend and to carry it very much further in the extremist direction of fascism and totalitarian government.

In its shattering effect upon European prosperity and stability, the Great Depression was comparable with the 'World War itself. The first international manifestation of the crisis was the complete cessation of American loans to Europe in 1929 and this was rapidly followed by a drying up of purchasing power all over the world resulting in a general and catastrophic fall in prices. In Germany the crisis was particularly acute. Germany was the largest debtor state and had been during the past five years the largest recipient of foreign loans. In a country where the political balance was always precarious, so great an economic upheaval was bound to have drastic consequences. Between Jan. 1931 and January 1933, the membership of the Nazis more than doubled. The March 1933 elections took place in a mood of anticommunist frenzy and terror, whipped to fever pitch by the Nazi's propaganda and accompanied by the use of extreme violence against all their opponents. The German Communist Party leader Thaelmann was arrested in March and in September the Nazis conducted the famous Leipzig Trial in which the Communists were accused of burning down the Reichstag building in February. Prominent among them was the Bulgarian Communist, Dimitrov who put up a historic defense which revealed to the world the nature of the atrocities of the Nazi regime. One of the first actions of the

new Reichstag was to pass an Enabling Act granting Hitler and his government dictatorial power for four years. The Nazis now completed their seizure of power by easy installments, abolishing all opposition parties and taking over all the machinery of state power. The November plebiscite gave Hitler a clean chit and in 1934 on the death of Hindenburg, Hitler succeeded him as 'Führer and Reich - Chancellor' and inherited his presidential powers, including supreme command of all the armed forces.

In Austria, the other main central-European victim of the economic crisis, comparable events took place. There, too, a rapid succession of short-lived chancellorships dug the grave of the Republic. A new Austrian Nazi party working in close collaboration with the German Nazis emerged. In the municipal elections of 1932 they made alarming gains aimed scenes of riot, terrorism and virtual civil war. In such circumstances Engelbert Dollfuss a christian Socialist set up a virtual conservative and clericalist dictatorship.

It was clear that democratic systems of parliamentary government had broken down or had been replaced by more authoritarian governments in Spain, Portugal, Hungary, Austria, Yugoslavia, Poland and Lithuania and by Fascist governments in Italy and Germany. Respect for authoritarianism, even in Britain and France, was strengthened in these years by their own experience of the need to abandon normal parliamentary procedures in an effort to meet the Great Depression.

How was this trend to be explained? How was Fascism to be defined? The popular liberal definition saw it as "... a hypernationalist, often anti-nationalist, anti-parliamentary, anti-liberal, anti-communist, populist and therefore anti-proletarian, partly anti-capitalist and anti-bourgeois, anti-clerical, or at least, non-clerical movement, with the aim of national social integration through a single party and corporative representation not always, equally emphasised; with a destructive style and rhetoric, it relied on activist cadres ready for violent action combined with electoral participation with totalitarian goals by a combination of legal and violent tactics."<sup>3</sup> This was to be used as a multi-dimensional typological definition of fascism, a definition which would cover all studies of single fascist parties or movements even when some dimensions were more central to one or another of them.

In general the liberals emphasised one dimension of the phenomena to the exclusion of others. They stressed on the political, organizational, ideological, psychological and cultural structures of fascism and undermined the socio-economic basis which was vital to its scientific understanding. They associated fascism with the middle classes (L. Salvatorelli, T. Parsons and Lipset), with crisis of religious values due to secularisation of society (christian theorists); as a revolt by the masses against traditional values (conservatives); as a form of totalitarianism (liberals like H. Arendt, C.J. Friedrich)

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3. Juan J. Linz: Some Notes Toward a Comparative Study of Fascism in Sociological Historical Perspective" in Walter Laqueur, Fascism - A Reader's Guide. (Penguin Books Ltd., Harmondsworth, 1979), p. 25.

or as an exceptional phenomenon of a particular epoch (Ernst Nolte); a phenomena which emerges due to psychological reasons in mass societies or industrial societies in which anomie and alienation play an important part (W. Reich, Eriah Fromm, Lasswell, W. Kornhauser, S. Neumann).

All these definitions overlook the fact that "... The roots of fascism, like those of any other social movement, are not in the mind, or the realm of ideology, but in society."<sup>4</sup> Thus, "... Fascism is seen as an independent movement of the disgruntled middle and lower middle classes, and the close relationship between fascism and capitalism is denied."<sup>5</sup> The main argument is that the essence of the capitalist system is freedom of enterprise and the right of the individual to economic self-expression, whereas fascism is authoritarian and believes in the principle of the corporate state. In order to prove the middle class base of fascism, the liberal writers refer to the emperical analysis of the membership of fascist parties and the voters attracted by them. This theory finds the roots of fascism in the desparate middle class which was threatened from above by the monopoly capitalists, and from below by the working class. Fascism promised a third way between monopoly capitalism and socialism, which could attract the middle classes. But even in their theory of the middle class as the basis of fascism the liberals are not very clear. This greatly undermines the liberal

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4. Thesis published at the Thirteenth Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, 1934. As quoted in H. Kitchen, Fascism (London, 1976), p. 7.

5. Ibid., p. 60.

interpretations as in order to understand fascism as a social and political theory, and to find out its reactionary and counter - revolutionary character, its socio-economic basis should be analysed.

The liberal response to this crisis was at one level Keynesian economics and at another level appeasement of Fascism. It was believed that a correct anticyclical government policy, especially in the fields of taxation, money supply, credit expansion and contraction, interest rates, public works and especially budget deficits and budgets surpluses, could guarantee full or nearly - full employment and a significant rate of economic growth for long periods, if not for ever. This called for greater state intervention. It became common to entrust drastic emergency powers to 'national governments', broad coalitions usually conservative in character. In France the main device was the emergency delegation of law making power by parliament to the cabinet. In Britain the prerogative powers of the Crown had always provided a reserve of emergency authority. These were enhanced by the Emergency Powers Act of 1920, which broke with precedent and permanently delegated to any government the right to make exceptional provision for the protection of the community in cases of emergency. The experience neither of France nor of Britain matched that of Italy and Germany. They both found effective ways of combining speedy executive action with constitutional safeguards and parliamentary control.

The liberal response at the other level, i.e., the appeasement of fascism, came sharply into focus during the three years before war broke out in 1939. This was a policy shaped by Neville Chamberlain which soon came to be known as "appeasement". It rested upon the erroneous theory that the objectives of Hitler and Mussolini were essentially limited in scope. They were limited to reversing the wrong which, Hitler held had been done to Germany in 1919 and to the achievement of the colonial aims which Italy had for so long cherished. Since this was not true, no policy of appeasement could do more than postpone war and strengthen the Fascist powers for making further aggressions.

The years between 1934 and 1939 saw the rise, in almost every European country of strong extremist movements of both Right and Left. With fascist parties in power in the two countries of Central Europe, fascist movement became active everywhere. In Belgium an all-party national government was formed in 1935 under Paul Van Zeeland who showed a Hitlerian flair for appealing at the same time to sentiments of violent nationalism, to conservative Catholicism, to the prejudices of the army-officer class and big industrialists. Even Sweden produced a number of Fascist parties. The Balkan states gave birth to their own versions of strong-arm fascist movements under Cornelines Codreanu in Rumania, General Metaxas in Greece and Kimon Georgiev, in Bulgaria. In Spain the Falangists arose in violent opposition to the Republic which was proclaimed in 1931.



In 1932 a military dictatorship was established under the leadership of Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera.

The rise of fascist movements and the establishment of fascist regimes in several European countries during the 1920s and 1930s confronted Marxist thinkers with a new and urgent problem for analysis. There were three main issues -

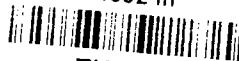
- (1) What economic and social conditions gave rise to fascism?
- (2) What made possible the victory of fascism and the destruction of the working-class ?
- (3) How can fascism be prevented from coming to power and how can fascism be overthrown after it has been victorious ?

Fascism, it was argued, was the expression of a profound structural crisis of late capitalism which inhibited the natural accumulation of capital. The historical function of the Fascist seizure was to change conditions of production and of surplus value to the advantage of decisive groups of monopoly capitalism. What was needed was a movement which could set the masses to their side, demoralize conscious sections of society by systematic terror and after seizing power destroy the proletarian mass organizations. Such a mass movement could only arise, on the basis of the petty bourgeoisie. If this section of society was badly hit by inflation, unemployment etc. then a typically petty bourgeoisie movement compounded of ideological reminiscence and psychological resentment would arise which would combine extreme nationalism and verbal anti-capitalist demagoguery. This victory

of Fascism would historically express the inability of the workers movement to resolve structural crisis of late capitalism on its own.<sup>6</sup> Thus, according to the Marxist writers, fascism emerged due to the inbuilt crisis of the liberal bourgeois society. Capitalists, faced with threats from the labour movements, threw overboard their professed belief in democracy. Seen in these terms, fascism is an appropriate theory and organization of liberal capitalist society in its crisis - ridden monopoly capitalist phase. Herbert Marcuse (and many other scholars of the Frankfurt School like F. Neumann) emphasised that the roots of fascism lie within liberal socio-economic order and that it is the almost inevitable result of monopoly capitalism. In a situation of extreme socio-economic and political instability, fascism restored (though temporarily) political stability by smashing the democratic opposition, and economic stability was restored by the destruction of the labour movement which threatened the economic base of capitalist society. When the capitalist system loses its ideological basis and the capitalist class cannot successfully run the system on the basis of consent (false consciousness), then the bourgeoisie use naked oppressive force and leave aside democracy and democratic institutions. When the masses cannot be kept orderly and pacified through assurances and talks, when the minds of the people cannot be controlled; then fascism emerges with a new kind of ideological

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6. Ernest Mandel: "Introduction" in Leon Trotsky The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany (Pothfinder Press, Inc. New York, 1971), pp. 17-20.



propaganda and with new kinds of political methods. Chinese Marxist interpretations enjoy a definite advantage over fascism on a scientific basis by analysing its socio-economic basis.

The definition of the character of Fascism, the conditions of its development and its class-rule received its most complete scientific expression in the progress of communist International in 1928. It held that under certain special historical conditions the progress of the bourgeois, reactionary offensive assumed the form of Fascism. These conditions were described as -

- (i) instability of capitalist relationships;
- (ii) the existence of considerable declassed social elements. The first world war expelled large numbers of people from bourgeois life, turning them into 'declasses', who after the war formed the fascist 'militias' and 'defence leagues' with their militaristic, anti-democratic and nationalist ideologies.
- (iii) the pauperisation of broad strata of the urban petty bourgeoisie and of the intelligentsia.
- (iv) discontent among the rural petty-bourgeoisie and
- (v) the constant menace of mass proletarian action.

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In order to stabilize and perpetuate its rule the bourgeoisie was compelled to an increasing degree to abandon this parliamentary system in favour of the fascist system, which was independent of inter-party arrangements and combinations.

The Communist International stressed that - "The principal aim of Fascism is to destroy the revolutionary labour vanguard i.e.

the Communist sections and leading units of the proletariat. The combination of social demogogy, corruption and active while terror, in conjunction with extreme imperialist aggression in the sphere of foreign politics, are the characteristic features of Fascism. In periods of acute crisis for the bourgeoisie, Fascism resorts to anti-capitalist phraseology, but, after it has established itself at the helm of State, it casts aside its anti-capitalist rattle, and discloses itself as a terrorist dictatorship of big capital."<sup>7</sup>

The social Democratic Parties were heavily censured for their role in the victory of fascism and the destruction of the working class movement. Here the SDPs referred to were the post-1914 SDPs which subsequently united to form the post-war Second International or 'Labour and Socialist International' in 1923. Even before the war while maintaining the nominal programme of international revolutionary Marxism, the SDPs had shown tendencies of opportunist parliamentary corruption and absorption into the capitalist state. It was the decisive test of the 1914 war that brought these tendencies to their full working out. Social Democracy emerged from the war with two clearly marked characteristics - (i) close unification of each party with its own 'national' i.e. imperialist state - therefore dilution of any form of internationalism (ii) class-co-operation in the forms of coalition ministerialism and trade union collaboration, to help to buildup capitalist prosperity as the necessary condition of working-class prosperity. It was argued that the collapse of capitalism was not in the

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7. Programme of the Communist International, 1928.

interest of the working class. The task of the workers was to help to rebuild capitalism, increase production, and help to develop the new rationalised 'organised capitalism' with increasing participation economically through the trade unions and politically through social Democracy in the government. This line was stressed upon by the German Trade Union Federation at its Breslau Congress and by the British Trade Union Congress in its 1928 Swansea Congress. Social Democracy and the trade unions under its leadership thus became, in the social Democratic theory, constituent parts of modern capitalist organization and of the capitalist state.

Later events were to prove all these contentions as right. In Poland in 1926 the Pilsudski Coup d'etat, overthrowing parliamentary democracy, and establishing a type of Fascist distatorship was carried out with the support of the Polish Socialist Party. In Spain the Primo de Revera Dictatorship gave its protection to the Spanish Socialist Party and the reformist General Union of Labour, while suppressing the revolutionary workers' movement. In Italy D'Aragona and the reformist leaders of the General Confederation of Labour entered into the service of Mussolini and declared the confederation dissolved in 1926. In Austria the Dollfuss dictatorship was built up step by step with the passive support of Social Democracy. In all these countries the main danger to capitalism was a united working - class front. Social Democracy provided for capitalism a social basis outside its

own ranks and splitting the working class. In Germany the SDP refused a United front with the KPD in April 1932, Jan. 1933 and in March 1933. This was because since 1930 it was supporting the 'bourgeois government' as a lesser evil than Fascism.

A clear exposition of this relationship and fundamental conflict of interest between social democracy and fascism was laid down by Palmiro Togliatti, an Italian Communist, in the 6th World Congress of the Communist International in 1928. The verdict was clear-Social Democracy was paving and smoothing the way for Fascism.

The decisive question at this juncture was the evolution of a strategy which could prevent fascism from coming to power and which could overthrow fascism wherever it had been victorious. The notion of a united front of the working class and the notion of a Popular front to combat Fascism were the tactical devices which emerged from the theoretical exercises which the Third Communist International indulged in. These are considered to be a turning point in the strategy and tactics of the Comintern and are associated with its seventh congress on 25th July, 1935.

The idea of a united working class front had already been put forward in the third and fourth Congress of the Comintern in June 1921 and November 1922 respectively. The fourth Congress had held that one of the most important tasks of the Communists was to organize resistance to fascism. The Communist parties had to take the lead in the struggle of all the workers against the fascists and vigorously carry the tactics of the United Front

into this field of activity. There was a reversal of this policy in the sixth Congress of 1928 wherein social democracy was denounced as social fascism and the proposals for a United Front with its leaders were rejected. It was the seventh Congress which subsequently took up the issue again in August 1935.

The Seventh Congress centered round the thesis of the Bulgarian Communist leader Georgi Dimitrov. His thesis showed that Fascism was a result of the weakness of both the bourgeoisie and the working class movement. It was "the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital."<sup>8</sup> He stressed the need to make difference between the state forms of bourgeoisie governments—bourgeois democracy and open dictatorship. To ignore this distinction would be a mistake which would prevent the revolutionary proletariat from mobilizing the broadest strata of workers for the struggle against fascism and from taking advantage of the contradictions which existed in the camp of the bourgeoisie itself.

The tactical move to counter the threat of Fascism was to be an interconnected one of a United Workers Front and the formation of a broad Anti-Fascist People's Front. This was closely bound up with the tactic of the United anti-imperialist front in the East (as laid down in the fourth Congress of the Comintern in 1922).

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8. Georgi Dimitrov: Report delivered at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International on August 2, 1935. As reproduced in G. Adhikari, ed., From Peace Front to People's War (People's Publishing House, Bombay, 1944), p. 17.

The Congress devoted most of its attention to the development of people's front movements in the respective capitalist countries, as the foundation of the whole struggle of these peoples against fascism and war. Dimitrov showed that on the basis of a resolute fight for the immediate needs of the broad masses, particularly against the threat of fascism, a broad movement, including sections of the peasantry and the city middle classes, could be built under the leadership of the working class. This movement, however, could not be constructed around an immediate fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat, because these masses were ideologically not yet ready for such a struggle.

The core of the people's front would be the United Front of the working class. The policy required the setting up of collaboration agreements with workers and organizations of various types - parties, trade unions, cooperatives, youth, women, communists, socialists, Anarcho-syndicalists, Catholics etc. Upon the basis of working class political unity, the anti-fascist people's front was to be organized. The two processes, building the proletarian united front and the people's anti-fascist front, were to go ahead simultaneously.

Also raised was the question of the possibility of creating people's front governments. This was a probable but not an inevitable development. The people's front government, based on the various types of workers' and other organizations, would come into existence, before, not after, the abolition of capitalism. It would come into power only in a period of political crisis



when the ruling classes were no longer able to cope with the powerful rise of the mass anti-fascist movement. It would be based on a definite anti-fascist programme and would carry out definite and fundamental revolutionary demands. It would be an approach to the proletarian dictatorship and not a transitional phase between the bourgeois and proletarian dictatorship. The Communist parties were warned that they should maintain their political identity and not lose themselves in such broad movements.

The notion of a 'Popular Front' was in part the reflection of a new phase in the policy of communism - i.e. a new tactical orientation. The Comintern held that "Tactics, which are the sum total of the methods and means of struggle of a political party, are precisely intended to be changed if changed circumstances require it." (Maniulsky). The development of the fascist offensive had drastically altered the world situation; therefore the Comintern had changed its tactics accordingly, and in some respects, also its strategy. This tactical re-orientation, however, did not imply the repudiation of the former tactical line of the Comintern, but the logical development of it, particularly of its established policy of the United Front.

Implications of the new political line were -- (1) Organization of a great peace alliance between the USSR and many capitalist states (later to be allies of 2nd World War), (2) A broad new policy of the Communists of developing an unprecedented alliance of the working class, the peasantry, and large sections of the urban middle classes. (3) It meant that the Communists would work for the creation of democratic governments within

the framework of capitalism; governments very probably to be regularly elected under bourgeois democracy and with Communist participation in them.

During the four years between the seventh congress and outbreak of world war II the workers in many countries waged bitter struggles against the rising tide of fascism and the threat of war. These fights were mostly fought along the principles and inspiration of the people's front. In Europe the decisions of the seventh comintern congress greatly stimulated the formation of the People's Front Government in France and Spain.

In France the People's Front achieved a victory in the general elections of 3 May 1936. It was supported by the Radicals, socialists, Communists and the trade union organizations. The Socialist leader Leon Blum became the Premier. This People's Front lasted only two years. It got discredited by its policies of devaluating the Franc, making concessions to employers and initiating the non-intervention policy towards the Spanish Civil War.

The Spanish working class in 1935, under communist stimulus had organized a strong people's front movement. The People's Front won the general elections of February 1936. It was supported by the Republican Left, the Socialists and the Communists. But advantages were taken by the army and it rose against the Front. In July 1936 the Spanish Fascists rose under General Franco and a Civil War ensued. They were greatly assisted by Germany and Italy and by the fact that Britain and France had

sponsored the Non-Intervention Committee. In October 1936 the International Brigade was formed. But the rebel activities continued to rise. By October 1938 the International Brigade was withdrawn and in March 1939 Madrid fell in Franco's hands. By January 1940 the Fascist Corporative state had been established. The defeat of Republican Spain opened the door for World War II. But the splendid fight of the Spanish People's Front was a great inspiration to the anti-fascist forces all over the world.

## PART II

### EVOLUTION OF THE UNITED FRONT POLICY OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA

A party in the name of Indian communists had been set up at Tashkent, USSR, in December 1920 by the Indian revolutionaries in exile. However, this paper will not in any way attempt to clear the controversy regarding the inception of the CPI. It will be assumed that CPI was formed in December 1925.

It would be imperative to begin with the polemic between Lenin and the Indian Communist, M.N. Roy since the second congress of the comintern in March 1920. This centered on theoretical and concrete problems of the national liberation movement particularly in India and also included the problem of Gandhi - the assessment of his role and place in the anti-imperialist strategy. Lenin upheld the idea of the unity of all anti-imperialist forces & the need actively to support the bourgeois - democratic national movement where they were genuinely revolutionary. He believed that the criticism of the national movement

had to be historical and not mechanical otherwise it would be reduced to a sectarian approach. A difference had to be made between the conceptual content and historical role of Gandhi's ideological positions. Despite his medievalism and mysticism, Gandhi was a revolutionary in the sense that given the historical condition, he could reach down to the masses and his policy of action included such things as hartals, non-cooperation, civil disobedience etc. Actual anti-imperialists and anti-feudal mass movements were developing under the inspiration of his ideology. This was an anti-imperialist progressive role. Therefore one had to take a positively critical attitude towards Gandhi. On the other hand, Roy's views proceeded from the assumption that the irreconcilable class contradiction between the bourgeoisie, workers and the peasantry, allegedly ruled out the possibility of creating a united front of the classes in the national liberation anti-imperialist struggle. He advocated a struggle against the bourgeois nationalist leadership of the anti-imperialist movement. Maintaining that this leadership was notoriously non-revolutionary he urged the organization of an independent liberation movement led by Communists. He was obsessed with Gandhi's socially conservative ideology. His Memoirs contain his assessment of Gandhi's activity - "I maintained that, as a religious and cultural revivalist, he was bound to be a reactionary socially, however revolutionary he might appear politically."<sup>9</sup>

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9. M.N. Roy's Memoirs, (Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Bombay, 1964, p. 379.

In India the implementation of Lenin's propositions which he advanced at the Second Congress of the Comintern and which were reflected in the famous thesis on the national and colonial questions, was handicapped by considerable difficulties. The prominent functionary of the Communist Party of India with a national and international understanding at that time was M.N. Roy. Owing to his status in the Comintern Roy was the principal interpreter and propagandist of the Second Congress' decisions concerning India. Meanwhile, he did not repudiate his views which he defended in the polemic with Lenin. Therefore in the years when the Comintern definitely adopted Lenin's point of view, Roy's stand was, on the one hand, to reconcile the Comintern's platform with his views as far as it was possible, and on the other, to try and influence the position of the Comintern. He was not alone in his delusions concerning the role of the national bourgeoisie and Gandhi in the liberation movement. From time to time he found supporters among the emergent Indian Communist movement and in the Comintern. To an extent this accounted for the fact that the activities of the emergent communist movement in India and in some other Eastern countries were far from always consistent with the strategic course of the Second Congress of the Comintern.

In the Gaya session of the Congress in 1922, the Indian Communists had addressed an appeal to the Congress. Alongside demands for full independence of the country, the programme offered by the Communists urged the liquidation of landed estates, nationalisation of all public enterprises, participation of the

workers in the profit of enterprises and arming of the people in order to defend national freedom. It was a programme which could neither be accepted by the Congress nor serve as a basis for Co-operation between it and the Indian communists. The presentation of the working people's maximum social demands which went beyond the limits of a bourgeois - democratic revolution at a time when India had no influential Marxist - Leninist party and no independent movement of the working class, when it was impossible to establish the hegemony of the proletariat in the national liberation movement, only artificially augmented and aggravated contradictions in the national anti-imperialist front and brought the small group of communists into isolation. Roy steered his line of two contrasting liberation movements and ruled out the possibility of their coming together on the basis of a certain community of interests. Therefore any reference to co-operation with the Congress was in effect a demand that it should shift to the positions of the Communists. And since this was out of the question the whole case was reduced to a desire to exhibit the allegedly reactionary nature of the Congress.

The Fourth Congress of the Comintern had reiterated that the Indian Communist Party's links with the mass movement and workers' strikes were weak and that it did not make the most of the legal methods of struggle. It held that the Indian bourgeoisie was a revolutionary factor because its interests objectively contradicted imperialism and that the struggle for national liberation was a revolutionary movement. A workers' and peasants'

political party which participated in this movement had to co-operate with bourgeois parties and support them. Therefore stress was again laid on the tactics of the United Front.

Having failed to influence the Indian National Congress in 1922 the Indian Communists felt that the organization of a party of the workers and peasants of India was indispensable and that unless such a party was organized the INC could not be radicalized. Preparations were set afoot in 1923 for organizing a Workers and Peasants' party. But all these efforts suffered a set back when the Government arrested the leading Indian Communists in accordance with the April 1924 Kanpur Conspiracy case. Though this greatly crippled the embryonic communist movement efforts to build up a legal party continued and on Sept. 1, 1925 the Communist Party of India was set up in Kanpur. In addition to this 1925 witnessed the creation of the predecessor of the Bengal Workers' and Peasants' Party. But the movement remained weak with their support confined to a very small section of the Indians.

Realizing the shortcomings of the movement, British emissaries Spratt & Bradley were sent to India to assist in the establishing of a Workers and Peasants Party on an all-India scale. It was hoped that such a party would prove attractive to radical congressmen and would be viewed as a possible vehicle for work within both the congress party & the Indian labour movement. As a result of these efforts, between 1926-29, workers and peasants parties were created in Punjab, Bombay, UP and Bengal. Considerable success was achieved in the trade union field. The Girni Kamgar Union, considered at that time the biggest trade union in Asia,

was born out of a six month-long general strike of the Bombay textile workers. By 1927 the Communists constituted a majority in the working committee of the AITUC (formed in 1920 with leaders who had close ties with the INC) which for the first time in 1927 declared its goal as complete independence and accepted a socialistic constitution for independent India. Between 1927-29 the number of trade unions multiplied rapidly and a large number of strikes took place which exceeded the total number of strikes in the previous five years. This period also saw the general radicalization of Indian politics because of the spread of radical and socialist ideas by Nehru and Bose. In 1929 the Congress accepted the goal of complete independence.

But at the same time there emerged a number of developments unfavourable to the Communists. One was in the shape of the instructions of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International in 1928 which renounced the policy of United Front with the bourgeoisie and followed a clearly sectarian line. This was influenced by the developments in China where the Kuomintang had turned against the Chinese communists. Now the bourgeoisie was dubbed counter-revolutionary and it was stressed: "... that the working class operating through their independent political party (i.e. the CP) is the only guarantee for the success of national revolution."<sup>10</sup> Communist parties should "demarcate themselves in the most clearcut fashion, both politically &

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10. "The Lessons of Chinese Revolution" - 'Masses of India' (Sept. - Oct., 1927). as quoted in Gene D. Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller's Communism in India (The Perennial Press, Bombay 1960), p. 102.



organizationally, from all the petty-bourgeois groups and parties.<sup>11</sup> In all their activities the communists should criticize the half-heartedness and vacillations of the petty-bourgeois groups including the left wing of the INC. The Communists were recommended not to organize WPPs since at particular periods they could be converted into ordinary petty bourgeois parties. The CPI's course was clearly mapped out - it was to dissolve any remnants of the WPP, sever connections with all elements of the bourgeoisie, and launch a full-scale attack on Gandhi, Nehru & INC. The Sixth Congress thesis left little room for Indian Communists to develop the national movement in India from within the Congress. This reversal in Comintern policy was followed by acute differences between communists and radicals and liberals within the AITUC. In 1929 the reformists left the AITUC and formed the ITUF. The unified working class movement which had began to emerge as a formidable force in 1927 weakened. This was followed by government repression in 1929 when 31 important leaders of the trade union movement were sentenced to imprisonment under the Meerut conspiracy case. Another split took place in the AITUC in 1931 on the question of the participation of the working class in the civil disobedience movement. The Left Radicals were inclined towards participation but the communists under influence of the Comintern line were averse to it. The latter being minority in the AITUC left it in 1931 and formed the RTUC. But non-

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11. Thesis on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-Colonies. Imprecor (Dec. 12, 1928). Ibid., p. 119.

participation in the Civil Disobedience movement proved to be a loss for them.

In the beginning of the 1930s the Central Committees of a number of Communist parties sent an open letter to the Indian Communists. They noted that the Communist movement in India was falling into isolation and even experiencing a crisis. They expressed the view that the attitude of the Indian Communists to the bourgeois - democratic movement should not be confined solely to exposing national reformism, that criticism should be combined with participation in the national movement and work in reformist organizations. By now a new tactical line was beginning to take shape in the international communist movement, and elements of subjectivism and left sectarianism were being discarded.

These new trends were developed and approved at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern which emphatically reiterated the necessity for all anti-imperialist forces to unite. It designated the formation of a united anti-imperialist front as the main task for the communist parties in the colonies and semi-colonial countries. This called for a serious revision of the propositions of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern and implied co-operation with the bourgeois - democratic movement and the need to come to an agreement with its leaders.

The experience of the communist movement in India was criticised at the Seventh Congress in a report by G. Dimitrov and

in the main report on the Colonial question delivered by Wang Ming, a Chinese Communist, which reflected the Comintern's point of view. Wang Ming said that there were left sectarian errors in the preceding activity of the Communist Party of India and noted that the work of the Indian Communists was an example of how not to carry on the tactics of the United National Front. They did not participate in all the mass demonstrations organised by the National Congress or organizations affiliated with it. At the same time they did not possess sufficient forces independently to organize a powerful and mass anti-imperialist movement. Therefore, the Indian Communists, were to a considerable extent isolated from the mass of the people from the mass anti-imperialist struggle. By their sectarian policy and isolation from the mass anti-imperialist movement, these small communist groups objectively helped to retain the influence of Gandhi and national reformism over the masses. The programme for joint action with other anti-imperialist forces proposed by the Indian Communists demanded among other things the establishment of an Indian Soviet Republic, confiscation of all lands belonging to the landowners without compensation and a general strike. Such demands, Wang Ming said, went far beyond the limits of the bourgeois - democratic programme.<sup>12</sup>

G. Dimitrov declared in his report : "In India the Communists have to support, extend and participate in all anti-imperialist mass activities, not excluding those which are under national

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12. Wang Ming: The Revolutionary Movement in the Colonial Countries. (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1935), p. 64.

reformist leadership. While maintaining their political and organizational independence, they must carry on active work inside the organizations which take part in the Indian National Congress, facilitating the process of crystallization of a national revolutionary wing among them, for the purpose of further developing the national liberation movement of the Indian Peoples against British imperialism."<sup>13</sup>

This signified a revival of the Leninist line in the national liberation movement. The need for the unity of action of the communist and all anti-imperialist forces, including the Indian National Congress, in the struggle for national independence was proclaimed once again. Noting the importance of co-operating with the Indian National Congress, the Seventh Congress of the Comintern mentioned the desirability of establishing particularly close contacts with its left wing.

The communist party of India itself was not represented at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern. The British Communist Party leaders who had attended the session in Moscow, proceeded with the task of interpreting and officially notifying the CPI of the new Comintern line. R. Palme Dutt and Ben Bradley prepared a formal statement for the Indian Communists entitled "The Anti-Imperialist People's Front." They said that the Indian National struggle had reached a critical point; that British imperialism had succeeded in imposing its slave

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13. G. Dimitrov: "Fascism and the Unity of the Working Class" (1935) in G. Adhikari, ed., op. cit., p. 68.

constitution on India; that the first stage of the struggle against imperialism had failed and was in retreat; that the ever-worsening situation and the sharpening struggle of the masses called for more radical organization and leadership; that this radicalised leadership could only come forth as a result of the broadest possible anti-imperialist front. It was evident that all elements, including from among the 'Liberals, who were prepared to break with the co-operation with imperialism and accept the programme of the national struggle were welcome to the common front.

In detailing the methods for organizing the "Anti-Imperialist People's Front" in India, Dutt and Bradley focussed exclusively on the Congress. They asked whether the Congress was not already "the United front of the Indian People in the national struggle?" They declared that the Congress had performed a gigantic task in uniting wide elements of the Indian people for national liberation. They claimed that it represented the "mass army" of the national struggle. It could therefore serve as an all-encompassing agency of the anti-imperialist people's front - "The National Congress can play a great and a foremost part in the work of realizing the Anti-Imperialist People's Front. It is even possible that the National Congress, by the further transformation of its organization and programme, may become the form of realization of the Anti- Imperialist People's Front, for it is the really that matters, not the name."<sup>14</sup>

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14. R. Palme Dutt and Ben Bradley: "The Anti-Imperialist People's Front", Imprecor, XVI (Feb. 29, 1936). As reproduced in G.D. Overstreet & M. Windermiller, op. cit., p. 160.

It was important to concentrate on this problem of 'transforming' the Congress. This was to be the task of the Indian Communists. This transformation required four reforms -

- (1) The Congress must accept "collective affiliation", that is the collective admission of mass organizations.
- (2) It must democratize its constitution in order to eliminate centralized control.
- (3) It must adopt an unambiguous anti-imperialist programme and demand complete national independence with a 'democratic' government.
- (4) It must eliminate the 'dogma' of non-violence.

The first of these reforms was obviously essential to the attainment of the others, since the admission of such mass organization as trade unions would vastly strengthen the left wing. But the left wing would have to achieve an unprecedented unity. They would have to make peace with rival radical groups. Dutt and Bradley clearly specified in the thesis that left-wing unity in the congress was to be attained through the medium of the Congress Socialist Party. ---"Congress Socialists, Trade Unionist, Communists, and Left 'Congressmen should all be able to unite on the essentials of a minimum programme of anti-imperialist struggle for complete independence, of organization of the masses and development of mass struggle, and of the fight for changes in the Congress constitution, policy, organization and leadership to forward these aims. The Congress Socialist Party can play an especially important

part in this as the grouping of all the radical elements in the existing Congress. It is of the greatest importance that every effort should be made to clarify questions of programme and tactics in the Congress Socialist Party."<sup>15</sup>

The estimation was that the Congress Socialists represented nearly one-third of the forces and a potential majority in the Congress. With the addition of the mass organizations and of the Communists, the left-wing would surely constitute a majority, making easy the goal of capturing the Congress.

At several points Dutt and Bradley suggested that the anti-imperialist people's front must be based on the workers, peasants, and petty bourgeoisie. But they were careful to emphasize that the CPI, for the time being, was to maintain and broaden the scope of the Congress, not drive out any of its components - that is, the bourgeoisie. Following Dimitrov's dictum, the Dutt - Bradley Thesis called upon the CPI to rally the Congress left wing for an attack on the right-wing leadership. This was a reiteration of the two main tactical devices as laid down by Lenin i.e. action from above and action from below. The first implied a formal alliance with non-Communist organizations. It meant exerting pressure on another organization through public collaboration with its leaders wherever practical expedience permitted. This entailed an alliance i.e. a United front from above, with the Congress Socialist Party. The second tactic implied action from below denoting an open attack on

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15. Ibid., p. 160.

non-communist organizations. It meant exerting pressure on another organization, from within or without, by appealing to its constituents or members. This entailed penetration, i.e. a united front from below, of the INC as a whole.

To implement this tactical device, a minimum programme was decided upon and instructions were issued to individual communists on how it was to be pushed through. It was not to be carried on from inside alone, but supported by a plan of action from outside. A circular of the Politburo declared - "Our main emphasis should be on demanding collective affiliation etc. by mobilising all anti-imperialist mass organization outside the INC... It is only when independent activity outside the INC is intimately linked up with the work inside that the demand for collective affiliation will become irresistible and the formation of a UF with the INC and its local organizations become possible." The Politburo was very clear on these two tasks, for it again and again emphasized the need of combining the two tasks "so as to produce the maximum results which will contribute to the building up of an all-embracing united front and the growth of the party."

Less direct channels of winning and influencing the Congress were sought. These channels were discovered in the personalities of Pandit, Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose and in the newly formed but growing Congress Socialist Party under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan. Nehru was even offered the leadership of the United Leftist Forces.



The most important channel of influencing the Congress was through the Congress Socialist Party. The United Front tactics of the communists were greatly facilitated by the enthusiasm of Jayaprakash Narayan, the General Secretary of the Socialist Party, who had become an intellectual adherent of the Comintern during his years as a student in the USA. In January 1936, the Socialist party met at Meerut, and, anticipating the change in communist tactics, decided to respond to the suggestion of a United Front with the Communist Party in furtherance of common objectives. The character of this United Front was to be two-fold -

- (i) a United Front as between Party and Party.
- (ii) going still further, admission of individual communists to membership of the Socialist Party to pave the way from United Front to complete merger and Socialist Unity.

Through the channel thus opened, the communists entered not only into the Congress Socialist Party but also in its parent body, the Indian National Congress, and the All-India Kisan Sabha. Both open and concealed members of the Communist Party were thus given an opportunity to hold positions of importance in the national forces.

Outwardly it appeared that the communists, socialists and other radical members of the INC had joined hands. In 1936 the Left wing of the INC collectively fought for some demands such as uncompromising opposition to the Act of 1935, not to

contest elections under this Act and to make this issue an issue for launching the anti-imperialist struggle in the belief that congress should use its majority to paralyse the government. But the congress participated in the 1936 elections and even agreed to form provincial government in 1937. Another important issue on which the united left stand was defeated was the question of collective affiliation of the Trade Unions and Kisan Sabhas to the INC. On the crucial question of election of Bose to the Congress Presidentship in 1939, the Communists supported the 'Pant resolution' and thus lost an opportunity of gaining superiority and removing the Right wing.

Independent activity outside the Indian National Congress was mainly directed towards the working for mass organizations front organizations and the student movement.' It was in accordance with the united front policy that the communists came back into the AITUC which they had left in 1931 to form the RTUC. They soon came to dominate the AITUC as they made considerable headway in the trade union movement. Within the peasant movement they adopted a united front posture with the Congress Socialists and the two regionally oriented groups led by N.G. Ranga and Swami Sahajananda Saraswathi in the Kisan Sabhas.

Dimitrov's thesis calling for a broad people's anti-fascist front and anti-imperialist united front provided the immediate impetus for the formation of Communist fronts in India. These fronts were smaller organizations working under the influence of the party but not under its mechanical leadership. They

were to serve two primary purpose - (1) as propaganda forums, they would help to create a climate of public opinion favourable to party activities. (2) And as sources of recruitment they would provide a sphere where political activities of all sorts could be observed, influenced and drawn into the party apparatus. The most important front organization created in this period was the All-India Progressive Writers Association on 10th April 1936.

In the student movement also the communists succeeded in gaining preeminence. The All-India Student's Federation which had till then been run by nationalist students & students attracted towards CSP now began to see a communist faction raise its head. This led to severe faction fighting.

Uneasy relations marked this United Front of the CPI with the CSP. Amid mutual allegations of trying to disrupt and capture the entire organization, the United Front was broken off in March 1940 at the Ramgarh Meeting of the CSP National Executive. The CPI made considerable progress during these years of the United front tactic. During the 1st five years though the party was still illegal, it emerged from semiobscurity to a position of considerable strength. The left wing as a whole had by now achieved a role of some importance in Indian politics: in the Congress, the Forward Bloc led by Subhas Chandra Bose had joined other radical groups, including the Socialists and Communists, to form the Left consolidation Committee; and though the left remained a minority, it had become increasingly better organized & influential.

## CHAPTER II

### A HISTORY OF THE AIPWA - POLITICAL

From the writings of Sajjad Zaheer and Mulk Raj Anand, two founder-members of the All-India Progressive Writers Association, we know that the Indian Progressive Writers' movement received its first impetus from Europe. The beginning was made in Paris in 1935. Here a conference of world writers was held under the tutelage of Maxim Gorky, Andre Gide, E.M. Foster, Andre Malraux and others. This was the "World Congress of Writers for the Defence of Culture" which eventually led to the formation of the "International Association of Writers for the Defence of Culture against Fascism". Incidentally, it<sup>is</sup> also a fact that attempts at the formation of the CPI were also made abroad in Tashkent though, now both the CPI and the CPI(M) consider 1925 and 1934 respectively, as the date of the formation of the CPI and that too inside the country.

This was the time when the success of the socialist revolution in the USSR had turned the minds of writers to a new direction towards the possibilities of producing "socialist fiction". Initially this was thought to embrace working class novels and works written by middle class

intellectuals. Towards the end of 1934 the functions and objectives of this socialist literature were sought to be more defined. This was easier said than done. The general analysis of the situation was clear enough - a crisis of ideas and the decadence of modern literature was leading towards the collapse of culture. What was not clear at all, however, was in which direction to proceed from this point. On the one hand, the writer was asked to recognize the necessity of constructing a new order, and this was said to be the task of the working class and taken inevitably to mean revolution. On the other hand, though, as a result of the rise of European fascism a possible takeover by the proletariat seemed far from being the order of the day. It seems to have been principally this second aspect of the situation which was taken into consideration when the criteria for defining the writers defending culture against fascism was sought to be established as those -

- (1) who see in the development of fascism the terrorist dictatorship or dying capitalism.
- (2) who, if members of the working class, desire to express in their work, the struggle of their class.
- (3) who use their pens or influence against the imperialist war in defence of the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Left Review, I, October 1934, p. 38. As quoted in H. Gustav Klaus's article: "Socialist Fiction in the 1930s - Some Preliminary Observations", in John Lucas, ed., The 1930 (The Harvester Press Ltd., Great Britain, 1978), p. 15.

At this Paris Conference, there were writers of different beliefs and persuasions. However, they all were united on one issue. All believed that their main work as revolutionaries was to get a united front for common action among all those who were not revolutionaries, but felt the need to defend culture and literature against the effects of modern capitalism, fascism and war. With every means in their power the writers were to defend their right of freedom of thought and opinion. Wherever fascist or imperialist forces attempted dictatorially to impose restriction on writers or adopt repressive measures on account of their views, a powerful agitation was to be launched against it.

The universal feeling at the conference was that the writers could defend themselves in the best possible manner by becoming a part of the People's United Front for freedom ~~and~~ thus gaining the support of the labouring classes. The experience of the French and Chinese writers proved the truth behind this idea. At a time when China was fighting Japanese imperialism the best writers, poets, novelists, dramatists, educationists, philosophers and others were using all their talents for the success of their country in the war of liberation. The Chinese Writers' Association, an important part of the anti-imperialist united front, besides satisfying the literary needs of the Chinese people, also presented the most patent reality of the Chinese life -

the war against Japan - in its real colour to the people, thus preparing them psychologically for the war of liberation.

In France great scientists, philosophers, poets, novelists and other writers, under the leadership of Henri Barbusse, had built up an organization to fight against fascism. It was largely the indefatigable efforts and the general influence of these intellectuals which had brought the middle class into the united front movement of the proletariat and established a Popular Front which was ultimately successful in forming a government in France in the middle of 1936.

The sessions of this International Conference and meetings of its committees were held for several days. They aimed at bringing a new awareness to writers of the role they could play in the modern world. The guarding of civil liberties, the organization of writers to safeguard their own economic interests and to render help to the writers exiled by Fascism was the basis of the campaign which gathered to it almost all the important writers of the world through the various national branches of the International Association in Europe as well as in such affiliated bodies as the League of American Writers, the League of Left Writers in China and the Indian Progressive Writers Association. One special feature was the presence

of workers in large numbers as if they were there to prove the newly established relationship between the writers and the people to strengthen which was the special purpose of this conference.

At the conclusion of the conference an International Centre of Progressive Literary Movement of the entire world was established in Paris. The Progressive Writers' movements in the various countries were being integrated not only intellectually but also organizationally. The Indian Progressive Writers Association formed in London in 1935 decided to get itself affiliated to this International Literary Centre. Later, when a Progressive Writers Association was formed in India it maintained this affiliation as a foreign branch of the central organization in India, representing Indian literature in foreign countries according to the instructions of the parent organization.

Now we shall go into the details as regards the Indian chapter of the PWA. According to Carlo Coppola, "The progressive movement in India like all literary movements elsewhere finds its origins in both distant and immediate antecedents." He opines that "One of its earliest precursors was the 1857 first war of Indian independence, its aftermath, especially within the Muslim community, the so-called Aligarh movement of Sir Syed



Ahmed Khan and the literary theories developed by Altaf Hussain Hali, the Islamic resurgence articulated in the poetry of Muhammad Iqbal, the leftists-liberal poetry of Qazi Nazrul Islam and the poetry of late Josh Malihabadi."<sup>2</sup>

The more immediate antecedents of the movement Coppola finds in the publication in 1932 of the famous collection of short stories entitled "Angare" (Burning Coals), to which four young Urdu authors had contributed works - Sajjad Zaheer (1905-1973), Ahmed Ali (1910- ), Rashied Jahan (1905-1952) and Mahmuduzzafar (1908-1956). This volume sparked considerable public controversy due to its direct criticism of middle-class Muslims mores and practices of the period. These attacks on Muslim society were immediately construed as assaults on Islam; therefore, the book was considered 'blasphemy' and eventually banned by the United Provinces legislature. Reaction to the book was so vehement that Sajjad Zaheer left the country and eventually returned to England. The other writers remained in India and faced severe criticism, public censure and

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2 Carlo Coppola, "Premchand's Address to the First Meeting of the All-India Progressive Writers Association - Some Speculations", Journal of South Asian Literature (Michigan), vol. 21, summer, fall 1986, number 2 'Essays on Premchand', p. 21.

even death threats. They, however, justified their literary efforts and called for the formation of a "League of Progressive Authors" throughout India which, in addition to seeking honesty and free expression in writing, would also look after writers' interests.

In the meantime, Sajjad Zaheer, together with Mulk Raj Anand, established an organization in London called the "Progressive Writers Association". Their compulsions came as Mulk Raj Anand recalls, "from the worldwide stirrings against the onslaughts of fascism, in Italy, Germany, United Kingdom, militarism in Japan, and the connivance by various Imperialisms, of violence unleashed by world reaction against the emergent egalitarian urges of the French and Russian Revolutions, especially in India, China and South East Asia. As victims of alien rule, which was aided by the Feudalists in our sub-continent, who had accepted the exploitation of our land by the alien and the indigenous 'Readymoneys' and 'Mir Jafars', we were intensely exercised about the similarity of the methods of oppression of the monopolists behind the Fascists, Militarists and the Imperialists."<sup>3</sup> The group met for the first time on 24 November 1934 in London and eventually formulated a

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3 Mulk Raj Anand, "Let Us Make the World Our Own Village - Each One of Us" (Inaugural address to the writers gathered in London on the 50th Anniversary of the signing of the Manifesto of the P.W.A.) in Syed Ashoor Kazmi, ed., Commitment! (Institute of Third World Art and Literature, London, 1986), p. 15.

manifesto which articulated the aims and aspirations of these young writers. Copies of the manifesto were sent to Premchand, who published an edited version of the original London manifesto in 'Hans' (October 1935), and to the 'Left Review' (London) which published it in February 1936. Zaheer returned to India with the purpose of establishing an AIPWA.

It must be kept in mind that the AIPWA was an organization that developed from within and was not foisted from the West. Like the CPI, the AIPWA was also a result of both external and internal developments - a movement from above as well as from below. The internal developments did have an autonomy of their own and come into sharper focus when we go into the origins of the AIPWA. An attempt must be made to understand the intricate elements inside a movement and the socio-political background of the times. If we look at the creative literature before the formation of the AIPWA we notice that the literature of 1930s was caught up with the peasant problem and the independence question. This was naturally the result of fall in prices of agricultural commodities owing to the Great Depression. The agrarian crisis drew the middle class writers and activists to identify themselves with the peasants. The Civil Disobedience movement saw persons like Patel, Nehru and Rajendra Prasad contemplate a no rent campaign though

Prasad did not carry it out. Independent peasant organizations were springing up and reformists like N.G. Ranga were involved in it. Finally the political and peasant struggle led to the formation of mass organizations. In a similar way the idea to form the PWA also sprang up from these situations. It would not be correct to think "that all this happened through some magic or karishma".<sup>4</sup>

Some opine that the AIPWA and the Progressive movement was "imported literary ruckus" controlled by the Communist Party of India which got its inspiration from the Soviet Union and was in no way connected with the needs of the Indian people.<sup>5</sup> Rangae Raghav believes that the progressive movement was supplanted in India from abroad, "from the foreign returned, educated, rich, upper middle class youth who were influenced by Marxism but had no knowledge about India. They were familiar with Indian history and culture through English translations".<sup>6</sup>

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4 Vishva Nath Tripathi, "The Impact on Hindi Literature" in Qamar Rais, ed., October Revolution - Impact on Indian Literature (Sterling Publishers 'P' Ltd., New Delhi, 1978), p. 1.

5 Rekha Awasthi, Pragativad aur Samantar Sahitya (Macmillan Co. of India, New Delhi, 1978), p. 2. Free translation.

6 Rangae Raghav, Pragatisheel Sahitya ke Maandand. As quoted in Rekha Awasthi, ibid., p. 19. Free translation.

Dharmvir Bharathi opines that progressivism in India entered only when it had been thrashed out from abroad. "We Indians ran to wear the cast-offs thrown away by the foreigners. There was no need to do so since at that time such tendencies were coming to the surface in our literature which were hundred times more powerful than any progressivism."<sup>7</sup> Instead of investigating these criticisms, counter-criticisms and solutions it would be more relevant if we see whether attempts had been made before 1936 to form such an organization?

One could begin with the success of the Russian Revolution of 1917 which exerted a very powerful influence on the patriotic intellectuals of the entire world. "During the twenties, when the movement for national freedom was gaining momentum, socialist thinking came in as a significant intellectual prop for political and social thinkers as well as for writers."<sup>8</sup> Mohammad Hasan points out that the impact of the October Revolution on the literary sensibility in Asia, particularly in India, was threefold: "Firstly, it evoked confidence in scientific temper and progressive outlook of life which militated against all obscurantism

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7 Dharmvir Bharathi, Pragativad - Ek Sameeksha. As quoted in Rekha Awasthi, *ibid.*, p. 19. Free translation.

8 Qamar Rais, "The Impact on Urdu Literature", in Qamar Rais, ed., op. cit., p. 54.

and superstition. Secondly it exploded the myth of the invincibility of the bourgeois and imperialist powers and assured the victory of the oppressed peoples of subjugated colonies against their enslaves. Thirdly, it introduced a new scientific vision to the world which firmly believed that the future of humanity lay in the hands of the workers and peasants who were historically destined to be the leaders of all human progress."<sup>9</sup>

The impact of this tumultous development in the Indian literary scene can be illustrated with a small example. Prem Chand's wife narrates her conversation with Premchand about the new type of government which the October Revolution had brought into being in the USSR: "I said, 'After Swaraj', should exploitation cease? He replied, 'Exploitation more or less, is everywhere. Perhaps it is the law of the Universe that the powerful exploit the weak. The only exception is Russia, where the powerful have been cut to proper size. There the poor have some comfort. May be, here too, the Russian pattern may prevail....' I enquired, 'Suppose this happens soon, whom will you favour?' He said, 'Naturally, the workers and the peasants. I shall declare at the very beginning that I am a worker. You ply the

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9 Mohammad Hasan, "The Impact on Urdu Literature",  
ibid., p. 43.

spade, I use the pen. Both of us belong to the same tribe." <sup>10</sup> But in addition to the impact of the October Revolution there were other factors which also accounted for the growth of progressivism. After 1929 tremendous changes had been taking place in the Indian political scene leading to the political awakening of the people. The struggle for independence was gaining momentum. The CPI had already been established in 1925, the boycott of the Simon Commission in 1927, the Bardoli Satyagrah, the Nehru Report, the establishment in November 1928 of the All India Independence League under the leadership of Motilal Nehru and Subhash Chander Bose, the Meerut conspiracy case of 1928-29, the 1929 Lahore conspiracy case, the death sentence given to Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev, the disappointment with Gandhian methods, the 1929 Lahore Congress session in which Jawaharlal Nehru was made the President, the 1930 salt satyagraha - these were some of the main events of the times.

The formation of the AIPWA should be seen against this backdrop. Between 1929-1933 the British Government became more repressive in putting down the nationalist aspirations of the people. The Meerut conspiracy case gave the Britishers a good excuse to come down heavily on the

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<sup>10</sup> Shiv Rani Devi, Prem Chand Ghar Men (Hindi). As quoted by Mohammad Hasan ibid., p. 45.

Indian communists. All the members of the Central Committee of the CPI were arrested. And in June 1934 the CPI was declared an illegal organization by the Government. Despite this the CPI and its various organizations continued their work under different names. Meanwhile a majority of the CPI workers, some socialist leaders plus some left oriented Congress leaders joined together and formed the Congress Socialist Party in 1934 within the broad framework of the INC. Among the founders were Jayaprakash Narayan, Acharya Narendra Dev, Ashok Mehta and Ram Manohar Lohia. Sajjad Zaheer and Mulk Raj Anand established contact with these leaders of the CSP in 1936. The INC's next session had been planned for Lucknow. Though the CPI was underground its members functioned through the forums of the INC. The CPI attempted to establish maximum contact with people through its various Front and People's Organization in order to spread the doctrine of Marxism-Leninism, to fight the reformist tendencies within the INC and to increase its influence on writers, intellectuals, students and peasants. So the year 1935-36 saw the formation of many front organizations and associations - the All India Kisan Sabha, The All-India Students Federation, The All-India People's Conference and the All India Progressive Writers Association.

In his book 'Roshnai', Sajjad Zaheer enumerates the aims for which the AIPWA was set up - "...The general



direction of the movement had to be towards the people, the workers, the peasants and the common man. We have to oppose their repressors and exploiters. Though our literary works we have to create a political awareness and unity amongst the people which would oppose the tendencies of despair, inaction, inertia and impotence. This will be possible only when we consciously and in our full capacity participate in the independence movement. This does not mean that the writer necessarily has to become a political activist. But it does mean that he cannot remain apolitical or indifferent...we want that the progressive intellectuals should meet the workers, peasants, the poor and the exploited people and become a part of their political and social life....We have laid great stress on the fact that along with literary creativity the intellectuals should establish maximum contact with the people for without this the new kind of literature cannot be created."<sup>11</sup>

This sort of contact with the people had already begun. In this respect the pre-eminent contribution of Bengal must be recognized. Mulk Raj Anand says: "Of all the linguistic zones, of course, Bengal has a longer tradition

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11 Sajjad Zaheer, Roshnai. As quoted in Rekha Awasthi, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

of creative activity in the arts and literature, and it was more easily possible for our aims to engage the attention of Bengali writers."<sup>12</sup> Much before the formation of the PWA writers like Sudhindra Dutta, Naresh Chandra Sen, Buddadev Bose, Premendra Mitra, Rabindra Nath Tagore and many others had made an advance both in technical virtuosity and ideas in the history of Bengali literature. A new movement in Hindi and Hindustani literatures in Northern India had also been developing subtly. Under the guidance and encouragement of Premchand an attempt at the formation of an all India Writers Organization had already been made in 1935 at Indore in the form of the 'Bharatiya Sahitya Parishad'. Associations like the 'Hindustan Academy' were actively working towards Hindi-Urdu unity. In December 1935 the Hindustani Sabha, an organization which sought to popularize Hindustani, a neutral form of language, met in Allahabad. Here, Zaheer showed his manifesto to the three major doyens of Urdu, Maulana Abdul Haq, Josh Malihabadi and Premchand. Agreeing with its tenets, Haq and Josh signed it. Zaheer wanted to elicit as wide a response as possible to his movement and to hear from individuals who might be interested in organizing

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12 Mulk Raj Anand, "On the Progressive Writers' Movement", in Sudhi Pradhan, compiled and ed., Marxist Cultural Movement in India - Chronicles and Documents : (1936-47), Vol. I (New Roplekha Press, Calcutta, 1985), pp. 7-8.

chapters of the AIPWA in various cities throughout India. Initially, Premchand did not favour the formation of AIPWA centres in other Indian cities, he felt that the best the group could do was set up provincial branches. However, Zaheer insisted on the notion of establishing as many centres as possible, an idea to which Premchand eventually acceded.

One of the earliest AIPWA centres was in Aligarh Muslim University. A group of students there immediately rallied behind the movement, among them were many who later became major names in the progressive literature in the decades to come - Ali Sardar Jafri, Jan Nisar Akhtar Husain Raipuri, Khwaja Ahmad Abbas and Shahid Latif. Zaheer himself travelled to Amritsar and Lahore to meet with Punjabi writers for the purpose of encouraging them to join the movement. Among those whose support he enlisted were Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Akhtar Shirani, Sufi Ghulam Mustafa Tabassum and Iqbal. By this time an organizing committee of the PWA had been formed. Very soon branches of the association were opened at Lahore, Delhi, Allahabad and Aligarh. Contact was established with writers in other parts of India - Bombay, Poona, Calcutta, Benaras, Cawnpore etc. The aim was to establish a branch of the PWA in every literary centre of India. In Bengal, Andhra, Kerala, Bihar and U.P. the Association was sought to be organized on

provincial basis as well - the provincial centre controlling and directing the branches in the province as a whole.

These attempts at grass root or provincial formation are reminiscent of the way the INC and the AIKS were set up. The INC, founded in December 1885, had many predecessors in the form of the Landholders' Society of 1837 (an association of the landlords of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa) and the Bengal British India Society of 1843. These two were merged in 1851 to form the British India Association. Then there was the Madras Native Association and the Bombay Association (established in 1852) and other lesser known clubs and associations. All were provincial or local in character and worked for reform of administration and the association of Indians with the administration. Similarly, though the AIKS formally came into being during the Lucknow and Talzpur Congress sessions, the initiative at first had come from Andhra, where N.G. Ranga, leader since 1933-34 of the Provincial Ryot's Association for zamindari tenants, had been trying from 1935 both to extend the Kisan movement to the other three linguistic regions of Madras Presidency, as well as to draw in sections of agricultural labourers. A South Indian Federation of Peasants and Agricultural Labour, started in April 1935 with Ranga as General Secretary and E.M.S. Namboodripad as a Joint Secretary, suggested in its conference of October 1935 the immediate formation of

an All India Kisan body. The socialists took up the idea at their Meerut Conference in January 1936, and though Bihar (the other main base of the early Kisan movement) was unenthusiastic at first about what was feared would be a rather formal unity, Sahajanand Saraswati eventually agreed to preside over the first session of the AIKS in Lucknow in April 1936.

The attempts at provincial formation by the progressive writers was encouraging enough for Zaheer to plan the first meeting of the AIPWA for 9-10 April 1936 in Lucknow. The choice of venue was determined by the fact that the Indian National Congress would be meeting there at the same time. Several benefits could accrue from having this meeting coincide with that of the Lucknow Congress. First, it was possible that the presidential address to the AIPWA meeting could be given by Jawaharlal Nehru (this did not materialize); in addition, many of the people attending the Congress meeting might wish to attend the AIPWA conference as well, thus ensuring an audience for the progressives. Given Premchand's positive disposition to the idea of the AIPWA, Zaheer invited him to give the presidential address.

Thus, the first All-India Progressive Writers' Conference was held at Lucknow on 9-10 April 1936. For

the first time in India writers from all parts of the country, Bengal, U.P., Punjab, Maharashtra, Gujrat, Madras gathered together and laid the foundation of the movement. The significance of the Conference can be seen from this statement of Sajjad Zaheer: "...this Conference is a landmark in the history of our literature for the following reasons - Firstly, it was the first all India gathering of writers, writing in different Indian languages, but wanting to unite for solving our common national cultural problems. Secondly, this Conference looked at literature not from the point of view of a pedant, as something apart from the rest of life, but as a social product, and as such moulded and influenced by social environment. Social convulsions did not leave literature alone, and therefore it was the duty of our writers to take account of them, to consciously help through their writings the forces of enlightenment and progress, to struggle against reaction and ignorance in whatever form they may manifest themselves in society. Thirdly, the conference realised that although we were to produce literature of a new kind, yet we were not rejecting our literary heritage; in fact we asserted that only progressive writers and not pedantic reactionaries, worshipping dead forms, could claim to be the true inheritors of all that was best in our classical literature. Fourthly, we defined at this Conference our creed in the manifesto which gave

a minimum basis of unity for all those writers, who, though differing in many ways, were united as far as the progressive writers movement was concerned."<sup>13</sup> Munshi Premchand's Presidential address entitled "The Nature and Purpose of Literature"<sup>14</sup> marked the tenor of the Lucknow conference. Calling the first meeting of the AIPWA a "memorable occasion in the history of Indian literature", Premchand stated that the Indian writers of the past had confined their works to a very narrow view, in terms of both style and content which had led to a preoccupation with language as an end in itself. He opined that because writers were depending on patrons, the literature these authors produced necessarily reflected the taste and mentality of those for whom it was written, in this case a people in "a period of decline" who "either indulged in sexual passion or lost themselves in spiritualism and renunciation."

"When literature is dominated by the inevitability of the transitoriness of the world, every word, steeped in frustration, obsessed with the adversity of the times and reflects elaborate feelings (of love), one should understand

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13 Sajjad Zaheer, "A Note on the Progressive Writers' Association", in Sudhi Pradhan, ed., *ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

14 Prem Chand, "The Nature and Purpose of Literature" (Presidential Address to the first meeting of the A.I.P.W.A., Lucknow, April 10, 1936), in Sudhi Pradhan, ed., *ibid.*, pp. 38-40.

that the nation has fallen into the grips of dullness and decline and has lost the will to undertake action and struggle. It has closed its eyes to the high aims of life and has lost the capacity to discern and understand the world."

According to Premchand, the writers of the past were not concerned with the "capacity to discern and understand the world", instead, they "created from imagination and worked into it any sort of arbitrary spell they wished". "The sole purpose of these writings was to entertain and to satisfy our lust for the amazing. It was a delusion to think that literature had any connection with life; a story was a story and life was life; both these considered contradictory to each other. Poets were also dominated by the notion of individualism. The ideal of love satisfied lust and that of beauty contented the eyes. Poets exhibited the splendour of their brilliance and imagination in depicting those elaborate feelings."

Premchand differs radically from such a view and stresses that "only that creation will be called literature which describes some truth in a mature, refined and graceful language ~~language~~, and which has the quality of affecting the head and heart. And this quality is acquired by literature only when the truths and experiences of life are expressed in it." Literature, for him, is best defined as "the criticism of life; whether in the form of an essay,



story or poems, the chief function of literature is to present an honest and critical view of life." The operative words here are "function" and "honest". That literature should have a "function" implies a basically utilitarian view. Premchand declares this tenet explicitly: "I do not hesitate to say that I also measure art with the rod of usefulness." "That literature which does not rouse our good taste, does not provide us with a spiritual and mental satisfaction, does not produce activity and strength in us, which does not awaken our life for the beautiful, which does not produce in us resolution and the determination to achieve victory over difficulties, that literature is useless today; it does not deserve to be called literature."

Premchand states that in the past religion was the basis of man's spiritual and moral civilization. It functioned through fear and temptation, with issues of piety and sin as its weapons. But now literature has nullified this function of religion by inspiring "a sense of the aesthetic" and a "sense of justice". This points towards progress and the improvement of the human condition.

In this context, Premchand points out that the name 'Progressive Writers Association' is a misnomer because, "A litterateur or an artist is, by nature, progressive. He probably would not have been a litterateur if this were not

his nature. He feels inadequacy inside as well as outside himself. He must remain restless in order to fulfil this deficiency. He does not perceive the individual and society in those conditions of happiness and freedom in which he wants to see them in his imagination. For this reason, he always feels dissatisfied with the present mental and social conditions. He wants to end these disgusting conditions so that the world would become a better place to live in and die in. This anguish and this feeling keep his heart and his brain alive."

Premchand further elaborates on what he believes "progress" to mean: "By progress we mean that situation which generate the firmness and capacity to perform duty, which shows us our degradation, which shows us that, due to various internal and external causes, we have reached this condition of death and decline and must strive to remove them." In such progress there is no place for idiosyncrasy or personality: "To give importance to egoism and individual perspective is, in our profession, a thing which leads us to dullness, degradation, and carelessness. And such art is not useful to us, either individually or collectively."

Premchand asserts that to progress is to change. We have to change our standards of beauty. To do this, the writer has to turn away from the rich and privileged towards the common man as the subject of his writing.

Otherwise art will continue to mean "worship of form, word scheme and novel similes." In such art there is, "no ideal, no lofty purpose of life. Worship, renunciation spiritualism and retreating from the world are its most exalted imagination." It is only when this standard of beauty will change, will feelings of idealism, courage and self-sacrifice also emerge."

Premchand also makes a call for political improvement as well as moral and aesthetic progress: "It (beauty) will not stay confined to one class. Its flight will not be limited by the four walls of the garden but will have the entire universe at its disposal. Then we shall not tolerate base taste; we will gird our loins and dig its grave. Then we will not be ready to tolerate that state of affairs in which thousands of people are slaves to a few; then and only then will we bring into being a constitution which will not be in contradiction to beauty, good taste, self-respect, and humaneness."

In drawing his speech to a close, Premchand notes that the PWA has entered this "field of duty with some principles". These principles are, first, a basic view vis-a-vis literature in which content is more important than form: "It does not want literature to remain a slave of wine and glamour. It claims to make literature a message and a song of action and adventure. It is not much concerned

with language. "...The writer who wants to please the rich accepts the style of the rich; the writer who writes for the common people writes in the common language. Our purpose is to produce such an atmosphere in this country wherein unsophisticated literature can be created and developed."

The second major aim of the association was to establish literary centres throughout the country, in all the various vernacular languages, in which there would be extensive give and take between and among members. Through such activity India would come to possess the intellectual atmosphere in which there would be "the birth of a new epoch in literature. Such literature would possess the fundamental quality of great literature "dignified through the breath of freedom, beauty, and clarity of style, and a clear reflection of the call and bustle of life, the heart of truth. It must give us a goal; it must make us alive; it must make us think." In his concluding statement Premchand emphasizes that this new literature "should not put us to sleep, for further slumber will mean death."

This Presidential address of Premchand emphasized the question foremost in the minds of the delegates - what did progressivism in literature mean? It was felt that the search for an all-embracing definition was futile as progressivism meant different things at different times

depending on the ever-changing historical conditions. But careful literary analysis and criticism would always reveal the "tendency" of certain literature and the sympathies of certain authors. All tendencies towards sympathy with reaction, feudal superstitions, imperialism, fascism, imperialist aggression and war were condemned as non-progressive and therefore to be attacked and rooted out. All tendencies towards irrationalism, introversion, sex-perversion, obsession with the fate of the individual as against society as a whole or dreams of an irrevocable golden age or a never-to-be-realised future were regarded as indirect allies of reaction as they detracted from positive resistance, activity and struggle.

What this progressivism entailed was clearly defined by Mahmuduzzafar in the journal 'Towards Progressive Literature' - "The first step toward progressivism therefore, is the realisation that there are antagonistic forces in society, forces of conservation and forces of change; the second step is the coming into the closest possible contact with these forces; the third is the representation of these forces through the aesthetic medium; the fourth step is the complete identification with the forces making for change and the alignment of the aesthetic medium of these forces."<sup>15</sup>

The headway made at the first AIPWA Conference is evident from the resolution passed at Lucknow on April 10, 1936.

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15 Mahmuduzzafar, "Intellectuals and Cultural Reaction" in Sudhi Pradhan, ed., *ibid.*, p. 70.

Foremost amongst them was the adoption of the Manifesto of the PWA.<sup>16</sup> The Manifesto noted that radical changes were taking place in Indian society. "Indian literature, since the breakdown of classical culture...has tried to find a refuge from reality in baseless spiritualism and reality" in the process becoming "anaemic in body and mind" and adopting "a rigid formalism and a banal and perverse ideology".

It was the duty of Indian writers "to give expression to the changes taking place in Indian life and to assist spirit of progress in the country by introducing scientific rationalism in literature" and by developing "an attitude of literary criticism" which would "discourage the general reactionary and revivalist tendencies on questions like family, religion, sex, war and society and to combat literary trends reflecting communalism, racial antagonism, sexual libertinism and exploitation of man by man...we believe that the new literature of India must deal with the basic problems of our existence today - the problems of hunger and poverty, social backwardness and political subjection. All that drags us down to passivity, inaction and un-reason we reject as reactionary. All that arouses in us the critical spirit, which examines institutions and

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<sup>16</sup> Manifesto of the Progressive Writers' Association as reproduced in Sudhi Pradhan, ed., *ibid.*, pp. 74-77.

customs in the light of reason, which helps us to act, to organise ourselves to transform, we accept as progressive."

The aims and objectives of the Association were enumerated as:

- (1) To establish organization of writers to correspond to the various linguistic zones of India and to co-ordinate their activities by holding conferences and by publishing literature;
- (2) To form branches of the Association in all important towns of India;
- (3) To produce and to translate literatures of a progressive nature, to fight cultural reaction, and in this way to further the cause of India's freedom and social regeneration;
- (4) To protect the interests of progressive authors;
- (5) To fight for the right of free expression of thought and opinion.

The second resolution was on the question of freedom of thought and expression. It strongly protested against the restrictions placed by the Government on the freedom of thought and expression by promulgating repressive Press Laws, Customs Act and Criminal Law Amendment Act. This was seen as a serious attack on the free cultural development of the country.

The third resolution was on the issue of war -  
"We consider that collectively and individually we stand in

the ranks of those who are striving to build a new social order based on equality, freedom and peace, and as such we cannot but protest against the anti-cultural forces of fascism and militarism. We declare that war is a brutality and is a serious menace to human culture and progress. Further we resolve to strive to help the forces of international peace and such national aspirations as are consistent with them."

The fourth resolution was regarding the rights of students to freely develop their organizations, journals and general movement and to have the freedom to express themselves on all social and political subjects. Through its fifth resolution the conference extended its greetings to the Peace Conference to be convened at Geneva in September, under the presidentship of M. Roman Rolland.

This Lucknow Conference also adopted a constitution for the AIPWA detailing its name, aims and objects and the composition of an All-India Committee which was to be known as the Executive Committee. This was to elect a General Secretary and three or four other persons to carry out the routine work of the All-India Committee. It was to work for the opening of Branches of the PWA in all parts of India.

It is interesting to note that the educated middle class and the intelligentsia which came forward to form the



AIPWA were from different ideological mainstreams. There were Freudians, Marxists, Socialists, Gandhians, Anarchists, Bohemians, and Individualists. From the ideological viewpoint this organization was not a compact unit. One could however see that it was mostly the educated middle class left-oriented youth which came forward to participate in this movement. Besides them amongst the established intellectuals and litterateurs one could discern a kind of ideological polarization beginning to take place. Therefore some people started supporting the organization while the others opposed it. The PWA was able to win over the sympathies and support of Premchand, Pant, Nirala, K.A. Abbas, Majaj, Dinkar, Navin, Vrindavan Lal Verma, Faiz, Manto, Sahir, Iqbal, Ravindra, Benipuri, 'Prabhat', Anchal, Narendra Sharma, Suman etc. Thus, "This progressive movement was a spectrum of different shades of political and literary opinions with Premchand, a confirmed believer in Gandhism at one end, and Sajjad Zaheer, a confirmed Marxists, at the other end. In between there were various other shades including non-conformists, but every one of them interested in the freedom of the country and glory of literature."<sup>17</sup>

What was it that brought these diverse trends and people together on a common platform. Bhisham Sahani points out that despite their obvious differences the members

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17 Ali Sardar Jafri, "Progressive Movement and Urdu Poetry", paper presented at the Urdu Conference, 1982, Toronto, Canada, p. 2.

and sympathizers of the PWA were completely united on three issues. The first was the question of opposition to imperialism and the struggle for national independence. Many progressive poets and writers actually participated in the freedom struggle. Of them, Ali Sardar Jafri says, "They were the poets of a country where great patriots had mounted the gallows reciting poetry with proud defiance, like Ram Prasad Bismil who immortalised these lines of a poet from Bihar of the same pen name -

'Sarfarooshi Ki tamanna ab hamare dil mein hai,  
Dehkna hai zore kitna baazoo-e-qaatil mein hai.  
Rahrav-e-raah-e-muhabbat rah na jaana raah mein  
Lazzat-e-sehra navardi doori-e-manzil mein hai.'

- Bismil Azimabadi

(We are prepared to sacrifice our head,  
Let us see the power of the executioner's arm.  
Do not linger behind, O traveller of the path of love,  
The pleasure of wandering in the desert lies in its distances).<sup>18</sup>

The second issue pointed out by Bhisham Sahani was the concern with the creation of a just social order. Not only had India to be liberated from the shackles of imperialism and British rule but also from the yoke of feudalism, exploitation, poverty and inequality. In this

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

context it would be relevant to talk about Premchand's novel 'Premasram' which is often referred to as "not only the first novel in Hindi to focus on the plight of the Indian peasantry, but also the first to make contemporary historical reality its subject matter."<sup>19</sup> Both the central theme (a revolt of peasants against their zamindar) and the main motifs connected with it (opposition to the zamindar system, the call to build a new society, the ideal of trusteeship, the method of non-cooperation) were highly topical, directly reflecting the events and the evolving political discourse of the day.

The third issue according to Bhisham Sahani, was the need for maintaining links with one's own cultural heritage. Various trends were being brought together and it was essential that the relationship with the traditional humanist Indian thought was to be maintained. This was essentially a question of deciding one's attitude to the past. It was not to be a narrow sectarian one but a broader humanitarian attitude. In the later nineteenth century the freedom struggle had developed a kind of Hindu character. As T.G. Jacob remarks: "The national movement at that time,

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19 Karine Schomer, "Prem Chand's 'Premasram', Gandhism and the Imagination - A Review Article", Journal of South Asian Literature, op. cit., p. 86.

was dominantly Hindu in colour, it was led by the Hindu middle class leaders. The nationalism of that period, therefore, expressed itself in the garb of Hindi ideology. The idea that India is one nation thus became inextricably interwoven with ideas depicting the oneness of India in Hindu religious and cultural imagery."<sup>20</sup> In the twentieth century a more secular approach to the freedom struggle was noticed. The stress was not on the concept of the Hindu rashtra but on a composite culture. A national outlook was being developed and many of the fossilized customs and social evils like the caste system, sati, purdah, untouchability etc. were being rejected. A lead to this was given by Gandhi and the progressive litterateurs too dealt with them. They were interested in changing the social behaviours and patterns through their writings. For example, one can take Ismat Chughtai's story 'Lihaf'. This was very critical of the Muslim middle class and especially took up the problems of woman-education, marriage and exploitation. In the literary field a convergence on criticality and creativity came about despite heterogeneity. This will be taken up in the next chapter.

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20 T.G. Jacob, "The Evolution of the Communal Question" in T.G. Jacob, ed., National Question in India - CPI Documents, 1942-47 (Odyssey Press, New Delhi, 1988), p. 38.

Despite the concurrence on these three basic issues it was obvious that such a heterogeneous association would have its own internal problems of organization. The question before the PWA was whether it should become a non-principled United Front in order to make the progressive literary movement more widespread. Ram Billas Sharma throws light on this problem: "The biggest problem for this movement has been the problem of unity between the writers influenced by Marxism and the other nationalists and popular writers. It is a historic truth that the progressive literary movement has been influenced by Marxism. On the one hand we have literature influenced by Marxism and on the other hand literature uninfluenced by Marxism (but nationalist and popular at the same time) and it is essential for our culture and society that both the kinds of literature and litterateurs unite."<sup>21</sup> The attempts made by the journals 'Hans', 'Rupabh', 'Sangharsh' etc. with a view of making a widespread People's Front of the Marxist and non-Marxists writers were quite appreciable. Besides this the trend of calling the non-Marxist writers to the conferences of the Marxist writers was continued. In those days nearly all the major poets of "Chhayavad"<sup>22</sup> were

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21 Ram Billas Sharma, 'Pragatisheel Sahitya Ki Samasyayen'. As quoted in Rekha Awasthi, op. cit., p. 30. Free translation.

22 The Chhayavadis could be compared to the German or English Romanticists, though the mood of the former

associated with this progressive movement. Besides them Amritlal Nagar, Suman, Dinkar, Narendra Sharma, Anchal, Pahadi, Nemi Chandra Jain, Narinarayan Vyaas, Bharat Bhushan Aggarwal, Girija Kumar, Ashk, Krishna Chander, Balraj Sahani, Sankar Shailendra, Ram Billas Sharma, Yashpal, Rangey Raghav, Shivdan Singh Chauhan, Muktibodh, Amrit Rai, Shripat Rai etc. became supporters or sympathizers of the movement. It would be irrelevant to question as to who all remained indisciplined from the organizational viewpoint. At that time on the level of literary creativity three main trends were developing - Critical realism, Revolutionary Romanticism and Socialist Realism. Chandrabali Singh has commented on this -- "The progressive movement was a result of our national awakening and socialist ideology. It was but natural that it would contain varied viewpoints and different forms and levels of class consciousness. Through the medium of this dialectical reaction the progressive movement developed, our litterateurs learnt to grasp life more deeply and realism became the mainstream of our litterateures. In this process many writers gave a revolutionary bend to their reformist, capitalist and humanist viewpoints."<sup>23</sup> But another aspect started developing

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was different. It was nurturing a vague and dreamy kind of utopian socialism or idealistic humanism. Famous Chhayavadis were Pant and Nirala.

23 'Swadhinta' November 1967, 'Pragativad-Punamulyankar aur nai disha'. As quoted in Rekha Awasthi, op. cit., p. 31. Free + anslation.

internally from this attempt at unity. In the bid to make the movement all pervasive the struggle against anti-Marxist and Freudian tendencies, the superstitions of traditional viewpoints, naturalism, anarchism etc. slackened.

Where the AIPWA was able to win over the support and sympathy of many it had also to face stiff opposition from other quarters. First and foremost was from the British Government which looked upon the formation of this organization with suspicion. In a circular, called the "Hallet's circular", issued on 7 September 1936 it cautioned the local governments about this organization. It stated that though the aims of the association were "innocuous" it had "... close contacts with organizations and individuals who are in some cases avowed and active communists and in others are advocate of policies akin to those of the communists." This was seen as "a typical example of the methods now being pursued by communists in all countries in accordance with the current policy of the Communist International. This method is for a few convinced and trained Communists to establish contacts with all sorts of organizations and societies having interest in intellectual, cultural and social subjects with the object of spreading communistic ideas and gaining converts".<sup>24</sup> Therefore its development

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<sup>24</sup> Hallet's Circular. File No. 7/9/36, Home/Political, 1936. (P.C. Joshi Archives, Jawaharlal Nehru University).

was to be watched with some suspicion.

The main challenge to the progressive movement came from the members of the 'Hindi Sahitya Sammelan' and from Hindu conservatism. The Hindi Sahitya Sammelan was an organization of writers which through its platforms and literary centres was advocating and encouraging communal and revivalist tendencies. It was putting up a strong opposition towards all the new expressions and creative innovations of contemporary literature. It was full of what Nehru called "the intricate and ornate language that was customary in Hindi writing, full of difficult Sanskrit words, artificial and clinging to ancient forms". Nehru goes on to say, "I ventured to suggest that this courtly style, addressed to a select audience, should be given up, and Hindi writers should deliberately write for the masses and in language understood by them. Mass contacts would give new life and sincerity to the language, and the writers themselves would catch some of the emotional energy of the mass and do far better work."<sup>25</sup> Moreover, it was not placing the regional languages and dialects on an equal footing with its literature. It was following a policy of Hindi imperialism whereby it held Hindi as supreme amongst all the languages. At the ideological level not only the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan but

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25 Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography (Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 456.



also the old guards of literature and old fashioned publishers were giving encouragement to the tendencies of tradition<sup>al</sup>ism, revivalism and conservatism. Nehru had also protested against this cultural imperialism and conservatism. This can be seen in his criticism of the poet's imagination of India as 'Bharat Mata': "It is curious how one cannot resist the tendency to give an anthropomorphic form to a country. Such is the force of habit and early association. India becomes 'Bharat Mata', Mother India, a beautiful lady, very old but ever youthful in appearance, sad-eyed and forlorn, cruelly treated by aliens and outsiders, and calling upon her children to protect her. Some such picture rouses the emotions of hundreds of thousands and drives them to action and sacrifice. And yet India is in the main the peasant and the worker, not beautiful to look at, for poverty is not beautiful. Does the beautiful lady of our imagination represent the bare-bodies and bent workers in the fields and factories? Or the small group of those who have from ages past crushed the masses and exploited them, imposed cruel customs on them and made many of them even untouchable? We seek to cover truth by the creatures of our imaginations and endeavour to escape from reality to a world of dreams."<sup>26</sup>

The language policy followed by the communal conservatists was the chief challenge which the PWA had to

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<sup>26</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *ibid.*, p. 431.

face. In opposition to Premchand, Gandhi and Nehru's demand for Hindi-Urdu unity, the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan in 1937 (under the Presidentship of Purushottam Das Tandon) and in 1939 gave a severe blow to the demand for 'Hindustani' (this stressed on Hindi-Urdu unity and demanded a common script for the two). The Benaras Sahitya Sammelan under the leadership of Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya also expressed the viewpoint of Hindu orthodoxy and buttressed the idea of separatism between Hindi and Urdu. The PWAs reaction to this has been well expressed by Shivdan Singh Chauhan - "From the beginning the progressives supported Hindustani on the question of the national language. For this support they got inspiration from three things. Firstly, they considered Hindustani as a symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity. And since they wanted to <sup>t</sup>say away from communalism they thought that taking sides with either Hindi and Urdu would be communal. Secondly, this provided them with a simple solution to the question of the national language. Thirdly, prominent Hindi and Urdu writers had come together in an organization. Therefore, it was more than necessary not to take sides with either Hindi or Urdu but to stress on the unity of their historical traditions."<sup>27</sup>

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27 Shivdan Singh Chauhan, 'Sahitya ki Samasyayen'. As quoted in Rekha Awasthi, op. cit., p. 25. Free translation.

Therefore, the progressive movement had to provide popular solutions to the questions of language, culture and nationality and had to fulfill the historical responsibility of fighting against Hindu and Muslim communalism.

That it did so is evident if one goes through the report of the Second All India Progressive Writers' Conference held at Calcutta on the 24th and 25th of December 1938. The proceedings of the conference began with an address by Rabindra Nath Tagore in which he recounted the causes of the downfall of Eastern Culture - "The habit of clinging to the past has lead to endless misery and humiliation and in course of time the impact of the West destroyed our civilization, uprooted the culture that had once spread into the remotest villages. Sitting at the feet of foreign school masters we grew more and more convinced that our powerlessness and ignorance were inherent and that our destiny was to wear the chains of stupidity."<sup>28</sup>

The first session of the conference concluded with four resolutions:

- (1) On the sacred duty of all those who love culture "to align themselves with those forces in our country which are fighting for the political emancipation of

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28 'National Front', 8 January 1939. As reproduced in 50 Years of PWA, Souvenir of Golden Jubilee Celebrations, 1986, p. 55.

India and to help through their writings and moral and material forces at their disposal the struggle for freedom of the Indian people."<sup>29</sup>

- (2) On the solidarity of progressive writers of India with the writers and artists of the world who are fighting against reaction, fascism and imperialism. It declared that "the progressive writers of India stand in the ranks of those who are striving against all odds to build a new social order based on equality, freedom and peace and that they shall strive against the anti-cultural forces of fascism and militarism".<sup>30</sup>
- (3) Protest against restriction on freedom of speech in certain Provinces and Indian State, and the ban against entry of progressive literature in the country imposed by the Government of India in the form of Sea Custom Act or special notifications.
- (4) Need for eschewing communalism, sectarianism, and reaction from the syllabus of education shortly to be introduced by the Provincial Government. And support to the idea of making basic Hindustani a compulsory subject in all primary schools all over India. It requested the Indian National Congress to appoint a competent committee to chalk out a plan for this purpose.

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<sup>29</sup> New Indian Literature, No. 1, 1939. As reproduced in Sudhi Pradhan, ed., op. cit., p. 102.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 103.

The second session started with a discussion on the crisis in culture initiated by Professor Hiren Mukherjee who showed how culture was threatened by Fascism. He quoted the familiar phrase of the Nazi dramatist Jolst - "When I hear the word culture I cock my revolver."<sup>31</sup> In the opinion of Professor Mukherjee the writers and artists who are on the side of the workers and peasants will, of necessity, find that they must forge out of their art a sword for use in the struggle.

One of the papers read out in the third session was on "The Problems of Hindustani" by Dr Abdul Aleem. He opined that unfortunately the deep rooted prejudices for or against Urdu or Hindi clouded the fact that the basic language was Hindustani and Urdu and Hindi were only two literary forms. The division of Hindustani which means Hindi and Urdu is chiefly due to the use of different scripts. The solution commonly suggested is that both these scripts should be taught to everyone. But this would make the problem of mass education very difficult. Dr Aleem made out a case for the adoption of the Roman script, suitably adopted to the needs of Hindustani and he went on to suggest that only the AIPWA could handle the controversy to propose a more constructive plan - "It is we who want that literature should have the closest touch with the masses. It is for

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31 Ibid., p. 104.

us to make the language and the script easy enough for the masses to learn. We want to keep literature clear of communalism and racial antagonism. So it is our duty to evolve a common language and a common script. Let us not shirk it."<sup>32</sup>

At its second conference the PWA also adopted a constitution which further clarified the aims and objects of the association as -

- (1) To produce and to translate literature of a progressive nature.
- (2) To fight cultural reaction and in this way further the cause of Indian Freedom and social regeneration.
- (3) To bring Literature and Art into closest touch with the people and the actualities of life.
- (4) To develop an attitude of literary criticism which will discourage the reactionary and revivalist tendencies and will encourage the spirit of progress.
- (5) To fight for the right of free expression of opinion and to protect the interest of progressive writers.<sup>33</sup>

In the meantime the world situation had worsened. In Europe Fascism was fast emerging as a political philosophy with an expansionist programme of aggression in Ethiopia, Spain, Austria and Czechoslovakia. Fascist

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32 50 Years of PWA, op. cit., p. 57.

33 Sudhi Pradhan, ed., op. cit., p. 79.

trends were also developing in Japan and in 1937 imperialist Japan attacked China. The Second World War broke out in September 1939 when Nazi Germany invaded Poland in pursuance of Hitler's scheme for German expansion. Britain and France, which had tried their best to placate Hitler, were forced to go to Poland's aid. The Government of India immediately joined the war without consulting the National Congress or the elected members of the Central Legislature.

The INC gave the slogan of "Na ek pai, Na ek bhai" (not one pai nor a brother for the Imperialist war). But because of their strong anti-fascist feelings they were willing to participate in the war if the British government would declare in unequivocal terms its war aims as regards democracy, imperialism and the new order. The British refused to accept any demand for the transfer of substantial power to the Indian people and the Congress ordered its ministers to resign. In October 1940 Gandhi gave the call for a limited satyagraha by a few selected individuals (limited, so as not to embarrass Britain's war efforts by a mass upheaval in India). The various political parties - the INC, the Muslim League, the Forward Block and the CSP were united in their opposition to India's participation in the Second World War.

Two major changes in world politics occurred during 1941. Having occupied Poland, Belgium, Holland,

Norway and France in the west as well as most of Eastern Europe, Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941. On 7 December Japan attacked the American fleet at Pearl Harbour. It quickly overran the Philippines, Indo-China, Indonesia, Malaya and Burma. This brought the war to India's door-step.

The British Government now desperate for India's co-operation sent to India in March 1942 a mission headed by Sir Stafford Cripps to negotiate on the question. But the demand of the Congress for the immediate transfer of effective power to Indians was rejected. The failure of the Cripps Mission embittered the people of India. The Congress on 8 August passed the 'Quit India' Resolution and started a non-violent mass struggle under Gandhi's leadership to achieve this aim. Before the movement could gain momentum the Government struck hard and on 9 August arrested Gandhi and other Congress leaders and the INC was declared illegal. Such wide-scale and intense repression had not been seen in the country since the Revolt of 1857.

Till Germany had attacked Soviet Russia, the Communists had looked upon the war as an Imperialist war and had opposed India's participation in it. But with the Nazi aggression on the Soviet Union in June 1941 the Communists declared it as "People's War". They felt that in the given situation India's non-participation in the war would be indirectly helping Fascism. Therefore they were



in favour of stalling the struggle against British Government for some time and supporting its war efforts against Fascism. This stand of the CPI accentuated the split in the Anti-Imperialist United Front, started inside the CSP in which both Communists and independent Socialists worked together. Serious differences had cropped up after Subhas Chandra Bose's re-election as the Congress President in 1939. Although entire left forces in India voted for him the CSP remained neutral when the Rightists launched their offensive in the Tripuri session of the INC to remove Bose. By March 1940, the Communists had been expelled from the CSP. Sajjad Zaheer the first general secretary of the PWA was also a joint secretary of the CSP. He and K.T. Chandi of the Bombay Branch of the CSP were among the expelled members together with E.M.S. Namboodiripad, P. Ram Murthy and P. Sundarayya.

With this in mind they did not participate in the Quit India movement. The members of the INC, the followers of Subhash Chandra Bose and the socialists saw this role of the CPI as traitorous and untrue to the national movement. This changed attitude of the CPI was looked upon with favour by the British Government and the party was declared legal in 1941. In pursuance of this policy the CPI did not participate in the Quit India movement.

The beginning of the Second World War, the varying viewpoints of the different parties, the Fascist invasion of

Soviet Russia, the changing attitude of the Communists to the war, the Quit India Movement and the splits that developed in the national movement - all this had an impact on the progressive writers movement. According to Sudhi Pradhan: "...in the first phase of the Second World War, i.e. in 1939-41, the Marxist Cultural movement had a setback due to disruptive activities of a section of the Left, with the active connivance of the Right, with Jawaharlal sitting on the fence with uneasy conscience."<sup>34</sup> As a result of this there was an absence of activities on the part of the PWA between 1939 and 1942. For this reason no all India Conference of the PWA could be held in this period. Ram Billas Sharma holds the view that the role of the CPI in this complex situation was faulty and because of it a kind of incoherence developed in the progressive writers movement. The members and sympathizers of the CPI within the movement now got isolated from the other non-communist but nationalist and popular writers. This was because from the beginning of the Second World War the communists had expressed their hostility towards imperialism but were now only stressing on the anti-Fascist aspect of their struggle.<sup>35</sup> It would be interesting to note that no

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34 Ibid., p. xiv.

35 Ram Billas Sharma, "Pragatisheel Sahitya ki Samasyayen". As quoted in Rekha Awasthi, op. cit., p. 39. Free translation.

creative work on the Quit India Movement of 1942 came forth from the active members of the PWA. Rajiv Saxena (the present general secretary of the movement) remarks that not a single good novel was written on the Quit India Movement except perhaps for Yashpal's 'Deshdrohi' which in any way is almost a caricature and not a tribute to the movement. But poets like Dinkar, Navin, Nirala, Milind, Prabhat etc., did write on it. Nirala's poem 'Na aye veer Jawaharlal', shows the leaderless state of the country with the Congress leaders including Nehru in jail, after the 1942 movement.

"Kaise hum bach paaye nihate, bahate gaye hamare jathe,  
Raah dekhtae hain bharmain, na aaye veer Jawaharlal."<sup>36</sup>

(Defenceless, how did we escape? Our groups were swept aside. We are confused and wait for direction but brave Jawaharlal does not come).

In 1942 no attempt was made to strengthen the movement from this viewpoint. But at this time the PWA was active on two main fronts - first, developing a united anti-Fascist front of the writers and second, to bring people together on the issue of the Bengal famine of 1942-43.

On behalf of the PWA the first Anti-Fascist Writers Conference was called in March 1942 in Delhi. This

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<sup>36</sup> Suryakant Tripathi Nirala, "Raag-Viraag" (Lokbharathi Prakashan, Allahabad, 1979), p. 123. Free translation.

is also referred to as the Third Conference of the PWA. Ag<sup>y</sup>eye was chosen the President and Sajjad Zaheer the General Secretary. The resolutions this Conference passed were in the name of the All India Anti-Fascist Writers Conference (Delhi 1942). The resolution was very lengthy but we can pinpoint some of the important parts:

"We Indian writers have no cordial relations with Fascism. Fascism is not an unknown enemy. To turn a blind eye to the essentially anti-cultural elements of Fascism would be to make one a prey to a merciless aggressor. In today's world the victory of Fascism would be like the beginning of the Dark Ages and to avoid this peril the Indian people have to perform their duty. They would have to be one with the brave citizens of the Soviet Union, the courageous<sup>ou</sup> Chinese nation and the Anti-Fascist populace of the world. We are the sentinals of our great and invaluable cultural legacy. It is our duty to protect it from the Fascist spoiler. Through our creative works we can help strengthen the minds of our people against Fascism. We should reach the people through our books, pamphlets, radio, cinema, songs and theatre. It is our duty to come forward to the call of our nation and to keep the fire of freedom and culture ever smouldering."<sup>37</sup>

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37 Sahitya ki Samasyayen. As quoted in Rekha Awasthi, op. cit., p. 40.

The Communists had made a mistake by not joining the Quit India Movement. To compensate for this and to keep intact the entity of the PWA as a people's movement, its members and sympathizers started a movement opposing the repressive policies of the British Government. The 1942 stirring had been in a way a spontaneous uprising of the people. The British Government had come down very heavily on all those who had taken part in it. Therefore the anti-Fascist movement was widened to include within it opposition to the repressive policies of the government. The resolution of the September 1942 PWA Conference of the Benaras branch stated: "Though we are not all politicians, nor do we follow one political ideology, yet we are saddened by the incidents happening all round us. We specially protest against the curbs put on the freedom of thought and expression and the restrictions put on the newspapers.... Taking away the rights of the citizens in this manner has created a great cultural calamity in the country. For us intellectuals this is a subject of serious thought."<sup>38</sup>

In the October issue of 'Hans'<sup>39</sup> there was an appeal published by the PWA against repression and Fascism.

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38 'Hans', October 1942. As quoted in Rekha Awasthi, op. cit., p. 41.

39 From the very beginning the journal 'Hans' under the editorship of Prem Chand and K.M. Munshi was the main mouth-piece of the progressive movement. The proceedings of each and every conference and meeting of the PWA were faithfully reported and published in the journal.

There was also a protest against the arrest of writers and artists and an immediate demand for their release. There was also an entreaty to the various forces of the country to unite and join the great anti-Fascist struggle which was being conducted under the leadership of the Soviet stalwart Stalin<sup>40</sup> whose role in forging a treaty of friendship with the Nazis is now denounced by the CPSU.

In the meantime the PWA looked around for other means and mediums through which it could reach the common man. Shivdan Singh Chauhan put forward the idea of establishing a 'National People's Theatrical Association' and efforts began from the side of the PWA towards this end. In 1943 in Bombay the 'Indian People's Theatre Association' (IPTA) was established. Immediately after this with the constant help of the CPI and the PWA branches of IPTA were sought to be established in various corners of the country. With the formation of IPTA the progressive writers found full opportunity to awaken the people's consciousness regarding fascism, repression and the Bengal famine.

The Bengal famine of 1942-43 was one of the biggest political events of the time. It was one of the most

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<sup>40</sup> 'Hans', October 1942. As quoted in Rekha Awasthi, op. cit., p. 41. Free translation.

important issue of mobilization for the PWA. Commendable work was done by it and specially by the Bengal Progressive Writers, in this context. This can be seen from the speech of Shivdan Singh Chauhan to the Bengal Anti-Fascist Writers' and Artists' Union: "At this time in every district of Bengal talented writers and artists are emerging from midst the people. They are in the real sense writers and artists of the people. They are taking organised cultural groups from the established Writers' and Artists' Union to their own districts in the countryside. And through their songs, dances, dramas and film shows they are getting the people united against Japanese fascism, repression, slavery, food hoarders and profit mongers. In the tradition of folksongs and folk dances they are imbuing a revolutionary ardour and thus giving them a new form."<sup>41</sup> It was clear that the PWA was functioning in a double context of politics and literature. The issues were political but the forms of mobilization were literary. Thus one of the most outstanding features of the movement was the growth of folk songs and other forms of folk literature. Most of the poets who wrote poetry were either themselves kisans or persons connected with the Kisan movement of the country.

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41 Ibid., p. 44.

In this sphere the work of the PWA overlapped with the folk song and dance groups of their allied association, the IPTA. The ballad forms of the various peoples - the 'Burrakatha' of Andhra, the 'Pawada' of Maharashtra, the 'Kabigan' of Bengal, the 'Alha' of UP were used by the kisan poets to carry the message of unity, freedom and revolution to the countryside. In Urdu the 'Masnavi' form (long poem used by classical writers for heroic or romantic narration) was used by classical writers for heroic or romantic narration) was used by some of the revolutionary poets. These poems were very popular among the Hindustani speaking working-class of North India, Calcutta and Bombay.

The CPI had to suffer severe condemnation from the CSP and the Gandhites for their role in the Quit India movement. In the face of this the CPI was trying to keep itself alive and viable through its propaganda works. And in this attempt the main questions on which the CPI concentrated its energies were those of the Bengal famine, Japanese fascism, the principled~~de~~ fight of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union against Hitler's totalitarianism and the repression of the Indian freedom fighters by the British Government. On all these issues the PWA organized conferences, meetings, folk songs, drama shows etc. A number of pamphlets were published. Among them were 'Fascism and Culture' (by Buddadev Bose), 'The Nature of



Japanese Fascism (by Sushovan Chandra Sarkar), 'Fascism and Women' (Prativa Bose), 'June Twenty-Second' (Bishnu Dey), 'Fascism and Nazism' (Rahul Sanskritayan), and 'Janayuddhar Gan' (Songs of the People's war - an anthology of thirty songs written by the workers in the people's own language). Song recitals were a very effective feature of the anti-fascist movement. Several groups of singers were formed, among them working class comrades and militants. Popular songs at that time were Haldherji's "Kakra, Kekra, Nam Batao" and Bharatbhushan Agarwal's "Bar Chalo Kisan Dhir, Bar Chalo Majur Bir".<sup>42</sup> "People still remember Wamiq's song, "Bhooka hai Bengal" and Makhdoom's poem, "Yeh jang hai jang-e-azadi".<sup>43</sup> All these activities of the PWA made it and the IPTA very popular. Moreover the progressive literary movement was now no longer limited to poems, stories or novels but spread to the theatre and kavi sammelans (meeting of poets) in the regional languages and dialects.

During this time the fourth All-India Progressive Writers' Conference was held at Bombay from 22 to 25 May 1943. S.A. Dange gave the Presidential address. Commenting on the role of the Indian Progressive Writers he said:

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42 People's War, February 7, 1943. As reproduced in Sudhi Pradhan, ed., op. cit., p. 130.

43 Ali Sardar Jafri, op. cit., p. 16.

"There is no doubt about their stout anti-fascism, about their pro-Sovietism, about their being friendly towards the great Chinese people....To fight for defence, against famine and sabotage, for our national Government and for the release of thousands in jail, our art must mobilise our people, unify them." Dange felt that the basis of this unity would be "not an imposed Akhand Hindustan but a voluntarily united Hindustan of autonomous nationalities must be the true home and ideal of the people's artist".<sup>44</sup>

The conference unanimously adopted a manifesto which was to serve as a basis for the united front of all Indian writers who claimed to be patriotic. K.A. Abbas and S. Zaheer emphasized that the effort should be to bring writers of all shades and schools, humanists, romanticists, Marxists and even religious writers into the Association and the PWA should become a mighty united front of all honest Indian intellectuals who wanted to set India free and who wanted to defend it from fascist enslavement. Among the tasks which the Manifesto set before the PWA was the need to produce short plays, stories, poems, songs and ballads emphasizing the need of National Unity for the

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44 S.A. Dange's address to the fourth AIPWA Conference at Bombay, 1943. As reproduced in Sudhi Pradhan, ed., op. cit., p. 137.

achievement of freedom from Imperialist yoke and the defence of the country against Japanese aggression. Literary and cultural circles among the workers and peasants (e.g. Mushaira, Ballad-singing) had to be organized and the PWA had to be linked up with folk literature and arts. The PWA was to co-operate with the IPTA and assist it by writing plays which the IPTA would stage.

The achievements of this Conference were many. Firstly, it indicated the broad patriotic line of national defence and national unity which the writers must follow. Secondly, it stressed that the writers must align themselves with the people and thus opened up new prospects for the development of culture. Thirdly, it laid down a basis for the widest possible literary and cultural united front in the country. Fourthly, it made all the writers realize that the PWA had to be reorganized and put on a much firmer basis than before.

The PWA achieved tremendous success in the Anti-Fascist movement. Two anti-fascist conferences had already been organized in Calcutta in 1943 and 1944. In the 1944 Conference it was made clear that the use of the word 'Anti-Fascist' was not in a negative sense (i.e. just meaning opposition to fascism). It was interlinked with the independence of the nation and this was essential for the survival of all art forms. It also indicated all the

forces which were keeping India dependent, which were responsible for the famines and epidemics for the hoarding and the profit-mongering. A Central Indian Anti-Fascist Writers Conferences was also organized. In this process branches of the PWA were also set up in Ujjain, Indore and Nagpur.

A consequence of all these developments was that in all literary works, conferences and meetings use of political vocabulary like-oppression, fascism, independence, feudalism, imperialism, anarchism etc. crept in. Some prominent writers like Elachandra Joshi, Agaye, Bachchan, Bhagwati Charan Verma, etc. felt that this was burdening literature with politics and reducing it to the level of propaganda. The progressive writers were denounced as unliterary occupational propagandists. Shivdan Singh Chauhan attempted an answer to this criticism through his essay 'Is literature propaganda?' (1941): "There is no doubt about the fact that a majority of the progressives believe that literature is propaganda. But we have to think independently whether they use the word 'propaganda' in the right sense or not."<sup>45</sup>

The 'Hindi Sahitya Sammelan' was the foremost amongst the detractors of the PWA. In the All India Hindi

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45 Shivdan Singh Chauhan as quoted in Rekha Awasthi, op. cit., p. 48. Free translation.

Sahitya Sammelan of 1945, in his Presidential address Dinkar denounced progressivism: "In the field of literature we are neither willing to accept Goebbels command which asks us to write in support of the Nazi regime or listen to any Stalin who will not let us decide the direction of our physical and mental growth. Our directives will come neither from the Kremlin or from Anand Bhavan. In our field we will comply by only those controls which the art of literature has been accepting through the ages."<sup>46</sup>

A new conflictual period for the PWA begins with 1946. Many changes had taken place by then. Under the leadership of Stalin the Soviet Communist Party had dealt a severe blow to fascism. The Indian freedom struggle had entered a new phase. After the defeat of fascism the anti-imperialist wave was on the rise. In India all strata and classes of people started taking part in the independence movement on a large scale. Only the capitalist class kept itself aloof. It was scared that the anti-imperialist struggle would be followed up by a social revolution which would sweep them aside. Though the INC and the Muslim League could not see eye to eye on any issue they were united on the question of maintaining the non-violent

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<sup>46</sup> Dinkar as quoted in Rekha Awasthi, *ibid.*, p. 49.  
Free translation.

character of the independence movement. At this time the CPI along with the INC and Muslim League followed a united anti-Imperialist policy.

The PWA entered this new phase with the combined organizational strength of its numerous branches, the progressive litterateurs of all the Indian languages and the popularity of the IPTA. In this period there was a conscious qualitative change in the attitude of the youth and the intellectuals towards the Communist ideology and the PWA. As a result of this the Freudians, anarchists and individualists got separated from the movement. Even a poet like Nirala who had kept his distance from the PWA was attracted towards Marxism and the CPI in 1946. On hearing of the establishment of the Interim government in Delhi, he remarked: "Today there has been no connection left between the Congress policies and the thought process of the people. In Indian politics today there is only one path left and that is the path of revolution, of struggle and in the end of socialism. There is no other path besides this."<sup>47</sup>

During this time the Central office of the PWA shifted to Bombay. There were many reasons for this. Firstly, the Central office of the CPI was in Bombay. Secondly, 'Janyug', 'Naya Adab', and 'Naya Sahitya' were

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47 'Mahapran Nirala', Sahityakar Sansad, Prayag. First edition. As quoted in Rekha Awasthi, *ibid.*, p. 51. Free translation.

published from there. Thirdly, the main centre of the film industry was there and fourthly, many of the stalwarts of the movement like Ali Sardar Jafri, Kaifi Azami, Balraj Sahani, Shamsheer Bahadur Singh, Amritlal Nagar, Narendra Sharma, Shankar Shailendra etc. operated from Bombay.

The political awakening and uprising of the people in 1946 was qualitatively different from the previous years. The freedom struggle was being repressed not only by the British imperialists but also by a section of the Indian populace which comprised of the capitalists, industrialists, feudal lords, zamindars and erstwhile Princes. Besides, this a sort of compliance was seen between the reformist leadership of the INC and the Indian bourgeoisie. Despite this the struggle for freedom was gaining momentum. In the princely states the peasants were revolting, in the Provinces under the leadership of the All India Kisan Sabha conflicts were breaking out against the zamindars on the issue of land. Under the direction of their unions the workers in the railway, posts and telegraphs, banking, offices etc. were on strike. Besides this the factory workers in Kanpur, Bombay, Madras and Calcutta were ready to go on a strike. Among the masses the desire for unity in the struggle against imperialism was overwhelming. This was shown in the great demonstrations in Calcutta, Bombay and other leading cities, where Congress and Muslim League flags and

in many cases Communist Party flags also were carried in unity by the crowds.

The movement swept forward not only among the civilian population but also among the armed forces. In this explosive situation the Naval revolt suddenly broke out in February 1946: "The rising of the Indian Navy in February 1946 laid bare in a flash all the maturing forces of the Indian Revolution. The memories of the 'Potemkin' in Russia in 1905, of Kronstadt in Russia in 1971 or Kiel in Germany in 1918 have all deeply impressed the significance of the Navy in the vanguard of great revolutions. The Naval rising in February 1946, the mass movement of support within India and the heroic stand of the Bombay working people constituted the signal of the new era opening in India and one of the great landmarks of Indian history. In those February days the friends and foes of Indian popular advance stood revealed."<sup>48</sup>

The ratings fought a seven-hour battle with the army and navy and only surrendered when asked to do so by the national leaders - Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad, Jinnah and Gandhi. But the CPI, the Workers Trade Unions and the AIKS extended full support to the revolt and started a wide-

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<sup>48</sup> R. Palme Dutt, India To-Day (Statesman Commercial Press, Calcutta, 1979), pp. 579-80.



spread movement all over India in support of it. The PWA also supported this naval revolt and this revolutionary poem by one of the progressive writers on this incident is illustrative of it -

"Aaj se koocha-o-bazaar mein marana hai rawa  
Zulm ki chhaon mein chup baith ke jeena hai haram !"

(It is tood to die in the lanes and the streets today  
It is a sin to remain alive under the shadow of  
tyranny).<sup>49</sup>

The poet Sahir Ludhianvi also wrote a very popular poem on this topic - "Yeh kiska lahu hai, kaun mara?" (Whose blood is this, who is dead?).

During the 'Quit Kashmir' movement of 1946 Maharaja Hari Singh of Kashmir and the British Government came down heavily on the Congress, Communists and the National Conference Party of Sheikh Abdullah. In all the Princely States the Princes were ruthlessly suppressing the peasant movement. The repression of the people's movement in Kashmir was condemned throughout India. On this occasion the CPI helped the Kashmir movement by organizing cultural meets in many places. One of them was in Bombay on 28 July where the play 'Mashal', written and directed by Balraj Sahani was staged and the revolutionary poems of Josh Malliabadi .

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49 Ali Sardar Jafri, op. cit., p. 16.

were read out. This was just a part of the multi-faceted cultural programme. It was not only in the case of Kashmir that the PWA expressed solidarity. In India wherever there was a popular mass uprising the PWA and IPTA writers and artists established unity with the cause and tried to make the trend of realism strong and alive in their literature.

The national question in the Indian subcontinent assumed grave importance in these times. The demand for a separate state of Pakistan by the Muslim League was vehemently opposed by the INC. During these decisive years the CPI upheld the right of self-determination including the right to secede and thus supported the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan. The resolution of the First Congress of the CPI in May 1943 stated:

"Every section of the Indian people which has a contiguous territory as its homeland, common historical tradition, common language, culture, psychological make-up and common economic life would be recognised as a distinct nationality with the right to exist as an autonomous state within the free Indian union or federation and will have the right to ~~exist as an autonomous state within the free Indian union or federation and will have the right to~~ secede from it if it may so desire."<sup>50</sup>

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50 T.G. Jacob, op. cit., pp. 30-31.

Professor Qamar Rais remarks that the CPI did ask Sajjad Zaheer to go to Pakistan and establish a communist party out there. The CPI felt that <sup>this</sup> could be done with the support of the people wanting Pakistan. But Zaheer was not able to do so as he was opposed tooth and nail by the people there. Important trade unions in railways and labour were led by Faiz Ahmed Faiz. But still the communists could not develop a stronghold out there because Pakistan through and through had a feudal set up. Many of the writers of the PWA supported the demand for Pakistan e.g., Ibrahim Jalis and many other Punjabi writers went over the Pakistan. But this was in their individual capacity. It is important to note that the PWA in its organizational capacity did not pass any resolution on Pakistan.

In June 1946 communal riots broke out. It was a part of the conspiracy of the British which wanted to leave behind a divided India. The riots took a serious turn in Noakhali in Bengal. At the call of the PWA the majority of the writers brought out literature strengthening communal unity. Poems like Kaifi Azmi's "Khana Jangi" (Civil War), Askh's play "Toofan se Pahle" (Before the Storm), K.A. Abbas' story "Ajanta", Sajjad Zaheer's "Bandargah" were all directed against communalism. The AIPWA brought out a 'Statement on Communal Disturbances'.<sup>51</sup> In it, it blamed

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51 Sudhi Pradhan, ed., op. cit., pp. 372-73.

the Calcutta outbreak on the British policy of 'divide and rule' and on the policy of fostering reactionary anti-national disruptive ideologies pursued by imperialism for the last two hundred years. It saw the fundamental causes of the communal outburst on "the appeal to religion in order to divide Indians: to revivalism in order to split the common people; to racialism in order to prove the superiority of one people over another and to perpetuate conflict among them; to communalism in order to consolidate outmoded caste and religious differences". The ideologies of feudalism and reaction (communalism, revivalism, caste) were used in order to fight the healthy and unifying forces which were strengthening the freedom movement. The members of the AIPWA expressed their solidarity with the champions of Indian unity, Indian freedom and Indian democracy.

Under the leadership of Nehru an interim government was set up in 1946 under the provisions of the Wavell Plan. Both the INC and the British Government came down heavily on the Communists. In January 1947 the offices of the CPI were raided and thousands of Communist leaders were arrested. It was hoped that the CPI would buckle under this pressure and accept the illusory independence offered under the Mountbatten Plan. Under these circumstances the imperialist division of the subcontinent was decided upon. The CPI gave up its policy of 1946 and gave its support to the

agreement between the British, INC and the Muslim League.

The subcontinent was partitioned and India became independent on 15 August 1947. The PWA at this time was passing through a turbulent period. The partition had a tumultuous effect on the minds of the writers. It was in 1947, immediately after partition and during the riots that Jigar Moradabadi wrote these memorable lines -

"Kahan ke lala-o-gul, kya bahar-e-o tauba-shikan,  
Khile hooe hain dilon ki jarahaton ke chaman."

(Do not talk of the tulips and roses, do not speak  
of the exiting spring; These are the wounds of the  
heart, open like flowers)

"Rug-o-pai mein kabhi sahba hi sahba raqs karti thi,  
Magar ab zindagi he-zindagi hai maujzan saq."

(It was wine and only wine which circulated in the  
veins before. Now it is only the waves of life in  
my body, O Saqi).<sup>52</sup>

Some members of the PWA welcomed the independence of the country while others more in line with the CPI's perception looked upon it as 'Jhooti Azadi'.

In this context the 1947 conference of the All India Hindi Progressive Writers' Association held at Allahabad

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52 Ali Sardar Jafri, op. cit., p. 18.

is of importance. Here the writers of Urdu and other languages were also represented. The Conference expressed its reluctant acceptance of the geographical division of the country but made an appeal to avoid a cultural division of the united common culture. The first resolution expressed grief over the communal riots which had taken place and gave a call for the reconstruction of the country. The second declared the independence of the PWA from any political party. The third called for the protection of freedom of thought and expression of the writers. The fourth welcomed the new national government. The fifth was about the development of dialects. The sixth was a protest against censorship. The seventh resolution protested against all form of repression and the eighth demanded the release of all freedom fighters from the prisons.

Despite the PWA's resolution welcoming the new national government and the CPI's policy of support to the INC, the spread of Leftist literature was further repressed. Prohibitions were put on 'Naya Sahitya'. The entry of progressive literature from abroad was prohibited. The journal 'Viplav' stated:

"It is a matter of great shame that the national government is preventing the Indian people from coming into contact with progressive ideas and for this it is taking the

help of old imperialist policies of prohibition."<sup>53</sup>

The journal 'Hans' also challenged this repression. Special anti-repression number of 'Hans' was taken out in 1947 under the editorship of Amritrai and Narottam Nagar. Curbs were also put on the theatrical production of IPTA in Bombay. This repression of Leftist workers and leaders of trade unions and Kisan Sabhas was being carried out on a large scale. This attitude of the national government was taking culture towards its doom.

This repression was only one side of the coin. On the other side the new national government was trying to win over the progressive writers and artists by giving them plum posts in Askashvani, newspapers, Sahitya Academy, Sangeetkala Academy, Lalit Kala Academy, universities etc. Writing on this reality Namwar Singh states:

"The year 1947 was in many ways a deep dividing line for India. In this year the path of history altered in the sense that a revolutionary tradition of the independence movement came to an end. The political leadership of India choose the capitalist path of production contrary to all the promises made to the people. This opened a path of compromise and comfort which made many an

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53 'Viplav', August 1948. As quoted in Rekha Awasthi, op. cit., p. 60. Free translation.

insignificant leader and middle class writer and intellectual a slave of capitalist comforts. The tradition of 'poor Hindi' and 'poor writers' which had developed during the freedom struggle was now completely destroyed. Many of the progressive writers sooner or later joined this queue for comforts. In this way they destroyed their proud and great tradition. The irony was that all this was being done in the name of national reconstruction. For example, they took the name of socialism but worked for the capitalist path. This difference <sup>etw</sup> between words and action gave birth to that national deceit and hypocrisy out of which was born verbose polemics whose affect one can see not only in politics but also in literature."<sup>54</sup>

The entire political set up of the country changed with the independence of India from British rule. There were sharp turns and twists in the Marxist cultural movement following this changed political climate. Contradiction set up within the Left movement with the development of reformism and the question of participation in electoral politics. There was an uncertainty amongst the party leadership about keeping alive the front organizations like the IPTA and the AIPWA. This aside it is a fact that between 1936 and 1947 the PWA gave shape, consciousness and direction

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54 Namwar Singh, Aalochana, April-June 1970. As quoted in Rekha Awasthi, ibid., p. 78. Free translation.



to the radical writers' movement in our country. It ranged our writers with the world anti-fascist writers organization and linked them up organizationally with the World Association for the Defence of Culture. This great cultural movement on a world scale was part of the all-embracing anti-fascist united front that was being built up in European countries since 1933 and which culminated in the Front Popular of France and Spain in the years 1935 and 1936. In India during the independence struggle it raised the political consciousness of the people by forcing their attention on the questions of language, culture, nationality and communalism - Hindu and Muslim; by bringing literature and art into close touch with the people and the actualities of life; by fighting cultural reaction and in this way furthering the cause of Indian freedom. It therefore functioned in a double context - a political and a literary one. On the one hand, it operated as a broad front on the basis of resistance to imperialism and fascism and support to national liberation and on the other hand, it stressed on the need for a new kind of 'progressive' literature which would influence the structuring of political consciousness. Thus the issues were political but the forms of mobilization were literary.

The most important work of the Association was achieved by the activities of the local PWA units. By the

end of 1947 there were around fifty branches in the various cities of India and the total membership was over 3,900. The meetings of the local units were mainly of two kinds - either the celebration of anniversary of important literary personages or meetings for expressing the attitude of progressive writers towards some burning problems of the day like the Bengal famine, Hindu-Muslim riots, infringement of civil liberties etc. The PWA branches also undertook the publication of books, pamphlets and literary magazines and collections. The 'Parichaya' in Bengali, 'Naya Sahitya' in Hindi, 'Naya Adab' in Urdu, 'Sanskar' in Gujarati and 'Abhudaya' in Telugu, were publications which reflected the latest growth and tendencies of progressive writing in the various languages.

Despite these achievements there were shortcomings in the working of the PWA. The foremost among them was that the central organization of the AIPWA did not function properly. While several provinces were able to establish and develop a centralized and properly functioning office for the guidance of their local units, it was not able to do the same on the all India scale. The result was that till 1947 an All-India bulletin of the PWA had not been issued which would give information about the activities of the various branches; which would give direction on an

All-India scale to the entire organization; which would evaluate the development, and the shortcomings of the movements and formulate tasks keeping in view the changing conditions in the country.

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CHAPTER III

A HISTORY OF THE AIPWA - LITERARY

This chapter is divided into two parts: (1) The literary trends of 'Critical Realism' and 'Socialist Realism', and (2) An Analysis of Yashpal's Novel "Geeta-Party Comrade".

PART I

THE LITERARY TRENDS OF CRITICAL REALISM AND  
SOCIALIST REALISM

The relation of art to social life is a question that has always figured largely in all literatures that have reached a definite stage of development. This link has been well brought out by G.V. Plekhanov in his book "Art and Social Life". He finds that most often this question of linkage has been answered in one of two directly opposite senses. One of them is -

"....Some say: man is not made for the sabbath, but the sabbath for man; society is not made for the artist, but the artist for society. The function of art is to assist the development of man's consciousness, to improve the social system."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> G.V. Plekhanov, Art and Social Life (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1974), p. 5.

Plekhanov points out that many emphatically reject this view -

"....In their opinion, art is an aim in itself; to convert it into a means of achieving any extraneous aim even the most noble, is to lower the dignity of a work of art."<sup>2</sup> Plekhanov illustrates this view by quoting from Pushkin's "The Poet and the Crowd" -

"No, not for worldly agitation,  
Nor worldly greed, nor worldly strife,  
But for sweet song, for inspiration,  
For prayers the poet comes to life."<sup>3</sup>

The first of the views is vividly reflected in the progressive literature of our times. (Plekhanov finds it in the progressive literature of the 1860s.) The second view essentially inheres in itself the idea of 'art for art's sake'. Plekhanov tries to indicate the futility of such a view point. Quoting N.G. Chernyshevsky he says:

"....The idea of 'art for art's sake' is as strange in our times as 'wealth for wealth's sake', 'science for science's sake', and so forth. All human

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2 Ibid., p. 5.

3 Pushkin, "The Poet and the Crowd". As quoted by Plekhanov, *ibid.*, p. 7.

activities must serve mankind if they are not to remain useless and idle occupations. Wealth exists in order that man may benefit by it; science exists in order to be man's guide; art, too, must serve some useful purpose and not fruitless pleasure....The value of the art is determined by the sum of knowledge they disseminate in society....Art not only reproduces life but explains it: its productions very often have the purpose of pronouncing judgement on the phenomena of life."<sup>4</sup>

Plekhanov addresses himself to two questions. The first is - "What are the most important social conditions in which artists and people keenly interested in art conceive and become possessed by the belief in art for art's sake?"<sup>5</sup> Through the examples of Pushkin, the French Romanticists, the Parnassians and the early French realists, Plekhanov comes to the conclusion that - "the belief in art for art's sake arises when artists and people keenly interested in art are hopelessly at odds with their social environment."<sup>6</sup> When, due to certain conditions of its historical existence,

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4 N.G. Chernyshovsky. As quoted by G.V. Plekhanov. Ibid., pp. 5-6.

5 G.V. Plekhanov, op. cit., p. 8.

6 Ibid., p. 16.

art concentrates only on the individual value of an isolated personality while modelling it and influencing it, art for art's sake emerges. This grants that the personality is valuable in itself but neglects the significance of its being included in the system of social relations. Conditions for it arise whenever the artist is not sympathetic to his social environment, e.g. is revolted by the sordidness, tedium and vulgarity. Such a view helps the artist to rise above his environment.

The second question which Plekhanov addresses himself to is - "What are the most important social conditions in which artists and people keenly interested in art conceive and become possessed by the so-called utilitarian view of art, that is, the tendency to attach artistic productions the significance of 'judgements on the phenomena of life'?"<sup>7</sup> He feels that such a view arises where there is a mutual sympathy between a considerable section of society and people who have a more or less active interest in creative art. The tendency to adopt this view necessarily presupposes only one condition - a lively and active interest in a specific social order or social ideal. And it disappears when, for one reason or another, this interest evaporates.

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7 Ibid., p. 8.

Here the social and transforming functions of art are stressed. Art is active and helps in transforming the world, since

- (1) a work of art produces an ideological and aesthetic impact;
- (2) involving people into purposeful and value-oriented activity, art encourages social reform;
- (3) artistic creation itself means using imagination to transform the impressions and facts of life. The author turns his material into image building a new kind of reality - the world of art;
- (4) the artist's activity has one more aspect - processing the material he uses to mould an image.<sup>8</sup>

Taken together, all these aspects of art as an activity lend it its power to change society and life.

Theories of the relationship between art or literature and the society in which it arises are indebted to Marx's formulation of the metaphor of the base and superstructure, in which the aesthetics is explicitly cited as part of the superstructure, and as one of the 'ideological forms' in which class conflict is carried out. An early

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<sup>8</sup> Yuri Borev, Aesthetics (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1985), p. 110.



formulation of this view of art as the ideological expression of its age was seen in the work of Plekhanov, for whom literature and art are the mirror of social life. At its crudest, such an account reduces art to nothing more than a reflection of social relations and class structure, automatically produced out of these material features.

The seeds of this understanding are found in a famous passage in Marx and Engel's 'The German Ideology' (1845-6):

"The production of ideas, concepts and consciousness is first of all directly interwoven with the material intercourse of man, the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the spiritual intercourse of men, appear here as the direct efflux of men's material behaviour...we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from the real, active men....Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness of life."<sup>9</sup>

A fuller statement of what this means can be found in the oft quoted extract in Preface to "A Contribution to

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9 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "Feuerbach: Opposition of the Materialistic and Idealistic Outlook" (Chapter I of the German Ideology) in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels - Selected Works, Volume One (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1966), pp. 24-25.

the Critique of Political Economy" (1859):

"In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness."<sup>10</sup>

The social relations between men, in other words, are bound up with the way they produce their material life. At a later stage, the development of new modes of productive organisation is based on a changed set of social relations. Taken together, these 'forces' and 'relations' of production form what Marx calls the 'economic structure of society', or the economic 'base' or 'infrastructure'. From this economic base, in every period, emerges a 'superstructure'

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<sup>10</sup> Karl Marx, "Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy", *ibid.*, p. 503.

- certain forms of law and politics, a certain kind of state, whose essential function is to legitimate the power of the social class which owns the means of economic production. But the superstructure contains more than this : it also consists of certain 'definite forms of social consciousness' (political, religious, ethical, aesthetic) which is what Marx designates as 'ideology'. Ideology has a double meaning - it is both a reflection and inverted image of reality. The function of ideology, also, is to legitimize the power of the ruling class in society; in the last analysis, the dominant ideas of a society are the ideas of its ruling class.

Art, then, is for Marxism, a part of the 'superstructure' of society. It is part of a society's ideology - an element in that complex structure of social perception which ensures that the situation in which one social class has power over the others is either seen by most members of the society as 'natural' or not seen at all. To understand literature, then, means understanding the total social process of which it is part.<sup>11</sup> As Plekhanov put it: "The social mentality of an age is conditioned by that age's social relations. This is nowhere quite as evident as in the history of art and literature."<sup>12</sup> Literary works

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11 Terry Eagleton, Marxism and Literary Criticism (Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, 1985), pp. 5-6.

12 G.V. Plekhanov. As quoted in Terry Eagleton, *ibid.*, p. 6.

are not mysteriously inspired, or explicable simply in terms of their authors' psychology. They are forms of perception, particular ways of seeing the world; and as such they have a relation to that dominant way of seeing the world which is the 'social mentality' or ideology of an age. That ideology, in turn, is the product of the concrete social relations into which men enter at a particular time and place; it is the way those class relations are experienced, legitimized and perpetuated. Moreover, men are not free to choose their social relations; they are constrained into them by material necessity - by the nature and stage of development of their mode of economic production.

To understand a piece of literature is therefore to do more than interpret their symbolism and study their literary history. It is first of all to understand the complex, indirect relations between those works and the ideological worlds they inhabit. Ideology cannot be understood till one grasps the part it plays in the society as a whole - how it consists of a definite, historically relative structure of perception which underpins the power of a particular social class. This is not easy, since an ideology is never a simple reflection of a ruling class's ideas; on the contrary, it is always a complex phenomenon, which may incorporate conflicting, even contradictory views of the world. To understand an ideology, we must analyse

the precise relations between different classes in a society; and to do that means grasping where those classes stand in relation to the mode of production.

It would be a mistake to imply that Marxist criticism moves mechanically from 'text' to 'ideology' to 'social relations' to 'productive forces'. It is concerned, rather, with the unity of these 'levels' of society. Literature may be part of the superstructure, but it is not merely the passive reflection of the economic base. This is made clear by Engels, in a letter to Joseph Bloch in 1890:

"According to the materialist conception of history, the determining element in history is ultimately the production and reproduction in real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. If therefore somebody twists this into the statement that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms it into a meaningless, abstract and absurd phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure - political forms of the class struggle and its consequences, constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc. - forms of law - and then even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the combatants: political, legal and philosophical theories, religious ideas and their further development into systems

of dogma - also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form."<sup>13</sup>

Engels denies that there is any mechanical, one-to-one correspondence between base and superstructure; elements of the superstructure constantly react back upon and influence the economic base. The materialist theory of history denies that art can in itself change the course of history; but it insists that art can be an active element in such change.

There is however no systematic theory of art to be found in the writings of Marx and Engels. Both writers had an early, and life-long, interest in aesthetics and the arts, however, and their various brief discussions of such questions have formed the basis for numerous attempts, particularly in the last few decades, to produce a specifically Marxist aesthetics. This has been constructed from Marx's comments on the nature of art as creative labour, no different in quality from other (non-alienated) labour. It is a form of work, and work is an activity peculiar to mankind. Marx defined work in these terms:

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<sup>13</sup> Engels' letter to Joseph Bloch (1890). As quoted in Terry Eagleton, *ibid.*, p. 9.

"The labour process is...purposive activity...for the fitting of natural substances to human wants; it is the general condition requisite for effecting or exchange of matter between man and nature; it is the condition perennially imposed by nature upon human life, and is therefore independent of the forms of social life - or rather, it is common to all social forms."<sup>14</sup>

In 'Capital' when Marx talks about the essentially human character of labour, comparing the architect and the bee, it is significant that the architect is invoked merely as an example of a human worker and not as a privileged category of the artist. The notion that all non-alienated labour is creative, and hence intrinsically the same as artistic labour, provides the basis for a humanist aesthetics which successfully demystifies art by encouraging us to look at its historical development and separation from other activities.

A corollary of this view is the recognition that under capitalism art, like other forms of labour, increasingly becomes alienated labour. Art itself becomes a commodity, and the relations of artistic production reduce the position

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14 Karl Marx, Capital. As quoted in Ernst Fischer, The Necessity of Art - A Marxist Approach (Penguin Books Ltd., Harmondsworth, 1963), p. 15.

of the artist to one of an exploited labour, producing surplus value.

This analysis of the distortion of artistic labour and of cultural products under capitalism is the premiss of later critiques in which regulation by the law of value and the transformation of cultural products into commodities are said to reduce culture and the arts to the status of conformist, repetitive, worthless things, whose function is to ensure political stability. From Marx's general theory of fetishism, the Hungarian Marxist, Georg Lukacs, developed a theory of art. In his major philosophical work, 'History and Class Consciousness', Lukacs described the reified and fragmented nature of human life and experience under capitalism, analysing the impact of commodity fetishism on consciousness. Reified thought fails to perceive the totality of social and economic relations. The rest of Lukacs's life was devoted to work on literature and aesthetics in which the concept of 'totality' remains central. He inherits from Hegel a belief that "the literary work should form a unified totality". Concrete totality is therefore the category that governs reality."<sup>15</sup> In Lukacs's view, great literature is that which manages to penetrate beyond surface appearances, to

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15 Georg Lukacs, History and Class Consciousness (Merlin Press, London, 1983), p. 10.



perceive and expose the social totality, with all its contradictions and great artists are those who can recapture and recreate a harmonious totality of human life.

Nearly half a century was to elapse after Marx and Engels's death before the pattern of the various themes developed by them began to be systematically elaborated and to provide a framework for Marxist studies of literature, although there were two notable early attempts to develop a Marxist literary theory, by Mehring (1893) and Plekhanov (1912). The values which properly underline works of later Marxist writers in this field may be defined briefly in terms of the presentation of reality. The basis of analysis is Marx's theory of history, involving a dialectical and materialist method of study. The principal themes of concern to Marxists are class equivalents, the method and reception of realist writing and alienation/disalienation in literary experience.

While on the theme of class equivalents it must be kept in mind that the isolation of important elements of the representation of reality in writing, in terms of social class, began before Marx. With the rise of industrial capitalism and an impoverished urban proletariat which replaced the peasantry as the principal mass social group, literary producers and critics became keenly aware of the

relative instability of social formations and of the role of 'class' ethics and politics in shaping future society. Marx was but one of a generation of Young Hegelians who, in Germany, grasped events in social life and in its literary representation as being historical and mutable. Class was a crucial element in Marx's thought from the time of his discovery of the proletariat as the 'idea in the real itself', and Marxist literary thought is necessarily oriented to the value-clusters in literary production and reception that social class affects. But the key concept for a class analysis of literature - that of class equivalents - was provided not by Marx or Engels but by Plekhanov, who may be regarded as the first Marxist literary theorist. .

The notion of class equivalents can be applied to a range of correlatives in the literary work, from explicit statements of political views (more or less relatable to class affiliations) to what Marx described as enlistment in 'the party in the great historical sense', i.e. in the progressive movement of humanity. Marx remained sceptical, however, of the ability of most writers to make the leap from self-interest (class interest) to a truly universal literary empathy. He mocked even socialist or radical authors who, while raising the banner of equality and fraternity, were still dominated by the influence of their class origins and position.

Later Marxist analysis of the correlatives of class in literature have ranged widely, from the radical humanism of Bakhtin which emphasized class struggle to the analysis of Lucien Goldmann whose works examine literature from the perspective of the 'world view' of a class which is expressed in it. Goldmann is concerned with examining the structure of a literary text for the degree to which it embodies the structure of thought (or 'world vision') of the social class or group to which the writer belongs. The more closely the text approximates to a complete, coherent articulation of the social class's 'world vision', the greater is its validity as a work of art. For Goldmann, literary works are not in the first place to be seen as the creation of individuals, but of what he calls the 'trans-individual mental structures' of a social group - by which he means the structure of ideas, values and aspirations that group shares. What he seeks is a set of structural relations between literary text, world vision and history itself. He wants to show how the historical situation of a social group or class is transposed, by the mediation of its world vision, into the structure of a literary work. What is required for this is a dialectical method of criticism which moves constantly between text, world vision and history, adjusting each to the others.<sup>16</sup> Goldmann terms

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16 Lucien Goldman, Towards A Sociology of the Novel (Tavistock Publications Ltd., Great Britain, 1975), pp. 156-8.

this critical method 'genetic structuralism'.<sup>17</sup>

From here we move on to the second theme of interest to the Marxists, i.e. the theme of alienation/disalienation in literary experience. Marx's notion of alienation is the underlying dimension of the class-struggle theme of his theory of history, and this is also true for the literary theory. What begins as a perception of the class equivalents in fiction, leads the perspective and trained critic and theorist towards mythic, genre-based and formal equivalents in the literary work of the consequences of conflict, confusion, and loss of species - potential in social life. Marx remarked that the industrial age had produced impoverishment of the creative imagination, degradation of the quality of life and the warping of the potential for self-realization of our human species. As man becomes more and more capable of mastering and transforming nature and the entire world around him, so

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17 "Genetic Structuralism" - Both terms of the phrase have to be understood. 'Structuralism' because he is less interested in the contents of a particular world vision than in the structure of categories it displays. Two apparently quite different writers may thus be shown to belong to the same collective mental structure. 'Genetic', because Goldman is concerned with how such mental structures are historically produced i.e. with the relations between a world vision and the historical conditions which give rise to it.

does he confront himself more and more as a stranger in his own work, and finds himself surrounded by objects which are the product of his activity yet which have a tendency to grow beyond his control and to become more and more powerful in their own right.<sup>18</sup>

This alienation leads to mystification. The literature and arts of the late bourgeois world tend towards mystification i.e. shrouding reality in mystery. "This tendency is above all the result of alienation. The industrialized, objectified late bourgeois world has become so alien to its inhabitants, the social reality seems so questionable, its triviality has assumed such gigantic proportions, that writers and artists are forced to grasp at every apparent means of piercing the rigid outward crust of things. Both the desire to simplify this unbearably complex reality, to reduce it to essentials, and the desire to present human beings as linked by elementary human relationships rather than by material ones, leads to the 'myth in art,'<sup>19</sup> It offers a way of evading social decisions with a reasonably clear conscience. Social conditions and the actual phenomena and conflict of our

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18 Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 (Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1961), pp. 69-79.

19 Ernst Fischer, op. cit., p. 95.

times are transposed into a timeless unreality, into an eternal, mythical, changeless 'original state of being'. The specific nature of a historical movement is falsified into a general idea of 'being'. The socially conditioned world is presented as a cosmically unconditional one. This feature is common to all significant artists and writers in the capitalist world i.e. their inability to come to terms with the social reality that surrounds them.

Related to this is the third theme of concern to Marxists i.e. the theory of realism in art. The notion of realism, as the accurate portrayal of a society and its structural conflicts, through the use of 'types' has been a central one in Marxist aesthetics. The exploration of the Marxist notion of literary realism only began with Engel's statement about Margaret Harkness's novel 'A City Girl': "If I have any criticism to make, it is perhaps that your novel is not quite realistic enough. Realism, to my mind, implies besides truth of detail, the truthful rendering of typical characters under typical circumstances."<sup>20</sup> In a letter to Lassalle (Engels to Lassalle, 18 May 1859) Engels remarked that true character must combine typicality

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20 Letter to Margaret Harkness, April 1888 in Marx and Engels "On Literature and Art" (1973). As quoted in Terry Eagleton, op. cit., p. 46.

with individuality; and both he and Marx thought this a major achievement of Shakespeare and Balzac. A 'typical' or 'representative' character incarnates historical forces without thereby ceasing to be richly individualized.

It is in the work of Georg Lukacs that this problem of literary realism has been most thoroughly explored. For Lukacs the greatest artists are those who can recapture and recreate a harmonious totality of human life. In a society where the general and the particular, the conceptual and the sensuous, the social and the individual are increasingly torn apart by the 'alienations' of capitalism, the great writer draws these dialectically together into a complex totality. His fiction thus mirrors, in microcosmic form, the complex totality of society itself. In doing this, great art combats the alienation and fragmentation of capitalist society, projecting a rich, many-sided image of human wholeness. Lukacs names such art 'realism' and takes it to include the Greeks and Shakespeare as much as Balzac and Tolstoy. The three great periods of historical 'realism' are ancient Greece, the Renaissance, and France in the early nineteenth century. Lukacs remarks, "Of course every great realist found a different solution for the basic problem in accordance with his time and his own artistic personality. But they all have in common that they penetrate deeply into the great universal problems

of their time and inexorably depict the true essence of reality as they see it."<sup>21</sup>

Ancient Greek art explained the world through myth. It was at once a realistic and an illusory - fantastic view of the world, a spontaneously dialectical view. The mythological realism of antiquity espouses a heroic conception of man, asserts the unity of the individual and society and harmony of the individual's inner world.<sup>22</sup> The antique hero is active and energetic. Although he bows to necessity and at times is unable to save his life, he fights and necessity manifests itself only through his free actions. Medieval art stripped the hero of the will for action and put him in the trust of God. Man is a passive creature, everything is ordained from above, the world is explained through God. The art of the Middle Ages is so replete with symbols that it could be called allegoric-symbolic art.<sup>23</sup> Two artistic trends developed within medieval symbolism-religious and secular art.

The realism of the Renaissance<sup>24</sup> marks a return at a new and higher stage to the basic features of antique

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21 Georg Lukacs, Studies in European Realism (Merlin Press, London, 1978), p. 13.

22 Yuri Borev, op. cit., p. 199.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid., pp. 199-200.



art. This period tries to explain the world through itself and not by external explanation. Renaissance realism discovered the individual man and celebrated his power and beauty. It liberated him from medieval asceticism. The depiction of the nude body and female beauty was a potent and vivid argument in the struggle against asceticism. But this "permissive" liberation constituted both the strength and the weakness of Renaissance realism for it gave scope to all tendencies in man, both good and evil.

The French absolutism of the 17th century constrained the individual within the rigid regulations of statehood. The king became an intermediary between the bourgeoisie and the nobility to prevent them from destroying each other. The awareness of the conflict and the lack of historical prospect for resolving it was reflected in the art of classicism.<sup>25</sup> This is marked by civic awareness, concern with the interests of the state, faith in reason, clarity of moral and aesthetic values. In its intellectual-aesthetic conception, classicism underestimated the role of the masses of the people, treating history as the result of the deed of great personalities.

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25 Ibid., p. 200.

The realism of the 17th-18th century Enlighteners was influenced by the sharpening social struggles when the temporary unity of the bourgeoisie and the nobility under the aegis of absolutism was broken by the onslaught of the economically strengthened bourgeoisie on the positions of the aristocracy. The hero that comes to the force is a citizen who upholds freedom by political means. The enlightenment of people by reason and knowledge is the answer to all social conflicts. Although the realism of the Enlightenment is concerned with the social essence of its characters it differs from critical realism in that it puts its typical characters in experimental and not typical circumstances.

Romanticism was born of the atmosphere of storm before and after the bourgeois revolutions. It focussed on the individuality of the character divorcing itself from the real circumstances of his life. The romantic hero is plucked from the mundane life and put in extreme circumstances, and that makes him socially valuable. He stands proud and alone rejecting the imperfect world.<sup>26</sup> While romanticism merely sensed the imperfections of the new system established in the late 18th century, critical realism showed its basic inhumanity ('critical' as an

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26 Ibid., p. 202.

attitude, 'realism' as a method). The aesthetic ideals which were in most cases embodied in the positive hero of romanticism are, in realism, mediated through a whole system of images expressive of the artist's attitude to what he is portraying. Critical realism asserts the aesthetic ideal through negation. It is an indictment of the society which deprives man of freedom. It sees the mission of art in reproducing reality and pronouncing a verdict on it.<sup>27</sup>

Critical realism flourished in Europe beginning from the 1820s. That trend produced great names in France (Balzac, Stendhal), England (Dickens) and Russia (Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Chekov). Capitalism, for the first time in human history, established a worldwide economic system and drew the most diverse aspects of life into the sphere of production. Accordingly, the object of art expanded. Man, the main object of art, underwent profound changes. With the development of capitalism social ties became universal and truly worldwide. All these changes in reality brought forth a new type of artistic conception of the world as embodied in critical realism. The enlighteners conception of the natural man was discarded

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27 N.G. Chernishevsky. As quoted in Yuri Borev, *ibid.*, p. 202.

and human essence was sought to be explained by social life.

The principle of critical realism is typification. A 'realist' work is rich in a complex, comprehensive set of relations between man, nature and history, and these relations embody and unfold what for Marxism is most 'typical' about a particular phase of history. For Lukacs 'typical' denotes those latent forces in any society which are from a Marxist viewpoint most historically significant and progressive, which lay bare the society's inner structure and dynamics. The task of the realist writer is to flesh out these 'typical' trends and forces in individuals and actions; in doing so he links the individual to the social whole, and informs each concrete particular of social life with the power of the 'world-historical' - the significant movements of history itself.

Quoting Lukacs, "Realism however is not some sort of middle way between false objectivity and false subjectivity....Realism is the recognition of the fact that a work of literature can rest neither on a lifeless average, as the naturalists suppose, nor on an individual principle which dissolves its own self into nothingness. The central category and criterion of realist literature is the type, a peculiar synthesis which originally binds

together the general and the particular both in characters and situations. What makes a type a type is not its average quality, not its mere individual being, however profoundly conceived; what makes it a type is that in it all the humanly and socially essential determinants are present on their highest level of development, in the ultimate unfolding of the possibilities latent in them, in extreme presentation of their extremes, rendering concrete the peaks and limits of men and epochs... thus realism means a three-dimensionality, an all-roundness, that endows with independent life characters and human relationships.... All it opposes is the destruction of the completeness of the human personality and of the objective typicality of men and situations through an excessive cult of the momentary mood. The struggle against such tendencies acquired a decisive importance in the realist literature of the nineteenth century."<sup>28</sup>

Lukacs holds that the realist writer penetrates through the accidental phenomena of social life to disclose the essences or essentials of a condition, selecting and combining them into a total form and fleshing them out in concrete experience. Whether or not a

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<sup>28</sup> Georg Lukacs, op. cit., p. 6.

writer can do this depends for Lukacs not just on his personal skill but on his position within history. The great realist writers arise from a history which is visible in the making i.e. where it was possible for writers to grasp their own present as history - or, to put it in Lukacs's phrase, to see past history as 'the pre-history of the present'. Shakespeare, Scott, Balzac and Tolstoy can produce major realist art because they are present at the tumultuous birth of an historical epoch, and so are dramatically engaged with the vividly exposed 'typical' conflicts and dynamics of their societies. It is this historical 'content' which lays the basis for their formal achievement. "Richness and profundity of created characters", Lukacs claims, "relies upon the richness and profundity of the total social process".<sup>29</sup>

Therefore, the essence of realism is social analysis, the study and depiction of the life of man in society, of social relations, the relationship between the individual and society, and the structure of society itself. As Boris Suchkov puts it:

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29 Georg Lukacs, in an article in the New Hungarian Quarterly, vol. xiii, no. 47, Autumn 1972. As quoted in Terry Eagleton, op. cit., p. 30.

"Realism does not arbitrarily isolate man from the social environment in which he lives and acts, but instead sets out to perceive and portray the dialectics of social relationships with their real contradictions... Social analysis, the essence of realism, enables the writer or artist to discern life's essential features and approach an understanding of its law....If the social analysis of the environment in which the characters act is to be realistic, the writer must see and portray reality in its determinant, typical manifestations, which are objectively present in the sphere of human social relations, refracted through the prism of individual characterisations."<sup>30</sup>

Suchkov goes on to say that the realist principle of typification involves the tracing of the causality that exists in the world of social phenomena. Since it is human life and the life of society that form the subject matter of a work, the hero's inner world, and the sum of his individual traits which we call character are examined and described by the realist writer as the product of numerous, but typical circumstances which are in a causal relationship with the personal destiny of the hero. Thus, the typical character is a kind of derivative of social

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<sup>30</sup> Boris Suchkov, A History of Realism (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1973), p. 18.

forces. The typical character of the hero accumulates and combines the main determinant features of the environment of which he is a product, and it is through him and his personal fortunes that the features of that environment are revealed. The realist writers, therefore, "produced an authentic picture of contemporary personal and social life....The realists were able to portray the essential conflicts of their age which conditioned the inner world of their heroes, their way of thinking and behaving, and to see the sources of social evil that were having such a destructive effect on the human personality."<sup>31</sup>

Closely connected with the concept of Marxist criticism is the question of commitment of the writer. This was more than ever highlighted in post-revolutionary Russia in the 1928 decree of the Bolshevik Party Central Committee which aimed at creating a purely proletarian culture cleansed of bourgeois influences. Literature was to serve the interests of the party. In 1934 the Congress of Soviet Writers officially adopted the doctrine of 'socialist realism'. The doctrine taught that it was the writer's duty "to provide a truthful, historico-concrete portrayal of reality in its revolutionary

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31 Ibid., p. 22.



development", taking into account "the problem of ideological transformation and the education of the workers in the spirit of socialism". Literature must be "party-minded", it should be infused with a "revolutionary romanticism", portraying Soviet heroes and prefiguring the future.<sup>32</sup> The term 'socialist realism' as opposed to 'critical realism' was coined by Gorky and the antithesis is now accepted by Marxist scholars and critics. It clearly refers to an attitude, not a style, and emphasizes the socialist outlook, not the realist method. As a whole it implies the artist's or writer's fundamental agreement with the aims of the working class and the emerging socialist world.

The doctrine of socialist realism claimed descent from Marx and Engels, but its true forbear<sup>er</sup>s were the 19th century Russian critics Belinsky, Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov whose influence can be seen in the work of G. Plekhanov. He believes that literature 'reflects' reality. The writer reflects reality most significantly by creating 'types'. It is possible to find the 'social equivalent' of literary facts. This idea of literature as typifying and socially reflective enters into the formulation of socialist realism.

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32 A.A. Zhdanov, On Literature, Music and Philosophy (London, 1950). As quoted in Terry Eagleton, op. cit., p. 38.

Lukacs provides a useful contrast between critical and socialist realism which clearly brings out their specific aspects. The first crucial distinction between the two is made on the question of perspective. The perspective of socialist realism is the struggle for socialism and this varies in form and content according to the level of social development and the subject-matter. But the decisive point, particularly in contrast to critical realism, is not simply the acceptance of socialism. This is possible within the framework of critical realism. But where a critical realist attempts to describe socialism, his description is bound to be 'from the outside'. Therefore, "socialist realism differs from critical realism, not only in being based on a concrete socialist perspective, but also in using this perspective to describe the forces working towards socialism 'from the inside'."<sup>33</sup> Socialist society is seen as an independent entity, not simply as a foil to capitalist society or as a refuge from its dilemmas (as seen by critical realists who come closest to embracing socialism).

Lukacs clarifies what he means by description of socialism from the 'inside' and from the 'outside'.

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33 Georg Lukacs, The Meaning of Contemporary Realism, op. cit., p. 93.

He says, "By the 'outside' method a writer obtains a typology based on the individual and his personal conflicts; and from this base he works towards wider social significance. The 'inside' method seeks to discover an Archimedian point in the midst of social contradictions, and then bases its typology on an analysis of these contradictions."<sup>34</sup>

Lukacs points towards the 'concrete' nature of the new socialist perspective. By concreteness he means an awareness of the development, structure and goal of society as a whole. The great critical realists were at times able to achieve a comprehensive description of the totality of society but some of them were hardly aware of the historical nature of the reality described. The perspective of socialism enables the writer to see society and history for what they are. This opens a new chapter in literary creation. So socialist realism is in a position both to portray the totality of a society in its immediacy and to reveal its pattern of development. A correct understanding of reality quickens the relation between theory and practice and gives rise to a new kind of human self-awareness.

Despite this, there are similarities between socialist and critical realism. The social realists have

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Id., p. 94.

always considered the critical realists allies in their struggle to establish the supremacy of realism in aesthetics. Both are one in their struggle against reactionary forces in politics and art. Criticality is the first common factor between the two. The concurrence on criticality is at both levels - literary and political. At the literary level change, creativity and criticality would be the values of such an alliance. At the political level it would be a united front of all the writers and scholars pursuing critical realism or socialist realism as reflected in the PWA. For the Marxist, the road to socialism is identical with the movement of history itself. Any accurate account of bourgeois reality is a contribution, whatever the author's subjective intention, to the Marxist critique of capitalism and therefore furthers the cause of socialism.

A regime preparing for war or relying on oppression and untruth, must necessarily tend towards the suppression of realism and criticality, both at the aesthetic and the political level. The origins of an aesthetic proscription and prescription date from the days of Plato who banned drama and prescribed <sup>r</sup>material music for the rule of guardians over a stratified society. Similarly Fascism has exercised state control over

literary and political activity that has been critical of the existing regime.

Lukacs believes that "As socialism develops, critical realism, as a distinct literary style, will wither away".<sup>35</sup> Society will eventually achieve a condition which only socialist realism can adequately describe. It will be a protracted process but the outcome is inevitable. Critical realism will wither away, as the literary forms of feudalism have withered away. This, for Lukacs, argues the superiority of socialist realism. The reason for this superiority is the insights which socialist ideology and socialist perspective make available to the writer. They enable him to give a more comprehensive and deeper account of man as a social being than any traditional ideology without being reductionist. But this in no way can take away from the importance of critical realism because it can describe the reaction of the non-socialist to the new society, can depict its transforming power and its rich inherent complexity. Critical realism has thus a significant contribution to make to present-day literature and is an important ally of socialism. Moreover the continued existence of critical realism in socialist societies has not been conclusively disproved.

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35 Ibid., p. 114.

Going back to the question of partisanship in literature it is seen that this is bound to some extent with the problem of how works of literature relate to the real world. Socialist realism's prescription that literature should teach certain political attitudes assumes that literature does 'reflect' or 'reproduce' social reality in a fairly direct way. Marx, however, does not himself use the metaphor of 'reflection' about literary works, nor does he insist that literary works should be politically prescriptive. Lenin's remarks about literature becoming "part of the common cause of the proletariat...a component of organised, planned and integrated Social-Democratic Party work"<sup>36</sup> were addressed towards party literature. In its cruder formulations, the idea that literature 'reflects' reality is clearly inadequate. It suggests a passive, mechanistic relationship between literature and society. Literature does not stand in some reflective, symmetrical, one-to-one relation with its object. Lukacs sees artistic consciousness as a creative intervention into the world rather than as a mere reflection of it. Leon Trotsky claimed that artistic creation is "a deflection, a changing and a transformation

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<sup>36</sup> V. Lenin, "Party Organisation and Party Literature", Selected Works (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977), p. 149.

of reality, in accordance with the peculiar laws of art."<sup>37</sup>  
For Pierre Macherey, the effect of literature is essentially to deform rather than to imitate. If the image corresponds wholly to the reality (as in a mirror), it becomes identical to it and ceases to be an image at all.<sup>38</sup>

The question of how far literature is more than a mere reflection of reality brings us back to the issue of partisanship. In "The Meaning of Contemporary Realism" (1958), Lukacs argues that modern writers should do more than merely reflect the despair and ennui of late bourgeois society; they should try to take up a critical perspective on this futility, revealing positive possibilities beyond it. To do this, they must do more than merely mirror society. What Lukacs is calling for is essentially for the modern age to move forward into the nineteenth century. We need a return to the great tradition of critical realism; we require writers who, if not directly committed to socialism, at least "take (socialism) into account and do not reject it out of hand."

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37 Leon Trotsky as quoted in Terry Eagleton, op. cit., p. 50.

38 Pierre Macherey as quoted in Terry Eagleton, ibid., p. 51.

Lukacs has been attacked on two main fronts for this position. He has been criticized by Bertolt Brecht, who claims that he makes a fetish of nineteenth century realism and is blind to the best of modernist art. He has also been upbraided by his own Communist Party comrades for his lukewarm attitude to socialist realism. Against both bourgeois modernism and socialist realism Lukacs posits the great humanist tradition of bourgeois realism. This position of Lukacs has its roots in the cold war period when it was imperative for the Stalinist world to forge alliances with 'peace-loving' progressive bourgeois intellectuals and to play down a revolutionary commitment. His politics at this period turn on a simplistic contrast between 'peace' and 'war' - between positive 'progressive' writers and decadent reactionaries. Similarly Lukacs's praise of anti-fascist authors in 'The Historical Novel' reflects the politics of the Popular Front period, with its opposition of 'democracy' rather than revolutionary socialism to the growing power of fascism. Marxism and bourgeois humanism thus formed a common, enlightened front against the irrationalist tradition in Germany which culminated in Fascism.

The question which ~~some~~ Marxist criticism has addressed to literary works to assess their value - is its



political tendency correct, does it further the cause of the proletariat, is the work politically progressive? - entails the shelving of other questions about the work as 'merely' aesthetic. An instance of this dichotomy between the 'ideological' and the 'aesthetic' occurs in Lukacs' s 'The Historical Novel' - "It does not matter whether Scott or Manzoni were aesthetically superior to, say, Heinrich Mann, or at least this is not the main point. What is important is that Scott and Manzoni, Pushkin and Tolstoy, were able to grasp and portray popular life in a more profound, authentic, human and concretely historical fashion than even the most outstanding writers of our day...." This is closely connected to the question of perspective, "...perspective acts as a principle of selection, as the criterion by which a writer selects his detail and avoids the pitfalls of naturalism.... The concreteness of a writer's perspective, of course, is a decisive influence on the vitality and suggestive power of his art. It is decisive in as much as there is a connection - not direct, but complex and devious - between the structure of individual character and the degree to which perspective, in a work of art, can be

realized."<sup>39</sup>

To emphasize the question - 'Is the work politically progressive?' - as the basis of a Marxist criticism does not imply - that we dismiss such partisan literature as marginal. In the words of Terry Eagleton, "the Soviet Futurists and Constructivists who went out into factories and collective farms, launching wall newspapers, inspecting reading rooms, introducing radio and travelling film shows, reporting to Moscow newspapers; the theatrical experimenters like Meyerhold, Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht; the hundreds of 'agit-prop' groups who saw theatre as a direct intervention in the class-struggle: the enduring achievements of these men stand as a living denial of bourgeois criticism's smug assumption that art is one thing and propaganda another."<sup>40</sup>

It is true that all major art is 'progressive', in the limited sense that any art sealed from the

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39 Georg Lukacs, op. cit., pp. 53-55.

40 Terry Eagleton, op. cit., p. 57.

significant movements of its epoch, divorced from some sense of the historically central, relegates itself to minor status. What needs to be added is Marx and Engel's 'Principle of contradiction<sup>ion</sup>~~ion~~': that the political views of an author may run counter to what his work, objectively reveals. Also that the question of how 'progressive' art needs to be <sup>to be</sup> valid is an historical question which cannot be settled dogmatically for all time. There are periods and societies where conscious, 'progressive' political commitment need not be a necessary condition for producing major art. There are other periods - fascism, for example - when to survive and produce as an artist at all involves the kind of questioning which is likely to result in explicit commitment. In such societies, conscious political partisanship, and the capacity to produce significant art at all, go spontaneously together.

PART-II

AN ANALYSIS OF YASHPAL'S NOVEL - "GEETA-PARTY  
COMRADE"

How would one characterize the writings of the members of the PWA during the period 1936-47? In the United Front politics of the 1930s what were the literary trends which could be identified? Could the literary trends, of critical realism and socialist realism, be classified at that time or were they consciously in the minds of the members of the PWA?

It is interesting to note that there is little concurrence between the scholars and writers and the people involved with the PWA about the literary trend which the movement represented. - was it critical realism, or socialist realism, or both. Adhering to Lukacs' viewpoint that, "Socialist realism differs from critical realism, not only in being based on a concrete socialist perspective, but also in using this perspective to describe the forces working towards socialism 'from the inside'",<sup>41</sup> some opine that socialist realism is not possible in a non-socialist country. It is only when socialism develops that socialist realism can develop as a distinct literary style. Such a view is held by Bhisham Sahani and V.N. Tripathy who rule out the

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41. Georg Lukacs, op. cit., p. 93

possibility of discovering the trend of socialist realism in the works of the members of the FWA.

On the other hand we also have the opinion put forward by Rajiv Saxena who feels that socialist realism does not exist at all, not even in the Soviet Union. In his article "Literature: Politician Needs the Artist" he says, "Writing in the Soviet Union became, over the years under socialism, a sinecure. It offered most favourable conditions for writing at ease. At the same time, it created unfavourable conditions for penning the whole truth."<sup>42</sup> The socialist ideology demanded that literature be faithful to the working people and serve their cause. But the new ruling strata that had emerged after Lenin commanded the power of granting privileges and also the power to persecute. This dimmed the moral courage of many authors.

Qamar Hais feels that during the period 1936-47 there were very few books which could be characterized as specimens of socialist realism, amongst these he mentions the novels of Yashpal, Makhdoon ~~and~~ Moin-un-din, Krishan Chander. He makes it clear that socialist realism had not been adopted as the guiding force in Indian literature. It had been adopted in other non-socialist countries but

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42. Rajiv Saxena, "Literature: Politician Needs the Artist" in A Revolution Within a Revolution. (Navyug Press, Delhi, 1987)

only where the revolutionary forces were very strong e.g. in Vietnam and in China. This was not the case with India as here the fight was for bourgeois national democracy. The national movement was guided by the forces of bourgeois parties. But critical realism was there as a conscious trend. It was not just an imitation from the West. This was because of the agitational attitude of the progressives<sup>in</sup> politics and the attitude towards Imperialism and retrograde dominant sections of Indian society (especially as propounded by Premchand, Maulana Azad, Shibli etc.) It was an agitational literature, critical of the British and of all those forces responsible for maintaining colonial rule. In the Indian situation, the cult of critical realism was evolved by the Indian writers themselves in the early twentieth century - writers like Premchand, Iqbal, Azad, Hazrat Mohani etc. They were nationalist patriotic writers who were critical of the Indian situation - both social, political and cultural. They adopted their own tools of criticism in literature which was chiefly critical realism with very few instances of socialist realism.

Namwar Singh opines that the terms 'critical realism' and 'socialist realism' have been historically

applied by Lukacs. The nineteenth century bourgeois novel marks the beginning of critical realism. Socialist realism was possible only after the 1917 October revolution-, initially only in the Soviet Union but after that it became universal even in a non-socialist society. But he says that ideally in a non-socialist society socialist realism would be critical realism with a socialist perspective. It would be a historico-concrete portrayal of reality in its revolutionary development.

From the various view points of these scholars and critics, one thing stands out clear. In the literary field there was a convergence on criticality and creativity which came about despite heterogeneity. The principle of 'art for art's sake' was rejected outrightly and the progressives sought to be guided by the principle of art in the service of the people i.e. for social reform and liberation. There was an effort at the critical depiction of reality. The realist writers tried to penetrate through the accidental phenomena of social life in order to disclose the essentials of the condition. Social analysis was the essence of their literature. Man was not seen as isolated from the social environment in which he lived and acted. Thus an authentic picture of

contemporary personal and social life was produced the essential conflicts of the age depicted.

For the purpose of establishing this context of criticality we will proceed with an analysis of novel 'Geeta - Party Comrade' by Yashpal. In his 76 years Yashpal's (1903-76) life was often compared to that of a hero of an adventure novel. Over the years he graduated to writing revolutionary novels. In the company of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Bohara and Chandra Shekhar he openly took part in all the revolutionary activities of those times. After the death of Azad in 1931, Yashpal was appointed the Commander-in-Chief of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army. He was arrested by the Police in Lucknow in 1932 and served a jail term till 1938. From 1938 till the last years of his life he put himself heart and soul into his writings. Amongst his major works are Meri teri uski baat, Jhoota Sacch - Vatan aur desh, Sacch - Desh ka bhavishya, Pakka kadam, Geeta - Party Comrade, Dada Comrade, Deshdrohi, Kyon Phanse etc.

Appearing in June 1946, just four months after the Naval Revolt of February 1946, 'Geeta - Party Comrade' was not only written during those dramatic times, nor was it set in the context of those times - but was a novel of the times. It was a fictional representation and interpretation of the history that was being lived by Yashpal.



and his contemporaries. Both the central event (the Naval Revolt of Feb. 1946) and the main motifs connected with it (the imperialist British rule, the state of colonial India, the struggle for freedom, the attitude of the various political parties to the issues of the times, the critical analysis of the situation by the CPI, the question of unity, involvement of the masses, communalism, partition and even the position of women) were highly topical, directly reflecting the events and the evolving political discourse of the day. These events were worked out through the gradual development of the two main characters the novel, Geeta and Fadamlal Bhavaria.

In the 'Introduction' of the novel Yashpal himself says, "The story of 'Party Comrade' is the story of the times, it is a story of the present circumstances in which the reader finds himself."<sup>43</sup> He goes on to say, "To write a story about the reader's circumstances is like showing a mirror to him... It is not possible to find the fault in our face without looking into the mirror. For this reason I was inspired to write a story about our times and our circumstances."<sup>44</sup> He continues to say that in the things of our own times the differences of opinion can be very

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43. Yashpal, Geeta-Party Comrade. (Lokbharati Prakashan, Allahabad, 1978), p. 5. Free Translation.

44. Ibid., p. 5.

sharp. And it wouldn't be surprising if the mirror in front of the reader depicts this.

The period of 1946 in which 'Geeta-Party Comrade' was both written and set was one of great historical upheaval and intense political and social ferment in India. The post second World War negotiations had begun and there were occasional British efforts to obtain Congress and League participation in the existing structure of central government, as well as some abortive talks between Gandhi and Jinnah on the Pakistan issue. The notable events of these times were the Simla Conference of 1945, the public trials of the INA prisoners and the R.I.N. Mutiny of 1946.

The greatest threat of a popular outburst was posed by the naval mutiny in Bombay on 18-23 February 1946. This was one of the most truly heroic, if also largely forgotten, episodes of our freedom struggle. Wartime expansion of the Royal Indian Navy had brought in men from all parts of the country, weakening the old military tradition of recruitment from politically undeveloped 'martial races'. Racial discrimination continued unabated in this 'last bastion of the Empire', while service abroad brought contact with world developments and the I.N.A. trials and the post-war popular upsurge in India had a

growing impact. On 18th February ratings in the Signals training establishment 'Talwar' went on hunger- strike against bad food and racist insults. Next day the strike spread to Castle and Fort. Barracks on shore and twenty-two ships in Bombay harbour. The tricolour, crescent, and hammer - and - sickle were raised jointly on the mastheads of the rebel fleet. The ratings elected a Naval Central Strike Committee, headed by M.S. Khan, and formulated demands which combined issues of better food, equal pay for white and Indian soldiers, etc., with the national political slogans of release of INA and other political prisoners and withdrawal of Indian troops from Indonesia. The men hesitated fatally, however, on the border - line of peaceful strike and determined mutiny, obeying orders to return to their respective ships or barracks on the afternoon of 20 February, only to find themselves surrounded by army guards. Next day fighting started at Castle Barracks when ratings tried to break out of their encirclement, with the ships providing artillery support while the Britishers flew in bombers and threatened to destroy the navy. By 22 February, the strike had spread to naval bases all over the country as well as to some ships on sea, involving at its height 78 ships, 20 shore establishments, and 20,000 ratings.

It is against this background of the naval mutiny that the novel 'Geeta-Party Comrade' is set. The story line of the novel is simple enough. The chief protagonist is Geeta who is actively involved in the Communist movement, is a party member and does her share of work by selling party literature and newspaper in the streets and collecting funds for the party. In the course of this she comes in contact with Padamlal Bhavaria, a rich businessman who indulges in the frivolities of life - wine, women and loose company. Though an ardent Gandhian, under the influence of Geeta he slowly starts seeing the rationale behind the viewpoint of the Communists. The climax comes with the Naval Revolt of 1946 which the CPI supports. Disillusioned with the call of the Congress to the ratings to surrender, Bhavaria actively takes part in the total strike organized by the Communists and gets killed in the ensuing violence. Geeta, burdened with the party work and the curfew restrictions, is unable to meet him on his death bed.

Despite the apparent simplicity of the story line the novel manages to make contemporary historical reality its subject matter. While the dominant plot is the change, and development of Bhavaria's character under Geeta's influence and the stark political reality as witnessed

by him, there are subsidiary plots interwoven with it which are clearly depicted through the triangular relationship between the three main characters - Geeta, Bhavaria and the Communists.

The story line develops with the development of these three characters. First of all there is Geeta. She is a young collegian who in contact with politically conscious people of her college develops leftist leanings. The arguments of her and her friends always centered round the following issues -

"India is such a big country, its population is so large; then why are we a dependent colony of a small nation like England? All goods and commodities are produced by labour, then why is the position of the labourers the worst in our Society?"<sup>45</sup>

This would lead them to a Marxist interpretation in terms of wages, profits and surplus value .." The surplus value produced is the profit of the owner and the exploitation of the workers."<sup>46</sup> It was the profit motive which drove the capitalist in the first instance towards exploitation of the workers and in the second towards

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45. Ibid., p. 20

46. Ibid., p. 20

imperialism.

In the course of her involvement with the party many things become clear to her - what the party stands for, how it involves the masses, collects its funds, disciplines its members etc. Mazhar, the secretary of the Girgaum unit ('Gold Works Union') of the Party, explains to her what the party means -

"What is the Party? The meaning of the Party is to recognize the collective nature of your and my effort and to work towards it. In such a situation the question of liking or disliking the party work or feeling hesitant or insulted about it is entirely meaningless. There is a contradiction between your personal preferences and the popular well being. The only meaning of this is that your understanding or preferences are wrong." 47

He stresses the need of going out amongst the common man and making him understand the party's political direction -

"It is not enough to understand the right political line and direction. It is essential that one should make the effort of making the common man understand it also. The national problem cannot be solved by the understanding and efforts of one man alone. If this was possible we would

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47. Ibid., p. 21.

have got independence merely by the fasting of Mahatama Gandhi." 48

Among the methods of making the public more conscious was selling party literature and newspaper to them at very nominal rates. This also supplemented their drive for funds. They also asked for direct contributions to the party from the people. Geeta was called upon to do this job. Initially she refused to do it as she thought that it was no better than begging for alms. A fellow comrade, Meghnath, admonishes her for this and says, "This is bourgeois snobbery. When there is a need for the party then the question of personal insult does not arise." 49

It is seen that the party workers are very particular even in this drive for funds. The instructions of the party in this matter are very clear. As Meghnath explains -

"The Party office wants to know the amount of money collected, from which class of people it was collected and the attitude of the donor towards the Party .... The question of intention is involved in this give and take of money. There might be a selfish motive behind it. I would

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48. Ibid., p. 22.

49. Ibid., p. 21.

consider this as politically immoral money." <sup>50</sup> This was a direct pointer towards Geeta who had accepted two hundred rupp<sup>e</sup>s from Bhavaria as contribution towards the party funds. Bhavaria was known for his strong anti-communist feelings and therefore the money could have been given to Geeta only in her personal capacity. It was not enough accepting the donations blindly. Only when people were really motivated by the Party ideals or sympathetic towards it that the contribution could be accepted.

Geeta also comes to realize that for the Party there is **no** difference between the personal and the private life of the individual. It all reflects on the public life. The newspapers make capital out of an incident when Bhavaria comes to the rescue of Geeta by beating up the man who was out to heckle her. Geeta is called before the members of the Provincial Committee to explain her actions. She finds it difficult to explain to them that she had gone to the notorious Matunga Club with Bhavaria unknowingly, but even then it was in her personal capacity. Very disapprovingly she is told -

"What is private or public? Your life is for yourself or for the cause? Every action of yours has an impact on your ideals and on the Party situation. The incident

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50. Ibid., p. 54



has been reported in the newspaper because you are a Party member. Who has given this opportunity to others to sling mud on our Party?" 51

Considering Geeta's actions a serious breach of discipline she is suspended from the membership of the Party for three months.

The other main character in the novel is Padamlal Bhavaria. The author presents him as a rich man leading a debauched lifestyle given to the frivolities of life. The novel develops along with the development of his character. In the case of Geeta one could see that there is a certain correspondence between her thoughts and actions. She thinks and argues out rationally and then acts. In the case of Bhavaria there is action but no conscious thought. He befriends Geeta to accept the challenge of his friends. He regularly buys Party literature and newspaper from her not because he is in any way influenced by Marxist thought but just because it gives him a chance to meet Geeta. He does not have a very good opinion about the Communists. He had read in the newspaper that the Communists were in the pay roll of the Muslim League and the British government. They ate beef and supplied girls from the Party to the people. After meeting Geeta he knew that these informations were wrong. But he couldn't

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51. Ibid., p.95

ignore what he heard through his own ears in the public meetings of the great national leaders. He had heard the Congress leaders say that the Communists were in league with the British and were acting as traitors of the country. He had also heard that the CPI was a party which had fooled the public and the government and conned them off their money. They even got a regular supply of money from Russia.

With the entry of Geeta into his life Bhavaria's life style and thought process starts changing radically. He starts thinking consciously on all the events happening around him. The turning point comes with the Naval Revolt of 1946. He sees the valiant fight which the ratings put up and the spontaneous support which they receive from the people irrespective of their religion and party commitment - "The crowd was of thousands of people. At all places the tricolour, crescent and hammer and sickle were fluttering together. The slogans of 'Jai Hind', 'Inquilab Zindabad' and 'Down with the British government' rent the air. The uniformed soldiers were mingling with the crowds in such a way as if they were a part of the people, the difference was only of clothes." 52

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52. Ibid., p. 103

Thinking that this would lead to a spontaneous general uprising of the people, Bhavaria gets a real shock on hearing that the Congress had asked the ratings to surrender. In spite of this he takes part in the general strike and gets killed in the violence let loose by British repression.

Alongside with his developing political maturity, Bhavaria also becomes a more humane and sensitive kind of person. Geeta's reaction at being tricked into going with him to the ill-famed Matunga Club shakes him to the inner core of his consciousness. Crying out in anger she says - "Why did you bring me here. This place is not fit for any good man. I never understood you to be this. This does not become you." <sup>53</sup> Bhavaria feels very guilty after this. Gradually he breaks away from his old friends and in his spare time starts reading the Party literature given to him by Geeta. He finds truth in the printed word and his interest in finding out more about the Party, its aims and objectives, gets aroused. Leaving behind his pleasure seeking life style he gradually becomes a thinking and active man.

The other main focus of the novel is on the Communists as a group. Their perception of politics,

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53. Ibid., p. 62

their aims and objectives, their analysis of the situation, their methods of work, their party discipline is clearly brought out in the novel. Much of this has been discussed before and will be again discussed in the latter part of the chapter. It is interesting to note that Geeta's character has been depicted as more humane than the other comrades. Geeta is often irritated by their mechanical and self-righteous manner. Her opinion about Meghnath makes this very clear -

"He also used to talk of all the same things - massforce proletariat, patriotic duty, self-determination, anti-imperialist, organized working class and peasantry - like Mazhar, Shrinivas, Ranga and the other Comrades of the Union. But he had the burden of self responsibility and seriousness of pride on his face which seemed very artificial to Geeta." <sup>54</sup>

The incident with Bhavaria which gets reported in the papers shows the mechanical efficiency of the party. No concession is made for emotions or personal feelings or for individual human life. In contrast to this you can see the importance which Geeta attaches to human life. This is best illustrated with her reaction to Bhavaria's death. The other comrades try to reason it out with her - "This is

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54. Ibid., p. 23

the payment one has to make towards the cost of independence. What's there to cry for it?" 55

The comrades respectfully salute the brave men who sacrificed their lives in the incident. But even this effort is too much for Geeta -

"Despite pursing her lips under her teeth, Geeta's tears kept flowing. In an effort to control her unsettled mind and the weakness of her body, the tight fisted hand raised towards the sky was trembling." 56

Thus the plot of the novel moves as the relationship between the characters develops. This is against the backdrop of the events taking place. First and foremost is the development of the internal events of the novel - Geeta's involvement with the Party, meeting with Bhavaria, her attempts at making him interested in the Party etc. What is more important, however, is the gradual unfolding of the historical events of the times in the story.

The novel shows the highly organized and efficiently manned parallel movement of the Left alongside the mainstream Congress movement. This movement of the Communists was not in competition with the Congress but worked alongside in order to strengthen the national movement. As Geeta explains to her younger brother, Shyamu -

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55. Ibid., p. 119.

56. Ibid., p. 120

"If we fight the Congress then who will fight the Britishers? All this is the British imperialist design of divide and rule. Their agents have penetrated into the Congress to spread mischief. They have kept the Congress fooled. Congress is the national organization of our country. It is the organization which will fight for our independence from the British government. Our Party does not fight the Congress, it tries to make them understand the various issues. If brothers fight between themselves it is but obvious that the foreign invader will continue to rule us... Independence cannot be won without the collective efforts of the entire people of the country." 57

Though the novel is not about the 'Quit India Movement of 1942, the reaction of various parties towards it is mentioned in passing. Bhavaji, an ardent congressite, says about the communists -

"In 1942 they had gone and hidden behind the British government. Did they think that their grasp of politics was better than that of Gandhi, Sardar Patel or Nehru?" 58

The communist defence to this can be seen in the argument of Mazhar -

"In 1942 the Congress leaders saw that the path they

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57. Ibid., p.87

58. Ibid., p. 107

had adopted by completely ignoring our warning had been entirely unsuccessful. Now, by calling us traitors they are trying to excite the people against us and thus divert their minds from their unsuccessful policy and campaign... The onus of the failure of the movement which backfired due to their lack of far - sightedness is now being put on us." 59

The Congress was again at cross-roads with the Communists on the question of partition and Pakistan. In line with their argument for the right of selfdetermination the communists had supported the Muslim League demand and this had invited the ire of the Congress. Yashpal writes -

"The Congress was in contest with the Muslim League for the votes from the predominant Muslim areas. But more than criticizing the stand of the Muslim League, the Congress directed its anger towards the CPI because the CPI had been supporting the demand for Pakistan right since 1942. The Communists were condemned as unpatriotic, traitors and lackeys of the Muslim League." 60

Bhavaji, the Congressman says: "Till now the Muslims were the enemies of the Congress, and now look at these Red Flag Communists. What kind of Communists are these communists. They take money from the Britishers. In the Viceroy's Council the government itself admitted that it took money

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59. Ibid., p. 22.

60. Ibid., p. 31.

from the Muslim League. (In the Central Assembly the government had accepted to give a monthly assistance of thirteen thousand ruppees to the Radical Democratic Party of M.N. Roy). You tell me, being a Hindu how can you accept the demand for Pakistan? After dividing your country into two parts what kind of independence will you achieve? Now look at them, they are standing against the Congress in the elections." 61

The rationale behind the CFI's support for Pakistan is expressed in the words of Geeta -

"We hold that where the Muslim population is in majority, they should have their say. Unity cannot be attained by forcefully holding on to anybody. Let the Muslims do what they think is good or bad for them. If they by their own calculations work out their gains and then come and join you, unity will be achieved. If you hold on to them forcefully they will keep fighting with you and betray you at the last moment. This is what Pakistan is about." 62

Despite these differences the Congress and the Left had the common aim of fighting the Britishers. The means were different but the ends were the same. Also, they appealed to different sections of the society. As Bhavaria puts it -

"The fight within the INC is the fight between two

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61. Ibid., p. 75.

62. Ibid., p. 44



brothers. On the one side is the tricolour and on the other the hammer and the sickle. The Communists do not have a say among the white collar workers and therefore they take the ordinary labourers and workers along with them. In the congress all the men are big men and therefore the populace goes with them." 63

The novel shows how the different perceptions of the INC and the CFI on the question of the independence struggle come to a head with the RIN Mutiny of Feb. 1936. The mutiny is described through the eyes of Bhavaria -

"The naval ratings in their white uniforms with blue collars were marching ahead. With them were the army lorries with the tricolour, the crescent and the hammer and sickle. Inquilab Zindabad! Jai Hind! Make India free! Release the INA prisoners! Hindu - Muslim unite! Down with British Imperialism! Allah-o-Akbar! Praise be to Mahabir! These slogans resonated through the air. There was an awareness of the control and strength in their organization and behaviour." 64

It was evident that there was an instantaneous popular support for the movement. Now that the Indian forces had joined the masses the expectations of the people had risen sky high.

Despite this, at Bombay as well as elsewhere, two

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63. Ibid., p. 56.

64. Ibid., p. 100.

sharply different attitudes towards these dramatic developments became evident among the Indian political groups by 22 February. The Bombay CPI called for a general strike, which was supported by Congress Socialist leaders like Aruna Asaf Ali and Achyut Patwardhan. Sardar Patel in sharp contrast advised people to go about their normal business as usual, and S.K. Patil and Chundrigar, heads of the provincial Congress and League units, even offered volunteers to help restore order. Despite Congress and League opposition, 300,000 downed tools in Bombay on 22 February, closing down almost all mills, and violent street fighting continued for two days particularly in the proletarian districts of Parel and Delisle Road. Two army battalions were needed to restore order in Bombay city, and the official casualty figures were 228 civilians killed and 1046 injured. <sup>65</sup>

Patel and Jinnah managed to persuade the ratings to surrender on 23 Feb. giving an assurance that the national parties would prevent any victimization. This promise was soon forgotten, as is evident from the letter Patel wrote to the Andhra Congress leader, Viswanathan on 1 March 1946, ".... discipline in the Army cannot be tampered with ....

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65. 'The RIN Strike', by a group of victimized ratings, Delhi, 1954. As quoted in Sumit Sarkar's Modern India 1885-1947. (Macmillan India Limited, Delhi 1984), p. 424.

We will want Army even in free India" <sup>66</sup> Gandhi was as unequivocally hostile as Patel. On 22 Feb. he condemned the ratings for setting a bad and unbecoming example for India and advised them to peacefully resign their jobs if they had any grievances. He even called the alliance between the Hindus and Muslims and others for the purpose of violent action as unholy.

These differing attitudes of the Congress and the Communists is shown in the novel. On the day of the revolt the communist appeal to the people is made by Geeta over the microphone on a moving lorry -

"Our Party appeals to you to oppose these atrocities and oppression being meted out to the naval ratings. In protest against this you should have a total strike in Bombay tomorrow. Every shop, mill, office, tram, bus, motor will be closed. We will not allow any kind of looting or killing to take place. Our anger and protest are against the atrocities of the British government. Let them be warned that we will avenge the death of our young men. Blood will beget blood." <sup>67</sup>

After this fiery appeal, Bhavaria is taken aback by the appeal of Sardar Patel in the newspapers the next day -

"In such delicate circumstances the people should

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66. Sardar's Letters, Vol. IV, Ahmedabad 1977. As quoted in Sumit Sarkar. *Ib'd.*, p. 425.

67. Yashpal, *op. cit.*, . 104.

maintain peace in all ways. The strike should not be the cause of any unpleasant incident in the city. The naval ratings have broken the discipline of the forces without the advice of the national leaders. The people should not co-operate with them in this effort in any way." <sup>68</sup>

The bourgeois nature of the Congress leadership immediately becomes evident. Buisnessmen like Bhavaji and Babu Ram Gopal who are also congressmen, do not want the strike at any cost. It would be harmful to their business and moreover the possibility of the strike turning violent was frightening for them. They are displeased with Bhavaria's decision to close his shop. In the earlier part of the novel too, a reference to the link between the Congress and the big bourgeoisie is made by another character, comrade Shrinivas -

"The Congress boycotts foreign goods and takes money from the trade of foreign goods for its funds. Are not the lakhs of ruppees put into the Congress election funds of Bombay, Ahmedabad and Kanpur, the earnings of black marketeering? Is it not the money of the people who were responsible for the Bengal famine? The Congress boycotted the war but not the people who were providing the war supplies because it was getting lakhs of ruppees from there." <sup>69</sup>

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68. Ibid., p. 105

69. Ibid., p. 55

Besides these highly topical political issues, the novel also deals with a live social problem - the position of women. Geeta has to stand a lot of snide comments and heckling, when she goes out to sell the party literature and collect funds. In one instance she is saved by the timely intervention of Bhavaria. She finds a big difference in the status and position of the Indian women and what she had read in the newspapers about the women abroad - in Germany the women sold their kisses and in Japan they prostituted themselves to collect money for the war efforts. When Geeta's brother Shyamu shows sympathy towards her after the newspaper report on her about the Bhavaria incident she feels elated -

"She felt the support of an arm. That arm might be thin and weak to look at, but it was a man's arm! She was not alone, what happened if Shyamu was a small boy? After all he was a boy - male! She would be able to stand with his support." 70

What has Yashpal tried to show through the novel? First of all, he has indicated the shortcomings of the national movement. The differing stands of the INC, the Muslim League and the Communists on many important issues undermined the effectivity of the freedom struggle. The question of unity was indeed a difficult one. The important thing to note

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is that from the nationalist literature we get the idea that there was only one kind of movement which was going on - the movement led by the Congress leadership. What Yashpal clearly indicates is that there was a parallel movement of the Left and the level of consciousness was more developed in it. At times it provided a viable alternative to the bourgeois leadership.

The criticism which such a novel often gives rise to is that the novel is not literature but sheer political propaganda. In his 'Introduction' to the novel, Yashpal himself dispels these doubts. He says -

"The picture of any period will talk about or reflect that period. What kind of picture would it be if the picture of a monkey had no tail and that of an elephant no trunk? Similarly in the picture of our present conflict-laden days there will be talk of conflict and the characters of this conflict will also be in it ... but will calling a monkey, a monkey; an elephant, an elephant, a donkey a donkey be propaganda or not? Would it be propaganda to say that the monkey is naughty and deceitful, the elephant is heavy and huge and the donkey is stupid?"<sup>71</sup> Some people would consider this propaganda. But if the real things are not said it would not be possible to give an introduction or

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71. Ibid., pp. 5-6.

description of the monkey, elephant and donkey. The real introduction by the characters about whom the writer writes can only be given by a description of their thoughts and behaviour, and not through propaganda. Without this the picture would be incomplete and one-sided. He concludes by saying -

"If description and depiction is propaganda then the whole literature of the world is propaganda and how can the contemporary writer escape from this?" <sup>72</sup>

We could say that this novel represents the literary trend of critical realism. On the part of Yashpal there is a commitment to the values of criticality, change and creativity. The element of criticality is all pervasive in the novel. The novel very effectively reflects the events and the evolving political discourse of the day. The analysis of the Congress leadership and the Left alternative is very real. The element of criticality is evident not only in the depiction of the characters but also in the way the various events have been described. Where we see the shortcomings of the Congress leadership we also see the Communist Party is an unfavourable light when it takes disciplinary action against Geeta. The almost mechanical nature of its organization and functioning show its inhuman side.

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72. Ibid., p. 6.

The element of change also runs right through the novel. It is a demand for change from colonial rule to national liberation. The sporadic, localized, but extremely militant and united mass action as in the case of the RIN Mutiny is a change in the normal pattern which the struggle for freedom was following. The demand for bringing about an end to the British Imperialist rule was gaining force. The perception of the people on political issues was also undergoing a gradual change. This was evident from the popular response to the Naval revolt.

The third element of creativity is evident when we see how aesthetically Yashpal has put forward both the perspectives of the national movement. He has shown the parallel movements of the Congress and the Left leadership and their varying perceptions of different political issues. His work is marked by realism and criticality both at the aesthetic and the political level. The values of change, creativity and criticality are so well adhered to that we can call Yashpal's work as an excellent example of critical realism. We could even say that it represents critical realism with a socialist perspective.

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## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

We shall briefly go over what we have stated in the previous chapters. In Chapter I we saw how the threat of fascism in Europe led to the formation of the Anti-Fascist People's Front in the 1930s. The Communist International in its Seventh Congress in Aug. 1935 came up with a tactical move to counter the threat of fascism - an interconnected one of a United Workers Front and the formation of a broad Anti-Fascist People's Front. In India this provided the impetus for a larger unity between Congress Socialists, Trade Unionists, Communists and Left Congressmen and also for the formation of Communist fronts. The AIPWA was one of the important front organization created in this period.

In Chapter II we saw that the AIPWA was the result of both external and internal developments and not merely foisted from the West. Moreover, it functioned in a double context - a political and a literary one. On the one hand it operated as a broad front on the basis of resistance to imperialism and fascism and support to national liberation and on the other hand it stressed on the need for a new kind of 'progressive' literature which could influence the structuring of political consciousness. The issues were political. They were the questions of

fascism, imperialism, feudalism, independence, oppression, nationality, communalism, language, culture etc. on which the PWA took specific stands. The means of mass mobilization were literary-mushairas, ballads, folk songs, dances, dramas and film shows alongside with conferences and meetings. The most outstanding feature of the movement was the growth of folk songs and other forms of folk literature. The other remarkable feature was the rapid strides the movement made in almost all the major linguistic zones of the country and the accomplishments of the local PWA units.

We also saw <sup>the</sup> nature of the political composition of the PWA as ranging from Premchand, a confirmed Gandhian, at one end to Sajjad Zaheer, a confirmed Marxist, at the other. In between there were people belonging to a spectrum of faiths. Despite heterogeneity of political and aesthetic values there was general agreement on the two basic issues - opposition to imperialism and struggle for national independence. The political culture that emerged from such a concurrence was a value system of unity, secularism and freedom. This value system was based on an operational value system called criticality.

In the very mode of the formation of the AIPWA the objective and subjective causes of its decline can be seen.

The objective factor was that as the FWA was formed primarily as an anti-imperialist front for national liberation, with the coming of independence in 1947 the very raison d' être of the movement was lost. The momentum of the movement slackened perceptibly. If organizational slackness was there, it was because there seemed to be an uneasy mix of the movement from above and below. This reflected itself in the uneasy way the Centre was able to hold on to its local provincial units. This was the subjective factor.

The political issues which came up from 1942 onwards showed that the PWA like other mass organizations was reflecting the centrifugal tendencies of the times. The United Front was showing signs of breaking up. The Socialist - Communist relations broke up when the CPI lined up with the rest of the international Communist Movement in calling for full support to the anti-fascist 'people's war'. Charges and counter - charge of treachery and 'fifth - columnist' activity, erected a wall between the Socialists and followers of Bose on the one side, and the Communists on the other. Despite this another quick split as in the case of the AIKS did not come about in the AIPWA. The PWA also weathered the storm created by the partition question and did not split on the issue.

With independence in 1947, the Communists, raised the slogan of 'Yeh Azadi Jhuti Hai' (This freedom is a farce). They took a wrong and sectarian line on the question of the nature of freedom. As a result of this the United Front shrunk and its effectiveness declined completely. The course and character of the AIPWA also altered as is evident from the changed stance of the May 1949 Hemeri Conference. Here, contrary to the broad United Front policy of the FWA, a sectarian approach was adopted. Only the Marxist-Leninist writers were deemed progressive and there was a strong emphasis on socialist realism. The writers got divided and all the Congressites, Gandhians Nehruvians and non-Marxists left the FWA. This stand of the PWA was influenced by certain events in the national and international Leftist politics. It was felt that revolution was at the very doorsteps of India due to the presence of many objective conditions. The war had ended. After the Soviet Union there were now four to five more Socialist states in Eastern Europe. One of the biggest countries in Asia, China, had successfully ushered in the revolution in 1949. In the Indo-China, Malaysia and Thailand the Dutch and French colonialists were being opposed tooth and nail. Even the Middle East and Africa were witnessing uprisings led by Socialist or Marxist leaders against colonial rule. In India in 1948-49 it seemed that the Telangana movement was going to be

successful. These factors guided the Leftist leaders to adopt a sectarian line in the Hemeri Conference of the PWA in 1949.

The 1953 Delhi Conference of the FWA tried to remedy ~~the~~ the mistake by framing a new declaration which stressed on the humanist and anti-imperialist elements and welcomed writers from all faiths. But by then the harm had been done. Sectarianism and revisionism have been the bane of the Indian Communist Party after independence. The tendency of the Left movement to become sects has reflected itself in the mass front organizations also. This can be seen in the split of the AIPWA into the CFI(M) led 'Janwadi Lekhak Sangh' and CPI led PWA which was renamed the 'National Federation of Progressive Writers' in 1975.

At the literary level, it goes without saying that the movement has been the most successful experiment in the evolution of a broad front in the arts against colonialism and neo-colonialism. We saw in Chapter II that individuals ranging from confirmed Marxists, Socialists, Gandhians, Feudians, Anarchists, Bohemians and Individualists came together on the values of criticality, change and creativity. On the level of literary creativity one could discern three main trends - Critical Realism,

Revolutionary Romanticism and Socialist Realism. The world views and literary expressions of the various writers were different but there was an underlying unity because of the convergence on criticality and creativity.

In Chapter III we analysed the literary categories of 'critical realism' and 'socialist realism'. We saw the differences of opinion amongst the scholars regarding the literary trend which the progressive movement represented. But we also saw their concurrence on certain facts-that social analysis was the essence of the FWA literature; that there was an effort at the critical depiction of reality; that the progressives were guided by the principle of art in the service of the people i.e. for social reform and liberation.

For our purpose of establishing the contention of criticality we have not analysed any of Premchand's works though the beginnings of the FWA and the literary United Front began in his times and his contribution to the literary movement can be regarded as pioneering. This is because most of his major works were written during the period 1920 to 1936 and this does not fall within the time period under consideration in this research. Yashpal's novel 'Geeta-Party Comrade' was selected because it reflects

the co-operative and competitive elements in the broad United Front of the Indian national movement. This is reflected in the uneasy relationship between Geeta and the Communist Party and Bhavaria.

In addition to evolving a broad front in the arts, the movement also broke the isolation and insulation of the literat<sup>u</sup>re<sup>s</sup> of South Asia and made them components of world literature. Where the intellectuals in Europe were fighting against fascism, in India the literat<sup>u</sup>re<sup>s</sup> were fighting against imperialism and for democracy. The threat of fascism was not a distant one. There was Japan knocking at the very doorsteps of India during the second world war. In addition to it there was Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union and the question of the latter's defence.

Where the progressive movement broke the isolation of the litterat<sup>u</sup>re<sup>s</sup>, it also changed the sensibility of the reader and the writer and evolved a new aesthetic. This was done by introducing the literary category of 'critical realism' in their writings. This was a departure from the Indian writers of the past who as Fremchand puts it ... "either indulged in sexual passion or lost themselves in spiritualism and renunciation." <sup>1</sup> He continues to say that, "In order

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1. Fremchand, "The Nature and Purpose of Literature" (Presidential Address to the first meeting of the AIPWA, Lucknow, April 10, 1936) in Sudhi Pradhan, Compiled and ed., Marxist Cultural Movement in India - Chronicles and Documents (1936-47), Vol. I (New Roplekha Press, Calcutta 1985) pp. 38

to make the 'Idsa ' come alive, 'Realism' must be used ... The connection between art and reality is dialectical. Art is not just a copy of reality. When art appears, there is reality." <sup>2</sup>

The literat<sup>l</sup>ur<sup>e</sup>s of the PWA put the question of the writer's commitment to social change as a determining factor in the revaluation of literature at the focus of the literary debate. The principle of 'art for art's sake' was rejected outrightly. For this stand of their's they were denounced as 'unliterary occupational propagandists' by the members of the 'Hindi Sahitya Sammelan'. The latter made their position clear by stressing that "... we will comply by only those controls which the art of literature has been accepting through the ages." <sup>3</sup>

Even if one allows credit to the view that there is autonomy of politics and literature, the history of the PWA shows that the underlying linkages cannot be ignored even by those who believe that art is for art's sake.

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2. Premchand. As quoted in Elizabeth Röttger-Hogan. "Rasa, Idealism, and Realism: Premchand's Literary Essays", Journal of South Asian Literature (Michigan), vol. 21, Summer, fall 1986, number 2 'Essays on Premchand', p.80
  3. Dinkar. As quoted in Rekha Awasthi, Fragativad aur Samantar Sahitya (Macmilan Co. of India, New Delhi, 1978), p. 49. Free translation.



A classic work of poetry may as well convey a political message. For example, Pablo Neruda in his poem "I'm Explaining a Few Things" very aesthetically portrays the tragedy of Fascist Spain in 1936 thus -

"You are going to ask: and where are the lilacs?  
and the poppy-petalled metaphysics?  
and the rain repeatedly spattering  
its words and drilling them full  
of apertures and birds?" <sup>4</sup>

And he himself answers -

" Treacherous  
generals:  
see my dead house,  
look at broken Spain:  
from every house burning metal flows  
instead of flowers,  
from every socket of Spain  
Spain emerges  
and from every dead child a rifle with eyes  
and from every crime bullets are born  
which will one day find  
the bull's eye of your hearts." <sup>5</sup>

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4. Pablo Neruda, "I'm Explaining a Few Things" in Selected Poems - Ed. by Nathaniel Tarn. (Penguin Books Ltd, Harmondsworth, 1985), p. 103.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 103

These two stanzas combine a poet's urge for naturalism and pathos and the anger of the poet towards fascism.

The PWA's contribution was more marked as it functioned in the double context of politics and literature. Through the instrumentality of literature it tried to create a literary and political consciousness among the people on political issues. As this was an ends and means relationship its literature was infused with a political purpose and aesthetic pleasure. The need of political movement and its aesthetic awareness is reflected by Faiz Ahmed 'Faiz' through these lines of his oft - quoted poem -

"... Laut jati hai idhar ko bhi nazar kya kije  
Ab bhi dilkash hai tera husn magar kya kije?  
Aur bhi dukh hain jamane mein muhabbat ke siva  
Rahaten aur bhi hain vasl ki rahat ke siva  
Mujhse pehli si muhabbat mere mehboob na maang!"<sup>6</sup>

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6. Faiz Ahmed 'Faiz', "Mujh se pehli si muhabbat mere mehboob na maang", Irtinidhi Kavitayen. (Rajkamal Paperbacks, New Delhi, 1984) p. 17.

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