

cies and misstatements in Hirsch's review. For, unlike Hirsch, I believe NEW MASSES readers should be encouraged to read the novel.

Hirsch agrees with "1933," the French Fascist weekly, that the novel has no political or social conclusions. Well, any reader who is not blind can find them throughout the novel—and towards the end they pile up as a superb challenge:

The Revolution had just passed through a terrible malady, but it was not dead. And it was Kyo and his men, living or not, vanquished or not, who had brought it into the world. . . . "A civilization becomes transformed, you see, when its most oppressed element . . . suddenly becomes a *value*, when the oppressed ceases to attempt to escape this humiliation, and seeks his salvation in it, when the worker ceases to attempt to escape this work, and seeks in it his reason for being. . . ." "Our people will never forget that they suffer because of other men, and not because of their previous lives. . . ." In the repression that had beaten down upon exhausted China, in the anguish or hope of the masses, Kyo's activity remained incrustated like the inscriptions of the early empires in the river gorges. . . .

And as the book ends the horizon opens wide upon the dawn of the Five-Year Plan, and Kyo's wife leaves for Russia to carry on the work in which he had participated. Throughout the novel the political and social conclusions are unmistakably pointed.

Hirsch says that "all Malraux's characters are intellectuals." Of seventeen principal characters in this particular novel, only two—Kyo and his father Gisors—are intellectuals. Kyo, the central character, is an intellectual of a special and, I may add, precious type: he has "the conviction that ideas are not to be thought, but lived." And he is in the highest sense a man of action. Hirsch's single long quotation from the novel is part of a speech of Gisors, who becomes a hop-head and whose character, after Kyo's death, completely disintegrates. Hirsch deliberately gives the impression that this speech sounds the keynote of the novel.

Hirsch asks a number of rhetorical questions after making the statement: "Much is missing in this book . . ." Every one of these questions can be answered by numerous page-references. I shall answer merely a few, as it would take too long to give all the references, and moreover, these things that he finds missing are not only present in specific passages, but an aware reader will *sense* them throughout the novel as a rich background; their presence contributes to the extraordinary intensity of the novel:

"Where are the underfed coolies . . . ?" Hirsch asks. Answer: pp. 14, 24 ("Hidden by those walls, half a million men: those of the spinning-mills, those who had worked sixteen hours a day since childhood, the people of ulcers, of scoliosis, of famine"), 25, 27, 28, 41, 70, 75, 76, 83, 87, 90, 94, etc., etc.

"Where are the peasants, taxed to the breaking-point . . . ?" Answer: pp. 146-148 specifically, and elsewhere.

"Where are the women of the poor, sold into prostitution? . . ." Answer: p. 49: "I've

just left a kid of eighteen who tried to commit suicide with a razor blade in her wedding palanquin. She was being forced to marry a respectable brute. . . ." p. 191: "There was his wife: life had given him nothing else. She had been sold for twelve dollars . . ." Also, p. 221.

"And where are the workers, whose conditions are such that the principal *revolutionary* demands . . . were confined to: a ten-hour maximum day, etc. . . . ?" Answer: p. 83: "To the right, under the vertical banners covered with characters: '*A twelve-hour working day*,' (1) '*No more employment of children under eight*,' thousands of spinning-mill workers were standing . . ." Etc.

But, says Hirsch, "there is hardly a glimpse of all this and without it the relationships between Malraux's characters are only psychological ones, arbitrarily conceived and unrelated to the real causes of the Chinese revolutionary awakening." This is his final estimate of the book.

The readers of THE NEW MASSES are entitled to know that the French Communist review *Commune* (from which much is to be learned) gave the novel a highly favorable review, and that a number of French Communists whom I spoke to, including Henri Barbusse, expressed the opinion that it is an extremely important revolutionary novel. Jean Audard, the *Commune* reviewer, says in part:

The first reason why we like Malraux's novel is the manner in which he has portrayed the Chinese revolution. Whatever reservations one may make as to the historic role which Malraux attributes here to the Third International, the Communist revolutionaries obviously have the entire sympathy of the author. They are presented under an aspect which one would commonly call heroic, but which it would no doubt be better to call, with Malraux, the simple aspect of *human dignity*. . . . The book does not only depict the Revolution in its collective aspect, but makes us penetrate into the individual drama of the characters that are involved in it. It appears even that this is its essential object. One can look upon it in two aspects: first as the picture of an event, of which Malraux *has understood the whole historic importance* [italics mine]; second, as the analysis of the effort of a certain number of individuals to struggle against the anguish of their solitude.

Such a point of view, which penetrates into the consciousness of individuals, which consists in asking oneself why the individuals are involved in the events, and even why they cause them, and especially *why they justify themselves in their own eyes for causing them*, appears to me superior to the point of view which limits itself to showing the characters of a Revolution simply reacting to external events.

The objections that I have raised suffice, I think, to make abundantly clear that, both in what it says and in what it does not say, Hirsch's review is an extraordinarily inept piece of criticism. I consider it distinctly unfortunate that THE NEW MASSES should have dismissed, in a contemptuous, sneering way, a book that is a moving tribute to all that THE NEW MASSES stands for, and to which its colleague, the Paris *Commune*, gave unqualified praise.

There will be some disagreement as to the sense in which *Man's Fate* may be considered a revolutionary novel. The novel does not aim to present a comprehensive picture of the external events of the Shanghai insurrection. Yet the author does give considerable attention to these events. It is, I think, a valid criticism to point out that these events are at times quite confused. What the author aims to do, and what he does admirably, is to show how the revolution becomes a part of the lives of diverse individuals, how it affects them and how they in turn affect its course. The manner in which the Revolution takes on a dynamic value for these characters I regard as an extremely important achievement. It is a novel of revolutionary *will*, which involves profound issues for man today. Malraux shows *why* and *how* these representative individuals become revolutionaries, and to have done that, with brilliance and penetration and an extraordinary ability to create character, to convey the strain and confusion of a vast social upheaval, and to keep before the reader's eye the complex and vivid international background, is enough for one novel. The book is essentially concerned with *values*, but those values are inseparable from the revolution which molds them. It is in this sense that I regard the novel as one of the most profound revolutionary novels we have had.

HAARON M. CHEVALIER.

### Granville Hicks Comments

TO THE NEW MASSES:

I HAVE read *Man's Fate* since the review of it appeared in THE NEW MASSES, and I find myself in the position of disagreeing almost as much with the review itself as with the translator's attack on it. To me the reading of the novel, especially after Alfred Hirsch's review, was a startling experience. Hirsch had not given me the slightest inkling of the book's extraordinary intensity. From the description of Ch'en's emotions in the act of assassination to the battle in the police station, I felt a steadily mounting excitement, not unmixed with dread. And then came that extraordinary scene in the prison yard, with Kyo's suicide and Katov's gift to the two prisoners of the cyanide that alone could save him from death in the firebox of a locomotive. Of the quality of the effect that *Man's Fate* had upon me I shall have something to say later, but the intensity of that effect cannot be denied.

If Chevalier quarreled with Hirsch on the ground that he failed to suggest Malraux's sustained power, I could not but agree with him. I feel that Hirsch was at fault, whether he simply did not respond to the book or neglected to record his response. But it is not, by and large, on that ground that Chevalier's objections rest. With his detailed criticism I do not agree, and I cannot accept his final estimate of the book.

In the first place, Chevalier objects to Hirsch's summary of Malraux's life. The tone of that summary may, as Chevalier says,

prejudice the reader against Malraux, but the facts are unassailable, and it is the facts that count. Malcolm Cowley, in his review of *Man's Fate* in *The New Republic* for July 4, described Malraux as "a man whose own mentality has strong traces of Fascism" (a statement to which, as far as I know, Chevalier has taken no exception). Hirsch did not make so flat an assertion; in fact, he carefully avoided all epithets; but he did give the facts and let the reader form his own estimate.

In the second place, Chevalier, with a venom that is more understandable than admirable, objects to Hirsch's comment on the translation. I can scarcely expect him to like that comment, but I am surprised at the form his objection takes. He gratuitously assumes that Hirsch had not read *Man's Fate* in French. "One knows," he says, "that Hirsch has not read the original." I don't know how "one" knows that, for I know that Hirsch had read the original. Chevalier also says that Hirsch attacked the translation because the "bourgeois" reviewers praised it. I know—and Chevalier might have realized it if he had thought about dates—that the review was written and in my hands before any reviews had appeared.

In the third place, Chevalier states that Hirsch agrees with "1933," the French fascist weekly. Hirsch, on the contrary, merely quotes the statement of "1933" as symptomatic and as a partial explanation of the success of the book in bourgeois circles. He specifically says that the fascist comment is "not entirely fair," though he thinks it "gives a hint of why this book was awarded the coveted Goncourt prize."

In the fourth place, Chevalier objects to Hirsch's statement that all the characters are intellectuals, and says that only two of the seventeen principal characters deserve to be so described. This seems to me mere quibbling. The important thing is that none of the seventeen principal characters is a factory worker or a peasant.

But these are comparatively minor points. The central issue is whether we are to regard *Man's Fate* as "one of the finest revolutionary novels that has been written to date," "one of the most profound revolutionary novels we have had," and, to quote Chevalier's introduction to the book, "the revolutionary novel that has been so long anticipated and so often foreshadowed in contemporary literature." I quite agree with Hirsch that we are not.

The first point to consider is the actual handling of the revolutionary material. The coolies, peasants, prostitutes, and workers are in the book, but they are there in mere phrases, as anyone who cares to look up Chevalier's references can see. They merely form the background. One does not get from the novel any impression that it is they who are creating the events that take place. Chevalier says that Malraux is trying "to show how the revolution becomes a part of the lives of diverse individuals," rather than "to present a comprehensive picture of the external events of the Shanghai insurrection." But, instead of re-

garding the two aims as incompatible, he should, I think, see that the first is dependent upon the second. Let him look, for example, at William Rollins' *The Shadow Before*, in which the individuals come to life precisely because they are so organically part of the mass movements that are the book's theme.

Hirsch, recognizing this failure of Malraux to reveal the forces that actually bind together the various characters of the book, says that "the relationships between Malraux's characters are only psychological ones." If Chevalier does not like that way of stating the issue, he can take Cowley's: "The revolution, instead of being his principal theme, is the setting and the pretext for a novel that is, in reality, a drama of individual lives." The informed reader, of course, can make the necessary interpretations for himself, can fill in the blanks, but that does not alter the fact that the blanks are there. The uninformed reader, it seems to me, would never be left by *Man's Fate* with a sense of the purpose and historic necessity of proletarian revolution. He would have a sense of personal heroism, but that is a quality that can be expended in many causes.

There is one section of the book that does deal directly with political issues, Part III, in which Kyo goes to Hankow to protest against the policy of the Communist International. It is unfortunate, in view of the political capital that Trotzky, in his fight against the Comintern, has made of the relations between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party of China, that it is precisely here that Malraux is so misleading in his analysis, as the subsequent history of Soviet China and the Chinese Communist Party (authoritatively given by General Victor A. Yakhantoff in his *The Chinese Soviets*) unequivocally establishes. I also think it unfortunate that Hirsch failed to deal with this point. I do not question Malraux's sincerity, and certainly I do not pretend to be an expert on the Chinese situation. I do know, however, that disaster came, not as Malraux and Trotsky say, because the Chinese Communist Party followed the instructions of the Comintern, but because Chen Tu Hsieu and other leaders refused to follow them. A careful comparison of the instructions issued by the Executive Committee of the Communist International and the activities of the Communist Party of China shows that it is with the latter that responsibility for failure lies.

There is another passage that raises similar doubts. Chevalier says, "And as the book ends, the horizon opens wide upon the dawn of the Five-Year Plan." But if Malraux is hailing a new day for the revolutionary movement, I wonder why he includes in the last chapter the letter from Pei, which seems to carry the absurd suggestion of the Trotskyites that world revolution is being sacrificed to the industrial progress of the U.S.S.R. It is not difficult to see why Trotzky wrote a letter endorsing *Man's Fate*, though he was shrewd enough to give literary reasons for his praise.

It is impossible to ignore such issues in dealing with the book. Though Chevalier says in his letter that the novel does not try to give "a comprehensive picture," in his introduction he spoke of it as "a remarkable feat in the novelistic treatment of historic material," commented on the "essential accuracy" with which events were recorded, and said we were made aware of the "profound issues" involved. I agree that the picture of the insurrection is not comprehensive, and I think it should be. I think, moreover, that even as far as it goes, it is not correct.

The second point to consider is the spirit of the book. Trotzky, though he sees fit to praise *Man's Fate*, finds it necessary to enter a disclaimer. "In the final analysis," he says, "Malraux is an individualist and a pessimist." Both these qualities are fully reflected in the novel. According to Chevalier's introduction, the theme is: "Change the conditions of man's life, control the blind forces that shape human destiny—*man's fate*. Above all, give his life a meaning; give it dignity." But I think Malcolm Cowley is far more accurate when he says: "Malraux's real theme is a feeling that most men nurse, secretly, their sense of absolute loneliness and uniqueness, their acknowledgment to themselves of inadequacy in the face of life and helplessness against death—that is what he means by *la condition humaine*; this is man's lot, his destiny, his servitude. And he has chosen to depict this emotion during a revolutionary period because it is then carried, like everything else that is human, to its pitch of highest intensity."

Malraux's pessimism, closely linked, as Cowley's description shows, to his individualism, permeates the novel. Different persons, he seems to say at the end, make different adjustments to the tragic burdens of fate. May, Kyo's wife, goes to Russia, but Gisors, his father, says, "I am freed both from death and from life." For myself I can only say that I was left, though briefly, with a sense of hopelessness. If it is objected that that is the fault of the material, I can point to Agnes Smedley's *Chinese Destinies*.

Extreme, even mystical individualism and pervasive pessimism are not qualities that make revolutionary fiction. I agree, in other words, with Hirsch's fundamental contention, regardless of the opinions of Haakon Chevalier and Jean Audard. When Audard says that Malraux "has understood the whole historic importance" of the events he describes, he is, I believe, wrong. When Hirsch says, "The world of this book is not above the revolution, but it is apart from it," he is, I believe, right.

Hirsch's mistakes are, as I have said before, mistakes of omission, but they are important mistakes, and they invalidate his estimate of the book. The revolutionary movement has always attracted a considerable number of bourgeois intellectuals, especially, because of the nationalistic issues involved, in China. Many of these intellectuals have been, as Chevalier says of Kyo, assets to the revolution. At the same time they have often been vac-



illating and sometimes opportunistic. Their whole approach to the movement is personal and certainly not representative of the desires and interests of the masses. It is with such elements that Malraux can most easily sympathize, and it is with characters of this kind that he is concerned. Even into such characters he has, I believe, projected his own philosophic pre-occupations, and as a result they are considerably more reflective and mystical than the average run of bourgeois intellectual revolutionaries. He does, nevertheless, have real insight into their mental processes, and, though he does not portray their role correctly, he does magnificently convey their emotions. Moreover, Kyo and his comrades are genuinely heroic and inspiring. Though a great deal of the revolution escapes Malraux, a great deal is in his book, and there are moments when he transcends his limitations and gives the reader a real sense of the power and greatness of the revolutionary movement.

That is why, though I cannot call *Man's Fate*, as Chevalier does, "the revolutionary novel that has been so long anticipated," I have no hesitation in hailing Malraux as a novelist who is capable of surpassing the limitations within which he is already powerful. The review of his book in *THE NEW MASSES* should, I believe, have dealt as generously with what he succeeded in doing as it did cogently with what he failed to do.

GRANVILLE HICKS.

### The Reviewer's Say

TO THE NEW MASSES:

**P**OSSIBLY my review of *Man's Fate* did not "deal as generously with what Malraux succeeded in doing" as it did with "what he failed to do," to quote Granville Hicks. But the book did not move me as it did Hicks. My review will not keep Communists from reading the book and I do want those who are approaching the Communists, but who do not yet work with them, to understand that this is not a revolutionary book. I still feel that it "treats of the heroics of the revolution rather than of the revolution itself" as stated in my original review, and

that it is "not above the revolution; but . . . apart from it."

Since quoting authorities seems to be on the order of the day, I will join in with two short excerpts—which I translated myself.

Ilya Ehrenbourg, a name not unfamiliar to *THE NEW MASSES* readers, wrote of this book in *Monde*, French weekly edited by Henri Barbusse:

His characters live and we suffer with them, we suffer because they suffer but nothing makes us feel the necessity of such lives and such suffering. Isolated from the world in which they live, the heroes seem to be feverish romantics. The revolution which a large country had lived through becomes the history of a group of conspirators.

Jean Fréville, in *L'Humanité*, official daily of the Communist Party of France, says:

Malraux's revolutionaries are exceptional people, abnormals in need of stimulants. There is something troubling and disturbing in the motives which precipitate these revolutionaries towards death. . . . The Marxist revolutionary is not this adventurer described by Malraux. He is a normal being, doubtless superior to other men through . . . the clarity of his vision . . . his courage, his capacity for self-sacrifice. But he does not need artificial stimulants. The revolution is not a pretext by way of which he can reach sublimity. The daily struggles . . . humble, obscure, the risks without chance of public recognition . . . these are his achievements.

ALFRED H. HIRSCH.

### Current Films

*Hide-Out* (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer): This new film directed by W. S. Van Dyke the maker of *The Thin Man* and written by the scenarists of the same film proves several things: That *The Thin Man* was a good melodrama because it had the advantage of a decent source—Dashiell Hammett; that William Powell and Myrna Loy are infinitely superior comedians to the ingratiating Robert Montgomery and the pretty but uninteresting (as an actress) Maureen O'Sullivan. *Hide-Out* concerns itself with a playboy-racketeer who escapes the police by fleeing to the Connecticut countryside. Here he meets the rural girl who makes him want to forget crime. However, the ever-alert movie police managed to get their man. But love has conquered crime and Robert Montgomery goes to Sing Sing to pay his debt to society. By this time the audience knows that our Connecticut country lass with a perfect English accent will wait for her lover. . . .

*Charlie Chan's Courage* (Fox): A dull mystery film containing that well-known Swede, Warner Oland, who always impersonates slimy Oriental villains or the philosophical Chinese detective, Charlie Chan. Decidedly not recommended.

*Cleopatra* (Paramount): It is remarkable how Cecil B. deMille can photograph so much on such a vast scale and still say nothing. *Cleopatra* is, of course, not history; it is so badly done and is so noisy that it can't be classed as "entertainment"; and it reeks with such pseudo-artistry, vulgarity, philistinism, sadism and anti-Semitism that it can only be compared with the lowest form of contemporary culture: Hitlerism. This is the type of "culture" that will be fed to the audience of Fascist America.

*Bulldog Drummond Strikes Back* (20th Century-United Artists): An example of the kind of film that Hollywood can best do. It is well-written and contains a great deal of amusing dialogue. It is generally a mild satire on mystery stories done in the

manner of *The Perils of Pauline*: the gay hero, dauntless and unafraid, the sneaking and slimy Warner Oland as the Oriental villain, the stupid police, and the *motif mysterioso* music. Ronald Coleman is such a complete personality that he remains the popular actor whether he plays Raffles, Bulldog Drummond, or Dr. Arrowsmith.

I. L.

## Between Ourselves

**T**HE John Reed Club of New York is preparing an exhibition on the theme *Revolutionary Front — 1934*, to take place from November 9 to December 7 at its quarters. All artists who feel themselves participants in the revolutionary movement are invited to exhibit.

Murals, paintings, drawing, sculpture, lithographs, woodcuts, etchings, and posters are to be included. "All work is to be not larger than 50" x 50", frame included, and must be delivered October 24, 25, and 26 at the John Reed Club, 430 Sixth Avenue, New York City. Exhibition fee is 25 cents. All shipping is at the expense of the artist. All work is to be called for on December 10, 11, and 12."

There will be a jury of artists including two non-members of the John Reed Club. For further information artists are requested to address the Secretary of the Exhibition Committee at the above address.

The National Organization Committee of the Film and Photo League of America has issued a call for a National Conference of Film and Photo organizations to be held in Chicago during the last week in September. All movie and photo clubs, societies, guilds, unions, and other amateur and professional organizations are invited.

The Conference will discuss the commercial film industry; why the commercial newsreels have become open instruments for strike-breaking, anti-labor, pro-Fascist and pro-war propaganda; continued mass misery and brutal terrorism as well as the assaults on cameramen, workers, and exhibitors and the deprivation of the right to take and show films (in Jersey City, Detroit, Tulare, San Diego); the dangers presented in the "Legion of Decency" movement; etc. The Conference will take the first steps for the formation of a solidified country-wide film and photo movement. Further details may be had by addressing the National Organization Committee at the Film and Photo League, 12 East 17 Street, New York City.

Next week *THE NEW MASSES* will feature, among other articles, *Freed Land* by Li-Yan-Chen, an excerpt from the diary of a chairman of one of the villages in Soviet China. This is the first time that any American periodical has offered an immediate picture of the life, organization, struggles and objectives of the new China—Soviet Republic No. 2.

The New York branch of the Friends of *THE NEW MASSES* will hold its first meeting Wednesday evening, September 5th, at 8.30 P. M., at Irving Plaza, 15th Street and Irving Place. All readers of *THE NEW MASSES* are invited.

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