

regiment the writers; you will work out your own discipline from the common experience of your common work.

We must always remember, however, that the struggle in which we are enlisted is a war—a war which the fascist powers are rapidly translating into air-bombings and hails of machine-gun bullets over ever wider areas of the world.

Writers must work out their own discipline for the problems of their own work. But in relation to the two great warring camps, democracy against fascism, they will find it necessary to adjust their own work to the higher discipline of the whole struggle for democracy. They are to make their own decisions on the content and method of their work; but they are responsible to their fellow-men that their work does in truth serve the common cause. The freedom which every writer demands cannot become irresponsibility. Every writer is responsible to his associates and to the people for the results of his work.

We Communists ask for no privileged position among your ranks. We welcome the free co-operation of writers of all parties. We are especially glad to see this Congress, in contrast to that of last year, addressed by representatives of all political groups which place the preservation of democracy as the main order of the day. We hope you will listen with equal attention to all of them, and judge each issue and each point of view on its merits as it relates to your problems as writers. We want nothing more than the right to exercise the same freedom of expression that we gladly join in guaranteeing to all others. That is the foundation for a broad unity of all democratic and progressive forces, including those of us whose aims reach into the future to the socialist revolution, against the rising menace of fascist barbarism.

Allow me to make the Communist attitude very clear by concretely dealing with a public accusation made against the Communists, and specifically myself, in the current issue of the *New Republic*. I choose this example, rather than the hysterical cries of the Trotskyites, who can be answered only in the same way as the similar outbursts of Senator Royal Cope-

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Writers and the Communist Party

THIS Second Congress of American Writers, gathering at a moment when world peace is immediately threatened by the fascist destroyers of civilization and culture, faces most serious tasks. Writers can stand aside from the struggles that are rending the world only at the price of removing themselves from the life of the people, the source of all strength in their art, and of becoming, even if unwittingly, apologists for reaction. They can join the camp of reaction only by completely abandoning all honesty and decency, not to speak of the professional stultification of all writers who join the goose-step parade of fascism which celebrates its victory by burning books. Writers cannot contribute anything to literature today, except in the service of the people against reaction, fascism and war. The ivory tower has been irretrievably shattered by the bombs of Hitler and Mussolini.

We of the Communist Party heartily welcome this great movement of the writers to enter the service of the masses of the people. At your First Congress we made clear that we do not approach the writers with any ambition to transform them into union organizers, or leaflet distributors. We join wholeheartedly with those who say the task of the writer is to write—and to write more and better. There will surely be some writers who will find the road to their best material through direct participation in the struggles of labor and of the people; all will find in these struggles, directly or indirectly, the source of their strongest work. But each must find his own way, in free consultation with his fellows; and schemes, blue-prints and formal discipline are of less worth in your field than in almost any other. We Communists are the last to want to

land and Al Smith. In the *New Republic* we have accusations against the Communists, written by Reinhold Niebuhr, which are not splattered simultaneously over the whole Writers' Congress, the progressive movement, and even the Roosevelt Administration, as has become the fashion. Mr. Niebuhr is more sober, and his apparent honesty merits a frank and clear answer.

Reinhold Niebuhr charges that "the similarities between Communist and Catholic orthodoxy are becoming daily more apparent." Because I spoke in sharp terms against a proposal from Waldo Frank that I join him in rejecting the evidence and verdict of the Supreme Court of the Soviet Union in the trial of the Trotskyite wreckers and espionage-agents of fascism, Mr. Niebuhr concludes that "Mr. Browder no doubt imagines himself delivering a mighty excommunication." He sees in this the issue of the "politician" who "dismisses the artist" with "patronizing abuse."

If we Communists had really created such an issue of "politician versus artist," we would indeed be in a bad corner in this Writers' Congress which consists, presumably, exclusively of artists of the pen. But I presume to declare that Mr. Niebuhr is mistaken, and to feel confident that my fellow-artists gathered here will acquit me and my Party of the charge.

The issue presented by Waldo Frank's letter and my answer is purely political. The letters are published for all to read and judge. Those who agree with Mr. Frank will doubtless "excommunicate" me, as Mr. Niebuhr has done, if we are to adopt his theological terminology; those who agree with me may similarly "excommunicate" Mr. Frank in the same sense. But why Mr. Niebuhr finds in this the issue of "politician versus artist" can be explained only by assuming that he claims special privileges for the artist to go free-lancing in the field of sharpest political struggles without accountability to anyone. According to this theory, the artist may decide to try to put a whole government on trial, a socialist government at that, and propose as judges the highest legal talent in the bourgeois world, unconnected with revolutionary politics in

any way—and because he is an artist—even a "great artist"—we are to treat such nonsense with respectful consideration.

No, my dear friends, the small minority of Communists who work among you know quite well that you already have left far behind such childish views; you know that just as politicians can operate in the artistic world only on the basis of the intrinsic merits of their art, so also the artist can operate in politics only on the merit of his political argument, that he has no special privileges in this respect. If I should perchance write a very bad novel, I hope Mr. Frank the artist will criticize it with a sharpness equal to that which I directed against his very bad politics.

No, the issue is not the politician versus the artist, and neither is it the Communist Party versus the artist. The problems which disturb us are part of the issue of the people against reaction and fascism. The questions of discipline which disturb some people are not created by the Communists, they arise out of the necessities of battle. In its simplest form, it is the requirement that when the democratic front is fighting the open enemy before us, it shall not be attacked from the rear by those who pretend to be part of it.

A typical example is given by the recent uprising against the Spanish people's government by the Trotskyites and their anarchist allies. Is it possible for us to adopt an attitude of broad toleration of those who preach and practice such treason, who in actuality become the agents of the fascists? It is clear to most of us, I think, that no argument and no consideration of any kind can justify the treason of this open sort. Anyone who defends it, has no place in the anti-fascist, pro-democratic front. To the hundreds of thousand of victims of Franco there was added at one blow 900 dead behind the front by the Trotskyites. Of what use that Ben Leider, the Lincoln Battalion, the International Column, go to Spain to uphold the Spanish Republic, if we fraternize at home with those who help organize insurrection against that same government? No, we Communists want no relations whatever with such traitors, and in this we are joined by all honest democrats. This is no private issue

of discipline of ours, it is the discipline that is imposed upon every enemy of fascism.

Not all who break this fundamental discipline are to be classed as Trotskyites of course. There are such innocents who stray out into no-man's land between the trenches. They get the fire from both sides. They cry out against the injustice of such a thing. They, seekers after truth, must go wherever their nose leads them, or truth is sacrificed, according to them. But such gentle souls must be warned, in tones sharp enough to command their attention, that they are performing the same role of the Nazi battleship *Deutschland*, which in the early days of the fascist invasion of Spain maneuvered in between the Loyalist ships and Franco's transports, and said, "You can't fire upon your enemy without firing on me also." They are coming to the assistance of fascism, however innocent their intentions may be in contrast to the diabolical schemes of Hitler. They call upon us to cease firing, while they investigate the soul of the enemy, in pursuit of pure truth. But fascism never ceases its fire; it is only we of the democratic camp who are still so afflicted with confusion among our weaker sisters that we sometimes allow our lines to be broken by sentimentalists and muddle-heads; the price we pay for this weakness is counted in the lives and blood of thousands of our own comrades.

Without fundamental discipline in the democratic front, the front against fascism and war, the victory of fascism is inevitable. We Communists accept that discipline for ourselves; we make great sacrifices to maintain it. We subordinate our own desires and judgments to the necessities of creating and maintaining the united front of all anti-fascist forces. We are not trying to impose our own discipline upon other individuals or groups. We call for a common discipline for the whole democratic camp, which is a necessity for our common victory.

Is there anything in this which is alien to the world of letters? Is that regimentation, is that intolerance, is that crushing the free spirit of truth? No, on the contrary, it is the fundamental condition without which all culture, which

is the social organization of the search for truth, is doomed to destruction. Culture, the search for ever higher truth, is not the enemy of discipline and order, it is not anarchistic; quite the opposite, it is the creator of organization and discipline, it is the instrument whereby the progressive and democratic forces consolidate themselves, it is the hallmark of our camp as opposed to that of the fascists. Those who in the sacred name of freedom would break our unity in the face of the menace of fascism and war are contributing to the destruction of all freedom.

The greatest literature of our day will surely have at its heart precisely this, the artistic re-creation of the great process going on among the people of the creation of the broad democratic front and the defeat of fascism. It will be fused with the spirit which is already creating great literature in those marvelous letters which are coming to us from the boys of the Lincoln Battalion. It will be filled with a great faith in the creative powers of the masses. It will reflect the growing power of the people that arises from that faith and its embodiment in a mass discipline and organization. It will reveal the flowering of great individuals, not through opposition to the common cause, but through identification and fusion with that cause.

It is in this spirit that we Communists welcome the Writers' Congress, and extend the hand of fellowship and co-operation to Republicans, Democrats and Socialists, as well as to those of no party at all. We are united in our determination to defend culture, to unite culture with the strivings of the people, to preserve and extend our democratic heritage, to assist our brothers in other lands who are suffering the bestial assaults of fascism. Above all, we are united in the firm determination that world fascism, and its expression within our own land, shall never come to power in the United States.

Address delivered at the opening of the Second National American Writers Congress, Carnegie Hall, New York, June 4, 1937.