

# READERS' FORUM

## Maryland Students Fight Back

**T**O NEW MASSES: In NEW MASSES of December 18 Virginia Gardner spoke of me as representing the various progressive leaders at the University of Maryland in their struggle against the reactionary administration at the university. Apparently, Miss Gardner used as a source of information the daily papers of this locality which cooperated almost completely with Dr. Byrd in suppressing the facts concerning the situation that existed. The university administration insinuated to the public that the situation was brought about by the Jewish fraternity students in an effort to be recognized. The papers published all the misquotations and slanders that the university officials wished to make while consistently belittling the students.

The leadership of the students consisted of a committee of twenty-six of which only one was a member of a Jewish fraternity. This committee charged:

1. Academic regulations state: "Students may be asked to withdraw even though no specific charge be made against them."
2. Censorship of the "students'" newspapers. Dean James H. Reid answered: "Not its paper, just the editorial policy."
3. Arbitrary changing of curricula without consultation of faculty or students.
4. Institution of an "Americanization" program under suspicious circumstances. (Hearst, etc.)
5. Donation of \$50,000 by Hearst for a scholarship fund to the university.
6. Arbitrary appointment of deans and departmental heads.
7. Lack of outside contacts through speakers, etc.
8. Exceptionally high turnover of the teaching staff.
9. Political domination of the university.

The 1,700-word report to the citizens of Maryland stated: "In conclusion, the University of Maryland, in its procedure of administration, has neglected the fundamental tenet of the American way of life—the democratic way of life. The question is whether or not students can be taught democracy without their being allowed to use it and see it in action."

Soon after the release of this statement by the committee of twenty-six, a petition was circulated throughout the campus supporting the report of the committee and more students signed in one evening than actively participated in student activities the entire school term. Subsequently, Dr. Byrd proceeded to slander the student leaders and the faculty

support. His attitude was summed up with: "I'll handle this in my own way in my own time." He did. Every faculty member participating, openly and otherwise, is no longer at the university, and \$10,000 of the students' money that was being saved for the building of a Students Union Building was "given away" by "Curly" Byrd. This was suppressed by the press of the Maryland "Free" State.

The situation can be shown in its full seriousness by an editorial in the "student's" newspaper at the time of the revolt.

"Some of these groups that cry out," it said, discussing anti-Semitism, "cannot even get along with themselves. . . . It appears that it is not what a race, nationality or group is in itself, but the mannerisms of the individuals of the group that have brought such criticisms upon them."

The situation at the University of Maryland has become desperate because of the political power of its president and the reaction of the public press. Let us hope the free press of America will come to the aid of those students that remain at College Park.

DANIEL NITZBERG.

Baltimore.

## An Evening in Paris

**T**O NEW MASSES: The following are excerpts from a letter I thought might interest readers of NM.

"I spent an evening with Louis Aragon, his wife, Elsa Triolet, Maurois and the two Soviet writers here for the World Women's Anti-fascist Congress, Elena Konenko and Anna Karavaeva. The Soviet writers spoke of their close relationship with the men and women at the front during the war. Konenko had a rifleman's score sent her as a symbol of appreciation—fifty-five German invaders killed in her honor. She's a grandma—proudly showed me a picture of her chubby little grandson.

"They were interested in French writers. What were they doing? What had they written about the war? The occupation? Maurois, supposedly a great French writer, columnist in *Figaro*, chairman of the France-USSR Writers' Commission, but who never misses a chance to write nasty things about the Soviet Union, answered in his hoarse voice—nothing now, maybe in ten years. And with Aragon and Triolet (she won the Paris prize for her book on the occupation), sister of Mayakovsky's great love, present. Aragon demurred, said he'd mention just one—Maurice Thorez. Flustered, poor old Maurois

came back with, 'But he's no writer, he's a political figure.' To which Aragon replied, 'But sometimes political figures write and writers become political figures—look at Malraux.' [Malraux is currently one of the leading figures in the MRP, France's reactionary party, and Minister of Information.] Good dig—but went over Maurois' head.

"The Soviet writers—I loved them—made quite a point of the lack of sufficient knowledge about each other among the world's writers. Called for more exchange, more translations, trips back and forth. (By the way, all Soviet people I've talked with made the same point about the necessity for cultural exchange and travelling.) Suggested we get things going for a World Writers' Congress. Something should be coming soon. Anyone doing anything about it at home?"

L. G.

New York.

## We Botched Lady

**T**O NEW MASSES: Next time you want to review a good mystery story please, for God's sake, have someone do it who knows how. The review of *Methinks the Lady*, by Guy Endore, is the lousiest botch job I have EVER seen.

The purpose of reviewing a good book is to make people read it. And in reviewing a mystery story one *never* NEVER gives the plot away. The inept masterminding of Charles Humboldt has effectively killed the best psychological thriller to go on the market in many years.

There is a vast reading audience for this type of book and said audience is far from moronic—in spite of opinions to the contrary. This audience will continue to read mysteries. If they can't get good ones they will read bad ones. Why not encourage the good ones and give them a fair deal and a decent break when they do appear?

MARY GARRISON.

New York.

## On Writer's Problems

**T**O NEW MASSES: Allow me to express this belated appreciation of Isidor Schneider's honest and stimulating article on writer's problems (NEW MASSES, October 23). It was for me a very gratifying affirmation of what I had long felt to be wrong with left-wing criticism but which, until the happy advent of the Arnault article, "Painting and Dialectics" [NM, Aug. 14, 1945], I did not attempt to convey to any of our publications, feeling myself to be in a hopeless minority.

I think it would be very interesting to read Schneider's comments on another "by-word" in left-wing criticism: "the form will determine the content," which, as you are possibly aware, has been perverted to the most platitudinous and, as far as creative effort is concerned, stultifying ends. I happen currently to be reading Matthew Arnold's *Essays in Criticism* which, for all its manifest short-

comings (what critical essay is, for that matter, incontrovertible?) I find to be stimulating and thought-provoking in the extreme. I can think of nothing I would like better than to read a series of articles in NM on literary criticism, using Arnold's treatise as a pivot.

I think you will agree with me that Arnault's article served as a sort of miniature Duclos letter to bring about a stock-taking on the part of left-wing critical thought, accountable for the comparative abundance of letters and articles currently appearing in NM on the subject. I think a series of articles by Schneider on a topic similar to that described above would compensate to no little degree for the many years of neglect and unwarranted contempt esthetics suffered at the hands of self-styled critics in left-wing circles.

MICHAEL CARVER.

Taos, N.M.

## Reunion in Moscow

(Continued from page 17)

Continent. No one should forget the recent protest in the National Association of Manufacturers' *News* (Oct. 20) that Washington politics was in effect interfering with trade and loans for the USSR. And it would be my guess that one of the purposes for which Byrnes went to Moscow was to pave the way for improved commercial relations.

But no one can count on the frictions within the American ruling class or its temporary needs as the keystone in American-Soviet friendship. That would be a keystone made of wet sand. It is more the pressure and vigilance of masses of people that will prevent slips between agreements and their implementation and build the kind of friendship between us and the Russians that will not be subject to every change in the weather. For the fact is that Washington is imperialist but it is only a coalition policy fulfilling the demands of the American people that will keep the worst features of that imperialism from breaking out of bounds.

## Psychiatry

(Continued from page 14)

lytic literature one gets the impression that psychoanalysis can override all social experience.

Neuroses constitute a social problem of immense magnitude. About ten percent of our men of draft age were rejected or discharged on neuropsychiatric grounds. Half to two-thirds of our educated middle class regard themselves as more or less neurotic. The incidence of nervous complaints among working peo-

ple is also high. It cannot be said that individuals who come to psychiatrists always represent the more serious neurotic problems: some of my cases seem like random samples of the population. In spite of the fact that so many neurotics believe that their problems are personal and internal, and could be psychoanalyzed away, I do not believe that psychoanalysis or even a sounder individual psychotherapy can offer a satisfactory answer to this gigantic problem. The roots of the problem are social. Psychiatrists who realize this must apply this insight to their dealings with the problems of individuals. Psychotherapy must extend into the world of social situations and social relationships to be

effective. An understanding of these basic principles allows patient and psychiatrist alike to pierce more quickly and effectively to the social core of inner conflicts.

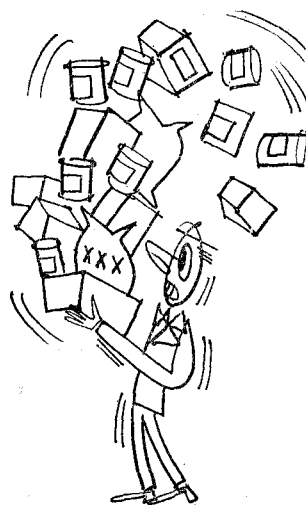
The incidence of neuroses in the Red Army has been extremely low—only 0.2 percent of the forward hospital beds were used for psychiatric cases and only 0.1 percent of the beds in the rear—the same number as for women's diseases. As the distinguished Canadian neurologist Wilder Penfield, member of a British-American-Canadian medical mission to the USSR, remarked, "The incidence of neurosis is low because they have an ample supply of its specific antidote, i.e., high morale. This antidote is not produced by psychiatrists, any more than it is by surgeons, either in the Soviet Union or elsewhere." (*Canadian Medical Journal*, Vol. 51: 379, 1944.)

A number of psychoanalysts have come to recognize the importance of experience and activity.<sup>5</sup> But this recognition often involves them in certain contradictions. Dr. Furst himself has got himself involved in a basic contradiction too. After insisting throughout his article that psychological problems must be dealt with *only* by psychological means, he finally says that psychotherapy "must gradually change both the activity and the patient's psychology together. There is such a close relationship here that *one cannot be changed without changing the other*, and a treatment that concentrates on activity alone is bound to fail." If he had only added that a treatment which concentrates on understanding alone is bound to fail, we would have some basis for agreement.

An emphasis on social factors does not involve a rejection of psychology. It is in fact only an understanding of the social basis of psychology that can maintain it as a vital and progressive science. The highest form of personality is that associated with the most complete social integration. It is represented by activity, highly conscious of its needs, and stretching forth its full powers for their attainment.

<sup>5</sup> Even Horney in her latest book has a few words on the importance of experience too, but takes the view that we cannot influence our experience. Her whole book is a reaffirmation of her basic position. Her emphasis on subjective psychological factors is so strong that she even suggests that "it might be interesting to examine whether an unconscious determination to go to pieces may not supply a powerful psychic contribution to such chronic diseases as tuberculosis and cancer." (p. 192.)

## Pile It Higher!



New Masses' collection of food for the auto strikers and others is piling up in our office corridors. But it takes lots of beans and wheaties for that picket line to stick it out. Bring in your contributions, from bacon to canned soup, to NM at Suite 388, 104 East Ninth St., N. Y., between the hours of 9:30 A.M. and 6:30 P.M.

Our readers outside New York should get in touch with their city CIO Councils, or in the case of smaller cities, they should write to their state CIO Councils where to send their contributions of food-stuffs.—The Editors.



## REVIEW and COMMENT

# THE RESISTANCE SINGS

By ISIDOR SCHNEIDER

A POETRY as remarkable as their heroism characterizes the resistance movements of Europe. Most of the poets being fighters, the deeds and poems were equal expressions of their devotion to the people. Both came out of an identification of the individual with the community that was spontaneous and complete. With it there returned to Western Europe a spirituality that, on such a scale, has been absent for generations.

Louis Aragon's poetry is infused with the elation and ardor of that identification, of which he gives a moving description in this passage from a letter to the Josephsons:

We had received orders *not* to do any local job, *not* to come in touch with local Party members, and so on. But we couldn't, after a certain moment, keep from helping the people around us: because that last year you can't imagine what France was like. My God, it was a repayment for everything in life! And people can slander and chitchat and loathe us, but we have seen that heroic moment when everybody was ready at every moment to die for anybody, people they didn't even know, provided that they were against the common enemy. You must believe me . . . that it is by no means a manner of speech if I say that in those incredibly long and bloody months life became a song for all of us: and you know, in the best of songs there are certainly tears, but how beautiful the voice and the eyes of the people appear when singing; they can't stop themselves crying!

It is natural that the fullest expression of this resurgence to appear in English should come from France and from Louis Aragon.\* Of all European literatures the French has the oldest and closest ties with the English and American; and of all contemporary French writers Aragon has had the most continuous personal ties with American and English writers during two periods of active mutual influence, the American "exile" twenties and the Left thirties.

In Aragon's case it is not a diversion from the poetry itself first to know the

man. His virile verse rings all the clearer and more sonorous for knowing him.

He first appears in the literary vanguard in Paris, after the First World War, by education a physician, by the fate of his generation a war veteran; by choice a writer. The war and the caricature of a world settlement made by the victors left his generation mutinous toward a culture that had produced such abominations. Among its expressions were the defiant, self-alienating cultural movements like Dadaism in which Aragon played a leading role.

Then came the capitalist crisis. A system that had sacrificed human values for its banks and stock markets proved incapable even of keeping its banks and stock markets going and was resorting to fascism, the most hideous protection racket in history. The tension of the emergency reached the alienated writers and artists. They saw Europe menaced by imminent barbarism, and the labor movement the strongest defender of human values. The literary significance of the change from Dada to the literary Left is characterized perfectly in a passage in another letter to the Josephsons:

First we worked over the problem of language so carefully that nothing seemed worthy of it; nothing seemed worthwhile saying. We said *nothing* magnificently and with the greatest freedom of expression. And now we have found what we had to say, more than we had ever dreamed. Can we ever say it well enough?

One of the most important productions of the Left thirties was Aragon's *Red Front*, a long poem whose excited rhythms and sweeping images showed the impact of Mayakovsky. A French court sentenced Aragon to five years' imprisonment on the pretext that the poem insulted the French flag. But, frightened by the public outcry, the government suspended the sentence.

In this period before World War II Aragon wrote two long novels that are among the outstanding achievements of social fiction; helped to organize and participated in national and international cultural conferences; and was one of the editors of *Ce Soir*, largest

newspaper of the Left, with a circulation approaching half a million.

World War II came. Aragon, then in his early forties, was drafted. The hysterical government of the French bourgeoisie sought to punish him for being a Communist by putting him into a labor battalion consisting of Czech and Spanish refugees. To these men, reliable and determined anti-Nazis, were given shovels instead of guns!

Succeeding in getting himself transferred to a combat formation Aragon won two *Croix-de-guerre*, one with a divisional and one with an army citation, and the *Medaille Militaire*, one of the two highest French decorations. This collection of medals had its use. The Vichy police could not lightly arrest a man who, in addition to his fame as a writer, had won such distinction as a patriot.

Aragon wrote as long as was possible under Vichy "legality"; then in semi-legality under transparent pseudonyms and in publications printed in Switzerland and smuggled across the border. Finally, in November 1942, when the Italians entered Nice, Aragon went "under the deep and pleasant cover of illegality."

Through difficulties before which hands like Gide's fell limp, Aragon, from the outbreak of the war to its end, finished a novel and published six books of verse and a First Aid manual for the Maquis. This would be staggering had he done nothing else; but he was active, also, in the military and political organization of the Resistance. The fecund energy of this physically unimpressive man filled the land with the pervasion of a legend. As many Americans were to discover and as Peter Rhodes reports in a valuable section of this book, Aragon's name, spoken anywhere in the country, brought a light into people's faces.

To us in America, beset by unctuous radio voices uttering matter mechanized to its last rehearsed scream, with a superabundant press whose most useful war service has been to provide waste paper, the importance of the literary phase of the Resistance may not be

\* ARAGON, POET OF THE FRENCH RESISTANCE, edited by Hannah Josephson and Malcolm Cowley. Duell, Sloan & Pearce. \$2.