

more clearly from their upper layers: their oppressors and exploiters have stepped out and joined a bloody battle with them of vast dimensions. It has become easier to take sides. An open battle has so to speak broken out among the 'public'.

The demand for a realistic style of writing can also no longer be so easily dismissed today. It has acquired a certain inevitability. The ruling classes use lies oftener than before - and bigger ones. To tell the truth is clearly an ever more urgent task. Suffering has increased and with it the number of sufferers. In view of the immense suffering of the masses, concern with little difficulties or with difficulties of little groups has come to be felt as ridiculous, contemptible.

There is only one ally against growing barbarism - the people, who suffer so greatly from it. It is only from them that one can expect anything. Therefore it is obvious that one must turn to the people, and now more necessary than ever to speak their language. Thus the terms *popular art* and *realism* become natural allies. It is in the interest of the people, of the broad working masses, to receive a faithful image of life from literature, and faithful images of life are actually of service only to the people, the broad working masses, and must therefore be absolutely comprehensible and profitable to them - in other words, popular. Nevertheless these concepts must first be thoroughly cleansed before propositions are constructed in which they are employed and merged. It would be a mistake to think that these concepts are completely transparent, without history, uncompromised or unequivocal. ('We all know what they mean - don't let's split hairs!') The concept of *popularity* itself is not particularly popular. It is not realistic to believe that it is. There is a whole series of abstract nouns in 'it' which must be viewed with caution. Think of *artistry*, *severity*, *serenity*; and we know that the concept of *nationality* has a quite particular, sacramental, pompous and suspicious connotation, which we dare not overlook. We must not ignore this connotation, just because we so urgently need the concept *popular*.

It is precisely in the so-called poetical forms that 'the people' are represented in a superstitious fashion or, better, in a fashion that encourages superstition. They endow the people with unchanging characteristics, hallowed traditions, art forms, habits and customs, religiosity, hereditary enemies, invincible power and so on. A remarkable unity appears between tormenters and tormented, exploiters and exploited, deceivers and deceived; it is by no means a question of the masses of 'little' working people in opposition to those above them.

The history of the many deceptions which have been practised with this concept of the people is a long and complicated one - a history of class struggles. We do not intend to go into it here - we only wish to keep the fact of the deception in sight, when we say that we need popular art and mean thereby art for the broad masses, for the many who are expressed by the few, 'the people themselves', the mass of producers who was for so long the object of politics and must now become the subject of politics. Let us recall that the people were for long held back from any full development by powerful institutions, artificially and forcefully gagged by conventions, and that the concept *popular* was given an ahistorical, static, undevelopmental stamp. We are not concerned with the concept in this form - or rather, we have to combat it.

Our concept of what is popular refers to a people who not only play a full part in historical development but actively usurp it, force its pace, determine its direction. We have a people in mind who make history, change the world and themselves. We have in mind a fighting people and therefore an aggressive concept of what is *popular*.

Popular means: intelligible to the broad masses, adopting and enriching their forms of expression / assuming their standpoint, confirming and correcting it / representing the most progressive section of the people so that it can assume leadership, and therefore intelligible to other sections of the people as well / relating to traditions and developing them / communicating to that portion of the people which strives for leadership the achievements of the section that at present rules the nation.

Now we come to the concept of *realism*. This concept, too, must first be cleansed before use, for it is an old concept, much used by many people and for many ends. This is necessary because the people can only take over their cultural heritage by an act of expropriation. Literary works cannot be taken over like factories; literary forms of expression cannot be taken over like patents. Even the realistic mode of writing, of which literature provides many very different examples, bears the stamp of the way it was employed, when and by which class, down to its smallest details. With the people struggling and changing reality before our eyes, we must not cling to 'tried' rules of narrative, venerable literary models, eternal aesthetic laws. We must not derive realism as such from particular existing works, but we shall use every means, old and new, tried and untried, derived from art and derived from other sources, to render reality to men in a form they can master. We shall take care not to describe one particular, historical form of novel of a particular epoch as realistic - say that of Balzac or Tolstoy - and thereby erect

merely formal, literary criteria for realism. We shall not speak of a realistic manner of writing only when, for example, we can smell, taste and feel everything, when there is 'atmosphere' and when plots are so contrived that they lead to psychological analysis of character. Our concept of realism must be wide and political, sovereign over all conventions.

Realistic means: discovering the causal complexes of society / unmasking the prevailing view of things as the view of those who are in power / writing from the standpoint of the class which offers the broadest solutions for the pressing difficulties in which human society is caught up / emphasizing the element of development / making possible the concrete, and making possible abstraction from it.

These are vast precepts and they can be extended. Moreover we shall allow the artist to employ his fantasy, his originality, his humour, his invention, in following them. We shall not stick to too detailed literary models; we shall not bind the artist to too rigidly defined modes of narrative.

We shall establish that the so-called sensuous mode of writing — where one can smell, taste and feel everything — is not automatically to be identified with a realistic mode of writing; we shall acknowledge that there are works which are sensuously written and which are not realistic, and realistic works which are not written in a sensuous style. We shall have to examine carefully the question whether we really develop a plot best when our ultimate objective is to reveal the spiritual life of the characters. Our readers will perhaps find that they have not been given the key to the meaning of the events if, led astray by various artistic devices, they experience only the spiritual agitation of the heroes. By adopting the forms of Balzac and Tolstoy without testing them thoroughly, we might weary our readers — the people — as much as these writers often do themselves. Realism is not a mere question of form. Were we to copy the style of these realists, we would no longer be realists.

For time flows on, and if it did not, it would be a bad prospect for those who do not sit at golden tables. Methods become exhausted; stimuli no longer work. New problems appear and demand new methods. Reality changes; in order to represent it, modes of representation must also change. Nothing comes from nothing; the new comes from the old, but that is why it is new.

The oppressors do not work in the same way in every epoch. They cannot be defined in the same fashion at all times. There are so many means for them to avoid being spotted. They call their military roads

motor-ways; their tanks are painted so that they look like MacDuff's woods. Their agents show blisters on their hands, as if they were workers. No: to turn the hunter into the quarry is something that demands invention. What was popular yesterday is not today, for the people today are not what they were yesterday.

Anyone who is not a victim of formalist prejudices knows that the truth can be suppressed in many ways and must be expressed in many ways. One can arouse a sense of outrage at inhuman conditions by many methods — by direct description (emotional or objective), by narrative and parable, by jokes, by over- and under-emphasis. In the theatre, reality can be represented both in objective and in imaginative forms. The actors may not use make-up — or hardly any — and claim to be 'absolutely natural' and yet the whole thing can be a stinkie; and they can wear masks of a grotesque kind and present the truth. It is hardly open to debate that the means must be questioned about the ends they serve. The people understand this. Piscator's great theatrical experiments in which conventional forms were constantly destroyed, found their greatest support in the most advanced cadres of the working class; so have my own. The workers judged everything according to the truth of its content; they welcomed every innovation which helped the representation of truth, of the real mechanism of society; they rejected everything that seemed theatrical, technical equipment that merely worked for its own sake — that is to say, that did not yet fulfil, or no longer fulfilled, its purpose. The workers' arguments were never literary or stated in terms of theatrical aesthetics. One never heard it said that one can't mix theatre and film. If the film was not inserted properly in the play, then the most that was said was: 'We don't need that film. It's distracting.' Workers' choirs spoke verse-parts with complicated rhythms ('If it was in rhyme it would go down like water and nothing would be left'), and sang difficult (unfamiliar) compositions by Eisler ('That's strong stuff').⁶ But we had to change certain lines whose sense was not clear or which were wrong. In the case of marching-songs, which were rhymed so that they could be learnt more quickly, and had a simpler rhythm so that they sank in better, certain refinements were introduced (irregularities, complications). Then they said: 'There's a little twist there — that's fun.' Anything that was worn out, trivial, or so commonplace that it no longer

⁶ Reference to Brecht's work *Die Alexander* (1930), intended as a vindication of party discipline and Comintern policy in China. The play was sharply criticized by the KPD itself, for its exaltation of expedition sacrifice. Lukács dismissed it in 1932 for reducing strategic and tactical problems of class struggle to ethical issues.