

Fourth
All India Progressive
Writers' Conference

RESOLUTIONS

BOMBAY

22ND TO 24TH MAY 1943.

MEMBERS OF THE PRESIDEUM

Josh Malihabadi (*Urdu*)

Satyen Majumdar (*Bengali*)

Tapi Dharma Rao (*Telegu*)

Prof. Jahagirdar (*Kanarese*)

S. A. Dange (*Marathi*)

Jitubhai Mehta (*Gujarati*)

Fourth All-India Progressive Writers' Conference

MANIFESTO

In this period of grave peril, it is the supreme task of Indian progressive writers, to spiritually sustain the nation; it is their duty to fortify the will and the morale of our people so that the day of our freedom shall be hastened, so that our culture and civilization may be preserved and developed and so that we may emerge out of this epoch of storm and stress, united, strong and free.

The progressive writers have always stood for the freedom of India, an equitable and just social and economic order, they have also fought all forms of social reaction and obscurantist tendencies in thought. They have conceived of Indian freedom as an integral part of world freedom, and while proclaiming the inalienable right of our people to be free from all forms of imperialist domination, have taken their stand against Fascism—which is nothing but the most violent phase of the imperialist system.

When the old familiar world is crashing down around us and values so long cherished need to be reorientated, the writer, if he is to be true to his vocation, must align himself with the people. This is not to deny that writing is a craft with a long and unique tradition, this is not to harbour the illusion that new cultures spring full-bodied into existence at the word of command. But when society is in travail, the writer in his own interest must come out of his ivory tower. If we think of the few elect as the guardians of our cultural heritage, they will be surely bludgeoned into uneasy submission to the powers of evil, as has happened under fascism to countries that have got its cruel taint. Soviet example tells us how revolution gives men the chance of bringing dignity and civilization into the common possession.

Our country is in the grip of one of the greatest crisis of its history. On the one hand an alien imperialist bureaucracy, brutal and inefficient, refuses to part with power, on the other hand, rapacious and blood-thirsty Japanese Fascism knocks at our eastern frontiers. Thousands of Indian patriots languish in imperialist prisons, while fascist bombs rain on Assam and Bengal. Food and cloth becomes more and more scarce. Acute shortage of paper and other requisites needed for printing books and periodicals has created a situation very alarming to the normal development of our cultural activities. Production is getting disorganised. The entire economic structure of our society is threatened with disintegration.

Inheritors of the great humanist and liberty-loving traditions of Rabindranath Tagore and Iqbal, the Indian progressive writers take their stand today for freedom of their own people, for the freedom of all the peoples of the world from the menace of imperialism and fascism. We admire the Soviet and the Chinese writers who are today suffering with their valient people the misery and the tribulations ad also the exultation of a bitter war against the hordes of fascism, and who continue to keep the torch of art and literature burning bright even in this hour of darkness. We too shall not lag behind. We shall try incessantly to carry the message of freedom and unity to our people, to inspire them with faith in their inherent strength. Progressivism has no other meaning today. When the very foundations of human society, when its whole future is threatened with destruction, when fascist reaction is making its last desperate attack on all that is good, decent and beautiful in life, and when the reactionary imperialist group stands in the way of our freedom and the unity of our people, progressivism must carry the message of hope and freedom to all and declare that a people, united in its pursuit of freedom is invincible.

With these general objects in view, the Progressive Writers' Association must achieve the following specific tasks:—

1. Producing short plays, stories, poems, songs, ballads emphasising the need of National Unity for the achievement of freedom from Imperialist yoke and the defence of our country against Japanese aggression.

2. Translation and propagation of progressive foreign writings and specially of recent Soviet and Chinese literature.
3. Publication at regular intervals of a symposium, in English, of outstanding works from different Indian languages.
4. Publication of journals and collections of progressive literature in the different languages of India..
5. Organisation of literary and cultural circles among workers and peasants (e. g. Mushaira, Ballad-singing) and link up the P. W. A. with the folk literature and arts.
6. To co-operate with the Indian People's Theatre Association and to assist it by writing plays which might be staged by the said Association.

RESOLUTIONS

RELEASE OF LEADERS

This Conference of the All India Progressive Writers condemns the arrest and continued detention of the leaders of the Indian National Congress and demands their immediate and unconditional release.

It is emphatically of the opinion that it is this reactionary policy of the Imperialist Bureaucracy, that has thrown our country into an ever deepening crisis and thus weakened the world front of the Progressive forces ranged against Fascism, the arch-enemy of all culture and civilisation.

Under these conditions, one of the main tasks of all Progressive forces is to secure the release of the Congress leaders, for without their release, National unity and National Government cannot be achieved.

The demand for the release of the National leaders must become a mass campaign, rallying every section, every class, and every party in our country.

The Progressive writers in particular, have a very important part to play in this campaign. They must wield their pen to awaken every section to the urgency and the full significance of this demand.

This Conference calls upon all Progressive writers to look upon this campaign as their immediate contribution to the forces of Progress and Freedom.

GREETINGS TO PROGRESSIVE WRITERS IN JAIL.

This Conference of All India Progressive Writers sends its heartfelt greetings to many progressive writers who have been imprisoned or detained by the imperialist Government under the Defence of India Act, under all kinds of flimsy pretexts even though they are staunch anti-fascists. This Conference condemns this arbitrary action of the authorities and demands immediate release of all progressive writers.

GREETINGS TO SOVIET WRITERS

The Fourth Conference of the All India Progressive Writers sends the warmest greetings to the writers of the Soviet Union.

The great creative effort of your people in the last 25 years has filled us with hope for the future of humanity. In the field of culture, our intellectuals have been fascinated by the wonderful advance registered by you in Literature, Science and the arts, when culture in the capitalist world has been confronting a continuous and unprecedented crisis.

When the Nazis villainously attacked your country, our people with one voice expressed their unqualified sympathy and support for the Soviets. The glorious resistance of your heroic people, portrayed and inspired by you in the magnificent short stories which have lately reached us, has been to us also a great inspiration.

In our last Conference held in Delhi, we expressed our determination to rally our people against fascism. We in India are faced directly with the threat of fascist enslavement. The foul desecration of places of cultural pilgrimages, Tolstoy's home at Yasnaya Polyana, the Pushkin and the Tchaikovsky museums, have burnt into our consciousness that fascists are enemies of culture and that their victory would mean the death of civilisation.

We desire to take our place in the front ranks of the fight against fascism. But our alien Imperialist bureaucracy thwarts our endeavours, locks up our leaders and bends down our people.

The tasks are stupendous. But we pledge our word to you that we shall expend every ounce of our energy to keep the torch of freedom burning in our country, to rouse our people to unite, and win for India an honoured place in the family of Free Nations.

GREETINGS TO CHINESE WRITERS

The Fourth Conference of the All-India Progressive Writers sends fraternal greetings to its brother writers of China.

Our two peoples have been linked together through centuries of friendship. We admired the deathless determination of your people to carry forward the torch of freedom lit by San Yat Sen. We recognize that your nation was the first to stand up against the forces of world enslavement.

To you, the writers of China, the peoples of Asia are doubly indebted. You awoke in your people the burning passion for Freedom, and that clarity of outlook which roused them to stand up and fight almost with bare hands against incomparably superior forces.

The determination that your nation forged on the basis of its unity has helped you to keep the fascists at bay.

We are anxious that our people should join you and all the other forces of freedom in the fight against the fascist enslavers. But an alien Imperialist bureaucracy refuses to release our hands to do the fighting. Our leaders have been jailed, our people have been beaten, our patriotic spirit has been attacked brutally.

The task is hurculean. But we pledge our word that we shall use all our powers to rouse our people to unite and fight side by side with the Progressive forces for a world of Freedom in which our country shall take her rightful place.

CIVIL LIBERTIES

This Conference of Progressive writers emphatically protests against all the many laws, ordinances and rules under the Defence of

India Act which limit and hamper the liberties of the press and the free expression of views by writers, thus penalising legitimate criticism of the Government.

This Conference further notes with disquiet the several recent cases in which legal action has been taken against authors, editors and publishers who are among the few who publish the works of Progressive writers, on the pretext that such of these realistic writings were indecent or vulgar. Such harassment of progressive writers, whether provoked by the reactionary vested interests and obscurantists or initiated by the bureaucracy is to be severely condemned.

PAPER SHORTAGE

The country is in the grip of a paper famine which adversely affects our educational institutions, and all the other aspects of our cultural activities.

The policy of the Government is mainly responsible for this crisis. Import of paper has been stopped; facilities to the Indian paper industry to import machinery and increase the output have been denied. The major part of the output of Indian industry has been commandeered for the use of the Government.

This Conference therefore calls upon the people in general and all Progressive writers in particular to bring united pressure on the authorities immediately to import paper into India treating it as a vital commodity and to help the indigenous paper industry to develop its capacities fully so that it may cope with the demand.

PROGRESSIVE WRITERS & PUBLISHERS

This Conference takes note of and deplores the precarious economic condition of writers as a class in India and progressive writers in particular. Apart from other causes which are rooted in the capitalistic system and must await the establishment of a better and more just economic order for their disappearance, the financial insecurity of the Indian writer can be ascribed to certain undesirable practices of the publishers and owners of newspapers.

For example articles, stories and pictures appearing in foreign journals are reproduced in the Indian Press on an extensive scale in

complete moral and legal disregard of copyright, thus taking away the space that should be rightly given to Indian subjects and Indian writers.

Amateurs and leisured persons to whom writing is a hobby or a craze are encouraged to write in the press for no reason except that they do so free. Even Magazines and newspapers that make enormous profits out of their circulation and advertisement do not pay their contributors and when they do, it is less than a pittance.

Publishers generally content themselves with publishing school text books or compilations and extracts palagiarised from foreign authors instead of encouraging original writing.

Publishers and booksellers organise themselves in such a manner as to create a bottle-neck through which it is impossible for an author to pass, without paying the lion's share of profits to publishers and booksellers. A progressive writer indeed, can hardly find a publisher for the capitalistic publishers prefer to publish the works of old romanticist and reactionary writers.

This Conference is of opinion that so long as the profit motive is the guiding principle of society, the quality of published writing, whether in journals or in books, will not improve unless every printed word is paid for.

This Conference is of opinion that progressive writers should not allow newspaper proprietors and book publishers to exploit their names and opinions. They should refuse to write (except when there is urgent need to do propoganda for any good cause) for any journal run on a profit-motive basis unless they are paid for what they write.

In order to safeguard the interests of progressive writers who live by their pen this Conference charges its Executive Committee to undertake the following tasks :—

To examine the copyright laws of this country; take such steps as are open to it to discourage and prevent the breach of copyright; to agitate, if necessary, for the amendment of the copyright laws in favour of writers.

To try and create and increase a demand for publication of progressive writing, canalise the existing demand and educate the public to patronise only such journals and publishers as will give a square deal to and encourage progressive writers.

To consider all such means that can be employed to safeguard the economic interests of the progressive writers, invoking (if necessary) the sanctions of collective bargaining or a 'pensdown' strike to ensure a fair deal.

PROGRESSIVE WRITERS AND FILMS

This Conference of Indian Progressive Writers recognises that motion pictures are the most effective and popular form of visualized literature and as such possesses better potentialities than any other literary form for enriching the aesthetic life of the people, propagating decent and progressive human ideals and enlightening the public mind.

But in the opinion of this Conference those who wield this potent weapon of art and propaganda have not only failed to realise its real worth but have consistently exploited it merely as a commodity to be sold on a profit-motive basis. At the same time they have tabooed anything that is really progressive and rational and instead, they have continued to opiate the popular imagination with the glorification of all that is decadent and reactionary, thus perpetuating superstitions, age-old irrational traditions and romantic illusions.

And yet the dynamic forces that have been convulsing our social, political and economic life have inevitably made their influence felt on themes and content of Indian motion pictures. The conscious, intelligent effort to synthesise this great art medium with the imperative needs of life is still lacking but sporadic gropings towards reality are beginning to be discernible. By its own paradoxical laws, the profit-motive is exploiting the very progressive trends that it seeks to destroy.

To the popularity of great writers like Tagore, Sarat Chatterjee and Munshi Premchand the Indian motion picture owes its first contact with literature. Even where the literary masterpieces suffered

disastrously in the process of translation to the screen, their refining influence was not negligible and their ideological content was not entirely lost. Today a small but growing band of progressive artists is striving to carry forward that trend towards more aesthetic and progressive films. These pioneering efforts need to be reinforced. The film of course can fulfil its own destiny and its inherent forces can be brought into play fully only when the profit-motive is finally eliminated. But, for the realization of this very ideal condition, it is necessary for the progressive writers to wrest every possible opportunity to use this powerful weapon as vehemently as they are using other forms of literature in their unflinching war against reaction.

PROGRESSIVE WRITERS and PEOPLE'S THEATRE

This Conference of the Progressive writers welcomes the recent development of the People's Theatre movement which seeks to revitalise the Indian stage, and make it a means of enlightening the masses about the causes and solution of the problem confronting them in their struggle for freedom and social justice. As Progressive writers who are endeavouring to achieve the same objects through the medium of literature, we recognise that in a country like India, where illiteracy is great, the stage is a powerful assistant in the achievement of our objects. We therefore call upon the writers to cooperate fully with I. P. T. A. for the development of People's Theatre movement, particularly by writing plays etc. which are simple and direct and can easily be appreciated and understood by the masses. We should specially produce short one act plays, plays suitable for open air shows or village stage, songs and ballads based on folk-tunes.

OFFICE-BEARERS

Gen. Secretary: Sajjad Zaheer (Bombay)

Joint Secretaries: { Bishnu Dey (Bengal)
K. A. Abbas (Bombay)

Treasurer: Mama Warerkar (Bombay)

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Bengal: { Hiren Mukerjee
S. K. Acharya

Bombay: { R. A. Bakoolesh
S. A. Dange

Hindi: { Rambilas Sharma
Narendra Sharma

Urdu: { Makhdoom Mohiyuddin
Dr. Abdul Aleem

Marathi: Anant Kanekar

Gujarati: Bhogilal Gandhi

Telegu: C. Pichia

Kanarese: Prof. Jahagirdar

Tamil: Shaktidasam Subramaniam

Malyalam:

Punjabi: Dr. Bhag Singh.