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ANDRE MALRAUX: THE ANTICOLONIAL AND ANTIFASCIST YEARS

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Richard A. Cruz, B.A., M.A.

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Cruz, Richard A., André Malraux: The Anticolonial and Antifascist Years. Doctor of Philosophy (History), May, 1996, 281 pp., 175 titles.

This dissertation provides an explanation of how André Malraux, a man of great influence on twentieth century European culture, developed his political ideology, first as an anticolonial social reformer in the 1920s, then as an antifascist militant in the 1930s. Almost all of the previous studies of Malraux have focused on his literary life, and most of them are rife with errors. This dissertation focuses on the facts of his life, rather than on a fanciful recreation from his fiction.

The major sources consulted are government documents, such as police reports and dispatches, the newspapers that Malraux founded with Paul Monin, other Indochinese and Parisian newspapers, and Malraux's speeches and interviews. Other sources include the memoirs of Clara Malraux, as well as other memoirs and reminiscences from people who knew André Malraux during the 1920s and the 1930s.

The dissertation begins with a survey of Malraux's early years, followed by a detailed account of his experiences in Indochina. Then there is a survey of the period from 1926 to 1933, when Malraux won renown as a novelist and as a man with special insight into Asian affairs. The dissertation then focuses on Malraux's career as a militant antifascist during the 1930s, including an analysis of

Malraux's organization of an air squadron for the Spanish Republic, and his trip to North America to raise funds.

The dissertation concludes with an analysis of Malraux's evolution from an apolitical, virtually unknown writer into a committed anticolonial social reformer and an antifascist militant. The man and his political ideology were intricately interwoven. His brief career as a political journalist in Saigon was crucial in his transformation from an apolitical Parisian dandy into a political activist. Because he regarded fascism as a dire threat to European civilization, Malraux gave his full support to the Soviet Union and the Spanish Republic during the 1930s.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As an artist and a man of action, André Malraux pursued a multi-faceted career of enormous range and complexity. Over the course of his life, he was a novelist, amateur archaeologist, adventurer, soldier, art critic, and a minister of culture. In 1925, when he was in Vietnam, he became involved in anticolonial politics, and he helped to start a newspaper called L'Indochine in Saigon. By 1926 the newspaper was forced out of business because the strident, anticolonial editorial policy of its staff angered the colonial establishment. During the late 1920s and the 1930s Malraux won renown as a novelist, while serving as artistic director for the Gallimard publishing house. He travelled widely during the 1930s, and in 1934, he even participated in an archaeological survey flight over Yemen in search of the lost city of the Queen of Sheba.

Aroused by the rise of Nazism and fascism in Europe, Malraux became a leading antifascist figure during the 1930s, making several trips to Moscow to strengthen the ties between French leftist intellectuals and their Soviet counterparts. In 1936 he organized and commanded an international air squadron for the Spanish Republic. The following year, he toured North America to raise funds for the Spanish Republic, published a novel, L'Espoir, on

the Spanish civil war, and then returned to Spain to shoot a motion picture entitled Sierra de Teruel. After the outbreak of World War Two, he enlisted in a French tank regiment, was captured by the Germans in 1940, and escaped to the Free Zone where he joined the French resistance. He was a colonel in the Maquis in the Dordogne region, but he was captured again by the Germans in 1944.

Fortunately, he was liberated before the end of his interrogation, and he then joined with the Free French forces in the final Allied advance into Germany.

Malraux met Charles de Gaulle in 1945 and became Minister of Information for the first de Gaulle government. He stopped writing novels, but he published books on numerous other subjects during the postwar period, including several important studies in art history. In 1958 he was appointed Minister of Information in the second de Gaulle government, and he moved to the post of Minister for Cultural Affairs in 1959. He made numerous trips abroad as a cultural ambassador for France, including visits to meet the leaders of India and China in 1965. Malraux retired from public life in 1969 and devoted the remainder of his life to writing. He died in 1976.

In this dissertation, I will focus on the career of Malraux in the 1920s and the 1930s and examine in detail his transformation from a stylish Parisian dandy into a committed anticolonial social reformer and an antifascist fighter. I will investigate each phase of his life and thought during this period in order to find an explanation of how the young, apolitical Malraux evolved into a courageous

militant who was prepared to risk everything in the antifascist struggle.

His political views and activities are my primary concern. Most previous studies of Malraux have dealt with his novels or with the philosophical views expressed in his literature and his critical works. Although scholars have subjected his literature to exhaustive analyses in numerous books and articles, little has been written on his political activities. This dissertation will focus on Malraux's political evolution during the two decades between the world wars. My approach will entail a detailed analysis of his anticolonial activities in Indochina 1923-1925, as well as his antifascist commitments during the period 1933-1939. His career in the French resistance and his subsequent association with Charles de Gaulle are beyond the scope of this study.

On occasion I will discuss the gradual formation of the Malraux myth, a romantic aura that began forming around him during his youth in Indochina. Because Malraux said little about his career in Asia during the 1920s, this period of his life gave rise to extravagant speculation on his role in the nationalist movements of Indochina and China. On occasion, the young Malraux deceived journalists and critics who were curious about particular episodes, for instance, his alleged exploits in revolutionary China. In this dissertation I will discuss how these myths originated.

To present a balanced account of Malraux, I have consulted a wide variety of sources. Government documents, such as police

reports and dispatches, shed light on Malraux's activities in Indochina during the period 1925-1926. Unfortunately, these are few in number because most of the documents dealing with Cochinchina were left in Saigon when the French withdrew from Indochina.¹ The most significant sources of information on Malraux's anticolonial views are the newspapers that he published with Paul Monin in Saigon, L'Indochine and L'Indochine enchaînée. Fortunately for research, the French Bibliothèque nationale preserved these newspapers on microfilm before they disintegrated.

Though Malraux wrote very little about himself, other people who knew him have written memoirs and reminiscences which contain valuable information on his life. The memoirs of his ex-wife, Clara, are the most complete source of biographical information on his activities in the 1920s and the 1930s. Because she was fully involved in most of his exploits for almost two decades, her insights furnish a useful counterpoint to the Malraux legend. Under the collective title Le Bruit de nos pas, five of the six volumes of her memoirs deal with their life together.² As is often the case with memoirs, Clara Malraux's reflections on their travels and adventures are sometimes biased and self-serving, yet she provides facts that would otherwise be unavailable. Several of André Malraux's earliest literary acquaintances -- editor René-Louis

¹In the general inventory catalogues at the Archives Nationales, there was a note which said that the archives of the government of Cochinchina remained in Saigon. I confirmed this fact in a conversation with Lucette Vachier, chief archivist at the Archives d'Outre-Mer.

²Clara Malraux, Le Bruit de nos pas, 6 vols. (Paris: Grasset, 1964-1979).

Doyon, André Salmon, and poet George Gabory -- recorded their impressions of Malraux in the 1920s. Some of the men who knew him during the Spanish Civil War have written about Malraux during the time in which he commanded an international air squadron for the Spanish Republic. These include Julien Segnaire, Malraux's lieutenant; Michael Koltsov, who wrote for Pravda; Pietro Nenni, who served with the International Brigades and later became head of the Italian Socialist Party; Ignacio Hidalgo de Cisneros, who was the communist chief of aviation for the Spanish Republic; and Ilya Ehrenburg, who was a well-known Soviet writer and journalist. Of the many writers who knew Malraux in the interwar period, several recall him in their memoirs or journals. Among them are André Gide, a good friend of Malraux; novelists Julien Green and François Mauriac; and André Maurois, the novelist and biographer.

One of the problems a researcher must face is that Malraux did not like to write about himself. He did not keep a journal nor did he publish his memoirs. On the second page of his book Antimémoires, he wrote, "I am not very interested in myself."³ Antimémoires, which appeared in 1967, is not a traditional volume of memoirs. This fascinating work consists of an assortment of recollections, and meditations on culture, history, art, along with conversations with such leaders as Nehru, Charles de Gaulle, Chou En-lai, and Mao Tse-tung. The reminiscences are highly idiosyncratic, and they are

³André Malraux, Le Miroir des limbes, vol. 1, Antimémoires (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), 10. All of the translations in this dissertation are my own unless otherwise noted.

infused with ubiquitous irony, but the book offers little biographical detail. His articles and speeches reflect his opinions on innumerable subjects, including anticolonialism and antifascism. Malraux gave many interviews, and these are particularly helpful in elucidating his political views during the 1930s. On the other hand, the letters and postcards that Malraux wrote to friends and colleagues are, generally speaking, short and sketchy. On the whole, his correspondence is disappointing. Malraux's legendary loquacity did not carry over into his letters. For the most part, they are brief messages written in the heat of the moment.

Of the dozens of books and hundreds of articles dealing with Malraux, the vast majority focus on his fiction. Some of the studies are literary analyses of his novels, while others discuss his philosophical views or esthetic values, as reflected in his literary works. Furthermore, the biographical sketches appearing before 1970 in works about Malraux frequently contain inaccuracies. Several biographies of Malraux appeared in his lifetime. Robert Payne's A Portrait of André Malraux is a popular biography in which entire chapters are devoted to the fictional works of Malraux. For Payne, "each novel is an autobiography."⁴ He spends an inordinate amount of space discussing the novels, inserting long quotes from them at frequent intervals. The endnotes are inadequate, making it difficult to ascertain his sources. On the other hand, Jean Lacouture's André Malraux is more authoritative than the Payne book,

⁴Robert Payne, A Portrait of André Malraux (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970), 129-130.

although occasionally marred by overlong quotes. Lacouture, however, falls into a tendency that is all too common in Malraux studies: using Malraux's fictional passages as historical evidence. He uses passages from the novel L'Espoir to depict Malraux's activities during the Spanish Civil War. The biographer argues that the descriptive passages in the novel are "reportage . . . and therefore a reflection of reality."⁵ Despite its flaws, the Lacouture study is vastly superior to Axel Madsen's Malraux, a popular biography in which the author acknowledges only a few of his sources in the scanty footnotes.⁶

The most ambitious Malraux biography to date is Curtis Cate's André Malraux.⁷ It is the most detailed and the best documented of all the Malraux biographies. Although it contains numerous digressions and excursions into the backgrounds of people who knew Malraux, this study is the most complete biography available. Even so, the Cate study contains flaws, including factual errors and the occasional careless use of sources. No professional historian has yet written a definitive biography of Malraux.

One of the finest Malraux studies ever published is André Malraux: The Indochina Adventure by Walter G. Langlois.⁸ The author

⁵Jean Lacouture, André Malraux, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), 241.

⁶Axel Madsen, Malraux, (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1976). Another Madsen book in the same vein is Silk Roads: The Asian Adventures of Clara & André Malraux (New York: Pharos Books, 1989).

⁷Curtis Cate, André Malraux, trans. Marie-Alyx Revellat (Flammarion, 1994).

⁸Walter G. Langlois, André Malraux: The Indochina Adventure (New York: Praeger, 1966).

spent a year doing research in Indochina, from 1956 to 1957, and he interviewed a number of Malraux's friends and acquaintances in France. Malraux himself answered many of Langlois's questions by letter. Even though the Langlois study is carefully documented and very well written, it contains several significant errors. When it appeared in 1966, only the first volume of Clara Malraux's memoirs was available. Without the later volumes of her memoirs, there were significant lacunae in the story of Malraux's oriental experiences. For instance, Langlois argued that Malraux initially went to Indochina not for profit, but to expand his esthetic awareness of oriental art and to test himself as a man in the jungles of Cambodia. Clara Malraux's memoirs clearly establish that her husband, through the sale of Kmer sculptures, hoped to recoup losses he had sustained on the stock exchange.⁹ Langlois made several dubious suppositions about Malraux's hypothetical relationship with Chinese revolutionaries. Langlois thought that Malraux met the Soviet agent Michael Borodin after the Canton strike in 1925 and that Malraux participated in a meeting of Kuomintang leaders in Hong Kong in 1926. Clara Malraux was with her husband throughout the period in question. Her memoirs coupled with other sources concerning her husband's whereabouts at the time clearly establish that he could not have played a role in the events of the Chinese revolution. These facts are beyond dispute today; but when Langlois wrote his book, it was difficult for even the finest of scholars not

⁹Clara Malraux, *Le Bruit de nos pas* (Paris: Editions Grasset & Fasquelle, 1992), 270-272. This edition contains the first three volumes of her memoirs.

to subscribe to apocryphal stories about Malraux's Asian experiences.

On the subject of Malraux's political commitments during the 1930s, Robert Thornberry's fine study André Malraux et L'Espagne is a survey of Malraux's involvement in the Spanish Civil War.¹⁰

Unfortunately for historical study, only one quarter of the book deals with the exploits of Malraux and the *Escradille España*. The rest of the book consists of a discussion of the novel L'Espoir, Malraux's filming of the movie Sierra de Teruel, and the critical reception of the book and the movie. As is common in so many Malraux studies, Thornberry uses fictional passages as historical evidence.

Perhaps the worst example of this type of analysis is David Wilkinson's Malraux: An Essay in Political Criticism.¹¹ Wilkinson discusses the political ideas found in Malraux's novels, the attitudes of various fictional characters, and the themes of selected novels. But he does not deal with the concrete political positions taken by Malraux in the 1920s and the 1930s. There is no work that adequately deals with Malraux's political development during this period.

This dissertation will begin with a survey of Malraux's early years, up to his first trip to Indochina in 1923. It will then focus on Malraux's career in Indochina, beginning with his expedition to Banteay Srei in Cambodia, and his subsequent difficulties with the

¹⁰Robert S. Thornberry, André Malraux et l'Espagne (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1977).

¹¹David Wilkinson, Malraux: An Essay in Political Criticism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967).

French colonial authorities. It will discuss in some detail Malraux's anticolonial activities, in particular the trenchant criticisms he directed at the colonial establishment in the newspapers he founded with Paul Monin. It will provide a survey of the period from 1926 to 1933, when Malraux won renown as a novelist and as a man with special insight into Asian affairs. It will examine closely Malraux's career as a militant antifascist during the 1930s. This effort will involve an examination of his political speeches, articles, and interviews, an account of his travels on behalf of various antifascist organizations, and his activities on behalf of the Spanish Republic. The final chapter will analyze Malraux's political evolution from 1923 to 1939 in its entirety and present my conclusions on this formative period of his career.

CHAPTER II

THE YOUTH OF ANDRE MALRAUX

André Malraux was reticent about his youth and his private life. Although he delighted in recounting the old family legends of his paternal grandfather and his Flemish ancestors, he seldom discussed the events of his youth. In the many interviews that he granted, references to his childhood or his family life are infrequent. On occasion he would tell his wife, Clara, or one of his friends, that he felt a strong aversion to his childhood. He once remarked in an interview: "I did not like my youth. Youth is a sentiment that draws you backward. I did not have a childhood."¹ He was even more explicit in Antimémoires: "Almost all the writers that I know love their childhood; I detest mine."²

Although Malraux seldom raised the subject of his childhood, he never concealed his admiration for his father Fernand-Georges Malraux, the son of a Flemish ship owner from Dunkirk. Fernand Malraux was a small businessman, an inventor, and a speculator in the stock exchange. He was a tall, handsome, jovial man who loved to tell stories, and who enjoyed the company of women immensely.

¹André Malraux, "Dialogue," interview by Emmanuel d'Astier, L'Événement (September 1967): 58.

²André Malraux, Antimémoires, 10. See also François Mauriac, Nouveaux Mémoires intérieurs (Paris: Flammarion, 1965), 64.

Fernand married Berthe Lamy on March 24, 1900, when they were twenty-five and nineteen years old, respectively. She was a tall, attractive woman, the daughter of a Parisian baker. Once married, Fernand and Berthe Malraux lived in his apartment in Montmartre. A year and a half later, in November 3, 1901, George-André Malraux was born. A second son was born the following year, on Christmas Day, 1902, but he died three months later. The marriage was not a happy one, primarily because it was difficult for Fernand to endure monogamy. After five years of marriage, the couple agreed on a separation.³

Berthe left Montmartre with her son André and went to live in the town of Bondy with her sister Marie and her widowed mother, Adrienne Lamy. Bondy was a dreary town of five thousand, near the Ourcq Canal, eight miles from Paris and twenty-five minutes by train from the Gare de l' Est. It was situated on the road to Lorraine and had suffered significant damage from the Prussian army in 1870. André's grandmother, Adrienne, owned a small grocery store which occupied the ground floor of a modest, two-story house. The three women ran the business and kept house in the family lodgings upstairs, above the store. Adrienne Lamy was originally a Parisian of Italian descent (her maiden name was Romagna). She was an impressive woman--proud, independent, intelligent, energetic--and she was deeply devoted to her family. She encouraged her grandson

³Cates, Malraux, 14; Payne, Portrait, 6; Clara Malraux, Nos vingt ans, vol. 2 of Le Bruit de nos pas (Paris: Grasset, 1966), 44.

in his reading and instilled in him a love of books. He relished hearing, reading, or telling stories, and he sometimes surprised the women with his feats of memory. When Malraux was almost five, he was enrolled in a small private school, the Ecole de Bondy, which consisted of eighteen students and two schoolmasters. The family wanted to provide him with the best education that was available in the small town of Bondy.⁴

During his second year of school, André met a new student, Louis Chevasson, who was to become a lifelong friend. Louis was by nature easy-going, and he was a good listener, both of which were assets in dealing with his more domineering friend. Except for rifle shooting, Malraux was never interested in sports, but he and his friends hiked in the nearby woods, rode bicycles along the country roads, and occasionally went camping with the boy scouts. Although Malraux sometimes left the impression in later years that his childhood had been unhappy, his friend Louis Chevasson had an entirely different impression of their childhood years. Over half a century later, he said of the young Malraux that "being spoiled by three women didn't bother him at all." Chevasson remembered Malraux's mother as a delightful woman and said that Malraux visited his father in Paris on most weekends, often with his mother. As for Malraux's nervous tics, sometimes attributed to his mistreatment at school, Chevasson said that his friend had always

⁴Cates, Malraux, 14-16. Payne, Portrait, 7-8.

had these nervous twitches. Chevasson said that the grocery did well enough so that the young Malraux "never lacked for anything."⁵ In addition to weekly visits, Malraux's father took him on summer vacations to Dunkirk to visit relatives, including André's forty cousins.⁶

At an early age, Malraux was drawn to art and to museums. He enjoyed drawing, working in pastels or watercolors, and oil painting. At seven he visited the Louvre for the first time. When his mother visited a friend in Paris, she allowed him to visit the Musée Guimet, at that time a disorganized jumble of Asian artifacts and memorabilia collected by the founder, Emile Guimet. His favorite, however, was the Trocadero Museum, with its Kmer and pre-Columbian works, a plumed helmet from Hawaii, Ethiopian icons, and other exotic treasures. This fascination with strange and faraway places would always be a part of Malraux's intellectual makeup.⁷

When he was eight years old he read his first novel, Georges (attributed to Alexandre Dumas), and he followed this adventure with others such as Les Trois Mousquetaires and the works of Sir Walter Scott (in translation).⁸ By the time he had reached adolescence, he had a passion for books and was reading Shakespeare, Victor Hugo, Stendhal, Gustave Flaubert, and Honoré de Balzac. Near his home there was a small library where he spent a

⁵Chevasson quoted in Cates, Malraux, 17.

⁶*ibid.*, 17-18. Lacouture, Malraux, 21.

⁷Cates, Malraux, 17. André Malraux, Antimémoires, 53.

⁸*ibid.*, 141. Georges may have been written by one of Dumas's collaborators.

great deal of time prowling the stacks or assisting the librarian. Bondy offered few public entertainments, but on public holidays silent movies were shown in a tent. Malraux was fascinated by the films, which included the four-reel version of Hugo's Les Misérables, American westerns, and the early Charles Chaplin movies. On his fourteenth birthday, Malraux went to Paris with Chevasson to see Racine's Andromaque at the Comédie- Française. This was the first of many visits to Parisian theaters.⁹

Before Malraux's final year of school at Bondy, World War One began and his father was among the first to volunteer for military service. When the German offensive began to falter, their forces were no more than thirty miles from Bondy. These were exciting times for the thirteen-year-old Malraux and his friends. They saw the military trains passing through Bondy, as well as the famous Parisian taxicabs ferrying troops to the front during the first Battle of the Marne. Refugees poured through the town.¹⁰ After the battle was over, Malraux's teacher took the class to the battlefield where the Allies had checked the German advance. Not far away piles of bodies were being drenched in gasoline and burned. Malraux remembered the scene years later. At lunch, bread was handed around to the students, but they dropped it in horror when the breeze sprinkled the bread with ashes from the dead. ¹¹ Fortunately his

⁹André Malraux, interview by d'Astier, 58. Cate, Malraux, 15-17. Lacouture, Malraux, 21-22.

¹⁰Cate, Malraux, 18-19. Lacouture, Malraux, 22-23.

¹¹André Malraux, Antimémoires, 215.

father managed to survive the entire war. At the beginning of 1917, Lieutenant Fernand Malraux was attached to one of the first tank units, an appropriate assignment for a man who was fascinated with mechanical devices. André was very proud of his father and he regarded his father's position of tank officer as "very romantic."¹² Notwithstanding the boy's admiration for his father, and his youthful fascination with martial exploits, André Malraux never tried to enlist. Because of André's age--he was only seventeen when the war ended --his father's permission would have been required in any case, and Malraux's friends have said that his father would not have given his permission.¹³

At the Ecole de Bondy, Malraux was a hard-working student who excelled in history, geography, drawing, and French. He normally performed well in mathematics and the natural sciences, but was mediocre in English. In October, 1915, Malraux began to attend the Ecole primaire supérieure in the rue de Turbigo in Paris (it was renamed the Lycée Turgot when the war ended). Accompanied by his friend Louis Chevasson, he would leave Bondy on an early train each morning and arrive at the Gare de l'Est in Paris in time to make it to school. Each evening he would return to Bondy. The city of Paris supported the school and most of the students were from lower middle class families. Because so many men were either

¹²André Malraux, interview by d'Astier, 56.

¹³Lacouture, Malraux, 23.

dead or on active duty, the faculty consisted mostly of older teachers. Fellow students nicknamed Malraux "the Spaniard" because of his intense gaze and solemn demeanor. Malraux finished the year 1915-1916 first in history and drawing, second in spelling, third in English and French literature, fourth in mathematics and geography, and sixth in chemistry and the natural sciences. He did poorly in physics, gymnastics, and singing. When all of the grades were tabulated, he ranked third in his class. During the 1916-1917 school year, his grades dropped: he was first in spelling, second in literature, third in drawing, fifth in civics, and eighth in natural sciences, but overall he ranked eighth in the class.¹⁴

In Paris Malraux and his classmates found many diversions. They attended concerts on Sunday afternoons, and they enjoyed theatrical performances of such classics as Molière's Médecin malgré lui and Corneille's Le Cid. Although much of the Louvre was closed to the public during the war, Malraux returned often to the Musée Guimet, one of his favorite haunts since childhood. There he examined Hindu and Buddhist statuary, Japanese porcelain, Chinese artifacts, and calligraphy from the Far East. He devoured books on art, poetry, drama, fictional works, and travel adventures. Aided by a remarkable memory, he developed an extensive knowledge of authors, titles, dates, and editions. Malraux and Chevasson spent many an afternoon culling through the books in the stalls along the

¹⁴Payne, Portrait, 13-14. Lacouture, Malraux, 23. Cate, Malraux, 20.

quais, or in the second hand bookstores in order to find rare editions. They would then sell their acquisitions to one of the major Left Bank bookstores, such as Gilbert Jeune on the Boulevard St. Michel. In this manner they acquired the necessary cash for movies and cigarettes.¹⁵

Malraux was becoming dissatisfied with his school and he decided to apply for admission to the prestigious Lycée Cordorcet. In order to prepare himself for the entrance examination, he found a private tutor, Paulette Thouvenin, and began a cram course. She was the daughter of the police chief at Bondy and she had a good reputation as a teacher. She later remembered Malraux as an intelligent, taciturn, self-possessed young man, who dressed impeccably and remained somewhat aloof from the other students. Despite his youth, he was very very well read and during class discussions he could readily quote from a variety of sources to support his arguments. He passed the entrance examination, but he never attended the Lycée Cordorcet.¹⁶

No one knows exactly why Malraux quit formal education. What is certain is that he left school for good in 1918 and never attended a university. He continued to read and to study independently, but he followed his own curriculum, without a syllabus of required reading. He said years later that before the age of sixteen, he had already decided that he "wanted to become a great writer." He and his

¹⁵Ibid., 21-22. Lacouture, Malraux, 22-23.

¹⁶Payne, Portrait, 14-15. Cate, Malraux, 22.

friends were convinced that "a great writer, just as a great painter, must be an outsider." The artist should experience hunger, "in the tradition of the Symbolists and of Baudelaire."¹⁷ At seventeen Malraux was restless and ambitious, but he was not seeking a conventional career.

Although it is not known what his family thought about his decision to quit school, they were soon reconciled to the new state of affairs. On his seventeenth birthday, the women of the family took Malraux to see the Aeschylus Oresteia trilogy at the Châtelet Theater. A week later, November 11, 1918, the armistice was signed and the war was over. After his discharge, Malraux's father Fernand returned to Paris to live with his mistress, Marie-Louise Godard, and their six-year-old son Roland. He resumed his career as a speculator in the stock market and a promoter of small-scale business ventures. Despite the horrors of the war, Fernand Malraux was proud of his military record, and he recalled the camaraderie of the trenches with nostalgia for the rest of his life.¹⁸

As for his son, André Malraux had neither a degree nor a trade, but he knew a great deal about books. For seven years he had earned extra cash through the buying and selling of rare editions. Despite his youth, Malraux had acquired an extensive literary knowledge, as well as an appreciation for the nuances of typography and printing. Now freed from the school routine, he turned a sideline into a

¹⁷André Malraux, interview by d'Astier, 58.

¹⁸Cate, Malraux, 24.

regular business. One day in 1919 he visited a rare book shop called La Connaissance near the Place de la Madeleine, owned by a bibliophile named René-Louis Doyon. Years later Doyon remembered Malraux as a tall, distinguished young man who was courteous but reserved. Malraux offered to provide Doyon with rare books and original editions. Doyon agreed to the proposal, and subsequently Malraux sold him books on a regular basis. Malraux would browse through the bookstands along the quais by the Seine and search the shelves of second hand bookstores for rare and unusual volumes. Each morning at eleven o'clock he would arrive punctually at Doyon's shop with a bundle of rare editions. Malraux would set the price, sell the books, and then depart. As the two became better acquainted, Malraux would often stay and talk for a while. Doyon found that Malraux had very strong literary opinions that were peppered with sarcasm. Once the conversation was concluded, Malraux would solemnly shake hands, then resume his wandering through the streets of Paris.¹⁹

With his earnings from the book trade, Malraux was able to leave Bondy and move to Paris. He lived in a hotel at first, then he moved to a small room on the rue Brunel, not far from the Place de l'Etoile. His father gave him money occasionally, but otherwise Malraux was on his own.²⁰ Despite his youth, Malraux circulated

¹⁹Payne, Portrait, 17-18. René-Louis Doyon, Mémoires d'homme (Paris: La Connaissance, 1952), 19-20.

²⁰Lacouture, Malraux, 25.

with ease among the poets and painters of Paris. It is surprising how quickly he entered the world of writers, publishers, and illustrators, establishing useful contacts along the way. He met François Mauriac, who had already written several novels and books of verse, and who was on the verge of producing his best fiction. Mauriac was a Catholic writer who created characters tormented by love, desire, and regrets, sinners at the edge of the abyss blindly groping towards the gift of God's saving grace. Malraux had left the Church by the age of twelve and he asked Mauriac very bluntly what the powerful Catholic Church had really done for people. Mauriac conceded that there might be bad priests, but the Church remained the primary means for conveying God's grace to mankind. In his memoirs, Mauriac remembered Malraux as a grave, serious young man, calling him "this little bristling bird of prey with the magnificent eyes."²¹ As they discussed Christ and the Church, Mauriac decided that Malraux had a religious temperament, despite his dislike for the Church. Mauriac also determined that Malraux held mankind in contempt.²² Mauriac was perceptive enough to see that Malraux was obsessed with fundamental questions about the human condition. As for the contempt that Mauriac saw in Malraux, there is no question that the young intellectual sometimes projected

²¹François Mauriac, Mémoires politiques (Paris: Editions Bernard Grasset, 1967), 79.

²²Ibid.

a supercilious arrogance, a trait that softened considerably with age and experience.

Malraux's literary and artistic interests were often unconventional. He spent many hours reading at the Bibliothèque Nationale, immersing himself in works on such diverse subjects as satanism, demonology, African art, and Christian mysticism. He occasionally heard lectures at the Ecole des langues orientales and the Ecole du Louvre. In the museums he especially admired the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch, Pieter Brueghel the younger, Francisco Goya, and Odilon Redon. He relished paintings and engravings with dreamlike or nightmarish qualities, works steeped in dark fantasy. He was drawn to art that was mysterious, grotesque, bizarre, or fantastic. Whether in literature or in the graphic arts, Malraux was fascinated with works that were striving for a transcendence, attempting to go beyond mundane experience. His interest in art that was fantastic or other-worldly would be evident in his earliest activities as a writer and as an editor.²³

During their conversations at the bookshop, Doyon was impressed with Malraux's knowledge of unusual or forgotten works. The business arrangement with Malraux helped Doyon to augment his stock of rare books, and gave him more time for publishing. He had already published, among other titles, an edition of the letters of Stendhal to his sister Pauline, and a limited edition of five-hundred

²³Payne, *Portrait*, 24-25. Lacouture, *Malraux*, 32.

copies of H.B. par un des quarante, a biography of Stendhal written by Prosper Mérimée. Doyon realized that Malraux had a penchant for rare or unpublished texts. Malraux suggested to Doyon that he publish extracts from La Douleoureuse Passion, the old French translation of Das Leiden unsereres Jesus Christi, written by the romantic poet Clemens Brentano. The work was a transcription of the visions of a famous nineteenth-century mystic, the Bavarian nun Anna Katharina Emmerich. Doyon agreed to the proposal, and he hired artist Malo Renault to provide illustrations for the book. Doyon was only a few years older than Malraux and he admitted that he "was a novice in this genre of works."²⁴

Malraux then suggested that Doyon publish a new edition of excerpts from La Mystique divine, naturelle et diabolique, the French translation of a century-old work on the origins and foundations of satanic mysticism by Joseph von Görres. Doyon declined the proposal.²⁵ On the other hand, when Malraux brought him prose poems, aphorisms, and various literary fragments by the nineteenth-century poet Jules Laforgue, Doyon was enthusiastic about publishing them. Malraux edited and arranged the texts, which appeared in two volumes that he entitled Dragées and Ennuis non rimés. Critics later censured Malraux and Doyon for having deceived the public by claiming that the texts were previously unpublished

²⁴Doyon, Mémoire d'homme, 19-21. Cate, Malraux, 28-29.

²⁵André Vandegans, La Jeunesse littéraire d'André Malraux: Essai sur l'inspiration farfelue (J.J. Pauvert, 1964), 21.

when in fact they had appeared years before in various reviews. Malraux had culled the texts from old issues of La Revue blanche and La Mercure de France, without specifying their origin or justifying their arrangement in the two volumes that he put together. Malraux ignored the critics and continued to suggest texts for Doyon to publish.²⁶

When Doyon began to publish a monthly magazine called La Connaissance in January 1920, he asked Malraux to write an article for his new magazine. Doyon had already decided that Malraux had "an artistic vocation," although he was not sure how his erudite, young colleague would end up using his abilities. So the premier issue included Malraux's first published article, "Des origines de la poésie cubiste."²⁷ After writing some sarcastic remarks about the Symbolist movement, Malraux praised poet Guillaume Apollinaire as a precursor of cubist poetry in France. He argued that Apollinaire had a fresh approach to reality, writing whimsical poetry "in which the object . . . sometimes becomes autonomous." Malraux praised Max Jacob for "his subtle irony, his bizarre mysticism, a sense of the strangeness of everyday things, and the destruction of any possibility of a logical ordering of facts."²⁸ Two other poets he regarded as creators of Cubist poetry were Pierre Reverdy and Blaise Cendrars. Several weeks later a critic attacked Malraux in

²⁶Doyon, Mémoire d'homme, 21.

²⁷Ibid., 20-21. André Malraux, "Des origines de la poésie cubiste," in Michel Cazenave, comp., André Malraux (Paris: Editions de l'Herne, 1982), 89-92.

²⁸Ibid., 90.

the periodical Comoedia for having referred to Symbolism as a "senile" literary movement. Malraux defended himself in an open letter to the journal and thus, at the age of eighteen, became involved in his first minor literary controversy. In the second issue of La Connaissance, Malraux contributed a critical essay on three works by the poet and anarchist Laurent Tailhade. These two articles were his first published writings.²⁹

Malraux began to work for another book dealer and small publisher in 1920, Simon Kra, the son of a librarian who had worked for one of the Rothschilds. Kra had married a rich heiress and had subsequently opened a shop which specialized in rare books. Malraux suggested to Kra that he publish a series of limited editions on quality paper, with illustrations by some of the finest artists of the day. Instead of limiting the printing of a text to a hundred numbered copies, Malraux had the idea of producing a thousand copies, paid for in advance by subscribers. This sales method would lower the price of the books and guarantee a profit, provided enough subscribers could be found. Malraux argued that it would be easy to find six or eight-hundred bibliophiles eager to invest in limited editions of previously unpublished works, each with fine illustrations by a famous artist. During the immediate postwar period, the franc depreciated rapidly and many began to invest in gold, art works, and rare books as a hedge against inflation. Kra agreed to Malraux's

²⁹Ibid., 91-92. Cate, Malraux, 31. Doyon, Mémoire d'homme, 20.

proposal and a notice was sent to a trade journal informing the public that Editions du Sagittaire would be printing a series of limited editions in deluxe format. In three weeks, the first two titles of the series were sold out, even though Malraux was still preparing the texts for publication.³⁰ During their successful publishing venture, Kra appointed Malraux as literary and artistic director of Editions du Sagittaire. Malraux selected the texts for the series, which included Le Livret de l'imagier by Remy de Gourmont, Causeries by Charles Baudelaire, Carnet intime by Laurent Tailhade, Gestes, suivis de paralipomèner d'Ubu by Alfred Jarry, and La Patience de Grisélidis by Remy de Gourmont. The entire project was under Malraux's supervision. Because the series was a great success, Kra was well pleased with his precocious young associate.³¹

While Malraux was making arrangements for the artwork that adorned the texts he edited, he met a number of artists, including Maurice de Vlaminck, James Ensor, Fernand Léger, André Derain, and Demetrios Galanis. Galanis never became famous as a painter, but his engravings and book illustrations were outstanding. Malraux often visited Galanis and his family, and the two men became lifelong friends. In a 1928 article about the paintings of Galanis, Malraux recalled an incident that occurred during the period in which

³⁰Georges Gabory, "André Malraux," in Mélanges Malraux Miscellany 2, no. 1 (Spring 1970): 6-7. Cate, Malraux, 38.

³¹Gabory, "Malraux," 6-7. Cate Malraux, 38.

they first became friends. Galanis, Malraux, and several friends were visiting a painter who lived in an enormous loft in Montmartre. The only access to the artist's quarters was a ladder. They heard strange sounds down below and decided to investigate. As they climbed slowly down the ladder into the dark chamber below, they began to see the shapes of people lying on the ground. When Malraux and his friends spoke to them, the men stood up and began shouting. At that moment, Malraux realized that they were blind men from Montmartre who had gathered in the old building for shelter. He saw Galanis with a look of utter bewilderment on his face, tightly gripping the sword he carried at night. As Malraux wrote later, they left "pursued by this vision of Brueghel, which was both comic and sad," and went to the home of Galanis. There the shadows moving on the walls reminded them of the gesticulations of the blind men moving about in the darkness. Galanis sat down at his harmonium and played Bach, while his companions listened quietly.³²

Malraux made friends with the well-known poet Max Jacob, who had been the main subject of Malraux's first article, "Des origines de la poésie cubiste." Jacob was a Jew from Brittany, who had converted to Catholicism in 1909 after having claimed to have had a vision of Christ. Pablo Picasso had served as his godfather and the two men shared a room for a time. Malraux first visited Jacob in November 1919 at the poet's room on the butte Montmartre. Jacob

³²André Malraux, "A propos des illustrations de Galanis," Arts et métiers graphiques (April 1928): 230-231.

was an eccentric character who lived in modest circumstances, working by the light of an oil lamp, the walls covered with the signs of the zodiac, surrounded by books, poems, drawings, watercolors, and pots full of paintbrushes.³³ Malraux, carrying a cane with a tassel, and wearing kid gloves, entered Jacob's room dressed rakishly in a suit with a pearl tie tack in his shirt. Despite differences in age, background, and religious preference, Malraux took an immediate liking to Jacob, who was not only a gifted poet, but also a man with an expansive sense of humor and a heightened sense of the absurdity of everyday life. Sometimes Malraux would join him at a cheap restaurant where they would drink absinthe and eat Jacob's favorite dish, mutton stew with potatoes. Once a week Jacob presided at the Café La Savoyarde, not far from Sacré Coeur in Montmartre. The cafe would resound with raucous laughter as Jacob told stories, danced, drew sketches, and mocked politicians. Because Malraux preferred high-class restaurants with China service, he was often teased by his dinner companions. He may have looked out of place with his silk-lined cape, cane, gloves, high collar, with a rose stuck in the lapel of his jacket.³⁴

One of Malraux's closest friends in the years 1919-1921 was the young poet Georges Gabory. Like Malraux, Gabory had not finished his formal education but he had acquired an extensive background in literature and art through his own studies. The two friends spent

³³Payne, *Portrait*, 19. Cate, *Malraux*, 32.

³⁴Gabory, "Malraux," 6. Lacouture, *Malraux*, 30. Payne, *Portrait*, 21.

many afternoons walking the streets of Paris discussing art, poetry, and publishing. While walking they would recite the verses of poets whom they admired, especially Charles Baudelaire, but also Alfred de Vigny, Victor Hugo, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Jules Laforgue. Sometimes Malraux would stop by the printers that he employed to examine works in progress. Gabory recalled that Malraux spent freely and always paid for everything when the two went out to eat and drink. Gabory was poor, and he was surprised at his friend's generosity. They might stop by a tea room for a cup of chocolate and some brioches, then later they would have a late lunch at a fine restaurant. In the evening they often went out for cocktails or whiskey at one of Malraux's favorite bars and would dine at a fashionable restaurant. They would enjoy a delicious meal with appropriate wines, and finish with coffee, brandy, and a couple of Havanas.³⁵

Sometimes they investigated the seamier side of Paris. Gabory remembered visiting a club, la Petite Chaumière, where transvestites danced to the music of a piano. The clientele included many of the best-known people in the French literary world.³⁶ Gabory wrote later: "We were young, Malraux and I, charmed by the display of depravity, whether real or pretended."³⁷ Although Malraux occasionally picked up a girl in a bar, Gabory on the other hand

³⁵Gabory, "Malraux," 3, 7-8.

³⁶*ibid.*, 7-8, 10-11.

³⁷*ibid.*, 11.

described himself once to Clara Malraux as a "lesbian." In a tone of good-natured condescension, he described André Malraux as an "amateur of eroticism." Gabory was not impressed with Malraux's female companions.³⁸ Malraux visited the Tabarin music hall with his friend Chevasson and Gabory more often than la Petite Chaumière. At the Tabarin, an orchestra played dance music for couples and every night there were performances of the cancan. It was there that Malraux met a girl that he lived with for a time.³⁹

During 1920 Malraux met Florent Fels, publisher of the avant-garde review Action, which was leftist in sympathy and included stories articles by the Russian writers Maxim Gorky and Ilya Ehrenburg. Under the vigorous direction of Fels, Action included material written by Max Jacob, Alexander Blok, Jean Cocteau, Louis Aragon, Blaise Cendrars, Erik Satie, and Tristan Tzara, one of the founders of Dadaism. The review was adorned with illustrations by Pablo Picasso, André Derain, Georges Braques, Raoul Dufy, and Juan Gris. Action also contained literary criticism, often laced with scornful attacks upon traditional religious and political values. Malraux attended the dinners hosted by Fels and was thereby able to broaden his circle of literary acquaintances. He wrote several pieces for Action, including "La genèse des Chants de Maldoror," which appeared in the third issue in April 1920 (two months after

³⁸Clara Malraux, Bruit de nos pas, 236. Gabory, "Malraux," 11.

³⁹*ibid.*, 10.

his first article appeared in La Connaissance).⁴⁰ Malraux accused the author of Chants de Maldoror, the late Isidore Ducasse Lautréamont, of plagiarism and of indulging in an "infantile sadism."⁴¹ In his acerbic treatment of Lautréamont, Malraux did not mince words. At the time that Malraux wrote the article, younger writers--especially those who sympathized with the dadaists and who later joined the surrealist movement--worshipped Lautréamont as a prophet of nihilism who had foreseen the decadence to come.

During 1920 Malraux supported himself through a variety of activities. While he was director of Kra's Editions du Sagittaire, he continued to sell rare books to Doyon, and he began to invest modest sums in the stock exchange. As a lucrative sideline, Malraux and Kra collaborated in the surreptitious publication and sale of erotic works. The first two editions were profusely illustrated texts from the works of the Marquis de Sade. Another opportunity presented itself during autumn 1920 when Max Jacob introduced Malraux to the German art dealer Daniel Henry Kahnweiler, who promoted cubist painters and who had published limited editions of literary works before the war. Kahnweiler asked Malraux if he would be interested in working on a new series of illustrated editions that he was planning. Malraux accepted the offer and during 1921 Kahnweiler and his French partner André Salmon published six limited editions,

⁴⁰Lacouture, Malraux, 26-27; Cate, Malraux, 34-37.

⁴¹André Malraux, "La genèse des Chants de Maldoror," Action (April 1920): 13-14.

illustrated by such artists as Juan Gris, Maurice de Vlaminck, and Georges Braque.⁴²

Kahnweiler suggested that the series might include a book by Malraux, who had finished writing a strange tale entitled Lunes en papier just a few months before. The review Action had published a fragment of this work. Kahnweiler was true to his word and in April 1921 a limited edition of Malraux's Lunes en papier appeared. This deluxe edition, illustrated with woodcuts by Fernand Léger, was printed in folio format on fine paper, each copy signed by Malraux and Léger. Lunes en papier is a capricious fantasy in which the main characters, the Seven Deadly Sins, decide to kill Death. This short work is full of bizarre imagery and could be aptly described as an adult fairy tale.⁴³ Malraux's first complete fictional work was scarcely noticed in Parisian literary circles. In a 1967 interview, Malraux said: "I wrote Lunes en papier at the age of nineteen: a coffeehouse triumph."⁴⁴

In June 1921, Malraux attended a dinner sponsored by a publisher and met Clara Goldschmidt, the daughter of a Jewish merchant. Several of the dinner guests left the restaurant and went to a nearby night club for dancing. Malraux danced with Clara once, but the two talked little that night. Several days later they encountered one another again at the home of a young poet named

⁴²Cate, Malraux, 42-44; Lacouture, Malraux, 34; Payne, Portrait, 37.

⁴³Cate, 44; André Malraux, Lunes en papier (Editions des Galeries Simon, 1921).

⁴⁴André Malraux, interview by d'Astier, 58.

Ivan Goll. This time Malraux and Clara talked for some time and found that they had many interests in common. They discussed French history, medieval poetry, Nietzsche, and Dostoevski. During the following weeks they saw each other often, and spent many hours discussing literature and art.⁴⁵ One night Malraux took her to a bal musette, a working class dance hall which catered to a rough crowd. As a well-bred Jewish girl from a prosperous family, Clara had never been in such a place, rubbing shoulders with pimps, gigolos, and working-class men and women who were dancing to the music of accordions. They left the bal musette in the early morning and entered a small side street. Several men followed them out of the bar and purposely bumped into them. The men continued on for a few seconds then turned and fired at the couple. Malraux shoved the girl behind him, pulled out his revolver, and fired at the men. The assailants fled, but Malraux had been wounded in the hand. They found a hydrant where Clara washed his hand, then hailed a taxi and went to her house so she could disinfect his hand and apply a bandage. This was the first of many adventures that they would share.⁴⁶

Clara had been planning a vacation in Italy and Malraux told her that he would accompany her, unbeknownst to her mother. As soon as Mme. Goldschmidt finished her farewell to her daughter and left

⁴⁵Clara Malraux, *Apprendre à vivre*, vol. 1 of *Le Bruit de nos pas* (Paris: Grasset, 1964), 268, 271-272.

⁴⁶*ibid.*, 277-283.

the train compartment, Malraux joined her. This was the first time that Malraux had left France. Once they arrived in Florence, they sent a telegram to her mother announcing their engagement. Unlike Clara, Malraux did not have an extensive background in Italian art, but he immersed himself in Renaissance culture while in Florence. He spoke French only, but she served as translator, being fluent in French, German, English, and Italian. One day they received a telegram from Mme. Goldschmidt ordering Clara to return to Paris immediately without her companion. They ignored the telegram and continued touring until their money ran out. After seeing the sights in Florence and Sienna, they went to Venice, then returned to Paris.⁴⁷

The Goldschmidt family was angry because a friend had informed them of Clara's vacation with a young man. Malraux asked his father for permission to marry Clara, but Fernand Malraux would not give his approval. Because André Malraux was only twenty years old, his father's permission was required by law. Once Fernand Malraux realized that his son was determined to marry Clara, he relented and granted his permission. André Malraux and Clara were married on 28 October 1921. They left on their honeymoon for Czechoslovakia and Germany, where André met Clara's relatives and where he became acquainted firsthand with German expressionist painting and films such as The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari. After brief visits to Bruges and Ostend, they returned to Paris and moved into

⁴⁷Clara Malraux, Nos vingt ans, 15-35.

the Goldschmidt home. Clara had a sizable dowry, so the couple lived a carefree life, traveling whenever they pleased. Malraux continued to dabble in publishing, but he quit his position with Kra because it interfered with his new life style.⁴⁸

Malraux's life was temporarily disrupted when he was ordered to report for military duty in Strasbourg. Clara was determined to do something about his induction, so she confided in her younger brother, Paul Goldschmidt. He had worked at one of the family businesses in Strasbourg and had good connections there. When the time came, André, Clara, and Paul left for Strasbourg together. Upon arriving, Paul went to see a doctor he knew, in order to see what could be done about the situation. Meanwhile, Malraux found himself assigned to the hussars, even though he was 5 feet 11 inches--the maximum prescribed height for a French hussar being 5 feet 3 inches. As Clara observed, because "he was the tallest hussar in France and Navarre," it was impossible for him to find a uniform that fit.⁴⁹ His uniform breeches fit him like short pants. In order to avoid training, Malraux complained of heart trouble--he was ingesting large doses of granulated caffeine--and thus managed to spend his days sitting around the barracks. In the meantime, Paul's doctor friend discreetly discussed Malraux's case with the major in command of the unit. The officer interviewed Malraux, then told him: "A man such as you can do better than loitering around here."

⁴⁸ibid., 36-39, 42-54.

⁴⁹ibid., 107.

The major signed Malraux's discharge papers and the three-week farce came to an end.⁵⁰

Malraux still hoped to make his reputation as a writer, and he offered several stories to Jacques Rivière, editor of the prestigious journal, La Nouvelle Revue Française. Rivière rejected the manuscripts, telling Malraux that one day when he had written serious works, he would regret the publication of insignificant works of fantasy.⁵¹ Nevertheless, Rivière did publish Malraux's book reviews in the journal. Although Malraux's earliest fictional attempts lacked depth and substance, his critical writings and prefaces were more mature. He would write dozens of articles for La Nouvelle Revue Française over the next forty years.

Malraux and his wife lived a carefree life until early 1923. Like his father, Malraux was fascinated with stock market speculation. He had invested most of his wife's money in stocks, Mexican mining stocks in particular. On the advice of his father, Malraux had attended a meeting of the Parisian shareholders of a Mexican mining company. Several members of the Pedrazzini family, the owners of the mines, had attended the meeting. Favorably impressed, Malraux had decided to invest heavily in these volatile stocks. The young couple's fortune had grown rapidly until early 1923, when they learned that they were ruined. The Goldschmidt family was furious. They regarded Malraux as an adventurer, a

⁵⁰ibid., 105-108.

⁵¹Clara Malraux, Nos Vingt Ans, 57.

careless young freebooter with no future. But Malraux formed a plan of action. He had been doing research on Kmer sculpture and archaeological sites in Cambodia. Good specimens of Kmer sculpture brought hefty sums on the art market. After a discussion of the project with his father, who had always been something of a gambler, Malraux obtained a promise of limited financial backing. The couple sold many of the art works they had collected and began to make preparations for a trip to Cambodia. Their adventure would change their lives.⁵²

⁵²ibid., 88-89, 109-110, 115-116.

CHAPTER III

FIRST STAY IN INDOCHINA

No scholar thus far has investigated Malraux's Indochina experiences utilizing all of the available evidence. This period of his life was shrouded in obscurity until the publication of Langlois's excellent study, André Malraux: The Indochina Adventure, in 1966. Langlois was the first scholar to thoroughly examine the newspapers that Malraux published with Paul Monin in Saigon.¹ Although the newspapers are a mine of information on Malraux's career in Indochina, Langlois did not consult government documents that would have shed light on Malraux's activities in Indochina (They may have been unavailable at the time). Furthermore, when the Langlois book appeared, only the first volume of Clara Malraux's memoirs had been published. Her reminiscences of the Indochina period appeared in later volumes of her memoirs. Without these volumes, there were significant lacunae for a scholar attempting to write the story of André Malraux's oriental experiences. Perhaps because information on various aspects of Malraux's life was lacking, Langlois occasionally lapsed into the dubious practice of using Malraux's

¹ André Vandegans consulted a few of the newspapers in La Jeunesse littéraire d'André Malraux: Essai sur l'inspiration farfelue (J.J. Pauvert, 1964).

novel La Voie royale as historical evidence for the expedition to Banteay Srei.

Curtis Cate, in his biography entitled Malraux, utilized Clara Malraux's memoirs, but he did not consult the available government documents. Cate utilized some of the newspapers from Indochina, but he did not delve into them thoroughly. Hue-Tam Ho Tai, in her Radicalism and the Origins of the Vietnamese Revolution, devoted several pages to Malraux's Indochina experiences; but in the context of her study, his involvement in the Vietnamese political struggle was only an episode. Heretofore, no scholar has written an adequate account of Malraux's Asian experiences utilizing all of the relevant evidence.

After losing most of his wife's money in the stock market, Malraux was anxious to recoup his losses. His audacious proposal to travel to Cambodia took his wife Clara completely by surprise. He asked her one day if she knew about the ancient road that pilgrims used when traveling from northern Europe to Santiago de Compostela in Galicia. She was puzzled by his question and told him no. He explained that there were many cathedrals along the pilgrimage route in France and Spain. In addition to the great churches, however, there were smaller churches and religious sanctuaries, though many had vanished. He told her that along the royal road to Angkor Wat, great temples were constructed during the centuries when the Kmer empire flourished. Although the large temples had been described and catalogued by European explorers and scholars, he

suspected that there were smaller temples as yet undiscovered. He told her: "we will go to some small Cambodian temple, we will remove some statues, and we will sell them in America" ² Malraux explained that the sale of some artifacts would provide them enough money to live on for two or three years. There was a ready market for Asian antiquities in Europe and America. It appeared that one of the publishers that Malraux had worked with for two years, Daniel Henry Kahnweiler, was an experienced art dealer with good connections. He found several colleagues abroad who were interested in acquiring Kmer statues and who began to correspond with Malraux. ³

Because of the rainy season in southeast Asia, Malraux decided not to leave France until October 1923. This delay gave him several months to research Kmer sculpture and to obtain the necessary authorization for the expedition. He carefully examined the Kmer artifacts at the Musée Guimet. In his reading on the subject, he found that a Chinese emissary sent to Cambodia in 1296 had reported that there were numerous Buddhist sanctuaries, rest houses, and asylums for pilgrims along the Royal Way. Malraux found valuable information in the Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient. Financed by the French colonial administration, the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient had been making an inventory of the

²Clara Malraux, Nos vingt ans, 112.

³Ibid., 111-112, 117; Idem, "Jeune homme et homme jeune," La Nouvelle Revue des Deux Mondes, no. 11 (November 1977): 342.

historical ruins in Indochina. The institute supported scholarly research and was engaged in the preservation of archaeological sites throughout Indochina. The school published information about its activities in a bulletin, where Malraux found a section written by archaeologist Henri Parmentier. In his extensive article, Parmentier discussed an abandoned temple called Banteay Srei. In 1914 an official in the colonial geological service stumbled upon the temple in a jungle eighteen kilometers northeast of Angkor. Two years later Parmentier visited the site and conducted an initial survey. Most of the structures had collapsed and jungle vegetation had reclaimed most of the ruin. But the Kmer sculptures that remained intact were of excellent workmanship. Banteay Srei was only one of many abandoned temples in the region. Malraux found that it was not listed on the official inventory of the monuments of Cambodia.⁴

Although there were regulations concerning the preservation of historical monuments in Indochina, they were loosely worded and vague. Historical sites that had been officially surveyed and classified were protected by the colonial administration.⁵ For ruins not on the official inventory of monuments, there were no clear guidelines. Europeans in French Indochina had frequently acquired valuable artifacts and sent them to museums or art markets in

⁴Cate, Malraux, 74-75; Henri Parmentier, "L'art d'Indravarman," Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient XIX (1919), 66-91; Langlois, Indochina Adventure, 5-6.

⁵"Arrêté protégeant Immeubles et Monuments historiques situés en Indochine," Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient I (1901), 76-78.

Europe. The Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient had urged the colonial administration to stop the sale of antiquities, but to little effect. During the postwar period, however, the removal and sale of Cambodian antiquities had roused the Governor General of Indochina. A special commission was appointed to examine the problem, and to make proposals for new regulations for the conservation of the archaeological treasures of Indochina. The governor general issued a decree in August 1923, which tightened the regulations, but this decree did not appear in the Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient until several months later, after Malraux was in Indochina.⁶

In order to camouflage his activities in Cambodia, Malraux wanted official sanction for his expedition. He had often discussed oriental art with Paul Boyer at the Ecole des langues orientales vivante, and Jules Hackin, director of the Musée Guimet. Malraux went to see Hackin, telling him of his desire to study Kmer art in Cambodia and offering to give a lecture when he returned to France. Impressed with Malraux's knowledge of the subject, Hackin granted Malraux's request for a meeting with the museum board. Malraux explained to the board members that he wished to mount an expedition at his own expense. They endorsed Malraux's proposal, and Hackin wrote a letter of recommendation to Louis Finot, director of the Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient in Hanoi.⁷ The colonial office then gave its permission, allowing Malraux to go to Indochina

⁶Langlois, Indochina Adventure, 7-8; Lacouture, Malraux, 57.

⁷Clara Malraux, Nos vingt ans, 115; Cate, Malraux, 75.

on an archaeological mission at his own expense. Upon his arrival, Malraux would be obliged to inform the colonial authorities and the Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient about his intentions. The colonial authorities would then help Malraux to find peasants owning buffalo carts in which to carry his supplies. The colonial office stipulated that the expedition could have no commercial purpose and that Malraux could not take possession of any artifacts that he might find.⁸

After obtaining the necessary authorization, Malraux and his wife purchased necessary supplies for the trip. They bought quinine tablets to prevent malaria, a serum for snakebites, and a syringe, which neither of them knew how to use. The variety of snakebite remedies was confusing, so they just took a gamble and bought one anyway. Clara had her mother's seamstress make tropical suits for both of them. In order to remove the artifacts they hoped to find, they bought a dozen saws from the Manufacture d'armes et de cycles de Saint-Etienne. They were hoping that the saws would cut stone. André convinced Clara that they could use another hand on the expedition; so he invited his childhood friend, Louis Chevasson, to join them in the adventure. André and Clara agreed that Chevasson would follow them and meet them later.⁹ They had bought first-class tickets on the aptly-named Angkor, but there was no money for

⁸Clara Malraux, Nos vingt ans, 120; Langlois, Indochina Adventure, 10-11; Vandegans, La Jeunesse littéraire, 217-221; André Malraux, "Revue de la presse locale," L'Indochine, 17 July 1925.

⁹Clara Malraux, Nos vingt ans, 120-121, 115.

the return trip. Clara later wrote: "We left, having burned our ships."¹⁰

They sailed from Marseilles on Friday, 13 October 1925. They traveled in first-class with the administrators and their families, while soldiers and French settlers, known as colons, were given the deck below. The Asian passengers--Chinese, Vietnamese, and others--were in the steerage. The ship stopped at Port Said before passing through the Suez Canal. The next stop was Djibouti, in French Somaliland, where they were delayed because of a fire on the Angkor. They sailed across the Indian Ocean, stopping at Columbo, Ceylon, and Penang, Malaya. At Penang they went ashore with a civil servant and his wife. After watching a Chinese puppet show in the rain, the group was crossing a small stone bridge when Clara slipped and fell into an open sewer, which was swollen by the rain. She was swept along by the strong current for fifty yards, toward a long tunnel. Just before the tunnel entrance, André and the others reached down towards her from another bridge and pulled her out of the water. This was her first Asian adventure. In Singapore they spent a night at the Raffles, in a bungalow where houseboys kept large, overhead fans in constant motion by lines attached to their toes. Clara was fascinated with the enormous brown insects she found in the bathroom. She called them cicadas until André examined them and told her that they were cockroaches. The ship

¹⁰Ibid., 118.

docked at Saigon, but they did not linger there. Their destination was Hanoi, the administrative capital of Indochina, where the Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient was headquartered.¹¹

The director of the school was away on a trip, so Malraux made an appointment with the acting director, Léonard Aurousseau, a professor of Chinese, who had written about the history of southern China and Vietnam. During the interview, Aurousseau warned Malraux that the region north of the Angkor complex was covered with tropical jungle, and that Europeans seldom visited the area. There were tribes living there who did not accept French sovereignty. Indeed, two researchers from the school had been murdered in this wild territory. Malraux told the acting director that he intended to study the temple ruins along the ancient road, regardless of the dangers. Aurousseau explained that the northern stretches of the old road were buried in the jungle, completely overgrown with vegetation. Furthermore, the governor general was promulgating a policy, long advocated by the school, that all artifacts found in the jungle be left where they were found. The researcher would then send a report to the school, where the director of archaeology would determine what course of action to take. Malraux argued that in the past, scholars and explorers on authorized expeditions had been allowed to remove antiquities and donate them to French museums. The acting director advised

¹¹Ibid., 122-128.

Malraux that the ambiguities in previous administrative decrees were being rectified. Furthermore, Aourousseau told him that the school would validate the certificate of requisition only after Malraux signed an agreement reiterating that he would bear all the costs of the expedition. The school would take partial credit for his findings. Malraux had no choice but to sign the document.¹²

The head of the archaeology department, Henri Parmentier, was much more amiable than the punctilious acting director Aourousseau. Parmentier was impressed with Malraux's knowledge of Kmer sculpture, and told Clara that her young husband was "so young . . . , and so rich . . . and so disinterested." Clara wondered what Parmentier would have thought if he could have peeked into their wallet and seen how little money they really had to undertake their makeshift expedition.¹³ Parmentier insisted on accompanying the couple all the way to Angkor. First they traveled to Saigon, where Louis Chevasson was waiting for them. Then the party steamed up the swollen Mekong river towards Pnom Penh. They arrived at Pnom Penh on 4 December 1923, and for three days they explored the town, examining Kmer sculptures at the local museum. They also

¹²Langlois, *Indochina Adventure*, 17-18; "L'Affaire Malraux," *L'Impartial*, 9 October 1924; "Les Déclarations de M. André Malraux," *L'Impartial*, 16 September 1924. Langlois occasionally used thoughts and statements from characters in Malraux's novel *La voie royale* as evidence of Malraux's thinking. In his discussion of Malraux's interview with Aourousseau, Langlois inserted a quote from the novel, in which one of the characters had an interview similar to that of Malraux. Langlois maintained that the thoughts of the fictional character must have reflected Malraux's own reasoning in a similar situation. See *Indochina Adventure*, p. 19. Unfortunately, Langlois employed this technique on several occasions.

¹³Clara Malraux, *Nos vingt ans*, 134-135.

purchased equipment for the trek: canvas for a portable shelter, mosquito netting, rubber buckets for washing, stoves, cooking utensils, hammers, and pick-axes. In addition, they carried a couple of revolvers, and Clara wore a ring that contained a dose of potassium cyanide. They had no idea that the police (the sûreté) had them under surveillance and was keeping a close watch on all of their actions and movements.¹⁴

While in Pnom Penh, Parmentier's servant introduced André and Clara to a young Cambodian named Xa. He claimed that he had no fear of the jungle; moreover, he could cook European-style food, bake bread, sew, and iron. They decided to hire Xa as an interpreter and servant. He helped them to find large, Chinese, camphor-wood chests that were as long as coffins. They would be useful for transporting their archaeological finds down the Mekong River to Saigon. As they were preparing to depart for Siem Reap, a policeman rushed over to warn Malraux that Xa had just been released from prison for gambling. Within earshot of Xa, the sergeant said that the fellow was an undesirable. After the officer left, Xa seemed apprehensive. Malraux told Xa: "I could care less about what the sergeant told me. Behave well with us, that's all I ask. And here is an advance on your wages." Although Clara admired the gesture, Parmentier seemed to frown upon it.¹⁵

¹⁴ibid., 134-137; AFFAIRE MALRAUX-CHEVASSION, Direction de la Sûreté-Protectorat du Cambodge, Rapport annuel du service de la Sûreté, 1 July 1923-30 June 1924, 7 F 15, carton 2, Centre des Archives d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence.

¹⁵Clara Malraux, Nos vingt ans, 135-136.

Accompanied by Parmentier, they left Pnom Penh on 7 December 1923, and traveled by river-boat to Siem Reap. The curator of the Angkor complex had a car waiting for them when they disembarked. A police sergeant named Crémazy accompanied them. They were taken to the home of the curator, Henri Marichal, who welcomed them and offered them drinks. The host was very gracious and he assured his guests that he would provide them with a guide, buffalo carts, and drivers. After a couple of rounds of drinks, the conversation became very lively. In high spirits, the party loaded into the car and proceeded around the circuit of temples and palaces in the Angkor complex. After a tour of several monuments, they retired to a bungalow that was reserved for visiting Europeans. For several days they examined the magnificent ruins of Angkor. Unbeknownst to Malraux, however, Sergeant Crémazy still was keeping them under surveillance. He warned Parmentier that Malraux was a suspicious character, but the old archaeologist shrugged it off.¹⁶

Once Crémazy had found them four buffalo carts, a guide, drivers for the carts, and three horses for the Europeans, the Malraux party was ready to leave. Malraux had hired an extra guide and several servants to help around camp. André, Clara, and Chevasson rode on small, muscular horses at the head of the column, accompanied by Xa and the guides. Although Clara was an

¹⁶ibid., 139-140; "Un Vol de bas-reliefs à Angkor," L'Impartial, 21 July 1924.

experienced horsewoman, she surmised that André and Chevasson had probably never ridden anything but wooden horses on a merry-go-round. André was tall and his feet almost reached the ground. The small horses often expelled air, which loosened girths and made their saddles turn. At midday they stopped for lunch, and Xa prepared a quick meal. He smoked out an enormous ant hill, then used it as an earthen oven for baking bread. After their lunch-break, they pressed on until they found a village with a hut for travelers. They shared a hut with an itinerant Chinese merchant, who spent the entire night in an opium-induced reverie. In the morning, the guides and drivers joined the villagers who were splashing about in a lagoon nearby.¹⁷

They proceeded towards the area where they hoped to find the lost temple of Banteay Srei. The jungle grew more dense as they entered a region where villages were few and far between. When they reached the village of Rohal, Xa questioned the inhabitants about the temple of Banteay Srei, but they claimed to know nothing about it. Finally, Xa spoke with an old man who remembered some ruins in the jungle. After Malraux gave the elder some money, he agreed to lead the party to the ruins the next day.¹⁸

At dawn, the old man and his sons led André, Clara, Chevasson, and Xa along a small path. As they marched farther into the jungle,

¹⁷"Une Affaire délicate," L'EchoduCambodge, 19 July 1924; Clara Malraux, Nos vingt ans, 141-146.

¹⁸Ibid., 146-147.

the trail finally disappeared as the vegetation grew thicker. The atmosphere became dense and steamy. The three Europeans had to dismount and lead their horses, while the old man and his sons used machetes to cut a path through the thick foliage. After they had trudged along for some time, the old man suddenly stopped and held up his machete. Through the opening in the bushes, they could see a ruined courtyard, and beyond it the temple. Two of the walls had partially collapsed, but the other two were intact. Clara was so mesmerized by the sight of the pink, decorated walls, that she absentmindedly walked forward until she saw an emerald-green snake laying at her feet. The creature raised up momentarily, then slithered under one of the temple stones.¹⁹

Once they had examined the ruins closely, they could see that most of the bas-reliefs were eroded. Some areas of the site were jammed with debris and thick vegetation. But two of the walls that abutted the stone towers were in good condition. In the niches of the walls, they saw a number of guardian goddesses. These superb relief sculptures were well-preserved, but removing them was a problem. Malraux and Chevasson found that the compass saws would not cut stone. After they ruined the saws in their fruitless attempts, they tried another technique the next day. Malraux and Chevasson moved one of the slabs with crowbars, then stuck chisels in the crack. They were able to get leverage on the stone, and

¹⁹Ibid., 148-149.

gradually they moved it forward. It was slow work. Finally they moved the stone out far enough to tie ropes around it. Then Clara and the two men pulled on the rope until the statue toppled and fell to the ground. They were worn out by the effort, and at this stage of the operation they had no help. Xa and their guide waited for them outside the temple because they believed that spirits lived in the inner sanctuary. By the time they reached their camp at Rohal, they were exhausted.²⁰

Fortunately, they were able to hire the men of the village to cut a trail to the ruins. After three days of back-breaking labor, they had removed seven large stones from the wall and several smaller pieces from the towers. When the buffalo carts arrived with the camphor-wood chests, the guides and drivers helped to load the precious artifacts onto the carts. Now that their mission was completed, they returned to Rohal. The next day they started back to Angkor, but they knew that the French officials there would be surprised to see them returning so soon. Once they arrived at the bungalow at Angkor, they hastily decided to tell the officials that Clara was having a bout of dysentery. Unfortunately, a young Vietnamese doctor appeared, and he brought out a massive hypodermic syringe. Clara resisted at first, but she finally allowed the doctor to treat her, though she was not actually sick. They remained at Angkor for several days, then they loaded the chests

²⁰ibid., 149-153.

onto trucks in order to transport their cargo to Siem Reap. On 22 December 1923, their chests were loaded onto the riverboat Hainan for the trip back to Pnom Penh. Clara and André had no way of knowing that the sûreté had already been fully informed about their activities. They were low on funds, and they wanted to get to Saigon as soon as possible, so that they could plan the next leg of their journey. With the sculptures in hand, Malraux thought he could convince one of his contacts to wire him the money for the trip to America. They rested peacefully that night aboard the vessel, which docked at Pnom Penh early in the morning, 24 December 1923.²¹

After they had slept for several hours, they were awakened by a knock on the door. The police were asking them to open up. André and Clara told them to wait for a moment while they dressed. Outside three policemen in plain clothes asked the couple to follow them to the hold of the vessel. They had already picked up Chevasson from his cabin. In the hold, the policemen ordered them to open their chests. After examining the contents, the officers told them that they had a warrant for their arrest. The court at Pnom Penh was seizing their artifacts, and the three of them would have to remain in the capital. The policemen allowed them to return to their cabins, but reminded them that they were under house arrest. The authorities did not jail the suspects, but they were ordered to remain in Pnom Penh. André and Clara stayed at the Hotel Manolis,

²¹Ibid., 153-159; AFFAIRE MALRAUX-CHEVASSON, Direction de la Sûreté, Cambodge.

which would be their residence for some time as the investigation dragged on.²²

Malraux and his companions had no way of knowing that their expedition had been doomed from the start. During their earlier stay in Pnom Penh, the police already had them under surveillance. The Cambodian guide that Sergeant Crémazy found for them was a police informer. Upon their return from the jungle, the sûreté had been notified that they were transporting bas-reliefs taken from the ruins at Banteay Srei. The sûreté informed the director of the Musée Albert Sarraut in Pnom Penh, M. Groslier, that they were bringing him Kmer sculptures for an expert analysis. In his report, later sent to the court at Pnom Penh, M. Groslier said that the sculptures were "exceptional works of art dating from the eleventh century," which were in an extraordinary state of preservation. Whoever had chosen these artifacts must have had a great deal of expertise in classical Kmer art.²³ Although Malraux had proved to be a fine amateur archaeologist, he had played into the hands of the colonial authorities. The expedition was a brash, naive venture, which would eventually be blown all out of proportion in the newspapers.

On 5 January 1924, the newspaper L'Echo du Cambodge published the first story about the case. An anonymous source in the French administration had provided the newspaper a detailed account

²²Clara Malraux, Nos vingt ans, 159-163.

²³M. Groslier is quoted in the document AFFAIRE MALRAUX-CHEVASSON, Direction de la Sûreté, Cambodge; "Chronique: Musée de Pnom Penh," Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient XXIV (1924), 311.

of the affair. Overall, the article was an accurate report, and it ended with the expectation that the authorities would deal with the young men in a rigorous manner.²⁴ Three days later, an article on the affair appeared in the government-supported daily L'Impartial in Saigon. After quoting a section of the article from L'Echo du Cambodge, editor Henri Chavigny suggested that the culprits had hoped to make a lot of money from the statues they had taken. Chavigny recommended that the colonial administration take measures to insure the protection of archaeological sites in Indochina.²⁵

André and Clara had a great deal of time on their hands in Pnom Penh. In the evenings they explored the city, and recited poetry to one another from memory. When they found that Pnom Penh had an excellent library, they spent their days reading books on history, philosophy, travel, and collections of letters. Often they would debate the things they had read with all "the passion of medieval theologians."²⁶ Because of the gossip about their case, they had attained a high degree of notoriety in the colony. When they danced in the hotel ball room, other couples moved away from them as if they were pariahs. Although André occasionally received letters from his mother or father, Clara heard from her mother only once.

²⁴"L'Affaire des ruines," L'EchoduCambodge, 5 January 1924.

²⁵"Les Vandales et pillards des ruines," L'Impartial, 8 January 1924.

²⁶Clara Malraux, Nos vingt ans, 168.

Mme. Goldschmidt advised her daughter to get a divorce, then she stopped writing altogether.²⁷

By the time they had spent three months at the hotel, they were living there on credit. Their cash was almost gone. They had no friends in the colony. At this point, Clara decided that one of them would have to return to France in order to get some money to pay their lawyers and to cover their debt at the hotel. If one of them were in France, it might be possible to rally their friends in their support and to do something to help the others left in Indochina. Clara decided to fake a suicide attempt, in order to arouse the sympathy of the authorities and obtain her release. The Cambodian Xa was still with them, although they could no longer afford to pay him. She sent Xa to a pharmacy to buy two tubes of phenobarbital. She and André agreed on what they considered to be a sufficient dose, enough of the sedative to call a doctor, but not enough to kill her. According to their plan, he would return from the dining room and find her on the bed. Then he would have her rushed to the hospital. A short time after she took the pills, Malraux returned to their room from downstairs. But the water near the sink had dissolved the remaining pills, and when he saw the empty tubes he was alarmed. He ran out into the hallway crying for a doctor. She was taken to the hospital where the doctors gave her an emetic. Xa was very upset because he had bought her the medicine without

²⁷*Ibid.*, 167-171, 187.

knowing about their scheme. She soon found out that despite her phony suicide attempt, she remained under arrest.²⁸

Throughout their time of waiting in Pnom Penh, Xa remained with them without pay. He found odd jobs around the city and came to visit Clara every day after work. With each visit he brought her a present, such as a cake, a piece of fruit, or a flower. Once he brought a baby girl for Clara to see. He offered to share his small wage with André and Clara, and it was difficult for them to persuade their Cambodian friend to keep his money. One day he asked why that had not told him about their plan to acquire Kmer sculptures in the first place. She tried to explain the matter without hurting his feelings. Xa said that he could have found some sculptures for them without anyone finding out. He asked if they still wanted some. She told him yes. A week later Xa brought them two fine pieces of Kmer sculpture that were around two feet tall. Eventually they took the pieces back to Europe, but were later forced to sell them when they needed the money.²⁹

Clara remained in the hospital for three months. She was afflicted with dengue, a tropical disease that causes high fever and severe pain in the joints and the back. André suffered from fevers and chills as well, and his complexion appeared yellow and pasty. Because they could not afford to pay their hotel bill, the manager rented their room to someone else and left their suitcases in the

²⁸ibid., 173-175.

²⁹ibid., 181-182.

hall. Fortunately, Malraux was allowed to sleep in his wife's hospital room, but he had to take his meals elsewhere. Although he had lost the room at the hotel, the manager agreed to let Malraux run a tab at the restaurant.³⁰

Despite their predicament, André and Clara continued their reading and discussions. When Clara was not feverish, they would forget the impending trial and discuss thinkers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Emile Durkheim, or Lucien Lévy-Bruhl. Although their conversations usually dealt with art, history, or philosophy, they gradually became preoccupied with the colonial society in which they were stranded. They remembered the comments they had heard aboard the Angkor, before ever setting foot in the colonies. Colons and petty civil servants spoke freely about striking their servants to insure obedience, or holding back part of their servants' wages in order to keep them in service. André and Clara had seen how the Vietnamese women, normally garrulous and animated in the market places, would become silent in the presence of Europeans. During the months they had spent in Indochina, they had heard stories of abortive uprisings and mutinies by the Vietnamese, and the brutal repression which invariably followed these violent incidents. They heard about blood-curdling atrocities the sûreté committed. They learned that French administrators and rich colons used loans from the Banque d'Indochine to buy up land from dispossessed peasants.

³⁰ibid., 175-176.

When peasants needed money in emergencies, they had to depend on money lenders. If the taxes and exorbitant interest payments were more than they could bear, then French officials could seize their land and put it up for auction. They found out about the tens of thousands of Asians drafted for the labor brigades during World War I. Thousands of these men died in France, serving a nation to which they would never truly belong.³¹

In their wide-ranging discussions of colonial affairs, Clara noticed that André's growing interest in the plight of the Indochinese masses was leading him to a social awareness that she had never before seen in him. Both of them were repelled by the smug arrogance of the colons, with their attitude of racial superiority. It was obvious to André and Clara that the colons would never regard Asians as equals, regardless of what advocates of assimilation might think in Paris. The colons regarded themselves as conquerors, and would continue to perpetuate their domination of the native peoples of Indochina. In this confrontation between the colons, who conducted themselves as conquerors, and the abject masses, Clara wrote "we ranged ourselves on the side of the vanquished."³² Now that they had become social outcasts while awaiting trial, they felt that they had the same enemies as the

³¹Ibid., 155, 177-180.

³²Ibid., 177.

native peoples. Clara wrote later: "Almost in spite of ourselves, we had discovered Asia in its humiliation."³³

The investigation of the Malraux-Chevasson case lasted for more than six months. The first examining magistrate, M. Bartet, gathered depositions and examined police reports in order to determine whether the prosecutor had a solid case. Judge Bartet sent Henri Parmentier to Banteay Srei to examine the site and determine the extent of the damage. Parmentier brought a photographer along with him. They were joined later by Louis Finot, the director of the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient. After having much of the area cleared of underbrush, Parmentier and Finot carefully studied the temple ruin, and concluded that it was an extraordinary example of eleventh-century Kmer art. They found inscriptions and some fine sculptures that still remained. Finot ordered that restoration work begin immediately. Their report confirmed that the ruins at Banteay Srei were exceptional, more valuable from an artistic and scholarly point of view than Parmentier had realized in his cursory survey of 1916.³⁴

The investigation dragged on for six months, primarily because Bartet had asked for information on Malraux and Chevasson from the Paris police. Neither of them had a criminal record. Malraux was the main focus of the investigation. Judging by the information that

³³*ibid.*, 177-180; see quote, *ibid.*, 177.

³⁴Langlois, *Indochina Adventure*, 26-27; "Chronique: H. Parmentier," *Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient* XXIV (1924), 307-308.

came to light during the trial, the investigators were interested in Malraux's relationships within the bohemian-artistic world of Montmartre and Montparnasse. Malraux had written for avant-garde magazines that published articles by Bolsheviks and anarchists. A 1920 issue of Action had in fact been seized by the police. Even though Malraux had never written an overtly political article, it could appear suspicious to some that he helped to edit a magazine that seemed to encourage Communism and other subversive ideas. The police unearthed a great deal of biographical information on Malraux, including his marriage into a well-to-do German-Jewish family. Several of his friends were Jews of Germanic background, including the art dealer who found prospective buyers for Kmer sculptures. After his marriage, it appeared that Malraux had no visible means of support, preferring instead to live on his wife's money. He lost this money by gambling in risky stock ventures. Even though Malraux had no previous criminal record, his background would probably appear unsavory to a conservative judge.³⁵

All of the information gathered by the Paris Police was sent to the Colonial Office, which sorted the material to be sent to Pnom Penh. A judicial dossier, which included innocuous biographical material, was provided to both the prosecutor and the defense. The

³⁵Langlois, Indochina Adventure, 27-30; although the police dossier remains closed to the public, several newspapers published a great deal of information based on trial testimony: Camille Devilar, "Cette fois L'Impartial exagère," Le Courrier Saigonnais, 25 September 1924; "L'Homme à la Rose," Le Matin (Paris), 3 August 1924; "L'Affaire Malraux," L'Impartial, 11 October 1924.

Colonial Office prepared a second file containing information of a political nature, such as Malraux's association with subversive publications. This second file was given only to the trial judge and the prosecutor. It appears that the examining magistrate, M. Bartet, had some doubts about the government's case against Malraux. The administration, therefore, put a new magistrate in charge of the inquiry. Shortly thereafter, the administration replaced the second examining magistrate with a third. This third magistrate recommended that Malraux and Chevasson be indicted.³⁶

Fortunately, all charges against Clara Malraux were dropped. She had been so upset during her second interview with the examining magistrate that he had handed her his handkerchief so that she could wipe her eyes. After the indictments against her husband and Chevasson were handed down, the magistrate came to visit her at the hospital. He read her a statement, which maintained that because a wife was obligated to go anywhere with her husband, she was not culpable in the affair and she would not be prosecuted. Clara told André to send a cable to inform her mother that the charges had been dropped, and that she needed money to pay her debts and buy a ticket for France. Clara's family responded quickly and sent her a ticket, a check for hospital bills, and some cash. When Clara left Pnom Penh on 11 July 1924, she was so weak from fever and a twelve-day hunger strike that she had to be carried out

³⁶Langlois, *Indochina Adventure*, 30-31; André Malraux, "Chronique de Saigon," *L'Indochine enchaînée*, 12 December 1925.

of the hospital on a stretcher. An ambulance carried her to the riverboat bound for Saigon. A Cambodian nurse that Clara had befriended accompanied her all the way to Saigon. While Clara sailed back to France, her husband's case finally came to trial.³⁷

It was on 16 July 1924, seven months after their arrest, that the trial of Malraux and Chevasson began in Pnom Penh. The case aroused so much interest that the courtroom was full by 7:30 a.m. A legal agent of the colonial administration attended the trial. When the proceedings began, the public prosecutor, Maître De Parceveaux, presented evidence that the chests containing the sculptures had been addressed to an import-export firm in Saigon. Furthermore, he had depositions showing that Malraux had already been negotiating with potential buyers before he ever left for Indochina. In his remarks, the prosecutor portrayed Malraux as a lazy ne'er-do-well, an adventurer who deserved the maximum penalty. If the court made an example of these two young men, it might serve to deter others from attempting similar crimes in the future.³⁸

Malraux and Chevasson had previously agreed that one of them should accept sole responsibility for the offense. Because Malraux knew many more people in Paris than his old friend, the two decided

³⁷Clara Malraux, Nos vingt ans, 192-197; AFFAIRE MALRAUX-CHEVASSON, Direction de la Sûreté, Cambodge.

³⁸"Une Affaire délicate," L'EchoduCambodge, 19 July 1924; H. de Lachevrotière, "Protégeons les trésors artistiques et archéologiques de l'Indochine," L'Impartial, 22 July 1924; "Un Vol," L'Impartial, 21 July 1924; weeks before the trial, Malraux's lawyer told the accused that investigators in Paris had found that Malraux had been in contact with art collectors interested in purchasing Kmer sculpture; see Clara Malraux, Nos vingt ans, 170-171.

that Chevasson would take the blame. If Malraux won his freedom, then he would be in a position to help Chevasson.³⁹ Therefore, when Judge Jodin questioned Chevasson, he insisted that he was indeed guilty of the crime and that he alone was culpable. On the other hand, Malraux denied any responsibility for the theft of the sculptures. While Chevasson appeared stoic and resigned, Malraux was animated as he energetically refuted the allegations. At times he served as his own defense counsel. The prosecution characterized Malraux as an adventurer whose sole motive had been to line his pockets. In order to demonstrate that he was an educated man, and not a mere opportunist, Malraux quoted lines from the Aeneid in Latin. To show that his interest in Asian art was scholarly, he delivered a veritable lecture on Kmer sculpture. Apparently Malraux's supercilious attitude annoyed Judge Jodin, who was well known as an arrogant man with a severe temperament. Given the damning evidence that was presented by the prosecution during the trial, Malraux's defense appeared disingenuous and naive.⁴⁰

The first witness was M. Debyser, owner of the bungalow near Angkor where Malraux and Chevasson stayed. Debyser had informed the police that the Malraux party had brought heavy chests out of the jungle, and had made arrangements to transport their cargo to Siem

³⁹Ibid., 171; Clara Malraux writes that her husband was "by far the most shrewd" of the three of them. This made him the best candidate. They made this agreement long before Clara's release.

⁴⁰Lachevrotière, "Protégeons les trésors," L'Impartial, 22 July 1924; "Les Déclarations de M. André Malraux," L'Impartial, 16 September 1924; Langlois, Indochina Adventure, 33-34.

Reap. His testimony, however, was overshadowed by that of Crémazy, the former police sergeant at Siem Reap who had been promoted to chief of the internal security division at Pnom Penh. Crémazy testified that a few weeks after Malraux arrived in Indochina, the Colonial Office sent a coded telegram informing the Governor-General's office and the director of the the l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient that Malraux was a suspicious character. Police headquarters at Pnom Penh had alerted Crémazy before the Malraux party arrived at Siem Reap. Crémazy had Malraux and the others under surveillance the entire time that they were in the Angkor area. He testified further that he had warned Parmentier that Malraux was under suspicion, but the archaeologist had taken the matter lightly. Once the expedition returned from Banteay Srei, Crémazy told police headquarters in Pnom Penh that the Malraux party had chests full of bas-reliefs taken from the ruins. Crémazy testified that he had notified the authorities after Malraux and Chevasson had their cargo loaded into the riverboat at Siem Reap.⁴¹

Malraux and his lawyers were infuriated that the mysterious coded telegram as well as information of a political nature had been excluded from the judicial dossier. Only the judge and the prosecutor were given access to the incriminating material provided by the colonial office. During the cross-examination of Crémazy,

⁴¹"Un Vol," L'Impartial, 21 July 1924; Lachevrotière, "Protégeons les trésors," L'Impartial, 22 July 1924; AFFAIRE MALRAUX-CHEVASSON, Direction de la Sûreté, Cambodge.

Malraux and his lawyer asked Crémazy about the coded telegram. What did the telegram say? Why had Malraux aroused suspicion in the first place? In response to these questions, Crémazy equivocated, maintaining that he could not be more specific because the case involved sensitive internal security issues. The defense asked how a trial for pilfering an ancient ruin could have anything to do with state security. But their objections did nothing to mitigate the effect of Crémazy's testimony.⁴²

The next witness was the archaeologist Parmentier, an affable man who had taken a great liking for Malraux and his wife. He testified that Banteay Srei was an overgrown ruin in very poor condition. The sculptures, however, were excellent. The prosecutor asked Parmentier how much damage Malraux and Chevasson had done to the temple. He told the prosecutor that there was some damage in the tower walls where they had removed several sculptures; nevertheless, Parmentier added that the young men had evidently been very careful in the removal of the bas-reliefs. He observed that Malraux was a fine young scholar and a talented amateur archaeologist.⁴³ After Parmentier concluded, the policeman who had seized the sculptures on board the riverboat gave his testimony. Then came the fourteen Vietnamese and Cambodian drivers and

⁴²Lachevrotière, "Protégeons les trésors," L'Impartial, 22 July 1924; André Malraux, "Revue de la presse locale," L'Indochine, 29 June 1925; Langlois, Indochina Adventure, 34-35.

⁴³"Un Vol," L'Impartial, 21 July 1924; Lachevrotière, "Protégeons les trésors," L'Impartial, 22 July 1924.

guides who had accompanied Malraux to Banteay Srei. This concluded the first day of the trial.⁴⁴

On the second day of the trial, 17 July 1924, the defense and the prosecution presented their closing arguments. The prosecutor told the court that the facts in the case were clear, and he asked for a severe penalty in order to dissuade other from plundering the ruins of Indochina. Chevasson's lawyer simply asked for leniency for his client. He reminded the court that heretofore Chevasson had been a sober, modest individual with no previous criminal record. Malraux's lawyer, on the other hand, argued that because the temple at Banteay Srei had not been officially surveyed, classified, and listed on the official inventory of monuments, Malraux was innocent of any crime. Furthermore, the question of which agency had clear jurisdiction over historic monuments was moot. Even though Malraux's lawyer raised some interesting legal questions, Judge Jodin brushed them aside.⁴⁵

On 21 July 1924, the judge handed down the sentences. Malraux was sentenced to three years' imprisonment. Chevasson received an eighteen-month sentence. The sculptures would become the property of the French government. The lawyers for the defense quickly filed a petition for a hearing in the Court of Appeals in Saigon, and the court date was set for September. During late July,

⁴⁴"Une Affaire délicate," L'EchoduCambodge, 19 July 1924.

⁴⁵Lachevrotière, "Protégeons les trésors," L'Impartial, 22 July 1924; "L'Affaire Malraux," L'Impartial, 10 October 1924; "L'Affaire des statues," L'Echo du Cambodge, 26 July 1924.

Malraux and Chevasson left Pnom Penh and traveled to Saigon where they checked into the Hotel Continental. Some colonial jurists were surprised at the severity of the sentences, which they deemed unusually harsh, given the nature of the crime. As for Judge Jodin, he received a promotion a short time later.⁴⁶

The trial took place while Clara Malraux was returning to France. The months of stress and sickness had taken their toll: she weighed between seventy and seventy-five pounds. Her money was almost gone. Her clothes were threadbare, and they hung loosely over her emaciated body. Because the Malraux affair had been the talk of the colony, the other passengers knew who she was. When she first walked into the dining room, she saw the others raise their heads and cast malicious glances at her. She could hear them muttering under their breath. Although she was ostracized by most of the French passengers, a man who had taught French in China became her daily companion and, for a brief time, her lover. She also met Paul Monin, an activist lawyer who had on many occasions aroused the ire of the colonial authorities. He had helped to organize strikes by Vietnamese workers and had often represented Vietnamese clients in court. She remembered her Vietnamese and Cambodian friends saying that Monin was an honest and upright man who would help the poor without charging them a fee. After she

⁴⁶Lachevrotière, "Protégeons les trésors," L'Impartial, 22 July 1924; AFFAIRE MALRAUX-CHEVASSON, Direction de la Sûreté, Cambodge; Cate, Malraux, 95; Langlois, Indochina Adventure, 237.

explained the charges pending against her husband and his friend, Monin told her that he was familiar with the case. In the course of their conversations, Monin described to her the venality of colonial politics. He gave her his Paris address and asked her to contact him in a few days.⁴⁷

When the ship docked in Marseilles, Clara did not have enough cash for a train ticket to Paris. Fortunately, her friend, the French professor, left her enough money to get to Paris. Once she arrived there, she went to a cheap hotel that was managed by a former maid in the Goldschmidt home. As soon as the hotelier realized that Clara knew nothing about the outcome of the trial, she showed her some newspapers. Clara was astonished when she read that her husband had been sentenced to three years in prison. A couple of the newspaper articles consisted of misinformation about the Cambodian affair, laced with vituperative attacks on the character and lifestyle of André Malraux. The article in Le Matin described Malraux as a pretentious dandy, who kept company with strange bohemian characters. He lived in a luxurious town house with his unfortunate in-laws. The article went on to say that when the police searched his rooms at the town house, they found "barbaric" and strange artworks, Cubist and African. The anonymous journalist congratulated the Pnom Penh court for convicting this vain publicity-seeker. Clara's former maid confirmed the fact that the

⁴⁷Clara Malraux, Nos vingt ans, 203-216.

police had ransacked her mother's house and had found incriminating items.⁴⁸

When Clara visited her family the next morning, she had a stormy confrontation with her brothers. They demanded that she divorce this "good-for-nothing," who had become a criminal. Upon seeing three letters addressed to her sitting on a desk, Clara walked over to pick them up and one of her brothers gave her a resounding slap. When her mother protested, Clara used the opportunity to quickly put the letters in her purse. After arguing with her family, she realized that the police investigation had deeply upset her mother, who had been humiliated by the whole affair. Some of Mme. Goldschmidt's friends and neighbors had shunned her after the inquiry. Clara's brothers told her that investigators had asked the family if André and Clara were in contact with an oil company or a foreign intelligence agency. During the melee her mother fainted and a doctor had to be called in. Some time later, the doctor told Clara that he wanted to put Mme. Goldschmidt in a rest home, until she recovered from the effects of the recent crisis. When Clara arrived at the rest home outside of Paris, she realized that it was a trap. The rest home was for her, not for her mother. She ran away from the doctors, and made it as far as the street before she was brought

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 219-221; the article castigating Malraux is "L'Homme à la Rose," Le Matin (Paris), 3 August 1924; see also "Le Pèlerin d'Angkor," L'Intransigeant, 5 August 1924; for a sympathetic view of the affair, see "Le Poète aux statuettes," Comoedia, 3 August 1924.

back. For hours she told the doctors over and over again that she would not agree to stay there. Finally they released her.⁴⁹

Although Clara had only three francs left, she was determined to find a way to help her husband. One of the letters that Clara had stuffed in her purse at her mother's house was an offer of help from the surrealist writer André Breton. He and his wife, Simone, received Clara graciously and listened to her story. Afterward, Mme. Breton outfitted her in some decent clothes.⁵⁰ André Breton wrote an eloquent defense of Malraux, which was published in August 1924. Breton described Malraux as a passionate young man of twenty-three, who engaged in one of those "arbitrary flights of innocence that are customarily accepted in poets after they are dead." Because of a petty theft, Malraux had been condemned to three years in prison. There, he would be unable to make a contribution to French art. Breton called Malraux's early fictional writings "remarkable experiments." Commenting on the hostility of much of the Parisian press towards Malraux, Breton wrote that "the poetic fire of a modern writer and his understanding of cubist painting should not be invoked by the majority as evidence of immorality." Breton called upon his friends, and those of Malraux, to speak out in support of a young and promising writer.⁵¹

⁴⁹Clara Malraux, Nos vingt ans, 222-229.

⁵⁰*ibid.*, 232-233.

⁵¹André Breton, "Pour André Malraux," Les Nouvelles littéraires, 16 August 1924; Breton's defense of Malraux was published, with a commentary by Camille Devilar, in Le Courrier Saigonnais, 27 September 1924.

Breton was not the first to publicly defend Malraux. René-Louis Doyon, the first publisher with whom Malraux had collaborated, was infuriated by the newspaper attacks on his former colleague. A week before Breton's letter appeared, Doyon had written a letter in defense of Malraux, which was published in the newspaper L'Eclair. Doyon described Malraux as a "correct, reserved" young man with an amazing intellect. In Doyon's opinion, neither the judge at Phnom Penh, nor those who condemned Malraux in the newspapers, had any inkling of his formidable intelligence, his erudition, and his passion for art and literature. Malraux was a young artist with impeccable taste who did not deserve the harsh sentence meted out by the court. In his plea for Malraux, Doyon wanted to establish that Malraux was a man of "true character," not a mere thief.⁵² Clara read Doyon's appeal and went to visit the publisher to express her gratitude. He agreed to help her in any way to free her husband.⁵³

Clara sent a telegram to Fernand Malraux, who was living with his family in Orléans. He arrived in Paris on 9 August 1924, and offered her both cash and fatherly support. She called Paul Monin on the telephone, and he agreed to meet with her and discuss the case. Marcel Arland arrived the very day he received a telegram from Clara. Arland was an editor for the Gallimard publishing house, and a good friend of André Malraux. When this group of friends and

⁵²René-Louis Doyon, "Plaidoyer pour André Malraux," L'Eclair, 9 August 1924.

⁵³Doyon, Mémoire d'homme, 22-29; Clara Malraux, Nos vingt ans, 238.

relations gathered, Paul Monin provided a graphic account of general conditions in Indochina. Clara explained to the others that most of the evidence gathered by the police came from witnesses who were either hostile, or who knew nothing about André's talent and vocation. In a colonial environment where influence was all-important, she argued, they had been regarded as "bluffers without connections, without protection, complete unknowns whose disappearance would pass unnoticed."⁵⁴ This was the perception that she wanted to change. She drew up a petition which Arland and Breton circulated among those who sympathized with Malraux.⁵⁵

This brief petition appeared in Les Nouvelles Littéraires on 6 September 1924. The document stated that Malraux was a writer whose early works had aroused great expectations in the literary world. The signatories would regret the waste of a young talent if the punishment inflicted by the court should cut short a promising career. Many of the most famous writers in France signed the petition, including André Gide, François Mauriac, André Maurois, Max Jacob, Louis Aragon, and André Breton.⁵⁶ Copies of the petition were sent to the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior, and to Malraux's lawyers in Saigon. Other friends of Malraux wrote appeals as well. Max Jacob wrote an open letter to the newspaper L'Eclair in

⁵⁴Ibid., 235.

⁵⁵Ibid, 233-235; Marcel Arland, Ce fut ainsi (Paris: Editions Gallimard), 34-36.

⁵⁶"Pour André Malraux," Les Nouvelles Littéraires, 6 September 1924; Arland, Ce fut ainsi, 35.

which he expressed hope that an appeals court would show clemency to Malraux. In his appeal, Jacob stressed the fact that Malraux was young and spirited. Clara Malraux was gratified with the outpouring of sympathy for her husband.⁵⁷

While she orchestrated the campaign in support of her husband, Clara raised money through the sale of their remaining paintings, sculptures, rare books, and some jewelry she had inherited from her grandmother. At her request, Doyon and Breton sold virtually everything of value that André and Clara owned. Clara sent the money to her husband so that he could pay his hotel bill in Pnom Penh, as well as his legal fees. In the midst of these activities on behalf of her husband, the police sent for Clara. Her family had informed the police that she was engaging in "alarming eccentricities."⁵⁸ At police headquarters, officers told Clara that she was obviously in a confused state of mind. She would be under police surveillance. Furthermore, they told her that she should divorce her scoundrel of a husband. She replied that one day there would be a plaque marking his place of birth, and he would be "as famous as Rimbaud or Nietzsche." After this interview, the police released her.⁵⁹

During a meeting with her mother-in-law, Clara found out that André's maternal family had sold the grocery store at Bondy. Once

⁵⁷Max Jacob, "L'Affaire André Malraux," L'Eclair, 15 August 1924; Vandegans, La Jeunesse littéraire, 234-235.

⁵⁸Clara Malraux, Nos vingt ans, 240.

⁵⁹*ibid.*, 239-241, 246; quote on 240.

they found an affordable apartment, Berthe Malraux invited Clara to move in with her. Clara accepted the kind invitation and moved into a two-room apartment with André's mother, grandmother, and aunt. Her in-laws were very kind, but Clara was surprised that so many people could live in two plain rooms without carpets, armchairs, a bath, a shower, or a maid. In any case, Clara spent her days away from the apartment, talking to friends about André's appeal, and gathering signatures for the petition. Paul Monin was particularly helpful with his advice, because he was a lawyer who understood Indochina. Before returning to Saigon, Monin spoke with Clara one last time, and he assured her that he would do anything within his power to help her husband.⁶⁰

Once the newspapers from Paris arrived in Saigon, Malraux was outraged by the false and malicious statements about the affair that were appearing in the Parisian press. In the Parisian newspaper Le Matin, he found himself characterized as a fop who kept company with bohemians, and who lived off of his unfortunate Jewish in-laws. He was described as a vain publicity-seeker, a ne'er-do-well who was justly convicted for his theft of a ton of statues worth over one million francs.⁶¹ Malraux was grateful that his wife and friends in Paris were writing to defend his character.⁶² Nevertheless, several newspapers in Indochina had sensationalized

⁶⁰ibid., 243-245, 248-250.

⁶¹"L'Homme à la Rose," Le Matin, 3 August 1924.

⁶²"M. Malraux proteste," L'Impartial, 17 September 1924.

the affair, among them the government-subsidized Saigon daily, L'Impartial. During the trial of Malraux and Chevasson in July, the editor of L'Impartial, Henri Chavigny, had attacked the two as vandals and thieves who had looted the Angkor ruins. In the photographs that Chavigny included with one of his editorials, there was a picture of a temple at Angkor Wat, not Banteay Srei. One of the articles dealing with the case was entitled "A theft of bas-reliefs from Angkor." Chavigny wanted his readers to think that Malraux and Chevasson had plundered the most famous archaeological site in Indochina, rather than a half-forgotten ruin in the jungle.⁶³

Given the fact that L'Impartial had repeatedly slandered him, it is surprising that Malraux granted the newspaper an interview. Because he was very loquacious, he rattled on at length and provided his enemy Chavigny with plenty of ammunition for future editorial attacks. Malraux declared that he was a wealthy gentleman scholar who wrote articles for some of the most prestigious journals in France. He told the reporter that he had come to Indochina, under the aegis of the Colonial Office and the Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient, to conduct research for a scholarly study of Kmer art. In addition, he had been charged with the task of arranging the sale of a valuable art collection owned by a Siamese prince. When the reporter questioned him about Chevasson, Malraux admitted that he

⁶³"Un Vol," L'Impartial, 21 July 1924; Lachevrotière, "Protégeon les trésors," L'Impartial, 22 July 1924; Langlois, Indochina Adventure, 42-44.

had been acquainted with his friend for a long time, but Malraux denied the fact that he had testified that he had never known Chevasson until they met in Saigon. When the reporter asked him about the theft of a ton of statues from the temple at Banteay Srei, Malraux told him that the so-called temple was a pile of rocks barely over a meter in height. The artifacts they removed from the ruin were defaced. When the reporter asked him to comment on why the authorities had pursued the matter with such zeal, Malraux speculated that the government may have thought that he was involved in a clandestine mission. His father was, after all, the director of "one of the largest oil companies in the world."⁶⁴

This unfortunate interview played into the hands of Chavigny, a tool of the colonial administration, who had heretofore attempted to portray Malraux in the worst possible light. In the interview, Malraux appeared pompous and arrogant. Rather than playing down the affair, Malraux inflated the whole episode with his lies and exaggerations. The interview led to an acrimonious exchange between Malraux and Chavigny, which was published in L'Impartial, because French law required that Chavigny print Malraux's letters. Despite the distortions found in newspaper accounts of the affair, Malraux pointed out that the ruins in question were many miles from Angkor. Malraux embarrassed Chavigny by referring to the editor's trial and conviction for bribery and blackmail several years before,

⁶⁴"Les Déclarations de M. André Malraux," L'Impartial, 16 September 1924.

pointing out that the editor had spent three months in prison in Saigon. This verbal battle occurred during the week preceding the scheduled hearing before the Court of Appeals.⁶⁵ Fortunately for Malraux, Camille Devilar, the editor of the independent newspaper Le Courier Saigonnais, criticized L'Impartial for its biased coverage of the case. He castigated Chavigny for printing editorials laced with calumny and defamation. Devilar also reprinted Breton's eloquent defense of Malraux, which had appeared in Les Nouvelles Littéraires in Paris a few weeks before. A few days before the hearing, Malraux wrote a letter of thanks, which was published in Le Courier Saigonnais on 6 October 1924.⁶⁶

The publicity surrounding the Malraux-Chevasson case added another dimension to the affair. Malraux later told his wife that he thought that the articles, petitions, and letters on his behalf had made an impression. He felt that he was no longer regarded as "scum."⁶⁷ Malraux was convinced that the French colonial administration was determined to make an example of him, an outsider with an allegedly unsavory background. Before his arrest, Malraux had never shown any interest in politics, but during their stay at Pnom Penh, Malraux and his wife had often discussed the frequent abuse of French authority in Cambodia and in Vietnam.

⁶⁵"M. Malraux proteste," L'Impartial, 17 and 18 September 1924.

⁶⁶Devilar, "L'Impartial exagère," Le Courier Saigonnais, 25 September 1925; Devilar and Breton, "Pour André Malraux," Le Courier Saigonnais, 27 September 1924; André Malraux, letter to Le Courier Saigonnais, 6 October 1924.

⁶⁷Clara Malraux, Nos vingt ans, 264.

Their Cambodian and Vietnamese friends had told them stories that revealed the darker side of colonialism. In Saigon, Malraux continued his political education in long conversations with Paul Monin, after he returned from France in October 1924. Monin had a thorough understanding of colonial Indochina and was able to help Malraux view his own case within the wider political context.⁶⁸

The hearing before the Court of Appeals in Saigon was moved back to 8 October 1924. During the morning, one of the three presiding judges summarized the case. That afternoon, the prosecutor spent three hours presenting the government's arguments. He characterized Malraux as a liar full of self-conceit, a man who was not a legitimate scholar, and who had planned to commit the theft long before leaving France. Malraux clearly was the ringleader, who was responsible for each phase of the illicit operation. As for the legal status of Banteay Srei, the prosecutor pointed out that the region in which the ruins were located had been ceded by Siam to France by treaty in 1907. The Governor General then awarded the territory to Cambodia, which was a French protectorate. The president of the French Republic sanctioned the transaction eight years later when he decreed that the area be ceded to the king of Cambodia. The prosecutor conceded that it was difficult to clearly establish whether the ruins in question belonged to the French government, or to the king of Cambodia. Nevertheless, the salient

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 177-180, 263-264; there is a lack of information on Malraux's political associations in Saigon in 1924, other than Paul Monin and his circle.

fact was that Malraux and Chevasson had stolen the sculptures. The prosecutor demanded that the sentences of the Pnom Penh court be upheld.⁶⁹

The following day, Malraux's defense lawyer was able to exploit the question of the legal status of the ruins at Banteay Srei. He argued that the only governmental entity that had the authority to legally transfer French territory was the Chamber of Deputies. The region of Cambodia in question was, therefore, French territory under the jurisdiction of French law. The lawyer cited legal precedents to prove that according to French law, the government had to publish a decree that officially classified a historical site in order to afford it legal protection. After Parmentier's 1916 visit to Banteay Srei, it would have been simple to classify the ruin as a protected monument. Because this had never been done, the ruins were abandoned property without legal protection. As for the question of Malraux's character and intellectual abilities, the defense lawyer exhibited articles, letters, and petitions that vouched for the defendant's literary abilities. The lawyer included a petition signed by forty-eight eminent writers, editors, and publishers to show that Malraux was not the freebooter portrayed by the prosecution.⁷⁰

Chevasson's lawyer explained to the court that his client had always been a sober, upright citizen who had no previous criminal

⁶⁹"L'Affaire Malraux," L'Impartial, 9 October 1924.

⁷⁰"L'Affaire Malraux," L'Impartial, 10 October 1924.

record. The lawyer asked how it was that these two young men could have committed a crime when numerous sculptures had been removed over the years to adorn the residences of French colonial officials. Colonial courts were lenient in cases dealing with massive financial swindles and murders of indigenous people by Frenchmen. The lawyer wondered why this minor offense had merited such a severe sentence. If the government had been fully aware of the actions of the defendants, why had the authorities delayed in taking action to prevent the incident? The defense counsel reminded the court that cases of this nature had been resolved before with much less fanfare.⁷¹

The three judges on the Court of Appeal handed down their ruling on 28 October 1924. They reduced Malraux's sentence to one year; that of Chevasson was reduced to eight months. Both could appeal for a suspended sentence as first-time offenders. The court ruled that the sculptures were the property of the French state. Malraux sent a telegram to his wife: "one year with a suspended sentence."⁷²

For several weeks, Malraux and Monin held lengthy conversations every day. Monin introduced him to Chinese and Vietnamese political activists. During these discussions, Monin explained that he wanted to start an opposition newspaper in Saigon.

⁷¹"L'Affaire Malraux," L'Impartial, 11 October 1924.

⁷²Vandegans, La Jeunesse littéraire, 220; Langlois, Indochina Adventure, 52-53; Clara Malraux, Nos vingt ans, 255.

Some of the money for this enterprise had already been raised by Chinese sympathizers in Cholon and Vietnamese in the Jeune Annam movement, a political group that sought legal equality with the French colons. Because Malraux was preparing to return to Paris, Monin asked him to help with the preparations for the newspaper, particularly in the raising of funds. Malraux was enthusiastic about the idea. He had undergone a political awakening during his stay in Indochina, and he was ready to assist in the founding of the newspaper. Monin and his Vietnamese and Chinese allies organized a banquet in Malraux's honor the night before his departure. On 1 November 1924, Malraux and Chevasson boarded the Chantilly and started the return voyage to France. Before long, however, Malraux would return.⁷³

⁷³Ibid., 261-262, 276; Langlois, Indochina Adventure, 52-53; André Malraux, "Seconde Lettre à M. Henri Chavigny d'En-Avant pour l'Arrière," L'Indochine, 18 July 1925.

CHAPTER IV

RETURN TO INDOCHINA

In his analysis of Malraux's first trip to Indochina, Langlois argued that Malraux went there to expand his esthetic awareness of oriental art and to test himself as a man in the jungles of Cambodia.¹ Although Louis Chevasson and George Gabory told Langlois in unpublished interviews that financial considerations played a primary role in Malraux's decision, Langlois preferred to believe that Malraux had higher aims. Clara Malraux's memoirs clearly established that her husband, through the sale of Kmer sculptures, hoped to recoup losses he had sustained on the stock exchange.²

In an effort to minimize the financial motive in the expedition, Langlois maintained that Malraux "was planning to write a detailed comparison of Kmer and Siamese art based on his discoveries in the jungle."³ Aside from the fact that Malraux--a talented amateur in oriental art--was not qualified to write such a work, Langlois based his supposition on statements that Malraux made to a reporter in an interview on 16 September 1924.⁴ The interview took place three

¹Langlois, *Indochina Adventure*, 9-10.

²Clara Malraux, *Le Bruit de nos pas*, 270-272.

³Langlois, *Indochina Adventure*, 9.

⁴"Les Déclarations de M. André Malraux," *L'Impartial*, 16 September 1924.

weeks before Malraux's hearing at the Court of Appeals in Saigon. In the interview, Malraux appeared pompous and arrogant, lying about his previous testimony in the original trial for theft in Pnom Penh. Malraux told the reporter that the temple at Banteay Srei was only a pile of rocks a meter in height. He declared that his father was the director of one of the world's largest oil companies. This unfortunate interview, in which Malraux was making a pathetic attempt to appear as a wealthy gentleman scholar, cannot be accepted at face value as a true reflection of Malraux's motivations at the time.

Upon his arrival in France in November 1924, Malraux told his wife that in four to six weeks they would be returning to Saigon: "The Vietnamese need an independent newspaper: Monin and I will manage it."⁵ In Paris André and Clara moved into an unfurnished apartment located directly above that of his maternal family. His family rented it for them and invited the young couple to share their meals. André had brought back from Saigon some very potent marijuana as a gift for Clara. She had never tried it. Before supper one night, they chewed up a sizable quantity of the weed. As they dined with André's family, Clara began to hallucinate, remarking to her husband that she was Alice in Wonderland. He led her to their bedroom upstairs and left her there in the dark, where her perceptions were so scrambled that she experienced horrifying sensations. When André rejoined her later, she told him that she had

⁵Clara Malraux, Nos vingt ans, 262.

slept with another man during their separation. He wept. After he regained his composure, he informed her : "If you had not saved my life, I would leave you."⁶

For the next few weeks, they were busy making preparations for the return trip to Saigon. André also wanted to thank the friends who had helped him with the petitions and letters on his behalf. While visiting Fernand Malraux at Orléans, André described the affair of the statues in such a way that he and Chevasson appeared to be the victims of an unjust colonial administration. He explained to his father how he and Monin planned to start a newspaper which would reveal the corruption that was rife in the French administration, and would provide a voice for Asians who were seeking political equality. André proudly affirmed that he would not remain defeated. Fernand was roused by his son's monologue. He told André that when they reached Singapore, there would be fifty-thousand francs in a bank waiting for them. After that, they would be on their own. He told his son that anyone could bungle things once; but if a person failed a second time, then he did not deserve any further help.⁷

In Paris Malraux made arrangements with Editions Fayard, granting his future newspaper the right to reprint articles and short stories from the weekly Candide. He also made a deal with the Hachette publishing company giving him exclusive rights, in

⁶ibid., 261-268; quote on p. 268.

⁷ibid., 272-277.

Indochina, to publish articles from five different publications, including the satirical weekly, Le Canard enchaîné. In the midst of these preparations, the publisher Bernard Grasset sent Malraux a special delivery letter asking him to make an appointment. Although Malraux was inclined to ignore the request, his mother and grandmother convinced him to speak to the publisher. As he later learned, François Mauriac had written a letter to Grasset praising Malraux as a young man with great potential as a writer. Grasset was impressed by the publicity generated by the petitions signed by so many eminent writers.

During their meeting, Malraux told the publisher that he had no idea if he would ever write a book. Ignoring Malraux's doubts about his future as an author, Grasset convinced him to sign a contract, then handed him a three-thousand franc advance.⁸

Despite the unexpected windfall from Grasset, André and Clara were still compelled to travel to Singapore third-class. The third-class passengers were lodged six people per cabin and were segregated by sex. Clara noticed other contrasts between first-class and third. When they had travelled first-class on the Angkor some months before, the staff was obsequious. Months later, she observed that the staff treated third-class passengers with contempt. André and Clara decided to spend most of their three thousand francs on a big party. They made the necessary

⁸André Malraux, "Seconde lettre à M. Henri Chavigny," L'Indochine, 18 July 1925; André Malraux, "Troisième lettre à M. Henri Chavigny d'en-avant pour-l'arrière," L'Indochine, 22 July 1923; Clara Malraux, Nos vingt ans, 277-278.

arrangements and invited their fellow passengers to the gala event. That night the hundred or so third-class passengers drank, sang, and danced most of the night. When the ship docked at Singapore, André withdrew the funds sent there by his father. André and Clara then travelled by rail to Kuala Lumpur, and from there to Bangkok. After touring Bangkok for a few days, they boarded a ship and finished their journey to Saigon as first-class passengers. Monin was there to greet them when they arrived in February 1925. André and Clara checked in at the Hotel Continental, which was not far from Monin's office.⁹

Monin had previously discussed with his Vietnamese and Chinese political allies the launching of a new newspaper and the impending return of Malraux.¹⁰ Since his arrival in Saigon in 1919, Monin had been the *bête noire* of the conservative French colon establishment which dominated the political and economic affairs of Cochinchina. Although it was technically illegal for natives to form unions, Monin had helped to organize dozens of union locals among the workers of Cholon, Saigon's port.¹¹ The Vietnamese Constitutionalist party--mainly Vietnamese landlords and

⁹*Ibid.*, 279-282; Clara Malraux, Les Combats et les jeux, vol. 3 of Le Bruit de nos pas, Paris: Grasset, 1969, 15-17, 24-33.

¹⁰Direction de la Sûreté--Gouvernement de la Cochinchine, Rapport annuel: 1924-1926, 7 F 22, carton 4, "Exposé chronologique des faits saillants," (hereafter referred to as "Exposé chronologique"), Centre des Archives d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence; Hue-Tam Ho Tai, Radicalism and the Origins of the Vietnamese Revolution, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992, 124-125.

¹¹Direction de la Sûreté--Gouvernement de la Cochinchine, Rapport annuel: 1924-1926, 7 F 22, carton 4, "Influence chinoise," Centre des Archives D'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence; Henri Chavigny, "La Propagande bolcheviste et les syndicats," L'Impartial, 24 July 1925.

businessmen who supported administrative and political reforms that would expand Vietnamese participation in the political life of the colony--supported Monin's unsuccessful attempt to win a seat on the Colonial Council of Cochinchina in 1919.¹²

Monin was also heavily involved in the organization of the Jeune Annam movement, which grew out of the Constitutionalist party.¹³ The Jeune Annam group consisted largely of young university graduates who advocated political and economic equality for the Vietnamese people. In newspaper articles, Jeune Annam activists often ridiculed Vietnamese officials who supported the French administration in Saigon. Monin spoke at clandestine meetings and helped in fund-raising efforts for the Jeune Annam group. In a secret report, Sûreté officials alleged that Jeune Annam "patriotism appeared rationally circumscribed" until certain Frenchmen, most notable Paul Monin, incited the Vietnamese activists to agitate against French authority.¹⁴

Most of the clients Monin represented were Chinese inhabitants from Cholon, many of whom were members of the Kuomintang party.¹⁵ Monin joined the Kuomintang and, with the financial backing of the Chinese nationalists, he had founded an

¹²Tai, *Radicalism*, 124.

¹³Direction de la Sûreté--Gouvernement de la Cochinchine, 7 F 22, carton 3, Notice d'information politique portant sur la période comprise entre le 1er Juillet 1923 et le 31 Decembre 1924, (hereafter referred to as "Notice d'information politique"), "Situation politique generale," 2-3, Centre des Archives d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence; "Notice d'information politique," "Parti Jeune Annam," 14-15, 21-35.

¹⁴"Notice d'information politique," "Parti Jeune Annam," 14.

¹⁵Tai, *Radicalism*, 124-125; "Notice d'information politique," "Contrôle des étrangers et des immigrants du 1er juillet 1923 au 30 juin 1924: Milieux Chinois."

independent political journal Verité. Because Verité was critical of the Governor-General of Cochinchina, Maurice Cognacq, Monin aroused the ire of the conservative colonial establishment. The government-supported press labelled Monin as "anti-French," often calling him a "Bolshevik."¹⁶ After a Vietnamese nationalist attempted to assassinate the Governor-General of Indochina, Martial-Henri Merlin, in Canton in 1924, the French administration used the incident as a pretext for closing down several opposition newspapers, including Verité.¹⁷ Monin then began working with another newspaper, the Saigon Républicain.¹⁸ Before long, however, Monin discovered that one of his associates was an opium addict, and the other was taking bribes from the colonial administration. Monin left the newspaper in disgust.

Monin told Malraux that their new newspaper, L'Indochine, would reach more readers if it were published in Vietnamese as well as French.¹⁹ The problem was that the government seldom allowed journals or newspapers to be published in Quoc ngu (the Vietnamese language written in Roman letters). Monin convinced Malraux to travel to Hanoi to request official permission to publish the newspaper in both languages. When Malraux arrived in Hanoi, the acting Governor-General of Indochina, Henri Monguillot, refused to

¹⁶Tai, Radicalism, 125.

¹⁷David G. Marr, Vietnamese Anticolonialism: 1885-1925 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 257-258.

¹⁸Clara Malraux, Combats, 38-39; André Malraux, "Vie locale," L'Indochine, 20 July 1925.

¹⁹Clara Malraux, LesCombats, pp. 126-128.

see him.²⁰ Another official told Malraux that a newspaper in French would be acceptable, but not a newspaper written in Quoc ngu. The official said that the censors were busy enough as it was.

Meanwhile Clara Malraux travelled to Singapore to see if she could obtain the rights to publish articles from one of the British newspapers there.²¹ When she arrived, a Vietnamese crew member quietly warned her about an undercover policeman who was standing in the boat that ferried the passengers to the dock. She informed the harbor policeman that she was being followed, but he shrugged it off. The editor of The Straits Times told her that the Indochinese newspapers he had seen were poorly done, but he agreed that his newspaper would exchange articles with L'Indochine. With her language skills, Clara would be able to translate the articles into French. During her brief stay in Singapore, she saw the Chinese undercover policeman several times, including the day she left. She came away from the experience thinking that the French and British colonial authorities probably cooperated when it was a question of keeping track of potential subversives.²²

Monin convinced a young Vietnamese political activist, Eugène Lien Dejean de la Batie, to serve as business manager for the future newspaper.²³ His father was a French diplomat and his mother was Vietnamese. Dejean had managed and written editorials for the

²⁰ibid., 134-135.

²¹ibid., 128-134.

²²ibid.

²³Rapport annuel: 1924-1926, "Exposé chronologique;" Clara Malraux, Les Combats, 43-44.

anticolonial newspaper Cloche fêlée. Everyone associated with this radical newspaper had been hounded by the sûreté, until the government finally closed it down after the assassination attempt on Governor-General Merlin in 1924.²⁴ Dejean recruited several other young Vietnamese activists for Monin and Malraux. One of these was Nguyen An Ninh, who had been Dejean's main collaborator on Cloche Fêlée. Ninh was a staunch Vietnamese nationalist who had struggled to keep Cloche Fêlée in operation against overwhelming odds. He was an experienced editor and editorial writer, who had translated Rousseau's Contrat Social into Vietnamese. He contributed a number of articles to L'Indochine. Dejean de la Batie also recruited Ho Dac Hien, whose uncle was Minister of Rites at the imperial court in Hue. After quarreling with his uncle over politics, Hien had gone to Saigon where he met political activists including Dejean de la Batie.²⁵ Le The Vinh, one of the founders of the Jeune Annam party, served as fund-raiser and occasionally wrote articles for the newspaper.

Vinh raised money for L'Indochine from Jeune Annam sympathizers, including Vietnamese landowners, provincial doctors, civil servants, and peasants.²⁶ Malraux donated most of the money that had been so generously provided by his father. Monin's political allies in the Chinese community of Cholon also contributed funds for

²⁴Tai, Radicalism, 125-133; Clara Malraux, Les Combats, 42-43.

²⁵Rapport annuel: 1924-1926, "Exposé chronologique;" Clara Malraux, Les Combats, 42-43. Clara Malraux described him as "strong, . . . swarthy, hard, violent." She thought that Hien was the model for the character Tchen in La Condition humaine.

²⁶Clara Malraux, Les Combats, 64.

the independent newspaper. Because Monin and his Chinese friends were members of the Kuomintang party, the French Colonial Office was concerned. In 1925, the Kuomintang party was allied with the fledgling Chinese Communist movement and was receiving Soviet aid. In a secret report sent by the Minister of Colonies, Edouard Daladier, to the Governors-General of the five regions of Indochina, there was a warning that the forthcoming newspaper L'Indochine would be subsidized by the Chinese Communist party; in addition, Kuomintang organizations in Canton would also be providing funds for the newspaper.²⁷ The Colonial Office was aware of the frequent contacts between the Kuomintang organization in Canton and party affiliates in Cholon, near Saigon.²⁸ Malraux spoke with a Kuomintang agent from Canton on several occasions. As for the alleged financial link between the Chinese communists and L'Indochine, there is a strong likelihood that the Colonial Office was simply blurring the distinction between the Kuomintang and the Communist party, which is understandable given their political alliance (albeit temporary). During 1925, the Chinese Communists and the Kuomintang were united in an uneasy alliance. The Soviet Union was sending money, arms, and military advisors to the Chinese revolutionaries.

²⁷Affaires Politiques, Propagande révolutionnaire (1925-1933), carton 110, dossier 1036, "Notes sur la propagande révolutionnaire intéressant les pays d'outre-mer," (hereafter referred to as "Note sur la propagande révolutionnaire"), Paris, 31 July 1925, Centre des Archives d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence; "Notice d'information politique."

²⁸"Notice d'information politique."

Monin's Kuomintang allies held a banquet in Cholon in May 1925.²⁹ As the guests sampled various Cantonese dishes, Clara noticed that she was the only female guest in the hall. Occasionally, men would leave the table and retreat to an area behind the head table to smoke a pipe of opium. The culmination of the ceremony came when one of the hosts gave Monin money that the Kuomintang had collected for the newspaper L'Indochine. The hosts proposed toasts to honor the founders of the newspaper. Monin responded with a short speech. When Malraux rose to speak, he said: "We are going to make a newspaper together! We are going to struggle together! It would be mistaken to think that our ends are totally the same . . . what brings us together, what unites us, are the enemies we have in common."³⁰

Malraux and Monin found a printer, Louis Minh, who agreed to help them with the newspaper.³¹ In spite of the fact that the government would probably frown on any person associated with the project, Minh agreed to print the newspaper in his shop. Except for the first few issues, L'Indochine was eight pages in length, appearing six days a week. L'Indochine contained editorials, news bulletins, international news stories, local items, photographs, serialized fiction, and crossword puzzles. From the Parisian literary weekly Candide, L'Indochine reprinted book reviews, as well

²⁹Clara Malraux, Les Combats, 114-121.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 121.

³¹Clara Malraux, Les Combats, 135-137; Langlois, Indochina Adventure, 58-59, 64-65.

as articles about art exhibitions, theatrical events, and musical performances. Advertising revenues were limited because local businesses feared official harassment if they were to buy space in the newspaper.³² Most of the advertisements appearing in L'Indochine were for companies based in France. Some small Vietnamese and Chinese firms, however, risked official displeasure and placed advertisements in L'Indochine.

The first issue of L'Indochine appeared on 17 June 1925. Five thousand free copies were distributed by the staff and by Jeune Annam sympathizers. The subtitle of the newspaper read: "Daily Newspaper for Franco-Vietnamese Rapprochement." Malraux and Monin stated: "L'Indochine is a free journal, open to all, without attachment to banks or commercial groups."³³ Because Malraux and Monin wanted to cover Asian issues as much as possible, L'Indochine included news items from India, Singapore, Japan, and China. The editors' relationship with the Kuomintang party enabled them to obtain inside information on the dramatic events that were then occurring in China. Some of the world news that appeared in L'Indochine came from the Agence Radiophonique Internationale de Presse, which provided news items for all of the Saigon newspapers. Unlike the other newspapers, however, L'Indochine included coverage of political unrest in Asia and Africa.³⁴

³²"Vie Locale," L'Indochine, 18 June 1925.

³³"Liberté de la presse," L'Indochine, 17 June 1925.

³⁴Langlois, Indochina Adventure, 67; Clara Malraux, Les Combats, 135-137.

In the second issue of L'Indochine, Malraux took the offensive against Maurice Cognacq, the Governor of Cochinchina.³⁵ Malraux wrote the article in the form of an imaginary letter, without mentioning Cognacq by name. Malraux argued that the governor was supposed to lead the province in the direction of economic prosperity and political justice. The governor should run his administration with discretion, always giving due consideration to the wishes of the governed. But in Cochinchina, the Vietnamese were obligated to remain silent. No political opposition was permitted. Malraux asserted that because the governor ruled through coercion, there was a mood of anger and discontent among the people. When the governor imposed his will through force, he cynically defended his actions, claiming that harsh means were necessary for the maintenance of order. Malraux argued that the governor always covered his actions by invoking "the principle of order," but "everyone recognizes that it is a mask."³⁶ According to Malraux, the governor's primary motivation was the desire for profit, for himself and for his cronies.

Malraux maintained that the governor had turned Vietnamese elections into a travesty.³⁷ In addition to the French bureaucrats, there were five hundred Indian civil servants with French citizenship, political dependants of the governor, who always voted

³⁵André Malraux, "Première Lettre de Jacques Tournebroche à Jérôme Coignard," L'Indochine, 18 June 1925.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.; André Malraux, "Revue de la presse locale," L'Indochine, 20 June 1925.

as he wished. Malraux argued that although most of the Indian residents were French citizens with the right to vote, few Vietnamese could vote for representatives to the various elective bodies in their own country. The Vietnamese were outraged at the injustice of this situation. Malraux pointed out that the question of Vietnamese naturalization had recently been discussed in the French Chamber of Deputies. He encouraged the readers of L'Indochine to write letters to the newspapers and express their views on this important question. For its part, L'Indochine would continue to support "the legitimate aspirations of cultivated Vietnamese."³⁸

Shortly after the appearance of these editorials, Governor Cognacq summoned Malraux to his office.³⁹ Malraux referred to the meeting in a satirical piece which appeared in L'Indochine several days later. Next to the article, there is a cartoon caricature of Cognacq with a fat head, long ears, and a nose reminiscent of a pig. Although Malraux did not use Cognacq's name in the article, there is no doubt to whom he is referring. According to Malraux's account, Cognacq wanted him to incriminate Monin in some way. When Malraux rejected the proposition, Cognacq grew angry and threatened him. The governor told Malraux that most of the Frenchmen in the colony supported him because he knew how to maintain order. In the article, Malraux asked the governor why it was, if the colons were so fond of him, that the President of the Colonial Council appeared

³⁸André Malraux, "Revue de la presse locale," L'Indochine, 20 June 1925.

³⁹André Malraux, "A Monsieur Je-Menotte," L'Indochine, 25 June 1925.

to be so anxious to get Cognacq removed from office. In addition, the mayor of Saigon had uncovered the unsavory, corrupt practices of Cognacq's business partners. Malraux observed that perhaps the efforts of these public officials would be noticed in Paris.

Addressing Cognacq with sarcasm, Malraux said: "You are great, but you still have hands that are a little dirty."⁴⁰

In one of his editorials, Malraux wrote that the newspaper received many letters from young Vietnamese intellectuals, conversant with French ideas, who resented the unjust regime that had been forced upon them.⁴¹ They wondered what could be done to free Cochinchina from a dictatorial regime that offered little opportunity for the Vietnamese. Malraux said that the goal of the French administration should be to build a Vietnam where all peoples could live "on an equal footing."⁴² Instead of making bombastic statements about the French civilizing mission, the colons should acknowledge the fact that they came to Indochina for profit. Malraux maintained that there was nothing wrong with making money, provided that the colons made their profits through honest labor. An honest administration should eliminate crooked land deals, fraudulent government contracts, and other corrupt

⁴⁰ibid. In his account of this confrontation between Cognacq and Malraux, Langlois uses alleged quotes from Cognacq which actually came from an article by Léon Werth describing a similar meeting between Nguyen An Ninh and the governor. See Léon Wirth, "Notes d'Indochine," *Europe*, no. 34 (15 October 1925): 185-186. Like an ancient historian, Langlois inserted dialogue reflecting what a person would have said under the circumstances. See Langlois, *Indochina Adventure*, 94.

⁴¹André Malraux, "Sur quelles réalités appuyer un effort annamite," *L'Indochine*, 4 July 1925.

⁴²ibid.

practices that enriched a few insiders. Most Frenchmen, however, had simply reaped the benefits of their labor, and had lawful property rights in Vietnam. Malraux observed: "It is important that these rights, legitimately acquired, be safeguarded."⁴³

In his analysis, Malraux said that many Vietnamese hoped to improve their situation by presenting their demands before the French Chamber of Deputies.⁴⁴ But Malraux argued that it was wrong to idealize the democratic process. Governments came and went regularly in Paris. Few politicians would take the time to concern themselves with the theoretical rights of a colonial people. Malraux suggested another approach to the question. He said that educated Vietnamese should stop coveting the petty administrative posts that were sometimes offered by the colonial government. Malraux argued that there should be more Vietnamese technicians and professionals. Talented Vietnamese students should go to France and study engineering, medicine, and agronomy. Vietnamese professionals could form professional societies and organizations which could compel the colonial administration to address their complaints. Malraux declared that agricultural producers should organize. A syndicate of rice growers could exercise a great deal of influence on the administration.⁴⁵

Malraux pointed out that his proposals were nonviolent. The strikes used by Indians against the British administration could

⁴³ibid.

⁴⁴ibid.

⁴⁵ibid.

serve as an example.⁴⁶ He admitted that the program he suggested involved hard work and organization. But if they were properly organized, the most educated and productive elements in Vietnamese society would be in a position to demand better schools, a more equitable judicial system, the freedom to travel, and other needed reforms.⁴⁷

Although Malraux's proposals were far from revolutionary, he was well aware of the restrictions that would hinder any reform program.⁴⁸ For instance, he had discussed the need for greater numbers of Vietnamese students to attend French universities. Letters from Vietnamese readers revealed that there were obstacles for those wishing to study in France. Malraux explained that in order to obtain a passport and an exit permit, a student had to acquire numerous documents, including a health certificate, a police report, an educational certificate, and family financial records. In addition, family members had to guarantee that they would provide sufficient funds to support the student and to pay his way back to Vietnam. The chief of the provincial sûreté would examine the student's dossier, and conduct an investigation if he suspected that anyone in the student's family had engaged in political activities. It was common for the provincial chief to demand a bribe. If the local sûreté gave its approval and sent the dossier to Saigon, then the

⁴⁶ibid.

⁴⁷ibid.

⁴⁸André Malraux, "Sélection d'énergies," L'Indochine, 14 August 1925.

Governor's office or an official at the sûreté headquarters could still reject the student's request without offering an explanation.⁴⁹

Malraux argued that the French administration was attempting to limit educational opportunities in France to sycophants.⁵⁰ The administration ignored the fact that the freedom to travel was guaranteed in French law. Some of the most enterprising young Vietnamese were forced to leave the colony clandestinely, so that they could travel and study overseas. According to Malraux, the administration assumed that any bright, promising Vietnamese student would become a revolutionary if he went to France for an education. He denounced the policy of restricting educational opportunities for Vietnamese students, because it frustrated the ambitions of the most intelligent and vigorous youths, those who could potentially be leaders and make a contribution to society. He said that the Governor-General should give orders that all academically-qualified Vietnamese students have the right to go to France to continue their educations. Malraux complained about these arbitrary procedures in the pages of L'Indochine, hoping that a public discussion of the problem would help to bring about a change.⁵¹

The Cognacq regime was incensed that L'Indochine was openly criticizing its policies, and was providing an open forum for anticolonial opinions.⁵² Furthermore the newspaper was providing

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰André Malraux, "Du monde entier," L'Indochine, 20 June 1925; Idem, "Sélection d'énergies," L'Indochine, 14 August 1925.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²André Malraux, "A Monsieur Je-Menotte," L'Indochine, 25 June 1925;

extensive coverage of events in China, at that time in a state of revolutionary upheaval. In the eyes of the French administration, the Chinese revolution was setting a dangerous precedent for the colonial peoples of Asia. French officials wanted to prevent this revolutionary activity from spilling over into Vietnam, which had ancient historical links with China.⁵³ Furthermore, Vietnamese political activists often found refuge in Canton. Like other French governors in the region, Cognacq was anxious to suppress news of the events taking place in China. Chinese newspapers were sometimes smuggled into the French colonies, although they were illegal.⁵⁴

From the first issue, L'Indochine included regular reports on the troubled situation in China. Thousands of Chinese living in Cochinchina were anxious to hear news of China. In 1925, there had been a series of clashes between the British police and Chinese in Canton and Shanghai. On May 20 1925, British police in Shanghai killed a dozen Chinese students. These violent incidents led to strikes and demonstrations in several cities. As anti-imperialist feelings intensified, Kuomintang leaders told Chinese sailors working on British ships to go on strike. The Kuomintang party called for a boycott of British goods, which, along with the strikes,

Langlois, Indochina Adventure, 130.

⁵³"Monguillot dispatch to Merlin," 7 July 1925, Indochine, Nouveau Fonds, Affaires Politiques: Presse (1921-1925), Fonds ayant servi à la fondation du quotidien "Indochine" (1925), A 81, carton 100, dossier 965, Centre des Archives d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence.

⁵⁴Virginia Thompson, French Indochina, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937, 313.

paralyzed Hong Kong. The government-supported newspapers in Saigon tried to play down the upheaval in China. While the Chinese were organizing a general strike in Canton and Hong Kong, there were several days in June in which the Agence radiophonique internationale de presse--the major source of international news for Saigon newspapers--reported that there were no new developments in China.⁵⁵ On the other hand, L'Indochine provided timely dispatches from its sources in China, often presenting information that did not appear in other Saigon newspapers until days after L'Indochine had broken the story.⁵⁶ In addition to furnishing sympathetic coverage of the Chinese struggle against foreign imperialists, L'Indochine occasionally discussed the factional infighting among the various Chinese groups. On 3 August 1925, a bulletin mentioned a conflict in Canton between the Communists and elements of the Kuomintang. But this incident was only a prelude to the bloody purge of the Kuomintang two years later.⁵⁷

The Cognacq regime was disturbed that the editors of L'Indochine endorsed the Kuomintang movement.⁵⁸ The administration was also concerned about the Kuomintang political

⁵⁵"De notre correspondant particulier," L'Indochine, 19 June 1925.

⁵⁶It is uncertain whether Malraux and Monin were relying on Chinese journalists or Kuomintang operatives in Canton for the news bulletins. See Langlois, Indochina Adventure, 134.

⁵⁷Paul Monin, "La Politique et la Chine," L'Indochine, 19 June 1925; "De notre correspondant particulier," L'Indochine, 19 June, 18 July, 3 August 1925.

⁵⁸For an example of the government-sponsored smear campaign, see Henri Chavigny, "Le Danger bolcheviste nous menace," L'Impartial, 11 July 1925.

connections of Monin and Malraux. A sûreté report claimed that a Kuomintang representative from Canton had been organizing party affiliates in Cholon.⁵⁹ The report estimated that Kuomintang membership in 1924 had doubled by 1925. The sûreté was wary of political ties between anti-French Vietnamese and Chinese Kuomintang party members. According to a sûreté report, Monin had encouraged Vietnamese activists at a political meeting to recover their liberty, encouraging them to study the history of their country, with its long record of resistance to foreign rule.⁶⁰ The report claimed that Monin spoke of "liberation coming from the North," a reference to the Chinese nationalists led by the Kuomintang.

In one of its annual reports, the sûreté alleged that Monin was in contact with an agent on a mission from Moscow, who regularly reported to the Soviet Consulate at Shanghai.⁶¹ The report said that because of Monin's propaganda, Vietnamese revolutionaries were expecting Chinese troops to intervene in Indochina. While Chinese troops crossed the border of Tonkin (the northern region of Vietnam), the Chinese of Cochinchina would stage an uprising. The report stated that "this plan was presented as having been elaborated by a Chinese general assisted by Malraux and Monin."⁶² The report condemned Monin for using this potential threat as a

⁵⁹Direction de la Sûreté--Gouvernement de la Cochinchine, Rapport annuel: 1924-1926, "Influence Chinoise."

⁶⁰Direction de la Sûreté--Gouvernement de la Cochinchine, Rapport annuel: 1924-1926, "Exposé Chronologique."

⁶¹Direction de la Sûreté--Gouvernement de la Cochinchine, Rapport annuel: 1924-1926, "Influence Chinoise."

⁶²Ibid.

means of inciting the Vietnamese. If necessary, the sûreté would be prepared to use expulsion, or other means, to stop this propaganda.

Although Malraux and Monin had often spoken with Kuomintang officials from Canton, there is no corroborating evidence that Monin was in contact with a Soviet agent. The preposterous allegation that Malraux and Monin were actually conspiring with the Chinese military could have been due to a garbled report from an informant, exaggerated by sûreté suspicions of the young editors. On the other hand there is no question that French officials, from the Minister of the Colonies down, believed that the communist party in the Canton region was subsidizing L'Indochine.⁶³ Furthermore, French officials were concerned because the Chinese who lent financial support to L'Indochine were, in the words of acting governor-general Henri Monguillot, "tied closely with Bolshevik agents."⁶⁴ In a dispatch to former governor-general Martial Merlin, Monguillot noted that Malraux had ties with anti-French Vietnamese activists, and that Monin was legal counselor to the Cochinchinese section of the Kuomintang. Loose talk by Kuomintang officials exacerbated sûreté suspicions about the ties between the editors of L'Indochine and Chinese organizations in Cholon and Canton. In an interview published in L'Indochine, Kuomintang leader You Wen Chew had criticized Governor Cognacq, stating that the Chinese Nationalist government could consider military intervention in Vietnam at some

⁶³Affaires Politiques, "Note sur la propagande révolutionnaire," 31 July 1925.

⁶⁴"Monguillot dispatch to Merlin," 7 July 1925.

future date.⁶⁵ Although Monin and Malraux enthusiastically supported the anti-imperialist struggle being waged by the Kuomintang in China, the sûreté suspicion that they were party to a conspiracy cannot be verified (or wholly discredited).

In the official mouthpiece of the Cognacq regime, L'Impartial, Malraux and Monin were characterized as Bolshevik agitators.⁶⁶ Henri Chavigny, editor of L'Impartial, attacked Malraux as an unsavory adventurer who had first come to Indochina to plunder artistic treasures for his own profit. Upon his return, Malraux had allied himself with Monin, who was in the pay of the Kuomintang, a Bolshevik organization. Chavigny asserted that it was obvious that both men served the enemies of France, the Chinese Bolsheviks, who would attempt to dominate Indochina if the French ever withdrew. According to Chavigny, nationalist sentiment was weak among the Vietnamese, because the French civilizing mission in Vietnam was essentially altruistic and charitable. Despite the fact that the French administration was devoted to the welfare of all the peoples of Indochina, Malraux and Monin were following orders from Communists in Moscow, and their lackeys in Canton, and were attempting to provoke a class struggle in Vietnam. To give credence

⁶⁵"Entretien de M. You Wen Chew," L'Indochine, 8 August 1925.

⁶⁶Chavigny's attacks on Malraux and Monin were a recurring theme in L'Impartial. Soon after the appearance of L'Indochine, Malraux began his verbal sparring with the editor of L'Impartial. The best examples of Chavigny's redbaiting are: Henri Chavigny, "Le danger bolcheviste nous menace," L'Impartial, 11 July 1925; Idem, "Le bolchevisme en Indochine," 18 July 1925; Idem, "Le mouvement bolcheviste," 22 July 1925; Idem, "L'Organisation de la lutte des classes," 6 August 1925.

to his views, Chavigny pointed out that Monin had helped to organize unions in Cholon. Chavigny alleged that if Monin gave the order, the unions of Cholon would stage a work stoppage and subvert the economy of Indochina.⁶⁷

Malraux countered Chavigny's attacks with a combination of reasoned arguments and scathing invective.⁶⁸ According to Malraux, Chavigny was using the hackneyed argument that anyone who supported liberal political principles, or who favored Franco-Vietnamese cooperation, was a Bolshevik by definition. Monin served as legal counsel for the Chinese Kuomintang organization in Cholon, but that activity did not mean that he was a revolutionary. Malraux argued that the absurd allegation that he and Monin were communist agents was merely a means of smearing men who challenged the status quo. After researching Chavigny's background, Malraux divulged the unpleasant facts about the past life of the rival editor.⁶⁹ Malraux pointed out that Chavigny had left his wife and six children in order to spend his money on female companions. After becoming an informer for the sûreté, Chavigny had convinced a Vietnamese woman to bribe a member of a local draft board in order to exempt her son from military service in 1916. He then turned her in to the sûreté, so that he could collect half of the bribe as a

⁶⁷Henri Chavigny, "Le Mouvement bolcheviste," 22 July 1925.

⁶⁸André Malraux, "Au très pur, très noble, très loyal gentilhomme, Henri Chavigny d'en-avant pour l'arrière, ancien indicateur de la sûreté," L'Indochine, 11 August 1925.

⁶⁹André Malraux, "Seconde Lettre à M. Henri Chavigny d'en-avant pour-l'arrière," L'Indochine, 18 July 1925; Idem, "Troisième Lettre à M. Henri Chavigny d'En-Avant pour-l'arrière," L'Indochine, 22 July 1925.

reward for informing against her. Unfortunately for Chavigny, he ran afoul of the military authorities, and was imprisoned for three months. Upon his release, Malraux continued, Chavigny tried to dodge the military draft by claiming that he was the head of a large household. After his abandoned wife told the authorities that she received nothing from her estranged husband, the military authorities put him on a ship to France in 1917. Malraux explained that Chavigny had faked a sickness, and was able to successfully evade his military obligation. After Cognacq became governor of Cochinchina, Chavigny ingratiated himself with the administration and won financial backing for his newspaper L'Impartial. Malraux asserted that Chavigny was "grotesque and cowardly," and he challenged him to a duel. Chavigny chose not to cross swords with Malraux.⁷⁰

Fencing was a form of recreation that Malraux relished during his time in Saigon.⁷¹ Monin and Malraux often practiced fencing in the evening, on the roof of the building where their newspaper office was located. Clara and other members of the staff would watch them compete and place bets on one or the other. Monin usually joined André and Clara for drinks in the evening. They would start the evening on the terrace of the Hotel Continental, then wander around the city, stopping at various hotel bars. Dressed in linen

⁷⁰Quote in André Malraux, "Première lettre à Monsieur Henri Chavigny d'en-avant pour arrière," L'Indochine, 8 July 1925.

⁷¹Clara Malraux, Les Combats, 150-151, 85-86, 104; Idem, Le Bruit de nos pas, 466.

suits and ties, Malraux and Monin carried ebony canes. Clara sometimes left the men to themselves and joined her friend Yvonne, who was ten years older than Clara. Yvonne was a militant anarchist, a hard-bitten labor activist who told Clara about the struggles of working-class women. When Clara was not with André or Yvonne, she went to opium dens where she would smoke a pipe, then lay on a bench and drift into a reverie.⁷² Although André smoked with her once, he could not long remain in a submissive, inactive state. So Clara sometimes went with her friend, Maurice Sainte-Rose.

In the journalistic battle between L'Indochine and L'Impartial, Malraux attempted to undermine the credibility of Chavigny's newspaper by exposing how the Cognacq administration supported it financially.⁷³ Under French law, a government was not supposed to subsidize newspapers. Malraux pointed out that the Governor-General of Indochina had said in speeches that, as a matter of law and principle, the government should not be supporting newspapers. According to Malraux, administration officials in Cochinchina bought newspaper subscriptions for the civil servants who worked for them. The expense was hidden in various budgets.⁷⁴ The staff of L'Indochine obtained an official form, which they reproduced in the newspaper. The form was from the governor's cabinet, requesting that newspaper subscriptions be sent to whatever address the

⁷²Clara Malraux, Les Combats, 104-105.

⁷³André Malraux, "Dépenses de L'Impartial, L'Indochine, 8 July 1925.

⁷⁴Ibid., Idem, "Liberté de la Presse," L'Indochine, 23 July 1925.

department head wrote in the blank. Malraux claimed that there were four thousand administration subscriptions in Cochinchina. He estimated that L'Impartial was largely sustained by eighteen hundred administration subscriptions. The rest of the government-subsidized subscriptions were divided among five other newspapers. Even though the government of Cochinchina was running a deficit, the taxpayers were paying for these needless subsidies. Malraux stated that he wished "to make it known in France that all of the subsidies provided for the local newspapers are clandestine, that they are prohibited, in violation of French law, and of the instructions of the Governor-General."⁷⁵ Malraux argued that the reason Governor Cognacq was willing to fund the subsidies was that he was anxious to disguise the true state of affairs in Cochinchina. L'Impartial was unable to counter the charges.

During early July 1925, some Vietnamese peasants from the district of Camau appeared at the office of L'Indochine.⁷⁶ These peasants had come to see the editors of L'Indochine because other newspapers would not print their story. The peasant farmers of Camau had cleared thousands of acres of land in a marshy area, and had developed rice paddies with high yields. They were afraid of losing their land to the state.

⁷⁵André Malraux, "Liberté de la presse," L'Indochine, 23 July 1925; quote in Idem, "Liberté de la presse, L'Indochine, 24 July 1925.

⁷⁶Clara Malraux, Les Combats, 195-197.

In the past, that had not generally happened.⁷⁷ The French administration advocated the clearing of virgin land by peasants in Cochinchina, in order to boost rice exports from the region. After new land had been cleared and cultivated for several years, the settlers would apply for a title. The government would normally grant the occupants title to the land, provided that all taxes had been paid. If a Vietnamese farmer worked a piece of land that he had cleared for three years, the government would occasionally give him the whole plot. Usually the government would give a peasant family twenty-five acres, with an option to purchase any remaining land at a price set by the administration. If the tracts of land in which the cultivated plots were located were large, the government would auction off part of the land, while adhering to rules designed to safeguard the rights of the original occupants.⁷⁸

The Camau land settlement was working out less justly.⁷⁹ The peasants of Camau had been clearing and developing the land in their district since 1913. They had paid their taxes regularly. Following the prescribed regulations, they had duly applied for land titles. But the administration kept putting them off, until three hundred eighty-seven peasant families learned that they were to be dispossessed by a financial consortium. In the past, crooked officials had sometimes cheated Vietnamese peasants by reserving the best land for

⁷⁷André Malraux, "Camau, les trente plaintes," L'Indochine, 25 July 1925; Langlois, Indochina Adventure, 101.

⁷⁸André Malraux, "Camau, les trente plaintes," L'Indochine, 25 July 1925.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*

anonymous bidders. The government-supported newspapers never publicized such shady transactions. After explaining the situation in Camau, an old peasant with a white beard made an oblique reference to a similar land-grab in neighboring Cambodia: "The Cambodians are peaceful people; still, one fine day, an administrator was killed."⁸⁰ Monin told the peasant that it need not come to that. Malraux and Monin assured the peasants that L'Indochine would publicize the affair. The editors suspected that Governor Cognacq was involved in the scheme. Instead of allowing Cognacq and his partners to make a fortune in secret, at the expense of the peasants, the editors would try to influence public opinion, and attract the attention of acting Governor-General Monguillot, who was scheduled to visit Cochinchina near the end of the month.⁸¹

What was happening in Camau was that Governor Cognacq had visited there in April 1925, and had met peasant leaders, assuring them that he would protect their property rights.⁸² When he returned to Saigon, he said that the land at Camau would be sold at a public auction in late July. The man in charge of the auction would be his protégé M. Eutrope, Director of Public Security, who set unusual conditions for the sale.⁸³ Eutrope would have the power to register bids, or reject them, without accounting for his decision. In

⁸⁰Clara Malraux, LesCombats, 197.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 196-197; "Les fertiles rizières de Camau," L'Indochine, 11 July 1925.

⁸²Clara Malraux, LesCombats, 198-199.

⁸³"Les fertile rizières de Camau," L'Indochine, 11 July 1925; André Malraux, "Camau, les trente plaintes," L'Indochine, 25 July 1925; André Malraux, "Troisième lettre à Chavigny," L'Indochine, 22 July 1925.

auctions of this type, the usual practice was to auction each plot of land separately. But Eutrope had created special rules insuring that fourteen of twenty-six sections of the best land would be sold together in one large tract. It was unlikely that one buyer would have the necessary cash to purchase approximately twenty-five thousand acres of prime land. Because Eutrope had served Cognacq in other shady transactions, Malraux and Monin suspected that the governor was orchestrating a swindle.

In an editorial, Malraux claimed that the Cognacq administration had in the past repeatedly tried to defraud Vietnamese peasants of their property.⁸⁴ At Camau, barely one-tenth of the land had been reserved for the peasants who had developed it. Monin wrote that peasants had been forced to bribe officials to gain official recognition of the few land titles that they had been able to obtain at Camau. Malraux observed that the government-supported newspapers gave little publicity to the controversy.

The public was evidently interested in the Camau affair.⁸⁵ Copies of L'Indochine sold out more quickly than ever before. L'Indochine was the only newspaper that published letters from the residents of the district.⁸⁶ A letter from a French farmer named Beauville said that the residents of Camau knew that Cognacq was

⁸⁴Ibid.; André Malraux, "Camau, les trente plaintes," L'Indochine, 22 July 1925; Paul Monin, "La Main dans le sac," L'Indochine, 30 July 1925.

⁸⁵André Malraux, "Camau, les trente plaintes," L'Indochine, 22 July 1925.

⁸⁶The letter from M. Beauville is in L'Indochine, 15 July 1925; the comments by the mandarins are in L'Indochine, 17 and 20 July 1925.

attempting to acquire rich properties through the questionable manipulation of a public auction. Beauville argued that communism did not yet exist in Cochinchina, although L'Impartial alleged that it did, but the Vietnamese peasants were frustrated and angry over the land swindles perpetuated by Cognacq and his associates. Two Vietnamese mandarins living in the Camau area wrote letters to the editors, verifying the allegations presented in L'Indochine. One of the mandarins feared that if the peasants were denied the opportunity of obtaining the land that they had developed and cultivated through their own industry, bloodshed would result. The other mandarin sent telegrams, on behalf of the peasants, to governor Cognacq, Governor-General Monguillot, and the Colonial Ministry in Paris.

One evening in the office of L'Indochine, Malraux and the others witnessed first-hand the passions that had been aroused by the Camau affair. On the staff of the newspaper, there was a young Vietnamese man, Ho Dac Hien, described in a sûreté report as "a small-time agitator, audacious in his language, whose criminal plans have always miscarried."⁸⁷ A strong, hard man from the region of Annam in central Vietnam, Hien had concocted a violent scheme.⁸⁸ During late July, Governor-General Monguillot would be visiting Governor Cognacq in Saigon. Hien had obtained a press pass for the official ceremony. He planned to move in as close as possible with

⁸⁷Rapport annuel: 1924-1926, "Exposé chronologique."

⁸⁸Clara Malraux, Les Combats, 43, 176-179.

his camera, then pull out his revolver and kill Cognacq. The others protested that the assassination of Cognacq would accomplish nothing. Hien told them: "he is a savage beast. Because of him land is taken from the peasants . . . we are crushed by taxes."⁸⁹ Another Vietnamese, Dejean, told Hien that the killing of Cognacq would only lead to repression. Hien replied that if the Vietnamese did nothing, then nothing would ever change.⁹⁰

Malraux reminded Hien of the 1924 assassination attempt by a Vietnamese nationalist on former Governor-General Merlin in Canton.⁹¹ In Malraux's opinion, the attack had been pointless. Hien responded sharply, saying that the French authorities would always consider the Vietnamese patriots to be mere pirates or assassins. Malraux replied: "It is a question of being efficient assassins"⁹² Because the assassination would not be accompanied by a popular uprising, Malraux thought that it would result in a setback for the Vietnamese. All of the Vietnamese on the staff agreed that because Merlin had crawled under the banquet table during the 1924 attack, he had lost face. Malraux responded: "For the Vietnamese perhaps; to the French, he was simply being sensible."⁹³ The room was silent for a time. One of the Vietnamese declared that the few liberties they still possessed could be taken from them at any time. Monin answered that Hien had no organization supporting him. If Cognacq

⁸⁹ibid., 178.

⁹⁰ibid.

⁹¹ibid., 179.

⁹²ibid.

⁹³ibid.

were murdered, there would be a savage repression. Hien glared at the others for a few moments, then stormed out of the office into the night. The following day, the staff learned that the official ceremony to welcome the Governor-General had been cancelled. Hien would not have the opportunity to put his plan into action.⁹⁴

After the outpouring of protest over the proposed Camau land auction, and meetings between Cognacq and the Governor-General, it was announced that the rules of the auction had been changed.⁹⁵ The rule that joined together fourteen of the twenty-six plots was withdrawn. The Camau peasants would not be thrown off their land. The choice fields that the peasants were actively farming would be set aside for them. Over twenty-three thousand acres of the remaining land were sold at the auction. Except for Cognacq and his partners, everyone was satisfied with the outcome.

Malraux had attended the auction, in order to get the story firsthand.⁹⁶ As he and two Vietnamese friends returned from Camau, the driver of their car suddenly braked hard. When the car finally stopped in a cloud of dust, Malraux could see a taut steel cable that had been strung across the jungle road. He suspected that the sûreté was responsible for the incident, but he was never certain.

⁹⁴*ibid.*, 179-181.

⁹⁵Paul Monin, "Première victoire à Camau," *L'Indochine*, 28 July 1925.

⁹⁶Clara Malraux, *Les Combats*, 202-203.

In Malraux's opinion, the Camau affair was typical of the clumsy, greedy colonial policy typified in the Cognacq regime.⁹⁷ He criticized the French administration for short-sighted policies that hindered the economic development of Vietnam. He argued that the colonial administration was authoritarian and corrupt. Heavy-handed governmental interference in the Vietnamese economy had stifled the development of commerce and industry. Malraux pointed out that the administration supported various monopolies and special arrangements with influential individuals, to the detriment of French and Asian businessmen alike. Public works projects were often calculated swindles, designed to benefit crooked promoters and their official protectors, at the expense of the taxpayers. Sounding very much like a traditional economic liberal, Malraux extolled the virtues of economic competition and private enterprise. He castigated the administration for its bureaucratic interference in the free economic development of Vietnam. Malraux remarked that "the high administration is supposed to serve the country, and not the country to serve the administration."⁹⁸

Malraux censured French officials and colons who openly regarded the Vietnamese as an inferior people.⁹⁹ He said that he would not prejudge a race as inferior. Malraux argued that the greatest and most successful colonizing nations in history had

⁹⁷André Malraux, "Sur le rôle de l'administration," L'Indochine, 16 July 1925.

⁹⁸ibid.

⁹⁹André Malraux, "Troisième Lettre à Chavigny," L'Indochine, 22 July 1925; Idem, "Sélection d'énergies," L'Indochine, 14, August 1925.

attempted to secure the loyalty of the strongest and most energetic elements in the populations that they ruled. Yet in Cochinchina, and in Vietnam generally, the French administration was systematically bringing into existence a formidable opposition. Moreover, administration policies were insuring that the brightest and toughest Vietnamese youths, those with the highest ideals and the strongest characters, were going to oppose French domination of their country. Malraux declared that stupid and greedy politicians were unwittingly arousing a proud people with a long tradition of resistance to foreign aggressors. He said that Vietnam was "an ancient land, sown with grand memories, the sleeping echoes of more than six hundred revolts."¹⁰⁰ Many Vietnamese were awaiting the mutual understanding and friendly collaboration that French politicians and officials promised in their speeches. Malraux feared that the backward policies of the French administration would eventually lead to a revolution, which would ultimately force France to abandon the colony.¹⁰¹

Malraux's advocacy of peaceful assimilation and cooperation between Europeans and Asians was echoed by many of the Vietnamese writers who expressed their views in L'Indochine. Nguyen An Ninh argued that much of the political unrest in his country was caused by Vietnamese leaders who accepted French democratic ideas, and who believed in "the inviolability of the

¹⁰⁰ibid.

¹⁰¹ibid.

Rights of Man."¹⁰² Educated Vietnamese who were familiar with European political ideas wanted Vietnam to be Europeanized, and to develop constitutional government under French sovereignty. Patriotic intellectuals wanted to teach the masses democratic ideas and the obligations of citizenship. Ninh maintained that Franco-Vietnamese rapprochement was a necessity. If the French administration continued to resist reform, then the worst fears of the Cognacq clique might materialize: "The legend of communism in Indochina . . . could become a reality."¹⁰³ If infuriated Vietnamese grew tired of waiting for the fulfillment of French promises, then they would gravitate towards the Communists. Ninh added: "And the communists, there as in many other Asian countries, thanks to their promises to respect the rights of oppressed peoples, would be regarded as saviors." Then violence alone would decide the future of Vietnam.¹⁰⁴ Like Malraux, Ninh predicted that if the French administration would not permit the peaceful evolution of Vietnam under constitutional government, then the future was ominous.

¹⁰²"L'Opinion des écrivains annamites," Nguyen-Tinh (pen name of Nguyen An Ninh), L'Indochine. 16 July 1925.

¹⁰³ibid.

¹⁰⁴ibid.

CHAPTER V

THE END OF A NEWSPAPER

Ever since the founding of L'Indochine, the Cognacq administration had been taking measures to hinder the distribution of the newspaper, and to harass its subscribers. Malraux published in the newspaper a copy of a document labeled as a "confidential and urgent order," which was sent by a district administrator to the mayor of Phung-Hiep.¹ In the document, the official ordered the mayor to find out if any Frenchmen or Vietnamese had visited the village recently, in order to sell copies of a newspaper which had recently appeared in Saigon. If so, the mayor was ordered to list the names of the subscribers, the number of subscriptions, and whether the subscriptions had been paid. The district administrator said that his order was "in conformity with urgent tract number twelve," and he expected a prompt report giving the results of the inquiry.²

Malraux and Monin published an open letter to Governor-General Monguillot, in which they protested the measures taken by Cognacq against L'Indochine.³ The editors alleged that government officials

¹The document is printed next to an editorial by André Malraux, "Liberté de la presse," L'Indochine, 24 July 1925.

²*Ibid.*; Letter from a provincial correspondent to the directors of L'Indochine, L'Indochine, 18 July 1925.

³André Malraux and Paul Monin, Open letter to the Governor-General of Indochina, L'Indochine, 22 June 1925.

were waging a campaign against the newspaper. An official at Travinh had summoned local Vietnamese who subscribed to the newspaper and had rebuked them. He had ordered his subordinates to do the same throughout the district. The editors complained that throughout Cochinchina government officials were warning their employees not to read L'Indochine. In the open letter to the Governor-General, Malraux and Monin said that they would protest to the French Chamber of Deputies if the slander against their newspaper continued. Monin wrote a letter to Marius Moutet, a member of the Chamber of Deputies who was as critical of French colonial policy as the editors of L'Indochine.⁴ In the letter, Monin told Moutet that the sûreté routinely opened mail addressed to the newspaper; moreover, the sûreté had threatened his Chinese legal clients with deportation.

The complaints of Malraux and Monin fell on deaf ears in Hanoi. It was unlikely that the governor-general would be sympathetic toward a newspaper that both he and the Colonial Ministry in Paris regarded as subversive. Even before the first issue of L'Indochine had appeared, the Minister of Colonies at that time, Edouard Daladier, had sent a report marked "ultra-secret" to the governors in Indochina, warning them that the newspaper L'Indochine would be "subsidized by the Communist party." The report pointed out that

⁴Letter Paul Monin to Maurius Moutet, 26 July 1925, Indochine, Nouveau Fonds, Affaires Politiques: Presse (1921-1925), Fonds ayant servi à la fondation du quotidien "Indochine" (1925), A 81, carton 100, dossier 964, Centre des Archives d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence.

Kuomintang party affiliates in Canton had contributed money for the founding of the newspaper.⁵ The French Colonial Ministry was suspicious of any links that the newspaper might have had with the Kuomintang-Communist alliance, which at that time was receiving arms, money, and military advisors from Moscow. Furthermore, many Vietnamese nationalists had found refuge at Canton. Several attended Whampoa Military Academy near Canton, an institution established with Soviet aid. Anti-imperialist agitators and committed nationalists from various parts of east Asia also congregated in Canton. The *sûreté* maintained a network of agents and informers in the city to report on the activities of subversive groups. It was in the Shameen district of Canton that a Vietnamese nationalist had attempted to kill the former Governor-General of Indochina, Martial Merlin. After the death of the Vietnamese nationalist responsible for the attack, Kuomintang leaders praised the assassin--five men in Merlin's party were killed by the bomb--and buried the Vietnamese patriot near some heroes of the Chinese revolution. The French government could only lodge protests.⁶

Two weeks after Malraux and Monin published their open letter to Hanoi, protesting the official harassment of their newspaper, Governor-General Monguillot sent a coded dispatch from Hanoi to

⁵Affaires Politiques, *Propagande révolutionnaire (1925-1933)*, "Note sur la propagande révolutionnaire intéressant les pays d'outre-mer," April 1925.

⁶Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism*, 253, 257, 259-260; Tai, *Radicalism*, 70-71, 175-176. Nguyen Ai Quoc, better known as Ho Chi Minh, was in Canton serving as an aide to Michael Borodin, chief Soviet advisor to the Kuomintang. Ho Chi Minh was forming his first political organization in Canton in 1925.

former Governor-General Merlin, then serving at the Colonial Ministry in Paris.⁷ The dispatch from Monguillot was a response to a previous coded message from Merlin, on the subject of how L'Indochine was funded. The sûreté had investigated the matter and concluded that some of the funds for the newspaper had indeed come from Kuomintang party affiliates in Canton, which were "tied closely with Bolshevik agents." The dispatch stated that Malraux had close relations with anti-French Vietnamese, and that Monin served as advisor and legal counsellor for the Cochinchina section of the Kuomintang party.⁸ Although Malraux and Monin knew that the Governor Cognacq and his cronies regarded them as "Bolsheviks," the editors of L'Indochine had no way of knowing that Governor-General Monguillot regarded them in the same way.

Malraux and the rest of the staff soon realized that the sûreté was keeping them under surveillance. During one of their evening walks, Malraux and his wife discovered that they were being followed. When they suddenly split up and rushed down separate alleys, they managed to lose the man.⁹ People collecting subscriptions for L'Indochine found themselves being followed by sûreté agents. For several weeks, the sûreté stationed men outside of the newspaper office, and the print shop where L'Indochine was

⁷"Monguillot dispatch to Merlin," 7 July 1925, Indochine, Nouveau Fonds, Affaires Politiques: Presse (1921-1925), Fonds ayant servi à la fondation du quotidien "Indochine" (1925), A 81, carton 100, dossier 965, Centre des Archives d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Clara Malraux, Les Combats, 182-183.

published. Malraux received information that the sûreté intended to have him and Monin beaten. The editors reported the rumor in the newspaper and declared that they would continue taking walks in the evening.¹⁰

Malraux and Monin learned that the Cognacq administration had taken measures to limit distribution of L'Indochine through its control of the postal services.¹¹ In areas outside of Saigon, local officials often met the mail couriers from Saigon in order to copy the addresses of readers who received L'Indochine. A Vietnamese reader wrote an anonymous letter to the editors, in which he revealed that a local official had threatened to imprison any Vietnamese who bought the newspaper. Monin heard that the Cognacq administration finally ordered postal officials in Saigon to discard most issues of L'Indochine. When Monin tried to pay a visit to the director of the postal service, the official was unwilling to talk to him. Monin resorted to publishing an open letter to the postal director in L'Indochine.¹² In the letter, Monin told the official that he would use all the legal means at his disposal to insure that copies of the newspaper were not stolen.

The Cognacq administration finally took measures to silence L'Indochine once and for all.¹³ Sûreté agents visited the Vietnamese

¹⁰"La Sûreté," L'Indochine, 1 August 1925; "Information," L'Indochine, 15 July 1925.

¹¹André Malraux, "Liberté de la presse," L'Indochine, 24 July 1925; Letter Paul Monin to Marius Moutet, 26 July 1925, Indochine, Nouveau Fonds, Affaires Politiques: Presse (1921-1925).

¹²Paul Monin, "A Monsieur le directeur des postes," L'Indochine, 27 July 1925.

¹³Clara Malraux, Les Combats, 207-208; André Malraux, "Lettre ouverte à

typesetters who worked for printer Louis Minh. After the sûreté warned the workers that they would be imprisoned if they did not cooperate, Minh's frightened employees threatened to go on strike. Minh was in danger of losing all of his business. Then Cognacq's associate Chavigny, editor of L'Impartial, went to see Minh to offer to buy out his printing operation. Minh agreed to sell his shop, and he notified Malraux and Monin that he would no longer print L'Indochine. The editors visited every printing shop in Saigon, but they found that the sûreté had already talked to the printers, warning them not to print L'Indochine. The newspaper was forced to suspend publication after 14 August 1925.¹⁴

Although Malraux and the others were frustrated and angry, they were determined to find a way to publish their newspaper, despite Cognacq's interference. For the time being, Monin suggested that they close the office and set up shop at his home. He and Malraux agreed that they should acquire a printing press and produce the paper themselves.¹⁵ Unfortunately, the sûreté had forbidden shops handling printing equipment to have any dealings with the staff of L'Indochine. Through their Vietnamese friends, the editors finally procured an old printing press badly in need of repair. They installed the machine in Monin's house and began to tinker with it. Vietnamese friends in the printing trade brought parts and managed

Monsieur Alexandre Varenne gouverneur-général," L'Indochine enchaînée, 18 November 1925.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.; Clara Malraux, Les Combats, 224-225.

to put the printing press in serviceable condition. When they tried to buy type for the press using go-betweens, however, they found that the sûreté had frightened off all of the potential suppliers. So Malraux and Monin had reached another impasse.¹⁶

Once they realized that they would probably be unable to purchase type anywhere in French Indochina, they began to consider Hong Kong. Monin knew several people there, so he gave Malraux some addresses that could be of possible use. Subsequently, André and Clara boarded a British ship bound for Hong Kong. Soon after they sailed, an Englishman told Clara that the captain was sending a message to the British authorities in Hong Kong that "the reddest Bolshevik in all Annam" was among his passengers.¹⁷ The captain was forwarding a warning he had received from the sûreté. After Clara told her husband about the message, they decided to shred the names and addresses Monin had given them, and throw them in the sea. The general strike against the British was in full swing, and the only ships sailing in or out of the port were those with non-Chinese crews. Thousands of Chinese workers had gone away from Hong Kong on account of the strike and boycott. Upon their arrival, Clara wondered if their reputation had preceded them. She noticed that theirs was almost the only luggage carried by the Chinese coolies at the dock. Most of the passengers had to fend for themselves.¹⁸

¹⁶ibid.

¹⁷ibid., 211. The quoted phrase is written in English in her memoirs.

¹⁸ibid., 211-213.

André and Clara were afraid that the sûreté's notification to the British police might hamper them.¹⁹ Contrary to their expectations, the task of finding type at a reasonable price proved to be easy. In a newspaper, they found an ad in which Jesuit monks were offering to sell some old type. As they left the hotel, however, they noticed that they were being followed by a plainclothes policeman. They ignored the man. When André and Clara arrived at the monastery, they found that the Jesuits were replacing the old type at their printing shop. After closing the deal, the Jesuits promised to have most of the type delivered to their ship, when André and Clara were ready to return to Saigon. The Jesuits said that some of the type would not be available for a week, but they promised to send the last cases of type to Saigon. André and Clara were amazed at their good luck.²⁰

Because they had accomplished their mission so quickly, there were five days left before their scheduled departure for Saigon.²¹ As they toured the area, a Chinese plainclothes policeman continued to follow them everywhere they went. A couple of policemen were taking turns on a rotating shift, walking behind André and Clara as they explored Hong Kong. The policemen finally ended the pretense and began walking beside the couple, offering to guide them around town. One of the policeman insisted on carrying Clara's packages for her. When Clara decided to go to Kowloon to see a French comedy at

¹⁹ibid., 214-215.

²⁰ibid.

²¹ibid., 215-220.

a movie theater, one of the policemen was eager to accompany her. Because the trip to Kowloon was longer than she had anticipated, Clara grew weary, and decided it was not worth the effort. She told the policeman that she would go to the movie with him the following day. But he looked worried and told her that it was not his turn to follow her that day. André and Clara also visited Macao, where they gambled at a Fan-Tan table. She told André that if she had been visiting Macao alone, she would have visited the opium dens.²²

When they returned to Saigon, customs officials seized the cases of type, using the pretext that the official paperwork had not been done properly in Hong Kong.²³ Much to his disgust, André realized that Governor Cognacq was making sure that the type would never reach its destination. Fortunately, the remaining cases of type arrived a week later, as promised by the Jesuits. With this second shipment of type, Malraux and Monin began to make preparations for their newspaper. Because the type was English, it was lacking accents, which are necessary for printed French. This problem was solved when some Vietnamese typographers visited Monin's house one night, when Clara was there alone, and gave her one hundred pieces of type inscribed with the necessary diacritical marks.²⁴ Knowing that Malraux and Monin needed the characters for their printing press, the workers had stolen a few accent marks

²²ibid.

²³ibid., 220-221, André Malraux, "Chronique de Saigon," L'Indochine enchaînée, 4 November 1925.

²⁴Clara Malraux, Les Combats, 194-195.

from their places of work. These marks came from various fonts, and they did not fit the English type very well. Because Malraux and Monin did not have large type for headings, they utilized wooden blocks which were made specifically for their newspaper. Printed on heavy, yellowish-colored paper, with uneven type, the new newspaper had a rustic, crude appearance. When they ran the printing press, Monin's house resounded with the vibration and the noise.²⁵ Because of the adverse conditions in which the newspaper was produced, L'Indochine enchaînée appeared only twice a week.

Malraux and Monin were anxious to get the newspaper started before the arrival of the newly appointed Governor-General of Indochina, Alexandre Varenne, who was scheduled to visit Saigon in late November 1925.²⁶ Because Varenne was the first socialist ever appointed as Governor-General, conservative politicians in Vietnam were apprehensive. On the other hand, Varenne's appointment aroused great expectations among those who favored liberal reforms in Indochina. Several Vietnamese political activists, including Dejean de la Batie, who had worked on the staff of L'Indochine, were preparing to resume the publication of the independent Vietnamese newspaper La Clôche Fêlée.²⁷ Knowing that Governor Cognacq and his political allies would attempt to insulate Varenne from knowledge of actual conditions during his stay in Saigon, Malraux and Monin

²⁵ibid., 224.

²⁶Langlois, Indochina Adventure, 149-150; Thompson, French Indochina, 314.

²⁷Tai, Radicalism, 137-139.

wanted to publicize the governor's malfeasance in office in the pages of L'Indochine enchaînée.

In the first issue of the newspaper, which appeared on 4 November 1925, Malraux attacked Cognacq in a sarcastic editorial, embellished with a piglike caricature of the governor.²⁸ Malraux surmised that if Varenne were to ask Cognacq for a report on the situation in Cochinchina, the governor would tell the new Governor-General that the Vietnamese were happy and content. Cognacq could tell Varenne that French law works better when "applied in Indochina according to the spirit of the Aztec code."²⁹ Malraux listed facts that Cognacq would attempt to explain away. He would need to explain how freedom of the press included ordering the post office to steal newspapers, and using the sûreté to intimidate Vietnamese typesetters. In a reference to the Camau affair, Malraux said that Cognacq would have to justify his attempt to give his political allies land cleared and cultivated by Vietnamese farmers. Perhaps Cognacq would explain to Varenne how he routinely threatened the families of young Vietnamese who found fault with administration policies. Malraux alleged that Cognacq provided regular subsidies for his political allies which were hidden in the budget under the caption "Charity: Deaf-Mutes."³⁰ Malraux claimed that he could furnish more than one hundred letters of protest which would reveal how Governor Cognacq shamelessly violated French laws in

²⁸André Malraux, "Réouverture," L'Indochine enchaînée, 4 November 1925.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

Cochinchina. According to Malraux, Cognacq had allied himself with several powerful financial and commercial groups in order to make money as quickly as possible, regardless of the consequences.

Malraux and Monin prepared a special issue of L'Indochine enchaînée to coincide with Varenne's arrival in Saigon on 18 November 1925. In an open letter to Varenne, the editors discussed at length the manner in which Cognacq had imposed authoritarian rule over Cochinchina, and had subverted justice in the colony.³¹ The editors alleged that Cognacq had used electoral fraud to insure the election of a political ally as President of the Chamber of Agriculture, an advisory body consisting of a French majority and a Vietnamese minority, the latter elected by a carefully circumscribed native electorate. To insure the election of Cognac's slate of Vietnamese candidates, the police had threatened Vietnamese voters. Malraux asserted that he had letters claiming that local administrators had rounded up Vietnamese voters and had ordered them to vote for Cognacq's list of candidates. In spite of these coercive measures, Cognacq's Vietnamese candidates had lost anyway. The editors provided details of the methods used by Cognacq to shut down L'Indochine, so that he could maintain control over the press in Cochinchina. The editors alleged that Cognacq regarded the province as a private domain which he and his allies were looting for profit. To illustrate their point, the editors

³¹André Malraux and Paul Monin, "Lettre ouverte à Varenne," L'Indochine enchaînée, 18 November 1925.

brought up the Camau affair, in which Cognacq and his cronies attempted to swindle a group of peasants and gain possession of their property. The editors argued that Cognacq's greed and his appetite for power had undermined French authority in Cochinchina.³²

While Varenne was in Saigon, the Colonial Council was expected to give its approval to Governor Cognacq's annual budget. The Colonial Council of Cochinchina was a deliberative body, with French councilors forming the majority, and Vietnamese councilors the minority. Some of the council members were elected and others were appointed by the governor.³³ A few days before Varenne's arrival in Saigon, Cognacq had presented his yearly report to the Colonial Council, a five hundred page document which glossed over the controversies of the previous year.³⁴ According to Cognacq, the colony had enjoyed peace and prosperity, despite the fact that Vietnamese, Chinese, and French agitators had assailed the administration with various trumped up charges. The governor said that he had taken measures to protect the people from the spread of subversive ideas.³⁵ He maintained that his policy was "characterized by benevolence, . . . the maintenance of order, which is the essential

³²ibid.

³³Thomas E. Ennis, French Policy and Developments in Indochina (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1936), 83.

³⁴André Malraux, "Considérations sur le livre vert," L'Indochine enchaînée, 18 November 1925.

³⁵André Malraux and Paul Monin, "Lettre ouverte à Varenne," L'Indochine enchaînée, 18 November 1925.

factor in the peace and prosperity of a country, but a prudent maintenance, obtained by conviction rather than by constraint."³⁶

Malraux responded to Cognacq's report by castigating the governor in an editorial.³⁷ Upon reading the report, Malraux remarked, it occurred to him that the governor was a "little buffoon" who told jokes to the councillors. For instance, the governor claimed that no one read the opposition press, and that the bulk of the populace was content. Malraux argued that Cognacq's policies were creating deep unrest, which could result in disastrous consequences for the colony. Anyone who questioned Cognacq's policies, or who sought justice, was branded as a revolutionary. Although Cognacq claimed in his report to rule through benevolence rather than coercion, Malraux countered with a blunt accusation: "You govern Indochina only by fear, money, and the sûreté."³⁸

When the Colonial Council met again on 24 November 1925, Malraux was sitting in the audience taking notes. Monin was an elected member of the council, which was dominated by supporters of Governor Cognacq.³⁹ The primary purpose of the meeting was to vote on the budget, which the governor had presented two weeks before. An official representing the governor was there to respond

³⁶Quoted in André Malraux, "Considérations sur le livre vert," L'Indochine enchaînée, 18 November 1925.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Langlois, Indochina Adventure, 174-175.

to any questions that the councilors might raise. The president of the council was Henri Chavigny, the editor of L'Impartial.⁴⁰

The first councilor to take the floor was Nguyen-tan-Duoc, who had won a seat on the Chamber of Agriculture despite Cognacq's efforts to prevent his election.⁴¹ In his remarks, Duoc took issue with Cognacq's bland assurances that political unrest in Cochinchina resulted from the subversive activities of a handful of malcontents. Duoc stated that the Vietnamese had ample reason to protest an administration that repressed their civil rights and limited their educational opportunities. He argued that the Vietnamese deserved elementary liberties, such as the freedom to travel, freedom of assembly, and freedom of the press. After seventy years of French occupation, there was still a lack of adequate schools. Duoc maintained that public education should be the government's top priority. He demanded that the administration provide compulsory primary education and a sufficient number of secondary schools. Even though natives were often given low-level civil service jobs, many of the Vietnamese bureaucrats were mere lackeys, concerned only with the acquisition of money and keeping French administrators satisfied. Duoc protested the use of Vietnamese draftees by the French government to quell uprisings in Syria and North Africa. As Duoc lambasted the governor's policies, several of

⁴⁰André Malraux, "Chronique de Saigon," L'Indochine enchaînée, 25 November 1925.

⁴¹André Malraux and Paul Monin, "Lettre ouverte à Varenne," L'Indochine enchaînée, 18 November 1925; "Discours prononcé au Conseil colonial par M. Nguyen-tan-Duoc," L'Indochine enchaînée, 2 December 1925.

Cognacq's political allies left the room, while spectators repeatedly interrupted the councilor with applause.⁴²

Even though Cognacq claimed that Cochinchina was calm and peaceful, Duoc pointed out that the governor had requested a substantial increase in the sûreté budget. Duoc observed that there were other police agencies at the local level, as well as a militia. Rather than allocating funds for schools or medical care, the administration preferred to spend money on police forces. If the people of Cochinchina were satisfied, Duoc remarked, then why did the governor need so many policemen? The real purpose of the sûreté was to hound those who disagreed with the governor's policies. The administration used the political police primarily to silence the opposition. This was not the way to build a harmonious relationship between the two races. Duoc concluded his speech with a request that the administration correct the erroneous statements in the governor's report. As Duoc sat down, many of the spectators applauded.⁴³

After Duoc's blunt assessment of the governor's report, other councilors rose to speak.⁴⁴ A French councilor commended Duoc for his boldness and his honesty; then, turning to Cognacq's representative, the councilor questioned the accuracy of the

⁴²Ibid.; André Malraux, "Chronique de Saigon," L'Indochine enchaînée, 25 November 1925.

⁴³"Discours prononcé au Conseil colonial par M. Nguyen-tan-Duoc," L'Indochine enchaînée, 2 and 5 December 1925.

⁴⁴André Malraux, "Chronique de Saigon," L'Indochine enchaînée, 25 November 1925; Henri Chavigny, "Bolchevisme et le Conseil colonial," L'Impartial, 25 November 1925.

governor's report. The governor's representative responded by claiming that the Colonial Council was not empowered to discuss political questions. It could only consider administrative and budgetary issues. The commissioner said that anyone with a complaint was free to appeal to the administration or the courts.⁴⁵ Monin then entered the fray, asserting that the problems discussed by Duoc were administrative in nature. Because the governor had raised the issues in his address to the council, as well as in his report, then it was appropriate for the Colonial Council to discuss the matters in question.

The atmosphere grew more heated when a Vietnamese councilor, Truong-van-Ben, declared that he objected to the use of Vietnamese soldiers by the French in colonial wars in the Middle East.⁴⁶ He then presented a motion asking Governor Cognacq to formally request that Vietnamese soldiers serving in "wars of aggression" be brought home. Monin seconded the motion while several councilors and many of the spectators applauded. Because Malraux was consistently leading the applause and voicing his approval, Chavigny requested that he be taken from the room.⁴⁷ Chavigny summarily demanded a vote on the governor's budget. Although one-third of the councilors expressed their dissent by voting against the budget, it passed.

⁴⁵André Malraux, "Chronique de Saigon," L'Indochine enchaînée, 25 November 1925.

⁴⁶Ibid..

⁴⁷Ibid.

In an editorial which appeared the following day, Malraux found it ridiculous that the governor's representative had claimed that those with grievances could simply "complain to the administration or to the courts."⁴⁸ How could anyone expect the Cognacq administration to respond to such complaints? As for the judiciary in Indochina, Malraux observed that the courts were not independent, but were tied to the executive power. He concluded that Vietnamese who were dedicated to reforming the colonial administration should make "an appeal to French public opinion."⁴⁹

The stormy meeting of the Colonial Council was potentially embarrassing to Cognacq, because the new Governor-General of Indochina, Alexandre Varenne, was still in Saigon. In one of his speeches, Varenne stated that although he intended to enforce existing laws in Indochina, reforms would have to wait.⁵⁰ Admitting that he was aware of the numerous complaints against the administration in Cochinchina, he asked the people of the province to "forget the past." Disillusioned by Varenne's remarks, Monin wrote that the new Governor-General had cynically changed from a socialist to a conservative in Cochinchina.⁵¹ According to Monin, Varenne was, in effect offering "immunity and absolution . . . to certain criminals in the administration."

⁴⁸André Malraux, "L'Appel à l'opinion française," L'Indochine enchaînée, 25 November 1925.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Quoted in Paul Monin, "Oublions le passé," L'Indochine enchaînée, 2 December 1925.

⁵¹Ibid.

Varenne was scheduled to leave Saigon on 28 November 1925. The day before his departure he granted a public interview to Nguyen-phan-Long, a prominent member of the Colonial Council and a leader of the Constitutionalist party.⁵² Hundreds of prominent Vietnamese attended the ceremony to see Long present Varenne with a list of reform measures advocated by the Constitutionlists and the Jeune Annam group. The list of suggested reforms included an expansion of the educational system, the liberty to travel, the easing of naturalization procedures, a reduction in the term of enlistment for Vietnamese soldiers, the appointment of additional Vietnamese notables on governing councils, a relaxation of administrative controls over the Vietnamese press, freedom of assembly, judicial reform, and government assistance for agriculture.⁵³

In his response, Varenne advised the Vietnamese to be patient. He said that he would inquire into legitimate grievances, but he had no plans to extend the civil liberties of the native peoples of Indochina.⁵⁴ He made no mention of the issues of naturalization or education. Varenne told the crowd that although he would study the question of censorship, the freedom to publish newspapers in Vietnamese would remain restricted. He feared that if the

⁵²Clara Malraux, *Les Combats*, 225; André Malraux, "Une Protestation de plus de milles notables," *L'Indochine enchaînée*, 28 November 1925.

⁵³*Ibid.*

⁵⁴*Ibid.*; William H. Frederick, "Alexandre Varenne and Politics in Indochina, 1925-1926," in *Aspects of Vietnamese History*, ed. Walter F. Vella (The University Press of Hawaii, 1973), 114.

government permitted freedom of the press for native peoples, then Vietnamese editorial writers would behave irresponsibly and create disaffection among the people.⁵⁵

Varenne's response to Long was a profound disappointment for those who supported reform in Cochinchina. Long was so disillusioned that he resigned from his position on the Colonial Council.⁵⁶ Because the political situation in Cochinchina appeared dismal, Long urged his political ally in Paris, Bui-quang-Chieu, to intensify his activities in metropolitan France and to remain there for a few more months. Chieu was in Paris writing articles, giving speeches, and sending letters to the Minister of Colonies in an effort to convince the French government to permit greater Vietnamese participation in the political administration of Vietnam.⁵⁷

Malraux and Monin were also discouraged by Varenne's remarks. In response to Varenne's refusal to grant freedom of the press to the Vietnamese, Malraux wrote an editorial in which he argued that there was no reason to assume that established Vietnamese journalists, who showed political moderation when writing in French, would suddenly advocate radical ideas in Vietnamese.⁵⁸ On the other hand, if younger writers were to use vehement language in

⁵⁵André Malraux, "Une Protestation de plus de milles notables," L'Indochine enchaînée, 28 November 1925.

⁵⁶Rapport annuel: 1924-1926, "Exposé chronologique."

⁵⁷Tai, Radicalism, 140.

⁵⁸André Malraux, "La Liberté de la presse indigene," L'Indochine enchaînée, 2 December 1925.

the discussion of long-standing grievances, then the administration would be wise to mollify them by enacting needed reforms. Although Varenne said that he would at least examine the question of censorship of the Vietnamese-language press, Malraux argued that a relaxation of existing regulations by the governor-general would have little effect in Cochinchina. At that time, an editor in Cochinchina had to get proper authorization from Governor Cognacq before publishing a newspaper in Vietnamese. Whether or not censorship was continued in the future, Malraux asserted that prior authorization should be abolished.⁵⁹

When Varenne was ready to start off for Hué and Hanoi on 28 November 1925, there was only one Vietnamese in the crowd of well-wishers, Le-Quang-Trinh, one of Cognacq's allies on the Colonial Council. On the previous day, hundreds of prominent Vietnamese had attended his meeting with Long, the leader of the Constitutionalists. In an editorial Monin remarked: "This is the first time that a Governor-General has been discredited in so little time."⁶⁰ Because Varenne's appointment as the first socialist Governor-General of Indochina had aroused great hopes within reform groups in Vietnam, his cautious attitude alienated those who had expected promises of rapid political change.⁶¹

On the day that Varenne left Saigon, a letter to the Governor-General from the mayor of a village in the province of Mytho was

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Paul Monin, "Oublions le passé," L'Indochine enchaînée, 2 December 1925.

⁶¹"Exposé chronologique."

published in L'Indochine enchaînée, with a commentary by Malraux.⁶² The Cognacq administration had demanded that village officials in the province were to be held accountable for all delinquent personal taxes in their respective villages for 1924 and 1925. The village officials of Mytho were frantically seeking relief from this burden. A Vietnamese member of the Colonial Council had requested an explanation of the policy from the administration, but to no avail. According to the letter from the mayor, the delinquent taxes remained outstanding because the taxpayers in question had gone to other provinces to live. The administration would not remove from the official register the names of taxpayers who had moved. The mayor argued that the migrant taxpayers would have registered in their new villages in order to officially update the information on their identity cards. In all likelihood, the migrants were paying taxes in their new villages.⁶³

Malraux pointed out that even though village notables had explained the injustice of the situation to administration officials, their appeal had fallen on deaf ears. The administration continued to threaten the village leaders, telling them that they would be sent to prison if they did not raise the funds required to pay the taxes allegedly owed to the state. According to Malraux, the mistreatment

⁶²"A M. le Gouverneur général de l'Indochine," L'Indochine enchaînée, 2 December 1925.

⁶³*ibid.*; Malraux commentary on the letter to the Governor-General of Indochina from the mayor of Dieuhoa, province of Mytho, L'Indochine enchaînée, 28 November 1925; André Malraux, "Les Notables et les impôts," L'Indochine enchaînée, 25 November 1925.

of the village leaders by the administration would embitter them against French rule.⁶⁴ In effect, Cognacq was undermining French authority in the province of Mytho. In an editorial, Malraux informed his Vietnamese readers that those who sympathized with the village leaders of Mytho were writing and sending information to important people in France, including the Minister for the Colonies.⁶⁵ He promised his readers: "We are going to have a dossier sent to the Minister of Colonies concerning this affair." Malraux was convinced that the colonial minister would realize that the unjust imprisonment of village officials was not in the best interests of France. Despite the protests, the Cognacq administration kept up the pressure on the hapless village officials of Mytho.⁶⁶

During December 1925, Malraux covered a notorious murder case, which occurred during a tax revolt in Cambodia. Taxes in Cambodia were higher than taxes in Cochinchina. In addition to the heavy administrative expenses in Cambodia, native officials commonly engaged in graft. The French administration had raised taxes in 1924, to fund public works, including a luxurious seaside resort for French officials.⁶⁷ When the administration placed a new tax on the rice crop in 1925, there was unrest in several provinces.

⁶⁴Malraux commentary on the letter from the mayor of Dieuhoa, L'Indochine enchaînée, 28 November 1925.

⁶⁵André Malraux, "Mytho, toujours les coutumes de guerre," L'Indochine enchaînée, 2 Decembre 1925.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*; Langlois, Indochina Adventure, 187.

⁶⁷Langlois, Indochina Adventure, 188-189; Thompson, French Indochina, 347-348.

Delegations of hard-pressed Cambodian farmers visited their provincial capitals, as well as Pnom Penh, in order to discuss the new tax with French officials. Even though Cambodian farmers were seething with discontent, the tax collections continued.

Occasionally there was trouble. In March 1925 in the Kompong Chnong region, peasants came to blows with several Cambodian officials who worked for the French administration.⁶⁸

Several weeks later, a provincial commissioner named Bardez decided to go to the Kompong Chnong area to demand that the villages pay the new taxes.⁶⁹ The Cambodian governor of the region urged Bardez not to visit the area where Cambodian officials had recently been mistreated by peasants. Despite the warning, Bardez set out for the area on 16 April 1925, accompanied by two members of the native militia. Bardez arrived at the village of Krang Leou during a Buddhist religious holiday. After news of his arrival spread to the surrounding villages, over one thousand Cambodians gathered around the Buddhist temple at Krang Leou.

Bardez ordered a village leader to read an administrative decree to the crowd. When the man had read the text, Bardez ordered the residents of the village to pay the controversial new tax. Although a Buddhist priest tried to mediate between Bardez and the muttering crowd, the angry commissioner suddenly seized several of the men of the village as hostages, in an attempt to compel the

⁶⁸André Malraux, "Encore?," *L'Indochine enchaînée*, 9 December 1925.

⁶⁹André Malraux, "Chroniques de Saïgon," *L'Indochine enchaînée*, 12 December 1925; "L'Affaire Bardez," *L'Indochine enchaînée*, 26 December 1925.

villagers to pay the tax. After some villagers brought the money to Bardez, he refused to free the hostages. During the ensuing argument, a woman grabbed for her husband, and one of the militiamen threatened her with his rifle. This action provoked the infuriated crowd. The Cambodian peasants ran amok, killing Bardez and the two militiamen.⁷⁰

As angry crowds gathered throughout the area, the French administration responded quickly and arrested three hundred Cambodians for questioning.⁷¹ Except for eighteen suspects, the rest of the Cambodians were released after several days of questioning. But the lands of all who had been rounded up by the administration were forfeit: an official edict forbade anyone from living in the environs of the troubled village. In an effort to depoliticize the case, the French administration maintained that the murders had resulted from criminal activity. Malraux pointed out that the allegation that the men were criminals was absurd. He alleged that bandits never attacked Europeans. They preyed upon other Asians. As Malraux explained, Bardez's body was found with his money and other belongings still on his person.⁷²

Malraux went to Pnom Penh to cover the trial for L'Indochine enchaînée. The judicial proceedings reminded Malraux of his own trial at Pnom Penh in July 1924.⁷³ He noted that although the judge

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²André Malraux, "Chronique de Saigon," L'Indochine enchaînée, 12 December 1925.

⁷³Ibid.

was openly hostile to the defense, he was deferential to the prosecution. Much of the evidence used by the prosecution was withheld from the defense. The Director of Political Affairs for Cambodia attended the trial, and intervened in the proceedings whenever he deemed it necessary. The eighteen accused had all signed confessions. Their faces and bodies were covered with wounds inflicted by the sûreté during interrogation. In addition to the injuries they sustained during the beatings, the peasants were marked with cigarette burns. Their eyelids were swollen and misshapened from red ant stings.⁷⁴

The defense lawyer, Gallet, argued that much of Cambodia was in a state of unrest. Representing an overweening French administration, Bardez had precipitated the violence through his arrogant behavior in the village. Gallet had hoped to call Bardez's Cambodian driver as a witness, but just before the trial date, the sûreté reported that he was killed "for resisting arrest."⁷⁵ On the other hand, several peasants from Krang Leou testified as witnesses for the prosecution. Malraux suspected that they were willing to testify against their neighbors to satisfy the sûreté.⁷⁶

During a recess, Malraux interviewed Gallet.⁷⁷ After drinking his tea, Gallet answered questions for a while, then suddenly he changed color, reached towards Malraux, and crumpled. A doctor

⁷⁴André Malraux, "Encore?," L'Indochine enchaînée, 9 December 1925.

⁷⁵"L'Affaire Bardez," L'Indochine enchaînée, 26 December 1925.

⁷⁶*ibid.*

⁷⁷André Malraux, "L'Affaire Bardez," L'Indochine enchaînée, 16 December 1925.

later told Malraux that someone had tried to poison Gallet. Although he was sick for several days, Gallet survived the episode. Malraux reported that Gallet was employing a stenographer to keep an accurate record of the proceedings. Governor Cognacq was incensed when he realized that these reports were appearing in an opposition newspaper. According to Malraux, Cognacq ordered one of his cronies to warn the stenographer--who was on leave from a government job--that she would be fired if she continued working for the defense lawyer. She quit working for the defense lawyer. Gallet protested to the judge at Pnom Penh, but he brushed aside Gallet's objections as irrelevant.⁷⁸

When the judgment was pronounced, thirteen of the eighteen accused were found guilty. One of the Cambodians was condemned to death, four were sentenced to prison for life, and eight to long prison terms at hard labor. Five of the defendants were acquitted.⁷⁹ In a caustic commentary on the trial, Malraux suggested that in the future, colonial court procedures could be greatly simplified if defendants and their lawyers were beheaded.⁸⁰

A sûreté report reveals that the police regarded the articles on the Bardez case appearing in L'Indochine enchaînée to have been "particularly violent."⁸¹ In the wake of the Bardez case, peasants

⁷⁸André Malraux, "Chronique de Saïgon," L'Indochine enchaînée, 19 December 1925.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰André Malraux, "L'Affaire Bardez," L'Indochine enchaînée, 16 December 1925.

⁸¹Rapport annuel: 1924-1926, "Exposé chronologique."

from the village of Baclieu feared that the French administration was attempting to defraud them of their land. The sûreté report notes with disdain that Monin seized on the issue and sent a telegram to the angry peasants urging them: "Defend yourselves." The sûreté concluded that Monin was "advocating revolt."

As Malraux and Monin struggled to keep the newspaper going, their effort was increasingly pervaded with a sense of futility.⁸² Keeping the ramshackle printing press in operation taxed their ingenuity. Monin often spoke of going to Canton to participate in the Chinese revolution. By December 1925, the relationship between Malraux and Monin had become strained. Monin's wife and young son had returned from an extended vacation in France. His invalid wife, who was confined to a wheelchair, was sharing her home with an old printing press that made an interminable racket whenever it was in operation. Monin was in the awkward position of maintaining a home which doubled as a newspaper office.⁸³ The sûreté kept his house under constant surveillance. Monin woke up suddenly one night to find a man standing over his bed, slowly cutting through the mosquito netting with a straight razor. When Monin jumped up suddenly and kicked the man, the intruder jumped out of a window and ran through the garden. Monin claimed that the would-be assailant was one of the men who regularly watched his house.

⁸²Clara Malraux, Les Combats, 227-228, 230.

⁸³Paul Monin, "La Sûreté," L'Indochine enchaînée, 12 December 1925; Clara Malraux, Les Combats, 236.

André and Clara began to talk of leaving Saigon.⁸⁴ They agreed that the reform effort that they had supported appeared to be going nowhere. Because they had little money left, André told Clara that the only solution was that he write the book that he had promised the publisher Grasset. They wanted to return to France, but they could not afford the tickets. One evening André was talking to Dang Dai, one of his Kuomintang friends from Cholon.⁸⁵ Dang Dai told Malraux that as the revolution in China was reaching a critical phase, the Kuomintang organization in Canton was asking for more money from the overseas Chinese. The conversation took an odd turn when Dang Dai remarked that both the Chinese and the Vietnamese enjoyed gambling. In fact, illegal gambling flourished in Saigon. Dang Dai asserted that Governor-General Varenne had once spoken in favor of legalized gambling, because it would be better for the profits to go to charity rather than the pockets of crooked policemen. Yet recently Varenne had blocked an attempt by several entrepreneurs to obtain a casino license. If there were a casino in Cholon, Dang Dai said that Kuomintang leaders would find a way to funnel some of the profits into the revolutionary fund. To gain authorization for a gambling casino, Dang Dai suggested that it might be necessary to speak to important politicians in Paris. Malraux realized where the conversation was leading. Because L'Indochine had often featured interviews with important

⁸⁴ibid., 228.

⁸⁵ibid., 232-235.

metropolitan politicians, the Kuomintang leaders of Cholon assumed that Malraux had political connections in Paris. Dang Dai suggested that if Malraux would agree to speak to French politicians about legalizing gambling in Cholon, the Kuomintang party would pay for two tickets to France. Malraux accepted the offer.⁸⁶

In his last editorial, Malraux said that it was impossible to have confidence in the men sent by the Colonial Office to govern Indochina.⁸⁷ In spite of their empty promises, they were interested only in making money. He wrote: "We cannot appeal to violence, because we have no arms." Malraux argued that it would be necessary to make an appeal to the people of France through speeches, meetings, and newspaper articles. It was essential that they understand how the peoples of Indochina were suffering under French rule. Malraux argued that those who knew the facts about French colonialism should encourage working people to sign petitions supporting the aspirations of the Vietnamese. The writers of France should use their influence and speak out on behalf of reform. He admitted that it was impossible to say whether an appeal to public opinion would result in full liberty for the Vietnamese. But perhaps it would be possible to obtain some liberties. He concluded: "That is why I am leaving for France."⁸⁸

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷André Malraux, "Ce que nous pouvons faire," L'Indochine enchaînée, 26 December 1925.

⁸⁸Ibid.

Malraux was fortunate that his Chinese friends had offered to pay for the passage back to France. He had little money left, and he was in poor health, suffering from recurrent bouts with malaria. A friend of Malraux, French writer Paul Morand, was hospitalized in Saigon while on a trip during the last weeks of 1925. Malraux went to the hospital to visit him. Remembering the incident, Morand said that Malraux looked like a "ghost," appearing "pale, emaciated, looking like a hunted man, and infinitely sicker than the patients."⁸⁹ When André and Clara arrived at the dock on 30 December 1925, they were accompanied by Dong Thuan and Dong Dai, two of their Kuomintang friends from Cholon. Once they were at sea, Malraux spent much of his time in the cabin, writing chapters for the book La Tentation de l'occident.⁹⁰ His Asian experiences would also provide him with the material for several later novels, and furnished him with a unique perspective on European culture.

In retrospect, Malraux's first experiences as a political activist appear quixotic. He and Monin found the colonial administration to be intransigent, unwilling to consider reforms. Despite the fact that Malraux was labelled a "bolshevik" by Chavigny, the editor of L'Impartial, the ideas Malraux advocated in his political editorials were far from radical. He supported civil liberties for the Vietnamese and native participation in the political administration. Most Vietnamese leaders at that time would have welcomed the

⁸⁹Paul Morand, Papiers d'identité (Paris: Grasset, 1931), 171-172.

⁹⁰Clara Malraux, Les Combats, 240-241.

opportunity to develop constitutional government under French sovereignty. Malraux predicted that if the French administration would not permit the peaceful evolution of Vietnam under constitutional government, then the future was bleak. Malraux predicted that the brutal exploitation of the colony by the colonial administration would alienate the Vietnamese and turn them against the French in a future struggle. Shortsighted policies would arouse a proud people with a long tradition of resistance to foreign occupation, and would eventually lead to a revolution, which would ultimately force France to abandon the colony.⁹¹

There was a political ferment in Vietnam, beginning during the time Malraux was there, but intensifying in 1926, when anticolonial Vietnamese political organizations began to proliferate. Historian Hue-Tam Ho Tai asserts that "exposé journalism," as practiced by Malraux and Monin, brought about "the radicalization of Cochinchinese politics."⁹² She also maintains that through his association with the Jeune Annam group, Malraux "played a part, however small, in its transformation from an accommodationist group to a more militant organization."⁹³ Several of the young Vietnamese activists who collaborated with Malraux and Monin, including Nguyen An Ninh and Dejean de la Batie, transformed the Jeune Annam group into a militant organization which mobilized thousands of Vietnamese nationalists during the strikes,

⁹¹André Malraux, "Sélection d'énergies," L'Indochine, 14 August 1925.

⁹²Tai, Radicalism, 143.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 144.

demonstrations, and student boycotts of 1926.⁹⁴ For many of the young Vietnamese nationalists, the failure of the accommodationist approach, with its emphasis on Franco-Vietnamese cooperation, led quickly to a more radical political position.

Malraux's brief journalistic career was crucial in his transformation from an apolitical Parisian dandy into a political activist. His involvement in anticolonial reform politics was his first experience in political engagement. In the articles he wrote for L'Indochine and L'Indochine enchaînée, there was a clear development from his earlier efforts, which were overloaded with sarcastic diatribe and personal invective, to his later pieces, which represented a more mature, reflective political journalism. During the late 1920s, Malraux would abandon political journalism, as he became preoccupied with writing novels and fashioning a unique literary persona, But he would resume his political activism during the 1930s, when Nazism and fascism threatened the peace and security of Europe.

⁹⁴See *Ibid.*, 146-166, for an excellent description of these events.

CHAPTER VI

A MAN OF LETTERS AND AN ASIAN EXPERT

In his last editorial in L'Indochine enchaînée, Malraux claimed that he was leaving for Paris to make an appeal on behalf of the Vietnamese to the people of France, through speeches, meetings, and newspaper articles.¹ In the editorial, he argued that those who were familiar with the unpleasant realities of French colonialism, like himself, should encourage citizens to sign petitions supporting the liberties of the Vietnamese. Concerned writers, in an appeal to French public opinion, could use their influence to speak out on behalf of colonial reform.² Yet, despite his activist rhetoric, almost eight years elapsed before Malraux wrote an article on the colonial system in Vietnam.³

In an attempt to explain this hiatus, Walter Langlois argues that Malraux must have spoken about the colonial situation in Indochina at various meetings, seminars, and round-table discussions that he attended during the late 1920s.⁴ Langlois's argument, however, is based upon supposition rather than evidence.

¹ André Malraux, "Ce que nous pouvons faire," L'Indochine enchaînée, 26 December 1925.

² *Ibid.*

³ André Malraux, "S.O.S.," Marianne, 11 October 1933.

⁴ Langlois, Indochina Adventure, 200-201.

Langlois further maintains that Malraux's failure to discuss the Vietnamese situation was due to his modesty, his reluctance to reveal details about his own experience in Indochina.⁵ Malraux's reticence about his personal life does not explain his silence. Although the voluble Malraux was notoriously taciturn when questioned about his private life, he was not a modest man. He began to exaggerate his role in anticolonial politics even before he left Saigon, claiming in a letter to be the head of the Jeune Annam party.⁶ This embellishment was typical of Malraux in the years before he acquired a literary reputation.

Although Malraux wrote nothing about French colonialism for almost eight years after his return from Saigon, he did write a philosophical dialogue contrasting East and West, The Temptation of the West.⁷ In a convoluted argument, Langlois asserts that by writing that work and by setting three of his subsequent novels against Asian backdrops, Malraux was at the same time promoting the Vietnamese reform cause by enlightening readers about the problems of Asia.⁸ According to Langlois, Malraux was attempting to deepen his readers' understanding of Asia and convince them of the need for colonial reforms through an abstract discussion of the

⁵*Ibid.*, 213.

⁶André Malraux to Louis Brun, 4 October 1925, Continental Palace, Saigon, in Michael Cazenave, ed., André Malraux, Cahiers de l'Herne (Paris: Editions de l'Herne, 1982), 167.

⁷André Malraux, La Tentation de l'occident (Paris: Grasset, 1926).

⁸Langlois, Indochina Adventure, 214.

cultural differences between East and West and through fictional depictions of Chinese revolutionary struggles. Langlois's argument is forced. Despite the fact that Malraux drew upon his experiences in Indochina in several of his novels, there is no direct connection between his Asian novels and the cause of colonial reform. Once in Paris, Malraux was preoccupied with earning a living, writing fiction, and developing a literary reputation. His interest in colonial reform never entirely disappeared, but it faded into the background.

André and Clara arrived in Paris late in January 1926.⁹ They stayed in a modest pension along the Quai de Passy, near the Eiffel Tower. Every day they had lunch with André's mother, grandmother, and aunt, who shared an apartment near the Gare Montparnasse. Clara reminded her husband that he had promised their Chinese friends that he would try to talk to government officials about authorizing a gambling casino in Cholon. She asked André if he was going to see Marius Moutet, who was a socialist deputy from Marseilles, a friend of Paul Monin known to be sympathetic to the colonial people of Indochina. When she reminded her husband of the promise he had made, he answered: "I am no fool." He had no intention of keeping his promise. That was the end of the matter.¹⁰

Malraux was writing at a brisk pace, attempting to finish the book he had promised publisher Bernard Grasset. During October

⁹Clara Malraux, *Voici que vient l'été*, vol. 4 of *Le Bruit de nos pas* (Paris: Grasset, 1973), 21-24.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 23.

1925, while still in Saigon, Malraux had written a letter to Louis Brun, the director of the Grasset publishing house, telling him that the manuscript was almost finished.¹¹ Moreover, Malraux claimed that over half of the work, La Tentation de l'occident, had been translated into Chinese and had appeared in various newspapers and periodicals in Shanghai and Peking. Actually, there was no Chinese translation, and the book was far from finished. Malraux was writing the early chapters of the book while at sea on his return voyage to France in January 1926.¹²

When La Tentation de l'occident appeared in July 1926, publisher Bernard Grasset made the spurious claim that Malraux was the only living French writer whose work had been translated into Chinese.¹³ Although none of the Paris dailies reviewed the book, it was generally well received in the weekly newspapers and the regional press. La Tentation de l'occident was not the rousing adventure novel that Grasset had expected from Malraux. Instead, the work was a brief, recondite account of the differences that Malraux observed between eastern and western civilizations.

This dreamlike, epistolary work consisted of an exchange of fictional letters between two interlocutors, A.D., a young Frenchman in China, and Ling, a Chinese youth touring Europe. Because the

¹¹André Malraux to Louis Brun, 4 October 1925, in Cazenave, ed., André Malraux, 167.

¹²Clara Malraux, Les Combats, 240-241.

¹³Cate, Malraux, 147-148.

opinions of the two were virtually identical, the book was, in a sense, Malraux's inner dialogue with himself. Malraux indulged fully his appetite for abstractions, revealing a predilection for formulating his thoughts and observations in grand generalizations studded with crisp apothegms and striking images. In La Tentation de l'occident, Malraux's view of western civilization in the postwar period was dark and pessimistic. In the book, A.D. wrote: "Europeans are weary of themselves, weary of their decaying individualism, weary of their exaltation."¹⁴ According to A.D., Europeans were capable of great actions and self-sacrifice, but they could no longer find a compelling meaning for their actions, in a world that had become more foreign to them. The disharmony between Europeans and their crumbling universe was intensified by the realization that an action seldom achieves its intended object.¹⁵ A.D. writes: "Actions are controlled by their unforeseeable repercussions."¹⁶

Ling wrote to A.D. that the inherent futility of human action and the contingent nature of events are perceived clearly in the Chinese mind.¹⁷ But the fact that a human action seldom achieves its intended object does not lead to a despairing pessimism. The inner conflict which is characteristic of western sensibility is generated, in part, by the passion which ideas generate in Europeans.

¹⁴André Malraux, La Tentation de l'occident, 100.

¹⁵Ibid., 154.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid., 127-128.

Ling wrote: "For you absolute reality was God, then Man; but Man is dead, after God," ¹⁸ Europeans are haunted by the disintegration of a once-coherent world view, a philosophical framework which could justify and explain their actions. ¹⁹ Although new myths could emerge and subject Europeans to the whims of fate, there were no ideals which could produce a high sense of self-sacrifice in the West, although Europeans were yet capable of making great and courageous sacrifices. Europeans were living in a spiritual vacuum, unable to harmonize a disjointed consciousness and the anguished civilization which they had created. A.D. wrote to Ling that in the intellectual destruction of God in the West, Europeans had removed all limitations to human progress on earth only to discover sterility and ultimately death. Western man was doomed "to a most bloody fate." ²⁰ In his final remarks to A.D., Ling remarked that Europe was, indeed, a "grand cemetery." ²¹

A.D. wrote to Ling of a meeting with an old Chinese gentleman, Wang-Loh, who remarked acidly that the best of the Chinese youth were simultaneously fascinated with, and repelled by, European civilization. ²² Wang-Loh argued that the history of Chinese thought consisted, in its most significant aspect, of the integration of man and the universe; but the influence of Western thought was

¹⁸ibid., 128.

¹⁹ibid., 154, 158-159.

²⁰ibid., 74.

²¹ibid., 159.

²²ibid., 133-140.

corrosive. Traditional Chinese sensibility, infused with Confucianism, was decaying. In Wang-Loh's opinion, those men who were "worthy of China's past" were gradually passing away.²³ The young men in China who superficially emulated western fashions and ideas were filled with hatred for the West. They wanted to acquire the technological and ideological tools of the West so that they could oppose it with greater intensity.

In his response, Ling agreed with Wang-Loh's view that traditional China was dying and that the old intellectual elite was moribund.²⁴ Ling observed that the newly emerging elite, which was more youthful than any elite which had ever existed in China, could lead the nation into chaos. He was hopeful, however, that the emerging leadership would ultimately renew China, while preserving much of the ancient Chinese culture which was their birthright. There were millions of suffering Chinese, weighted down by misery and injustice, who were waiting for a leader to unite them. Ling argued that China was in the throes of a great upheaval which would renew and transform the nation. No one could foresee the shape of the new China that would emerge.

In an article published several months after the appearance of La Tentation de l'occident, Malraux further developed several of the arguments he presented in the book.²⁵ He pointed out that the

²³Ibid., 137.

²⁴Ibid., 143-149.

²⁵André Malraux, "Défense de l'occident par Henri Massis," La Nouvelle Revue

European powers had imposed on the Asian cultures an aggressive, materialistic civilization which had eroded many of the traditional values of the Asian peoples. Unwittingly, the western powers were stimulating nascent nationalisms in several Asian nations. Malraux argued that the Europeans thoughtlessly destroyed "traditional authority which, in all the countries of Asia, was linked to culture."²⁶ The destruction of traditional values in the Far East would ultimately lead to "the reign of force."²⁷ Because Communism had suffered reverses in China and Asian revolutionaries were faction-ridden, it was difficult to foresee exactly how Asian revolutionary leaders would channel nationalist energies. According to Malraux, the factionalism that characterized Asian independence movements was itself a legacy of the West.

In both La Tentation de l'occident and the article, Malraux's views on Asia and the West are at the same time perspicacious and presumptuous. Aside from his trip to Hong Kong, Malraux's only inside knowledge of the Chinese revolution was that obtained from Kuomintang emissaries from Canton who visited Cholon and Chinese informants in Shameen who sent information to the editors of L'Indochine. Yet given his limited experience of China, Malraux presented striking insights which he presented with a great deal of intellectual bravura. Despite his philosophical speculation on the

Française, 1 June 1927, pp. 813-818.

²⁶ibid., 815.

²⁷ibid.

European cultural malaise and the revolutionary transformation of China, however, he wrote nothing about the need for colonial reform in Indochina during the late 1920s.

Fernand Malraux divorced his second wife and became a regular visitor at André and Clara's modest apartment. Clara had become very fond of André's father, who always treated her with affection and respect.²⁸ During the winter of 1926-1927, André was afflicted with articular rheumatism. His illness was so severe that he was unable to rise from the bed without his wife's help. He was confined to his bed for three months and was weakened for some time thereafter. The couple stopped having lunch with Malraux's family, and by spring 1927, they had little money left. Malraux was able to eke out a modest living through clandestine publishing ventures with his friend Pascal Pia. The two men cooperated in the production of limited editions of illustrated volumes of erotic poems, omitting the names of the editors and printers. Malraux's financial condition dramatically improved in December 1927, when publisher Bernard Grasset agreed to pay him a monthly income to edit a subsidiary line of illustrated volumes for the Grasset publishing house.²⁹

Grasset's generosity paid off in 1928 when Malraux finished the novel Les Conquérants.³⁰ The novel appeared in five issues of La Nouvelle Revue Française from March to July, 1928. The novel then

²⁸Clara Malraux, Voici que vient l'été, 36-38.

²⁹Cate, Malraux, 156.

³⁰ibid., 160-161.

appeared in bookstores in September 1928. In Les Conquérants, Malraux used the strike in Canton and Hong Kong in 1925 as his historical backdrop.³¹ The novel was written in the present tense, in short sentences, with the occasional insertion of news headlines, fictional messages, and reports. The novel tells a violent, dramatic story of political intrigue, in which most of the main characters are European expatriates. The protagonist of the novel is Garine, an adventurer and an intellectual of Swiss and Russian parentage. He is a bitter man, alienated from bourgeois society, who helps to organize the Canton strike of 1925. Garine is not motivated by ideology; rather he is a man of action, determined to surmount the absurdity of his life through commitment to a mass movement and feverish political activity. A perfect foil to the intense Garine is Borodine, the coldly calculating Comintern agent from Moscow whom Malraux borrowed from real life. The use of Borodine as a character, and the use of news items, gave the book a sense of historical reality, although in fact Malraux used his poetic license in twisting events to suit his purposes as a novelist.

The critical reviews of Les Conquérants were generally favorable.³² The work excited a great deal more interest than La Tentation de l'occident. Many critics believed that Malraux had actually participated in the revolutionary events depicted in the

³¹André Malraux, Les Conquérants (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1928).

³²Cate, Malraux, 161-163.

novel. Anxious to generate as much publicity as possible for the novel, Grasset did nothing to dispel the impression that Malraux had spent a considerable amount of time in China. When the novel was serialized in the German monthly Europaïsche Revue, it appeared under a title that translates as The Conquerors: A Journal of the Struggles in Canton.³³ This title reinforced the view that the novel was written by a man who had seen the Chinese revolution firsthand. The biographical sketch included in the first edition of Les Conquérants alleged that Malraux was the Kuomintang commissar for Cochinchina and later for all of Indochina, and that he served as a propagandist for the Kuomintang at Canton under Borodine.³⁴ In fact, although Malraux was a member of the Kuomintang organization in Cholon, his only Chinese experience to that date was a brief visit to Hong Kong and Macao. As his literary reputation grew, however,

³³André Malraux, Die Eroberer: Ein Tagebuch der Kämpfe um Kanton 1925, trans. Max Clauss, Die Europaïsche Revue, no. 5, (August 1928): 329.

³⁴Jean Lacouture believed that Malraux must have provided the biographical information included in the book. See Lacouture, André Malraux, 113-114. As Lacouture points out, Malraux wrote a letter to Edmund Wilson in 1933 in which he claimed to have been a "commissar of the Kuomintang in Indochina and finally at Canton." See Edmund Wilson, The Shores of Light: A Literary Chronicle of the Twenties and Thirties (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Young, 1952), 573. Langlois accepted the apocryphal story that Malraux met Soviet agent Michael Borodin after the Canton strike in 1925, and that Malraux participated in a meeting of Kuomintang leaders in Hong Kong in 1926. See Langlois, Indochina Adventure, pp. 157, 251. A fine discussion of Malraux's alleged participation in the Chinese revolution may be found in W. M. Frohock, André Malraux and the Tragic Imagination (Stanford University Press, 1967), 14-20. Frohock finds it unlikely that Malraux participated in the revolutionary events depicted in Les Conquérants. There is no evidence that Malraux was a participant in the Chinese revolution.

Malraux allowed himself to bask in the myth that he had taken part in the Chinese revolution.³⁵

The liberal organization l'Union pour la Vérité held a public debate on Les Conquérants on 8 June 1929. In his address to the conference, Malraux denied that his novel was "an apology for the revolution."³⁶ Aware of the fact that critics on both the right and the left had criticized his depiction of the Chinese revolution, he suggested that many critics had forgotten that his novel was fiction, telling the audience: "There is not a single point in Les Conquérants that can be defended on the historical plane." Malraux said that he had been primarily interested in the "psychological truth" embodied in his characters. Borodine represented an ideal type of revolutionary who acted in strict accordance with Marxist doctrine as interpreted by the party.³⁷

Malraux preferred Garine, a more complex character than Borodine.³⁸ Garine was an individualist who had freely chosen to serve the revolution in China although he had little love for masses. Malraux explained that in spite of his aversion to Marxist ideology, Garine had attempted to escape from the absurdity of his life through collective action, in revolutionary fraternity with others. Malraux argued that doctrinal orthodoxy was not an absolute

³⁵Clara Malraux, Voici que vient l'été, 55.

³⁶André Malraux, "Revolte et Revolution," Magazine littéraire, no. 11 (October 1967): 29.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 28-29.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 29-30.

requisite in a revolutionary. Although committed to the revolution, Garine did not think about earthly utopias or the ultimate ends of the revolution. In essence, Malraux said that Garine's task was "not to define the Revolution, but to make it."³⁹ Revolutionary consciousness arose from the desire to resist injustice and to take positive action against it. Malraux pointed out that a person who was acutely aware of social injustice might well choose to practice Christian charity and remain passive. But Garine, with his heightened awareness of injustice, social equality, and human suffering, chose violent resistance instead. Thus, Malraux argued, revolutionaries were prepared to take violent action and to pose the harsh question: "What is the enemy that must be destroyed?"⁴⁰

In a 1930 interview, Malraux was reminded once again that several critics had accused him of distorting the Chinese revolution, and of creating a character, Garine, who was a mere adventurer, a "dilettante," who cared nothing about the ultimate goals of the revolution.⁴¹ Malraux reiterated his argument that in Les Conquérants he was not trying to provide an accurate historical depiction of the revolution in China. He said that his main concern, rather, had been to portray an intellectual who, though not of proletarian origin, was willing to offer to the revolution his

³⁹Ibid., 31.

⁴⁰Ibid., 30.

⁴¹André Malraux, "Après Les Conquérants, La Voie royale, André Malraux nous parle de son oeuvre," interview by A. Habaru, Monde, no. 124 (18 October 1930): 4.

expertise in organization and propaganda. In contrast to the party representative Borodine, who was "almost mechanized," Malraux argued that Garine was motivated by sentiments that lent "grandeur" to man, such as "the camaraderie of arms and virile fraternity." At the same time, Garine represented "the tragic sense of human solitude" which hardly existed in the realm of "communist orthodoxy."⁴² Malraux pointed out that Les Conquérants was similar in one respect to his La Voie royale (which had just appeared at the time): each stressed the theme of "the fundamental solitude of man before death." Malraux's remarks concerning the nature of revolutionary commitment and the value of "virile fraternity" were a foretoken of position he would take as an antifascist fellow traveler during the late 1930s.⁴³

In addition to launching his career as a novelist, Malraux forged long-lasting ties with the Gallimard publishing house in 1928.⁴⁴ Early that year, Gaston Gallimard sent Malraux a letter, asking him if he would be interested in writing a biography of Edgar Allan Poe. Malraux turned down the offer but sent a portion of an oriental fantasy reminiscent of his youthful work Lunes en Papier. Gallimard sent the extract to an editor to see if he had any interest in it. The editor replied that he was interested, particularly if the

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Lacouture arrives at a similar conclusion. See Lacouture, André Malraux, 133.

⁴⁴Cate, Malraux, 170-171; Lacouture, André Malraux, 135-136.

young author could produce other books. It was the Gallimard publication, La Nouvelle Revue Française, that serialized Les Conquérants from March to July 1928, several months before the novel itself was published in its entirety by Grasset. Furthermore, Gallimard agreed to publish a limited edition of Malraux's oriental fantasy, Royaume farfelu, provided that the author of Les Conquérants would write novels henceforth for the Gallimard publishing house.⁴⁵ Malraux signed a contract on 12 April 1928 in which he agreed to write five books for Gallimard as soon as he had satisfied his obligation to Grasset.⁴⁶ Malraux owed the latter one more novel. Gallimard also hired Malraux as artistic director for his publishing firm. Malraux soon found a job for his old friend, Louis Chevasson. Thus, two years after his return from Saigon, Malraux had achieved a degree of financial security.

In September 1930, Grasset published Malraux's La Voie royale, an adventure novel set in the Cambodian jungle.⁴⁷ During the summer, extracts from the novel had been published in La Revue de Paris. The reviews of Malraux's second novel were, on the whole, favorable. La Voie royale contained many autobiographical elements, for Malraux drew upon his Cambodian experiences. The two main characters plan to find valuable Kmer sculptures in Cambodia and sell them to international art dealers. The colonial authorities

⁴⁵Royaume farfelu was published by Gallimard in November 1928.

⁴⁶Cate, Malraux, 171, 176; Lacouture, André Malraux, 135-136.

⁴⁷Cate, Malraux, 191.

insist that any sculptures found be turned over to the state. Using unreliable guides, the two adventurers trek into the jungle along the ruined royal highway. As was the case with Malraux and Chevasson, the characters find a ruined temple and remove the best sculptures. The similarity between the novel and Malraux's own experience ends at this point. The story that follows is vaguely reminiscent of Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness. Unlike Les Conquérants, La Voie royale has no political content.

During an interview with the conservative critic André Rousseaux, Malraux revealed that he was still sensitive regarding the subject of the Kmer sculptures taken from him several years before.⁴⁸ Rousseaux saw several Buddhist sculptures in Malraux's apartment, and he asked his host if the pieces were from India. Rousseaux had touched upon a nerve. Malraux told Rousseaux that the sculptures were from Afghanistan. Then he launched a diatribe on the injustice he had suffered at the hands of the colonial authorities years before. In a superficial attempt to disguise his motives in obtaining the Kmer sculptures, Malraux mentioned that the sculptures that Lord Elgin had taken from the Parthenon had ended up in the British Museum. Malraux piously expressed the hope that the sculptures that he had lawfully taken from the Cambodian temple would, in time, be restored to him. In a sarcastic gloss of Malraux's

⁴⁸André Rousseaux, "A propos de La Voie royale--un quart d'heure avec André Malraux," interview by André Rousseaux, Candide, no. 348 (13 November 1930): 3.

comments, Rousseaux remarked that he had hoped to meet a pure anarchist in Malraux. Instead, having interviewed the man who had stolen controversial statues from the Cambodian jungle, then had engaged in a fling with the Communists in Canton, he had found Malraux making "pitiful concessions" to the bourgeois order in "a tirade of lofty insolence."⁴⁹

On 20 December 1930, André and Clara were shocked to learn that Fernand Malraux had taken his own life.⁵⁰ For several years, he had managed the financial portfolio of his widowed sister-in-law by his second marriage, Gabrielle Godard. When the depression hit France, values on the stock exchange dropped rapidly. Mme. Godard angrily withdrew her portfolio from Fernand, intimating that she might reveal publicly that his two sons from his second marriage had been illegitimate. On the day of his suicide, the housekeeper found him on his bed, asphyxiated by gas. He was holding a book in his hands, Life After Death According to Buddhist Doctrine.

Fernand had expressed the desire to have a religious funeral.⁵¹ Despite the fact that he had committed suicide, André and Clara were able to make the appropriate arrangements. There were two funerals, one in Paris and the other in Dunkirk, where Fernand was buried. André's paternal family was there in attendance. In conversations with Clara, André claimed that his father had long had

⁴⁹ibid.

⁵⁰Clara Malraux, Voici que vient l'été, 171-174.

⁵¹ibid.

a strange fascination with death, as if it were the ultimate adventure. André evidently accepted his father's death with a stoic attitude. André and Clara recalled that during the weeks preceding his death Fernand had said: "If I must be reborn, I would like, once again, to be Fernand Malraux."⁵² There is no evidence that Malraux ever revealed his inner feelings about the suicide of his father.

A curious incident in 1931 revealed Malraux at his worst.⁵³ As artistic director at Gallimard, Malraux set up an exhibition of Buddhist heads in a gallery located in the building that housed the offices of La Nouvelle Revue Française. He prepared a pamphlet alleging that he had discovered the sculptures in the foothills of the Pamir Mountains in central Asia and that they were evidence of an advanced civilization in that region. Actually André and Clara had purchased the sculptures in India.⁵⁴ They had never visited the Pamir Mountains. In a newspaper interview, Malraux stated that he and his wife, accompanied by indigenous guides and bearers, had spent fourteen weeks on an expedition in the Pamirs in 1930.⁵⁵ When asked about the dangers of an expedition into such a wild, inaccessible region, Malraux answered that the danger did not bother him, reminding the interviewer: "I have been commissar of the

⁵²*Ibid.*, 173.

⁵³Cate, Malraux, 197-199.

⁵⁴Clara Malraux, Voici que vient l'été, 130-139.

⁵⁵André Malraux, "Que sculpta les pierres que M. André Malraux rapporta du Pamir?," interview by Gaston Poulain, Comoedia, 21 January 1931.

people of Canton."⁵⁶ On the following day, when another journalist questioned Malraux further, the flustered novelist remained silent for a time, then responded by asserting that all questions concerning the sculptures would be answered in a forthcoming scholarly article by a prominent expert in the field.⁵⁷ Malraux was not above deceiving the public.

From the earliest days of their marriage, Clara had noticed that her husband was prone to make mendacious statements about his origins. When she realized that the facts were not always in accord with the stories he had told about his family background, she regretted what she referred to as his "pathetic embellishments."⁵⁸ She became acutely aware of the fact that when he recalled experiences that they had shared, fantasy often blended with the facts. When she once confronted him on this issue, Malraux frankly admitted: "I lie, but what I say becomes true as a result of what follows."⁵⁹ During the years when Malraux was acquiring a literary reputation, Clara was puzzled and alienated by his gradual fabrication of what was the beginning of the Malraux legend.⁶⁰ She sometimes scolded him for his taking liberties with the truth. Reflecting on it years later, she arrived at the conclusion that "this taste for the imaginary formed an integral part of his creative

⁵⁶*Ibid.*

⁵⁷Cate, *Malraux*, 199.

⁵⁸Clara Malraux, *Nos vingt ans*, 41-42.

⁵⁹Clara Malraux, *Le Bruit de nos pas*, 499.

⁶⁰Clara Malraux, *Voici que vient l'été*, 55.

power . . . I did not yet realize that it was one of the necessities of his genius."⁶¹ So Malraux continued to parlay his Asian experiences into a legendary fame based, in part, on fabrications about shadowy exploits in the Far East. He continued to magnify his past role in the anticolonial struggle in Indochina, and he generated the myth that he had been a swashbuckling Kuomintang commissar in the Chinese revolution. After he planted the seeds, Malraux simply allowed the legend to develop.

The publication of Paul Morand's Papiers d'identité in 1931 gave credence to the myth that Malraux had been in Canton in 1925.⁶² The book was an interesting hodgepodge of reminiscences, literary opinions, and anecdotes. A great admirer of Malraux, Morand argued that anyone who wanted to truly understand the revolutionary era should read Les Conquérants.

Morand remembered meeting Malraux in Hong Kong in August 1925.⁶³ In hindsight, Morand believed that Malraux had been headed for Canton. After all, Malraux "had seen it, had suffered through it."⁶⁴ Morand recalled that when he had been afflicted by an illness in Thailand in 1925 and had been hospitalized in Saigon that November. He remembered that Malraux had visited him. According to Morand, Malraux looked "like a ghost . . . pale, thin, looking like a

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Morand, Papiers d'identité, 169-172.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid., 171.

hunted man, infinitely sicker than the patients."⁶⁵ The diplomat-writer Morand had been impressed with Malraux's knowledge of events in China, although he did not provide details of their conversation. Morand's assumption that Malraux had been personally involved in the Chinese revolution was faulty; but his sketch of Malraux in 1925 left an indelible impression of the novelist as a haunted revolutionary.

Leon Trotsky was another man who assumed that Malraux had witnessed the revolutionary events in China. He published a review of Malraux's Les Conquérants in La Nouvelle Revue Française in 1931.⁶⁶ Trotsky praised the novel for style and intensity, and he commended Malraux for his sympathetic treatment of revolutionary China. Obviously impressed by the novel, Trotsky complimented Malraux for his astute observations which enabled the novelist to create memorable scenes of the revolutionary events in Canton. Despite this high praise, Trotsky argued that Malraux lacked political perspective. Because of his individualism, Malraux had too little sympathy for the Chinese masses. Trotsky wrote: "A good inoculation of Marxism would have saved the author from fatal errors of this type."⁶⁷ Despite this criticism, Trotsky asserted that the novel accurately depicted how Comintern bureaucrats attempted

⁶⁵ibid., 172.

⁶⁶Leon Trotsky, "La révolution étranglée," La Nouvelle Revue Française, no. 211 (1 April 1931): 488-500.

⁶⁷ibid., 493.

to mold the class struggle in China. Although Malraux portrayed the Comintern agent Borodine as a professional revolutionary, Trotsky argued that, in reality, Borodine was a cynical bureaucrat. (Trotsky disliked the fictional Borodine as well as the living man.) Garine was more of a revolutionary than Borodine, Trotsky maintained, but unfortunately Garine scorned revolutionary slogans and political doctrines as rubbish. In Trotsky's view, this cynicism served the interests of the counter-revolution. Trotsky reserved his greatest admiration for Hong, an uncompromising revolutionary terrorist who unflinchingly murdered enemies of the revolution. But Hong and other revolutionary fighters were sacrificed because Comintern policy opposed the overthrow of the bourgeois government in Canton.⁶⁸

Trotsky was using the review of Malraux's novel as a means of criticizing Stalin for political opportunism.⁶⁹ Because the Comintern insisted on maintaining the Chinese Communist alliance with the Kuomintang-bourgeoisie, regardless of the needs of exploited classes, the bureaucrats in Moscow succeeded in throttling the revolution in China. Trotsky argued that the fundamental flaws in Comintern policy were evident in Malraux's novel.

Malraux replied that even though Trotsky regarded Borodine with disdain, the latter was in fact a professional revolutionary.⁷⁰

⁶⁸Ibid., 488-500.

⁶⁹Ibid., 491-500.

⁷⁰André Malraux, "Réponse à Trotsky," La Nouvelle Revue Française, no. 211 (1

Malraux took issue with Trotsky's allegation that the Comintern's political opportunism had led to Communist setbacks. In Malraux's view, the Communist alliance with the Kuomintang had been a tactical necessity, given the fact that the Chinese proletariat was relatively small and poorly organized and that the peasantry was largely passive. Because the Kuomintang had exerted a strong nationalist appeal, it had been necessary for the Communists to join with them in an effort to broaden the popular base of the revolutionary movement. Malraux maintained that the Communists had needed time to win over the masses and to foster class consciousness. Because of the sheer size of the Kuomintang movement and its military strength, the immediate creation of revolutionary soviets by the communists would have been doomed to failure. In Malraux's view, political and social conditions in China had not been propitious for a successful Communist revolution.⁷¹ It is interesting to see Malraux unabashedly debating revolutionary tactics with Trotsky who, next to Lenin, was the most prestigious Communist revolutionary of the time.

A couple of months later, Trotsky replied to Malraux's article, criticizing the novelist for defending Comintern policy.⁷² Trotsky labelled Borodine a member of "the quasi-revolutionary

April 1931): 501-507.

⁷¹ibid.

⁷²Leon Trotsky, "A Strangled Revolution and Its Stranglers," in Problems of the Chinese Revolution, trans. Max Schachtman (New York: Pioneer Publishers, 1932): 250-266.

bureaucracy," a "functionary-adventurer" whose arrogant bungling served the interests of the Kuomintang-bourgeoisie.⁷³ Because of the failed policies of the Comintern, most of the Chinese Communist cadres had been killed. Trotsky argued that Borodine, and Malraux's fictional character Garine, were both too far removed from revolutionary masses. Because of the blunders of such men, the interests of the Chinese working class had been seriously undermined. Trotsky discussed Malraux's argument that there was a lack of proletarian class consciousness in China. In that case, Trotsky said, the leadership should have been developing revolutionary class consciousness, rather than pursuing a suicidal policy. Trotsky wrote these articles assuming that Malraux was, in his words, "a man who came near the revolution, even but for a moment."⁷⁴

In June 1933, Malraux's La Condition humaine, (later translated into English as Man's Fate), was published by Gallimard.⁷⁵ After its serialization in La Nouvelle Revue Française, between January and June 1933, the novel excited a great deal of interest. It was by far Malraux's greatest success to date. La Condition humaine was a novel full of revolutionary intrigue, a fictional treatment of the Shanghai insurrection in 1927. In the novel, revolutionaries were sacrificed because of the ineptitude of Comintern policies, and were

⁷³Ibid., 250.

⁷⁴Ibid., 264.

⁷⁵Cate, Malraux, 218-220, 240.

ultimately crushed by partisans of Chiang Kai-shek. This well-crafted novel solidified Malraux's literary reputation and vaulted him into the front rank of French novelists. In December 1933, Malraux was awarded the Prix Goncourt, the most prestigious literary prize in France.

Malraux's literary triumph aroused the interest of Edmund Wilson, the American literary critic.⁷⁶ He wrote an article for New Republic--reprinted in his book The Shores of Light--in which he lamented the fact that Malraux had not found an audience in Great Britain or the United States. He urged British and American publishers to issue an English translation of La Condition humaine. Wilson appended to his article a letter of appreciation from Malraux. In his letter, Malraux repeated the claims that he had organized the Jeune-Annam movement and that he had been a commissar for the Kuomintang in Indochina and later at Canton.⁷⁷ Wilson believed him, as did others at that time. So Malraux nurtured an aura of mystery around himself. He had transmuted his Asian experiences and reflections into four books, culminating in the highly successful La Condition humaine. By 1933 he was a renowned novelist. The public viewed him as a man who had seen and experienced revolution firsthand. In fact, his two China novels were often regarded by

⁷⁶Edmund Wilson, The Shores of Light: A Literary Chronicle of the Twenties and Thirties

(New York: Farrar, Straus, and Young, 1952): 566-572.

⁷⁷Reprinted in *Ibid.*, 573-574.

critics as reportage. Although he had participated in debates and discussions of the political implications of his novels, however, Malraux had not engaged in any overtly political activities since his return from Saigon in 1926. From 1933, however, Malraux would become a leading antifascist figure in France. The man who had created a myth based largely on falsehoods and half-truths would be in a position to take a stand during the struggle against fascism.

CHAPTER VII

AN ANTIFASCIST ACTIVIST

Although Malraux had written nothing about French colonialism for almost eight years since his return from Saigon, in 1933 he wrote an article about Vietnam for the liberal newspaper Marianne.¹ During a mass uprising in central Vietnam (Annam) in 1930, French forces had killed about three-thousand Vietnamese peasants, and police had jailed many thousands of others.² In the wake of the conflict, while memories of the recent uprising were still fresh, relations between the French authorities and the peasants of Annam were permeated with bitterness and mistrust.³ In his article, Malraux described a violent incident that had occurred in Annam in 1931. In order to stop an argument between two Vietnamese villagers, a sergeant in the French Foreign Legion waded into a crowd of peasants who were gathered in a rural marketplace and began to beat several of them with a whip. After cowering for a moment, the peasants turned on the Legionnaire and killed him. Malraux described in gory detail the reprisals that followed. After

¹André Malraux, "S.O.S.," Marianne, 11 October 1933.

²David G. Marr, Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920-1945 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 380-385.

³André Malraux, "S.O.S." Malraux had access to articles and accounts later published in Andrée Viollis, Indochine S.O.S. (Paris: Gallimard, 1935).

hearing about the murder, Legionnaires at a nearby military post seized a Vietnamese man who had been accused of tax evasion and beheaded him. The two soldiers then forced another Vietnamese suspect to hold the head while they tied him to a tree. After interrogating the recalcitrant prisoner, the soldiers became enraged at the man's silence, so they shot him in the head and dumped his body in a nearby river. The two Legionnaires then drove to another military post where fellow Legionnaires were torturing Vietnamese suspects who had not yet been formally charged with a crime. The soldiers beat the prisoners, then shot them. On the following day, six Legionnaires drove several Vietnamese captives to a remote area, shot them, then flung their bodies into the bushes.

After an investigation, several of the Legionnaires involved in the incident were accused of murder and brought to trial.⁴ Malraux pointed out that, according to the testimony of one of the Legionnaires, it was common for soldiers in the Legion, following orders from their commanding officers, to torture prisoners, to behead them, and to shoot Vietnamese suspected of having communist ties. In Malraux's opinion, the climactic testimony was that of a Legion commandant who stated bluntly that the civil authorities did not station units of the Foreign Legion in Annam in order to set up convents. In Annam, a region seething with discontent, the commandant said that the Legion was under orders to

⁴ibid.

use harsh methods in imposing order on the peasants, and to shoot prisoners whenever it was deemed necessary. The commandant alleged that the civil authorities had given these orders orally, and that he had relayed the orders to his subordinates in the same manner. According to the commandant, the civil authorities were ultimately responsible for the order to shoot prisoners, although he remarked acidly that these officials were evidently afraid to appear in the courtroom. Malraux pointed out that the Legionnaires were acquitted, adding: "It is only the dead who are not acquitted."⁵

Malraux contrasted the lenient treatment of the Legionnaires with the harsh sentences that a Saigon court had recently imposed on some Vietnamese men and boys in May 1933. The court rapidly processed one hundred twenty Vietnamese who were accused of political crimes during a five day period. Seventy-nine Vietnamese men and boys were convicted of crimes ranging from murder to illegal political activities. The court sentenced eight men to death, nineteen to perpetual forced labor, and the rest to sentences totalling nine hundred seventy years of imprisonment. Malraux asserted that the Draconian justice that the French authorities preferred to use when dealing with Vietnamese suspects was tainted by dubious practices that ignored traditional French legal procedures. These flagrant inequities included the use of torture during interrogations, and verdicts that were determined by

⁵ibid.

political factors rather than an impartial consideration of the evidence.⁶

Malraux maintained that the colonial authorities could choose one of three approaches to ruling in Indochina.⁷ The colonial administration could embrace the "democratic attitude" and grant all of the native people citizenship, allowing them to vote and to freely participate in public life.⁸ A second possibility would be to reform the existing political system by expanding the number of native citizens qualified to participate in local commissions and governmental bodies, and by offering these people representation in the Chamber of Deputies.

Malraux discussed a third approach, which he called "the fascist attitude." In his opinion, this fascist approach characterized the existing French colonial system in Indochina.⁹ He predicted that if there were no changes in French colonial policies, then all of the classes in Vietnamese society would unite against France within ten years. On the other hand, the colonial administration might attempt to broaden the ruling class by offering some form of naturalization to the Vietnamese bourgeoisie. Malraux argued that if the administration tried to form a political alliance consisting of

⁶ibid.

⁷ibid.

⁸Malraux said that if it wished, the French government could create in its colonial possessions a "democratic French empire" of one hundred million people. He preferred a democratic solution to the colonial problem.

⁹André Malraux, "S.O.S."

French colons and a privileged Vietnamese elite in an attempt to keep the masses in check, then the vast peasant majority would eventually become communist. Malraux declared: "Every communism that fails calls up its fascism, but every fascism that fails calls up its communism."¹⁰ If the colonial authorities continued a policy of brutal repression and indiscriminate executions, then Vietnamese militants would form clandestine organizations and wait patiently for war to break out in Europe, before rising against the French. Malraux made a grim prediction. Addressing his remarks to the young men of France, he said: "You know that war is here. Europe now carries it within herself, just as all living bodies carry death"¹¹ He warned that when the next war inevitably engulfed Europe, then young Frenchmen would be sent to fight against the Vietnamese in a bloody colonial conflict.

Malraux returned again to the subject of French colonialism in Indochina in his 1935 preface to Andrée Viollis's Indochine S.O.S.¹² He criticized the colonial administration for its practice of labeling as "communist" any Vietnamese person who ran afoul of the administration or the police.¹³ Administration policies were insuring that the brightest and toughest Vietnamese youths would continue to oppose French domination of their country. Malraux said

¹⁰ibid.

¹¹ibid.

¹²André Malraux, preface to Viollis, Indochine, ix-xi.

¹³ibid., xvi.

that, having lived in Vietnam and having seen colonial rule for himself, he had reached the following conclusion: "It is difficult to conceive that a courageous Vietnamese would be anything other than a revolutionary."¹⁴ If foolish and shortsighted colonial policies continued, then ultimately there would be a bloody revolution which would force France to abandon the colony.

Although Malraux never lost his interest in colonial problems, by 1933 he had become deeply involved in the antifascist struggle. There are sketchy descriptions of Malraux's political activism in the 1930s, but there is no systematic account of Malraux's experience as a major antifascist spokesman during this critical period. After Hitler's rise to power in January 1933, Malraux joined other writers in various leftist organizations, which opposed the spread of fascism in Europe. Malraux became a member of the Communist-supported Association des écrivains et artistes révolutionnaires, an organization created by Communist journalist Paul Vaillant-Couturier and Maurice Thorez, who was a leading young party member.¹⁵ Several writers of great renown, including André Gide and Romain Rolland, joined the organization and lent it their full support.

On 21 March 1933, the Association des écrivains et artistes révolutionnaires held a public conference at the hall of the Grand

¹⁴*Ibid.*, xvi.

¹⁵Lacouture, *André Malraux*, 166; Cate, *Malraux*, 213.

Orient de France in Paris.¹⁶ Malraux's close friend André Gide chaired the conference, and he delivered a speech in which he sharply criticized the Nazi-sponsored terror and repression in Germany. Gide declared that he took the side of the working-class and praised the Soviet Union which was attempting to establish a new society with a promising future. Only communism could effectively deal with the fascist danger that loomed over Europe. Ilya Ehrenburg remarked in his memoirs that even though the workers in attendance had probably never read Gide's novels, they realized he was famous, and they expressed their approval of his remarks.¹⁷ Ehrenburg did note that Malraux's speech was difficult to follow; furthermore, Malraux's remarks were punctuated with nervous gestures and his face was often distorted by the nervous tics that had plagued him for most of his life.¹⁸ Malraux told the audience that fascism had spread "its great black wings" over Europe.¹⁹ He urged all writers who supported the cause of human dignity to close ranks in opposition to the grave peril that threatened the peace of Europe. If war broke out, Malraux declared, "we turn our sentiments towards Moscow, we turn towards the Red

¹⁶"L'Association des écrivains et artistes révolutionnaires pour la défense de la paix," Marianne, 21 March 1933. Several of the speeches are published in this article.

¹⁷Ilya Ehrenburg, Memoirs: 1921-1941, trans. Tatania Shebunina and Yvonne Kapp (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1964), 241.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 241-242; Ehrenburg claims that Malraux stated: "If there is a war, our place is in the ranks of the Red Army." The version given in Marianne is different.

¹⁹"L'Association des écrivains et artistes révolutionnaires pour la défense de la paix," Marianne, 22 March 1933,

Army." His remarks struck a responsive chord with the audience and were greeted with hearty applause.

As winner of the Prix Goncourt, Malraux was in a position to take a public stand on the threat of war and the dangers of fascism. In June 1933, the small leftist review Avant-poste sent a questionnaire to prominent French intellectuals, asking them to respond to several questions.²⁰ The management of the review was interested in the question of whether fascists could take power in France. In a brief analysis of the problem, Malraux said that it was common in France to confuse fascism with strong government. In France, it was quite possible that a strong government could emerge--like that of Georges Clemenceau--but it would be radical or Jacobin, not fascist. Malraux argued that fascist movements characteristically organized and armed the petite bourgeoisie against the working class. The petite bourgeoisie provided the base of mass support for a fascist movement. Furthermore, Malraux asserted that although fascism supported capitalism, capitalists in France would choose democracy rather than fascism. He claimed that there was no strong fear of the working class in France; moreover, democracy was quite profitable for the capitalists.

²⁰André Malraux, "Sur le fascisme en France: Réponse d'André Malraux," André Malraux, vol. 2, Visages du romancier, ed. Walter G. Langlois (Paris: La Revue des lettres modernes, 1973), 159-161.

Malraux observed that the weakness of the French working class diluted the appeal of fascism among reactionary groups.²¹ Under current conditions, the workers' movement in France had no chance of attaining power. In the future, the emergence of a proletarian state would be possible only in "revolutionary circumstances: profound crisis, famine, or war."²² Malraux argued that a significant portion of the French petite bourgeoisie would remain loyal to democracy and would oppose fascism under any circumstances. He asserted that the masses who would oppose fascism in France would consist largely of the "popular elements of the petite bourgeoisie" in alliance with the working class.²³ Barring some major catastrophe, Malraux contended that France would become neither fascist, nor communist, although an authoritarian state was a distinct possibility.

Malraux considered himself fortunate to have the opportunity to visit Leon Trotsky in late August 1933. The government of Edouard Daladier offered Trotsky political asylum and issued him a visa in July 1933.²⁴ The government allowed him to maintain a residence in a southern department, but barred him from visiting Paris. During his stay in France, the government enjoined him to maintain a low profile, to conduct himself with discretion, and to

²¹ *ibid.*, 160-161.

²² *ibid.*, 160.

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast: Trotsky, 1929-1940* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), 216, 263.

submit to police surveillance. Trotsky arrived in France on 24 July 1933, and he was escorted to a villa at Saint Palais on the Atlantic coast. Security precautions were necessary for the controversial Communist. Right-wing groups despised him as one of the masterminds of the Bolshevik revolution, and, following the Stalinist line, the French Communist Party was hostile to Trotsky and to Trotskyism. Only a few people knew of his whereabouts. Malraux joined the Comité pour contribuer à la sécurité de Leon Trotsky, a group which raised money to pay for a bodyguard for Trotsky.²⁵

Malraux was escorted to Trotsky's hideaway in August 1933.²⁶ Trotsky walked out to meet Malraux in the darkness, then escorted his young visitor into the study. Malraux noticed that he was using a revolver as a paperweight. When Malraux asked him about Soviet literature, Trotsky replied that, in the Soviet Union, revolutionary writers had not yet produced a truly great work. Malraux wondered whether the true expression of communist art was the cinema rather than literature. He mentioned the Soviet films Potemkin and Mother. Trotsky replied that Lenin had thought that communism could express itself well in the cinema. But he confessed that he had not seen the films mentioned by Malraux. He was at the front when they first appeared, and during later showings, he was in exile.

²⁵ibid., 269.

²⁶André Malraux, "Trotzky," Marianne, 25 April 1934.

Changing the subject, Malraux asked him whether individualism would persist in a communist society.²⁷ Perhaps communist individualism would differ from bourgeois individualism, just as the latter differed from Christian individualism. Trotsky replied that the early Christians were very poor, focusing largely on eternal life and attaching little importance to individualism. Poverty was essential to "the spirit of primitive Christianity." Communist citizens living under five-year plans were in the same economic situation, but for other reasons. In Trotsky's opinion, the period of economic plans would be unfavorable to any form of individualism. In any case, a collective ideology was not compatible with even a "minimum material liberty." Malraux responded that, in like manner, periods of war were not conducive to bourgeois individualism in capitalist countries. Trotsky predicted that after the economic plans, communism would "apply to itself the energy that it applied today to construction." Malraux could see that his distinguished host was tired, so he bade him good night.²⁸

The next day they discussed why the Soviet invasion of Poland in the wake of the Russian Civil War had been a failure.²⁹ Trotsky cited several reasons for the failure, including the presence of French military advisors who aided the Poles and the fact that the Soviet Army of Lemberg had not joined in the critical attack.

²⁷ibid.

²⁸ibid.

²⁹ibid.

Malraux knew that Stalin had played a role in the decision to hold back the Lemberg army, but he said nothing. Furthermore, Trotsky pointed out that the Red Army in Poland had been far from its supply base, and was greatly overextended. Trotsky claimed that he had opposed the venture initially, but that he had gone along with Lenin who had strongly supported the offensive. When Malraux asked him whether the Red Army could hold its own against a European or a Japanese army, Trotsky replied that the Soviets could rise to the occasion if necessary. He maintained that the Japanese army was overrated, being equal perhaps to the army of a second-rate European power. In the long run, Trotsky predicted, the United States would attempt to extend its influence in China and find itself at war with Japan.³⁰

After dining, the two men walked through the garden, then took a stroll along the beach to enjoy the sunset.³¹ Trotsky spoke of how much Lenin had loved children, possibly because he had none, as well as his fondness for cats. Malraux asked him whether Lenin had expected communism to produce a new kind of human being. Trotsky answered: "A new man, certainly. For him the prospects for Communism were infinite."³² Trotsky fully agreed with Lenin. The task of communism would be not only to free man from economic impediments, but also to clarify man's thought processes.

³⁰ibid.

³¹ibid.

³²ibid.

There was a great deal of mutual admiration and respect between Malraux and Trotsky. Three months after their visit, Trotsky wrote a letter to the New York publishing house Simon and Schuster in which he urged them to issue an English translation of Malraux's La condition humaine.³³ He lavished high praise on the novel: "Only a great superhuman purpose for which man is ready to pay with his life gives meaning to personal existence. This is the final import of the novel which is free from philosophical didacticism and remains from beginning to end a true work of art."³⁴ In a political article dated 31 March 1934, Trotsky claimed that Malraux's China novels supported his analysis of communist failures in the Far East.³⁵ Although Malraux was not fully cognizant of the political dimension of the struggle, Trotsky argued, the novels dramatically revealed the incompetence of Comintern policies in China.

Malraux defended Trotsky repeatedly in 1934. The Soviet government was engaged in a slander campaign against Trotsky. Following the Moscow line, the French Communist Party vilified the old Bolshevik who had found temporary asylum in France. Malraux was well aware of the fact that for orthodox Stalinists, maintaining a tolerant attitude towards Trotsky was as iniquitous as feeling an

³³Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast: Trotsky 1922-1940, 268-269.

³⁴Quoted in *Ibid.*, 260.

³⁵Leon Trotsky, "The Meaning of Rakovsky's Surrender," in Writings of Leon Trotsky: 1933-34, ed. George Breitman and Bev Scott (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc., 1972), 275.

affinity for fascism.³⁶ In a moving tribute to Trotsky, Malraux said: "In spite of all that will be said, printed, or shouted, . . . something of the heroism that shook the Winter Palace has gone away, humiliated, with your solitude."³⁷ At a meeting organized and attended by various communists and members of the Socialist Party, Malraux pleaded for revolutionary unity, and argued that it was wrong to denigrate one of the men who had made the Russian Revolution.³⁸ When Trotsky was finally expelled from France, Malraux defended him publicly and castigated the French government.³⁹

A writer's congress was scheduled in Moscow during the summer of 1934. Malraux was invited to attend, along with other French writers, including Louis Aragon and Paul Nizan.⁴⁰ Numerous foreign writers considered to be sympathetic towards the Soviet Union would be in attendance. Ostensibly, the purpose of the congress would be to discuss the development of Soviet literature in the merging socialist society. The Soviet government was undoubtedly interested in marshalling support among western intellectuals involved in the antifascist movement. Malraux had heard that a Soviet organization called International Workers' Aid

³⁶André Malraux, "Trotzky."

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸"La Révolution est une," *La Vérité*, no. 203 (27 April 1934): 1.

³⁹"La Réaction ferme l'Europe à Léon Trotzky," *La Vérité*, no. 204 (4 May 1934): 1.

⁴⁰Lacouture, *André Malraux*, 173; Ehrenburg, *Memoirs: 1924-1941*, 264.

wanted to make a film based on his novel La Condition humaine. Furthermore, Malraux was planning to write a novel set in Baku, an oil-producing region in the Soviet Union.

During late May 1934, André and Clara boarded the vessel Dzerzhinsky with their companions, Ilya Ehrenburg, Soviet writer and correspondent for Izvestia, and his wife Lyuba.⁴¹ As the Soviet ship passed through the Kiel Canal, people on shore offered to sell the passengers perfume, chocolate, and cigars. Upon seeing the Soviet flag, several German workers solemnly raised their clenched fists in a communist salute. When Malraux and the others reached Leningrad in mid-June, they were greeted by a delegation including Soviet novelist Alexis Tolstoy and French writer Paul Nizan.⁴²

In an interview conducted soon after his arrival, a Soviet journalist asked Malraux about the influence of Soviet literature in France.⁴³ Malraux told the interviewer that before Soviet literature could be better known in France, there was much to be done. French intellectuals read some Soviet work, but for the most part, the workers read newspapers. Because of literary criticism, French readers knew that Vladimir Mayakovsky, Boris Pasternak, and Alexis

⁴¹Clara Malraux, Voici que vient l'été, 244; Ehrenburg, Memoirs: 1921-1941, 264.

⁴²"André Malraux et Ilya Ehrenburg à Leningrad," from Literaturnaya Gazeta, 16 June 1934, trans. Hélène Reshetar, in André Malraux, vol. 1, Du "farfelu" aux Antimémoires, ed. Walter G. Langlois (Paris: La revue des lettres modernes, 1972), 134.

⁴³"Conversation avec André Malraux," from Literaturnaya Gazeta, 16 June 1934, trans. Hélène Reshetar, in André Malraux, vol. 1, Du "farfelu" aux Antimémoires, 135-137.

Tolstoy were great writers. Unfortunately, French translations of their works were rare. Because French publishers paid very poorly for the translation of Russian-language works, existing translations were often inadequate.

The Soviet interviewer said that Malraux was often regarded as a pacifist in the West, but it was said that because of his dislike for war, he had moved closer to communism.⁴⁴ Malraux replied that his personal experiences with the privileged French bourgeoisie in Indochina, as well as his antipathy for imperialist wars, had made him into a revolutionary writer, but, stated explicitly, he was not a pacifist. In Malraux's opinion, Japan would start the next war. If war broke out, Malraux said that he would work to form a foreign legion to combat fascism, declaring: "in its ranks, gun in hand, I will defend the Soviet Union, the country of liberty."⁴⁵

The Congress of Soviet Writers was held in Moscow, at the Palace of Trade Unions.⁴⁶ On one of the facades of the building, there was a banner with a slogan attributed to Stalin: "Writers are the engineers of the soul." Around the inside of the hall, there were huge portraits of great writers, as well as even larger portraits of Lenin and Stalin. There were about seven hundred foreign writers in attendance, as well as delegates from various Soviet organizations.

⁴⁴ibid., 137.

⁴⁵ibid.

⁴⁶Cate, Malraux, 258; Gustav Regler, The Owl of Minerva (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1959), 203.

An audience of twenty-five thousand filled the hall each day.⁴⁷ The venerable Maxim Gorky sat in a place of honor on stage, near an eighty-six year old veteran of the Paris Commune and various Soviet officials. After the congress began on 17 August 1934, Gorky delivered a three-hour speech. Ehrenburg observed that in spite of all the literary talk, the congress was in reality, "a political demonstration," a show of solidarity under the threat of fascism.⁴⁸

A former associate of Lenin, Karl Radek, delivered a speech in which he lashed out at "the literature of a moribund capitalism," which was little more than a form of "intellectual degeneracy."⁴⁹ According to Radek, bourgeois literature was no longer able to emulate the realism of Balzac; instead it descended to the level of the morbid introspection of Marcel Proust, "a mangy dog incapable of any action."⁵⁰ Radek argued that in creating the new socialist realism, Soviet writers should reject the futile ruminations of Marcel Proust and James Joyce, and embrace the realism of Balzac. He condemned the morbid preoccupation with the irrational that was, in his view, characteristic of the capitalist world. Speculation about the human subconscious--as seen in the works of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and Alfred Adler--was also pernicious and irrelevant. Radek advocated a new socialist realism that would be

⁴⁷Ehrenburg, *Memoirs: 1921-1941*, 270-273.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 273.

⁴⁹Karl Radek, "Le discours de Karl Radek devant le Congrès des écrivains soviétiques," *Commune*, nos. 13-14 (September-October 1934): 46-53.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 47.

"active, positive, combative, full of hatred toward putrefied capitalism."⁵¹

Malraux began his speech with high praise for the Soviet Union and its accomplishments.⁵² He said that communist civilization had, for instance, lifted up the downtrodden woman of the Czarist era from her misery, and created the self-assured Soviet woman. Despite the civil war and famine, communism had, for the first time in modern history, given man confidence. In light of the achievements of communism, Malraux posed the question of whether recent Soviet literature had presented an accurate image of Soviet life. He argued that in presenting the external facts of Soviet existence, socialist literature had performed well; but in the ethical and psychological dimensions, it had done poorly. The image of the Soviet Union reflected in contemporary Soviet literature did not truly portray the human reality, with its "sacrifice, heroism, and tenacity."⁵³ He called upon the Soviets to trust their writers, reminding them: "If writers are the engineers of the soul, do not forget that the highest function of the engineer is to invent. Art is not a submission, it is a conquest."⁵⁴ It was usually a conquest of

⁵¹Ibid., 52. It is not surprising that Radek was so vociferous in his remarks. Because of his role in the abortive German revolution, and his support for Trotsky during the power struggle of the 1920s, Radek had been expelled from the Communist Party for a time. After his recantation and readmission to the party, he followed the vagaries of the Stalinist line as closely as possible.

⁵²André Malraux, "L'Art est une conquête," *Commune*, nos. 13-14 (September-October 1934): 68-71.

⁵³Ibid., 69.

⁵⁴Ibid.

the unconscious, often a conquest of logic. Malraux observed that Marxism provided a social conscience, but a psychological conscience developed from a culture. Marx and Engels provided valuable insights on economics and the historical dialectic, but they did not outline the conditions for cultural advancement. He praised the works of Maxim Gorky, which were accessible to everyone, yet they possessed "this character of psychological and poetic discovery that I am calling for here."⁵⁵ Malraux predicted that, in the future, there would be new literary works that would uphold the cultural prominence of the Soviet Union, just as the works of Boris Pasternak and Vladimir Mayakovsky did at that time.

When Nikulin took the floor, he condemned one of Malraux's remarks about La Condition humaine: "Let those who put political passions above the love of truth abstain from reading my book. It is not written for them."⁵⁶

As Nikulin recalled, Malraux had said that he had written the novel in remembrance of the Chinese Communist dead. But for Nikulin, Malraux's attitude reflected a pure pessimism devoid of hope. Remembering a scene at the end of the novel, when one of the surviving characters looked with confidence toward Moscow, Nikulin said that this, at least, atoned for Malraux's pessimism. He ended

⁵⁵Ibid., 70.

⁵⁶"Extraits du discours de Nikouline devant le congrès et réponse d'André Malraux à ce discours," from Literaturnaya Gazeta, 28 August 1934, trans. Hélène Reshetar, in André Malraux, vol. 1, Du "Farfelu" aux Antimémoires, pp. 145-146.

his speech with a misquote: "'The truth of this world is death,' wrote Malraux." Then he declared "The truth of our world is life!"⁵⁷ His speech was followed by hearty applause.

Radek, who was sitting near Malraux and Ehrenburg, was afraid that Malraux's recurrent facial tics and grimacing were a sign of annoyance.⁵⁸ Ehrenburg reassured Radek that Malraux's odd twitching was only a nervous habit. Radek, nevertheless, attempted to relax Malraux, but the tics continued. In response to Nikulin's remarks, Malraux took the floor and argued that some of his statements had been used out of context.⁵⁹ He told the audience that if he actually thought that politics ranked below literature, then he would not have to come.

Although Stalin never addressed the Congress, André and Clara had an opportunity to observe him firsthand during a parade in Red Square.⁶⁰ They were invited to join other foreign guests, and Soviet dignitaries, on the terrace of the Kremlin. They were not far from Stalin, and Clara watched him closely. She found in his profile a hint of nobility. Admiring his gleaming black eyes, the "sensual mouth," and his "firm glance," Clara was quite taken with him.⁶¹

⁵⁷Ibid., 146.

⁵⁸Ehrenburg, Memoirs: 1921-1941, 274.

⁵⁹"Extraits du discours de Nikouline devant le congrès et réponse d'André Malraux à ce discours," from Literaturnaya Gazeta, 28 August 1934, trans. Hélène Reshetar, in André Malraux, vol. 1, du "farfelu aux Antimémoires, 146.

⁶⁰Clara Malraux, Voici que vient l'été, 272-274.

⁶¹Ibid., 272-273.

When they returned to the hotel, André asked her what she had thought of Stalin. She said that she would like to spend some time in bed with him, an answer that, as she recalled later, "exposed me to a few difficulties."⁶²

In an interview, a Soviet journalist asked Malraux why so many eminent French writers and artists decided to support the proletariat in its revolutionary struggle to create a socialist society.⁶³ The journalist pointed out that a number of famous writers who had been hostile towards the Soviet Union in the past had reversed themselves. Malraux answered that the economic distress in the West, and the rise of fascism, had influenced many writers to change their attitudes. In addition, there was the danger of fascism in France itself. When confronted with the question of what must be done in this crisis, Malraux said that from his point of view, there was an appropriate Marxist response: "Act in order to transform."⁶⁴ Some writers would defend the Soviet Union for the sake of the proletariat, whereas others would defend it for the sake of liberty.

When asked why many French writers had hesitated to support the revolutionary class struggle, Malraux answered that the more timid writers wanted to hold on to bourgeois cultural values, but

⁶²Ibid., 274.

⁶³"Interview avec André Malraux," from Literaturnaya Gazeta, 24 August 1924, in Melanges Malraux Miscellany, vol. 4, no. 1 (Spring 1972): 19-24.

⁶⁴Ibid., 19.

fascism was endangering traditional cultural values.⁶⁵ In Malraux's opinion, the choice that these intellectuals had to make was not "between democracy and communism but between communism and fascism."⁶⁶ Malraux asserted that, as a psychological phenomenon, bourgeois individualism was moribund, and would be superseded by a new "Soviet humanism."⁶⁷ The communist man who would emerge from the classless society would be as different from the man living within a bourgeois, capitalist society, as the latter was from the medieval Christian. Malraux said that he followed the emergence of a new society and culture in the Soviet Union with great interest.

The Soviet government sponsored a banquet for the most important foreign guests at Gorky's country house.⁶⁸ Tables were set in a horseshoe shape in a long room. Gorky sat at the head of the table, next to Vyacheslav Molotov, Stalin's right-hand man, who sat rigidly, eating and drinking little. Other Soviet dignitaries included Kliment Voroshilov and Andrey Zhdanov, both among Stalin's close associates. Nikolai Bukharin, formerly a political adversary of Stalin, had been demoted during the power struggles in the Kremlin, but had been appointed editor of Izvestia after his rehabilitation. The director of Pravda, Michael Koltsov, was also in attendance.

⁶⁵ibid., 20-21.

⁶⁶ibid., 21.

⁶⁷ibid., 22-23.

⁶⁸Regler, The Owl of Minerva, 208-214.

After several hours of feasting, toasts, and impromptu speeches, many of the guests were well into their cups.⁶⁹ After one of the German writers gave a short, drunken speech, suddenly Radek appeared, slowly walking between the two rows of tables, through the clouds of tobacco smoke. Roaring drunk, Radek began to exhort the assembled guests to look within themselves, to cast aside delusions, and to search for inner tranquility. He tore open his shirt, beat himself across the breast, and made a maudlin confession of his past mistakes. Under the steely gaze of Molotov, Radek lavished praise on the Party and the collective system. As his voice grew more strident, he admonished the audience to cast away petty ambitions, to faithfully follow the party line, to submit to the dialectic, and never to cherish individual convictions. He said that the Soviets needed objectivity and greater insight into themselves. Koltsov, the director of Pravda, murmured to one of the German writers: "He's talking too much!" Radek then declared: "Executions must be evaluated, not made mysteries of. We are all still petty bourgeois!" The room grew very quiet.⁷⁰

Suddenly switching to German, he turned on the German guests and began to berate them.⁷¹ He criticized the failures of the German revolution, noting with disgust how quickly German workers and

⁶⁹ibid.

⁷⁰ibid., 212.

⁷¹ibid.

intellectuals had adjusted to the Nazi regime.⁷² There was tension in the air. Radek came to a halt in front of Malraux, and wondered aloud why he discussed the subject of death with young Soviet communists. Then Radek blurted out: "Comrade Malraux, too, is still petty bourgeois!"⁷³ In a rambling, disjointed tirade, Radek attacked Malraux's speech at the writers' congress. From time to time, Radek spat out the words "petty bourgeois," to punctuate his ranting. Finally, he walked away, muttering to himself, and picking up a few glasses as he left. He disappeared for the night.

Malraux was also in the spotlight for a moment. He stood up to propose a toast: "I drink to the health of one who is absent, but whose presence is constantly felt. I drink to the health of Leon Davidovitch Trotsky."⁷⁴ In the dead silence, several of the Soviet officials lowered their eyes. Only a foreign guest could have uttered those words and lived. After the bizarre events of the evening, the party began to break up.

At that time, it would have been impossible for a foreign visitor like Malraux to understand the true state of affairs in the Soviet Union. In 1934, Malraux and other fellow travellers did not know the true extent of the misery and suffering that communist policies had caused. The gifted writer Isaac Babel took a walk with

⁷²Radek had been one of the founders of the German Communist Party. Later he served as a top official in the Comintern, along with Zinoviev. Communist failures in Germany had been the beginning of his downfall within the Kremlin.

⁷³Regler, *The Owl of Minerva*, 213.

⁷⁴Clara Malraux, *Les Combats*, 125.

Clara, just before her departure from Moscow. He told her: "I have the right not to write. But I am a writer. A writer writes. In my drawer, there are two novels: if they are found, I am a dead man."⁷⁵ Such a candid remark was rare in the Soviet Union. Four years later, Babel was arrested and sent to a concentration camp in Siberia, where he died in 1941. Radek, too, was a marked man. He was convicted on trumped up charges in 1937, and he died in a Soviet prison camp in 1939. Bukharin was arrested and shot in 1938. Koltsov was arrested in 1938, and he died in 1942. Outside observers were aware of the fact that power struggles within the Kremlin had led to the arrests of several former political allies of Trotsky. However, no one in the West, sympathetic or otherwise, could have predicted the show trials and the purges, which were still a couple of years away.

Malraux's optimism about Soviet society and the role of the Soviet artist was reflected in a speech he gave at a Paris meeting in which French writers evaluated the Soviet congress.⁷⁶ In his remarks on Marxism and Soviet literature, Malraux said that "to conceive of literature as the application of a doctrine never

⁷⁵Clara Malraux, *Voici que vient l'été*, 287; Babel's daughter wrote that anyone visiting his study in the 1930s "saw shelves piled with manuscripts." When the police arrested her father, the manuscripts were seized. When she wrote her comments in 1969, the manuscripts had not yet been found. She believed that his manuscripts may have been burned along with other police archives in December 1941, when the German army was nearing Moscow. See Nathalie Babel, preface to Isaac Babel, *You Must Know Everything*, trans. Max Hayward (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc.), vii-viii.

⁷⁶André Malraux, "L'attitude de l'artiste," in *André Malraux*, ed. Michael Cazenave, Cahiers de l'Herne (Paris: Editions de l'Herne, 1982), 280-293.

corresponds to reality." As he observed: "Between a literature and a doctrine, there is always a civilization, of living men."⁷⁷ Malraux asserted that within the emerging Soviet civilization, the artist no longer regarded himself as a primary subject, because he found the world much more intriguing than himself.⁷⁸ Although much had been said in the West about the Soviet suspicion of the individual, Malraux argued that the Soviets had great confidence in man. The artist would not "be diminished" in Soviet society. In Malraux's opinion, the Soviet artist would discover a new objectivity. Although the Soviets harbored a mistrust for individualism, Malraux stated that a "fundamental consequence of Soviet society is the possibility of recreating a humanism."⁷⁹ But the new humanism would be based not on "the particularity of each man," but on his depth and his ability to unite with others. Malraux affirmed that the Soviet artist would transcend that which divides him from other men, and find values "through which men are united," joined together in a "virile fraternity."⁸⁰

Malraux's novel Le Temps du mépris appeared in June 1935. Dedicated to the German communists, who had suffered under the Nazis,⁸¹ the novel dealt with the fate of a German communist

⁷⁷ibid., 289.

⁷⁸ibid., 292-293.

⁷⁹ibid., 293.

⁸⁰ibid.

⁸¹André Malraux, Le Temps du mépris (Paris: Gallimard, 1935). See preface, p. 13 for his dedication "to the German comrades."

imprisoned in Germany. In the preface, Malraux said that his protagonist, Kassner, believed, like many communist intellectuals, that "communism restores to the individual his fertility."⁸² Malraux wrote: "It is difficult to be a man." But intensifying one's associations with other people is just as demanding as developing one's individuality: "the first nourishes with at least as much force as the second that by which man is man, that through which he goes beyond himself, creates, invents, or conceives of himself." Malraux had clearly moved away from what he termed "an unformulated individualism," with its artistic preoccupation with feelings, dreams, and inner states, towards fraternity and communion with other people.⁸³

Along with Ilya Ehrenburg, Jean-Richard Bloch, Louis Aragon, and others, Malraux helped to organize an international congress of writers in Paris. Because this was an anti-fascist affair, the slogan was "In Defense of Culture."⁸⁴ The congress met from 21 to 25 June 1935 at the Palais de la Mutualité. Attending the congress were many of the best-known writers in the world, including André Gide, Heinrich Mann, Alexis Tolstoy, Henri Barbusse, Aldous Huxley, and

⁸²ibid., 12.

⁸³ibid., 13, 10. Years later, Roger Stéphane interviewed Malraux and told him that most communists liked Le Temps du mépris better than his other novels. Malraux answered: "Naturally, its a flop." Stéphane said that communists generally thought that his other novels were confusing. Malraux replied: "The truth is always confusing." Roger Stéphane, Fin d'une jeunesse (Paris: Table Monde, 1954), 51.

⁸⁴Ehrenburg, Memoirs 1921-1941, 302-310; Regler, The Owl of Minerva, 230-233; Janine Bouissounouse, La Nuit d'autun: Le temps des illusions (Calmann-Lévy, 1977), 72-74.

Bertold Brecht. The Popular Front was then taking shape: under orders from Moscow, the French Communist Party had made its peace with the Socialist party, and was negotiating with the Radical Socialist party. The organizers of the writers' congress feared that the public would regard the meeting merely as a communist rally.⁸⁵ The congress itself was indeed a part of the Popular Front strategy, in this case the formation of a broad antifascist alliance of writers including communists, socialists, liberals and others.

The speakers dealt with a variety of issues, including the function of the writer in society, the fascist threat to the cultural heritage, and the relationship between the nation and culture.⁸⁶ In a speech that aroused a great deal of excitement, Gide declared his conversion to communism. German communist writer Gustav Regler gave a passionate speech in which he urged the delegates to maintain solidarity.⁸⁷ When he finished, the audience spontaneously rose and sang the "Internationale." This event, which for Regler was very moving, angered the Communist Party leadership. All communists were expected to adhere rigidly to the Popular Front strategy, and the leaders hoped to keep a low profile. They feared that singing the "Internationale" would make the congress appear to be a communist rally in the eyes of the public. When Regler attended

⁸⁵Ehrenburg, *Memoirs 1921-1941*, 302.

⁸⁶*ibid.*, 304; Regler, *The Owl of Minerva*, 230.

⁸⁷Regler, *The Owl of Minerva*, 231-233.

the next meeting of the communist cell to which he belonged, he was upbraided for the incident.

Malraux's main speech did not deal with political questions.⁸⁸ Instead he outlined a theory of art that anticipated his later works on art history. Malraux said that when the circumstances that gave rise to a work of art in the past changed over time, the art work underwent a transformation, entering a curious state of limbo once it had been abandoned and was bereft of its former meaning; nevertheless, when we in the present have need of such works from the past--embodiments of ancient dreams--and we infuse these works with our will and desire, then we reconquer them and the art works are resuscitated, for we have recreated them anew, just as we create ourselves. In conclusion, he told the delegates that in spite their differences, there was a common will among them to preserve and transform the cultural heritage of the past. They would defend culture from the threat of fascism. In keeping with this general aim, Malraux joined with Louis Aragon, Jean-Richard Bloch, and others, in forming a new group, the Association Internationale des Ecrivains pour la défense de la culture.⁸⁹

On 4 November 1935, at the Mutualité, a month after the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, Malraux spoke to this Association

⁸⁸André Malraux, "L'oeuvre d'art," Commune, no. 23 (July 1935): 1264-1266.

⁸⁹This antifascist organization grew out of l'Association des écrivains révolutionnaires. Robert Sabria, "Lorsque les écrivains se battaient," Magazine littéraire, no. 5 (March 1967): p. 49.

internationale des écrivains pour la défense de la culture⁹⁰ Malraux said that reactionary intellectuals assumed that the forceful imposition of European control over a non-European country was the same thing as introducing civilization. Without debating this dubious assumption, Malraux went on to point out that several non-European countries which appeared to be the most westernized, such as Turkey and Japan, had never been under the control of the imperialist nations. Assuming that technological superiority implied racial superiority, most of the intellectuals of the right supported Italy in its war of conquest. Malraux asserted that "if technical superiority implies the right of conquest, the United States should begin to colonize Europe."⁹¹ At a time when Ethiopia needed technical specialists, guns had been sent to subdue the country. Malraux argued that ancient civilizations did not begin with warriors, but with legislators and priests. He declared: "barbarity is that which sacrifices men to myths, and we want a civilization that subordinates myths to men," a civilization that puts "the power of men at the service of their dreams," rather than placing "their dreams at the service of their power."⁹²

It is evident from Malraux's speeches and public remarks that he regarded fascism and Nazism as a dire threat to European

⁹⁰André Malraux, "Occident et Orient," in André Malraux, ed. Michel Cazenave, Cahiers de l'Herne (Paris: Editions de l'Herne, 1982): 170-173.

⁹¹Ibid., 171.

⁹²Ibid., 172.

civilization. Because communist sympathizers like Malraux knew little about what had happened in the Soviet Union during the collectivization drives--detailed information and statistics were not available--it was easy for them to look to that nation as a bulwark against fascism. Moreover, although Malraux and other sympathetic observers knew that some repression had occurred in the Soviet Union, they could rationalize the authoritarianism of the communists as an incidental byproduct of years of revolution, civil war, hunger, and disease. As with so many intellectuals of the left during the 1930s, Malraux hoped that a new communist civilization would emerge, and that soviet artists would create a new humanism inspired by a sense of fraternity. It was only a matter of months before Malraux would act upon his convictions, and join the antifascist struggle in Spain.

CHAPTER VIII

FROM ACTIVISM TO MILITANCY

During the Popular Front period, antifascist intellectuals in France were heartened by the fact that the Socialist and Communist parties were able to bury their differences (albeit temporarily) in 1935. Liberal antifascists were intrigued by the uncharacteristic political moderation exhibited by the French Communist Party. The adherence of the Radical Party to the Popular Front alliance in early 1936 was news of great moment.¹ When elections were held in France in April-May 1936, the Socialist Party became the largest group in the Chamber of Deputies. Although the Radical Party fell into second place, the Communist Party made significant gains in the Chamber. The election resulted in a solid victory for the coalition of the left.

Antifascist intellectuals were euphoric over the prospects for greater Franco-Soviet cooperation as a deterrent to Nazi Germany. In leftist political circles, the Soviet Union was regarded as the one power that would steadfastly oppose Nazism and fascism. In May 1935, a year before the Popular Front victory at the polls, a Franco-Soviet Pact had been signed. Although it was hardly an ironclad

¹Gordon Wright, France in Modern Times (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1987), 368-369.

alliance, antifascists regarded the agreement as a significant diplomatic step. Stalin voiced his endorsement of a strong French military posture. At the Comintern Congress in Moscow, during July-August, 1935, the communists declared their readiness to collaborate with any western political party for the common purpose of resisting Nazi Germany or the militaristic Japanese Empire. With the advent of the French Popular Front government, the prospects for further Franco-Soviet cooperation seemed promising. French antifascists had reason to hope that other collective security agreements would be forthcoming.

From 1933 to 1936, Malraux had immersed himself in the antifascist movement. After the victory of the Popular Front in 1936, he and his wife were caught up in the excitement, attending meetings and banquets and discussing the ramifications of the new political alignment.² According to Clara's memoirs, he did not know "what role to play in the Popular Front for which he had fought."³ One day he told her that he was thinking about joining the Communist Party. When Clara asked him why, he told her that if he joined the party, he might be given "an important function." She reminded him that the party imposed discipline on its members, and that there was no guarantee that he would be assigned to a significant position. In the end, Malraux never joined the Communist Party. As a writer and an independent political activist, it is

²Clara Malraux, Le Fin et le commencement, 26-28.

³Ibid., 28.

unlikely that Malraux could ever have maintained a party line for long. Nevertheless, he was a welcome ally for the communists at a time when the party enjoyed much favor within leftist and progressive political circles in Western Europe.

Malraux and two other representatives of the Association internationale de écrivains pour la défense de la culture left for Madrid in May 1936.⁴ Although a Popular Front government had recently taken power in Spain, the political situation was deteriorating: Fascists and anarchists were shooting one another; poor peasants were trying to seize land; the Guardia Civil was shooting peasant protesters; Spanish generals plotted to overthrow the government. Malraux and the others went to Spain to confer with leftist writers, and members of the Popular Front government. On 22 May 1936, Malraux and his companions met the president of the Spanish republic, Manuel Azaña. Later that day, Malraux gave a speech in which he castigated intellectuals who closed their eyes and stayed in "an ivory tower," lost in dreams, rather than confronting the world directly.⁵ He told Spanish journalists that an armed struggle against fascism in Europe was unavoidable. The struggle between democracy and fascism would ultimately be decided by war.

⁴Cate, Malraux, 281-282.

⁵Thornberry, André Malraux et l'Espagne, 24-25.

Upon his return to France, Malraux gave a speech before a large crowd in Marseilles, on 24 May 1936.⁶ In his interpretation of the events in Spain, Malraux said that the revolt of the miners in Asturias in 1934 had aroused the masses, and had led to the Popular Front movement in Spain. Although the rebellious miners had been crushed by the best units of the Spanish army, the "Asturian epic" had revealed the "proletarian conscience" of the workers of Asturias, and had inspired others. Since the uprising, Malraux claimed that a portion of the Spanish petit bourgeoisie had joined the side of the proletariat. Under the Popular Front regime, mass action often preceded governmental policy changes. In Malraux's opinion, Azaña might continue to follow a policy of encouraging democratic reforms. But there was also a possibility of left-wing groups pushing a revolutionary program, including the collectivization of the land. In any case, Malraux predicted that there was a good chance that right-wing groups would attempt to establish a fascist dictatorship. Because of the disorganization and disunity among leftist organizations, the poor condition of public finances, as well as the pressures exerted by the politicized masses, he feared that fascist repression was probable. Malraux ended his speech with an appeal for solidarity among democratically minded Frenchmen and all who believed in liberty, social justice, and fraternity.⁷

⁶André Malraux, "Impressions d'Espagne, par André Malraux," Le Petit Provençal, 25 May 1936.

⁷ibid.

On 18 July 1936, André and Clara were at the theater with Léo Lagrange and his wife. Lagrange was a socialist member of the Blum cabinet.⁸ Suddenly a man appeared and he asked Lagrange to accompany him to the loge of Pierre Cot, Blum's Air Minister. When Lagrange returned, he told André and Clara that a military rebellion was underway in Spain. Both Lagrange and Cot favored the immediate shipment of aid to the Spanish Republic. The following day, Spanish premier José Giral asked the Blum government for permission to purchase arms, equipment, and aircraft.⁹ Although there was widespread sympathy for the Spanish Republic in Blum's cabinet, it soon became apparent that the subject of military aid was very controversial. When Blum visited London, the British government advised caution. Because the French government appeared willing to supply the Spanish Republic, right-wing newspapers in Paris bitterly denounced Blum and his Air Minister, Cot. After considerable political wrangling within the cabinet, Blum and his ministers agreed on a compromise. Until the powers agreed to an international agreement on non-intervention in Spain, the French government would allow limited arms shipments.

Malraux flew to Madrid to assess the situation. He met with Spanish officials, including President Azaña, on 26 July 1936.¹⁰ When he returned to Paris the following day, he began to serve as a

⁸Clara Malraux, *Le Fin et le commencement*, 7-8.

⁹Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1961), 213, 223-225.

¹⁰Clara Malraux, *Le Fin et le commencement*, 10-13; Cate, *Malraux*, 290-291.

representative of the Spanish government in order to procure French aircraft.¹¹ Cot and his staff had assembled a list of potential recruits, French pilots who were reservists in the French air force. Acting for the Spanish government, Malraux began to recruit pilots and other personnel in his Paris apartment. Meanwhile, the air ministry cooperated in the ferrying of the aircraft purchased by the Spanish Republic to the French border. Because the Blum government appeared to be vacillating--there was discussion of a non-intervention treaty--Malraux worked furiously to find pilots, technicians, and aircraft while there was still time. When Malraux arrived in Madrid on 8 August 1936, to begin assembling an air squadron, the French government was preparing to suspend all arms shipments to Spain on the following day.

Malraux's Escadrille España was soon transferred from Barcelona to Barajas airport, east of Madrid.¹² In the beginning, there were seventeen pilots and fifteen other mechanics and flight personnel in the squadron. Although two-thirds of the motley collection of mercenaries and volunteers were Frenchmen, five other nationalities were represented. The most popular man in the squadron was Abel Guidez, a twenty-eight year old French military

¹¹Ibid., 291-293; Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, 225.

¹²Michael Koltsov, *Diario de la guerra de España* (Paris: Editions Ruedo ibérico, 1963), 36; Pietro Nenni, *La Guerre d'Espagne*, trans. Jean Baumier (Paris: François Maspero, 1959), 164. A good friend of Malraux, Michael Koltsov wrote for *Pravda* and spent fifteen months in Spain. He was arrested by Soviet police in 1938, and charged with working for the British. He died in unknown circumstances in 1942. Pietro Nenni fought in the front lines as a member of the International Brigades. He later became head of the Italian Socialist Party.

reserve pilot, who had several years of experience in civil aviation.¹³ Because he was likable, courageous, hard-working, and quick with a joke, he quickly earned the respect and goodwill of the other members of the squadron. Guidez saw a great deal of combat, sometimes flying a bomber, other times one of the fighters. During his time with the squadron, he registered ten kills, four bombers and six fighters. He gave a good account of himself. The most idealistic and dedicated pilots tended to gather around Guidez. This group was seldom seen at night in the Madrid hotel where the squadron members stayed. They spent so many evenings at the hanger at Barajas that often they spent the entire night there.

Another one of the best pilots in the squadron was the Frenchman, Jean Darry, a World War I veteran who had shot down six German airplanes.¹⁴ He was an anarchist, an adventurer, and a mercenary pilot. After the war, Darry made a lot of money in the United States, before returning to France to engage in the illicit business of making over stolen cars. He was arrested, tried, and jailed for eight months. In Spain, Darry found a clever means of attacking German Ju-52 bombers. He would approach the enemy plane from the front, then dive underneath the bomber and loop back upward in such a manner that neither the bomber's front gun, nor its rear turret guns could fire at the attacker. Darry downed at least

¹³Koltsov, *Diario de la guerra de España*, 93, 12, 36, 120.

¹⁴Jean Gisclon, *Des Avions et des Hommes* (Paris: France-Empire, 1969), 46-47.

two German bombers using this tactic.¹⁵ Another veteran was François Bourgeois, who had shot down four German airplanes in the Great War. After the war, he had made his living flying contraband whiskey from Canada to the United States (for John Dillinger, he claimed).

The bomber used most by the Escadrille España was the French Potez 54, a slow and heavy aircraft which required a crew of seven.¹⁶ At a speed of one-hundred sixty kilometers per hour, the Potez was much slower than the German Junker 52, which flew at a speed of two-hundred fifty kilometers per hour. The Potez was designed to bomb at an altitude of fifteen hundred to three thousand meters, but Malraux's pilots often attacked the Nationalists at much lower altitudes, in order to increase their chances of success. In addition to the Potez 54 bombers, Malraux acquired several Bloch 210 bombers, Dewoitine fighters, a couple of aging Nieuport 52 fighters, several DC-2 civil aviation transports (often used for bombing), and a small airplane formerly owned by Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie. Because the squadron had only five experienced mechanics, and spare parts were scarce, only five or six airplanes could usually be sent out on missions at any given time.¹⁷

¹⁵Ibid. A report describing Darry's fighter tactics was sent to the British foreign office in November 1936.

¹⁶Hugh Thomas, "The Lyrical Illusion: Spain 1936," in Malraux: Life and Work, ed. Martine de Courcel (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1976), 43.

¹⁷Julian Segnaire, "L'Escadrille André Malraux," Magazine Littéraire, no. 11 (October 1967): 16; Salas Larrazábal, La guerra de España desde el aire, 85.

Although Malraux had never been a military commander before, the men of the squadron respected him because he flew on numerous missions and was exposed to the same dangers as the others.¹⁸ Malraux was not a pilot, but as a gunner and bombardier he flew in one of the Potez 54 bombers or in one of the Blochs.¹⁹ In the early days of the squadron, while the crews engaged in training flights, Malraux organized raids using DC-2 transports. The crews hurled small bombs weighing eight or ten kilograms out of the doors of the civilian aircraft. Because the Nationalist forces were gaining ground rapidly in the early weeks of the war, Malraux and Guidez worked relentlessly to prepare the squadron for combat.²⁰

The squadron flew its first missions in August 1936.²¹ Nationalist forces, spearheaded by crack units of the Spanish foreign legion, were rapidly reducing the cities and towns of Extremadura in western Spain. On 15 August 1936, three bombers from the Escadrille España joined three other Republican bombers in an air attack on a Nationalist foreign legion formation under the command of the fascist commander, Colonel Blanco Yagüe. In other action over the Extremaduran front, Jean Darry shot down two Italian reconnaissance aircraft, thereby scoring the first air victories for

¹⁸Segnaire, "L'Escadrille André Malraux," 16, 18. Segnaire was a Belgian bombardier who was later promoted to lieutenant and appointed as political commissar for the squadron.

¹⁹Jesús Salas Larrazábal, La guerra de España desde el aire (Barcelona: Ediciones Ariel, 1969), 85; The author was a Nationalist officer and pilot during the war; Segnaire, "L'Escadrille André Malraux," 15-16.

²⁰Koltsov, Diario de la guerra de España, 12.

²¹Salas Larrazábal, La guerra de España desde el aire, 95.

the squadron.²² On 16 August 1936, an Italian Fiat pursuit plane shot down one of the fighters in Malraux's squadron over the Extremaduran front. The pilot parachuted into the Tagus River and eventually found his way back to a zone held by Republican forces. Several bombers from the Escadrille España bombed Badojoz on the same day. In other action on 16 August, two fighters escorted two Potez 54 bombers in a raid over Teruel, on the Aragon front. When three Italian Fiats attacked the formation, the two fighters from Malraux's squadron engaged them in a desperate air battle. The youngest pilot in the Escadrille España, Michel Bernay, shot down one of the Italian airplanes, while his partner, Victor Valbert, pursued one of the others. One of the remaining Italian fighters broke off from the engagement and the other escaped from Valbert.²³

After the conquest of Badajoz, Nationalist forces under Colonel Yagüe began to advance toward Madrid.²⁴ Because the Republican militiamen were no match for the Nationalist legionnaires and battle-hardened Moroccans, the military situation was rapidly deteriorating in western Spain. In order to slow down the Nationalists, the Republican Minister of War ordered more bombing raids in Extremadura.²⁵ On 20 August 1936, Malraux joined one of his flight crews on a mission to bomb Nationalist troops massed in and around Medellín. When they flew over the city, they

²²Gisclon, Des Avions et des Hommes, 37-39.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Hugh Thomas, The Spanish Civil War, 247-248.

²⁵Cate, Malraux, 299.

found the plaza of Medellín jammed with rebel trucks and other vehicles. Malraux and his men were lucky to catch the Nationalist troops in such a position. The pilots of two Potez 54 bombers and a DC-2 descended to the dangerously low altitude of three-hundred meters before releasing their bombs. The air attack virtually wiped out part of the Nationalist formation of legionnaires under Major Carlos Asensio Cabanillas.²⁶

The successful raid over Medellín was followed three days later by a Nationalist bombardment of the airfield at Cuatros Vientos, outside of Madrid, where the Dewoitine pursuit aircraft of the Escadrille España were stationed.²⁷ The first attack damaged several Dewoitines belonging to the squadron. Four hours later, another Nationalist air raid destroyed four of the Dewoitine fighters. One of the bombs dropped on the hangar did not explode.²⁸ Some men in the squadron brought the bomb to the Hotel Florida in Madrid, where others could examine its German markings.

On 28 August 1936, a curious incident occurred involving two pilots in Malraux's squadron.²⁹ Adrien Matheron and Victor Valbert were on patrol in two pursuit aircraft. Matheron shot down a Nationalist Bréguet 19 bomber near Talavera de la Reina, a town southwest of Madrid. As they returned to base, they observed on the ground some soldiers escorting a group of prisoners along a road.

²⁶Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, 248.

²⁷Patrick Laureau, *La Aviación republicana, 1936-1939* (n.p., n.d.), 1:45.

²⁸Koltsov, *Diario de la guerra de España*, 52.

²⁹Cate, *Malraux*, 300-301.

Assuming that the soldiers were Nationalist rebels, the two pilots dropped down to a low altitude and buzzed the column, firing their machine guns as they made a pass. Just as the pilots had intended, some of the prisoners took advantage of the confusion and fled into the surrounding brush. The pilots later learned that the soldiers were Republican militiamen and the captives were Nationalists. The War Ministry in Madrid was upset by the incident. Ignacio Hidalgo de Cisneros, who later became the communist Minister of the Air, had a strong aversion to the Escadrille España.³⁰ He tried to discharge the personnel of the squadron several times, but the Republican government would now allow it.

Malraux and the pilots of the Escadrille España lived at the Hotel Florida in Madrid, along with foreign journalists, guests of the government, and adventurers from various countries. The Italian socialist Pietro Nenni, who lived there at the time, called the hotel "a sort of tower of Babel."³¹ The pilots of the squadron were well paid, and many of them wore silk shirts and carried sheath knives and pistols in holsters fastened to their belts.³² The men of the squadron wanted to bring their wives to Spain when they first arrived, but they were not granted permission. After most of them found women in Madrid, they quit seeking concessions on that point. With such a diverse clientele, and people coming and going most of

³⁰Ignacio Hidalgo de Cisneros, *Memorias*, vol. 2, La República y la guerra de España (Paris: Editions Ruedo ibérico, 1964), 324.

³¹Nenni, La Guerre d'Espagne, 163-164.

³²Koltsov, Diario de la guerra de España, 93.

the night, the hotel was very noisy. At night the arguments and scenes that took place in the hotel corridors were so frequent that some of the journalists and foreign visitors lodged complaints with the management. Although the Hotel Florida was generally regarded as a revolutionary hub of activity, Koltsov maintained that true communists seldom went there. Foreign communists arrived quietly, attended party meetings, and eventually left for the front.

Although Malraux was very busy, he would often relax with a few friends in the evening.³³ The night life of Madrid continued in spite of the war, and along the Gran Vía, the Calle Alcalá, and around the Puerta del Sol, the cafes were full until three o'clock in the morning. After the heat of the day had passed, Madrileños and foreigners alike enjoyed a period of rest and relaxation. Malraux often went to a Basque restaurant, accompanied by friends such as Pietro Nenni, Michael Koltsov, writer José Bergamín, communist poet Rafael Alberti, journalist George Soria, as well as others.³⁴

As commandant of the squadron, Malraux was obsessed with military affairs, and he avoided political meetings of any kind.³⁵ Because he was under a great deal of stress, he slept little. With his propensity for hard work, Malraux had always been able to subsist on little sleep. In August 1936, he wrote in a letter to a friend: "I sleep three hours a night and I live in a mélange of heroism

³³Nenni, *La Guerre d'Espagne*, 164.

³⁴*ibid.*; Clara Malraux, *Le Fin et le commencement*, 36-37.

³⁵Segnaire, "L'Escadrille André Malraux," 18.

and imbecility"³⁶ He appeared lean, emaciated, and pallid.³⁷ Another source of tension was his crumbling relationship with Clara.³⁸ On several occasions, when she told him that he was unfit for military command, they quarreled violently. She had insisted on going to Spain with him, and their time together had not been pleasant. Because the other men of the squadron were not allowed to bring their wives to Spain, Clara's presence put Malraux in an awkward position.³⁹ She often went to the hangar and tried to make herself useful by keeping a squadron journal. When Clara rode around in a P.O.U.M. car of the Trotskyite party, Malraux's communist friends were incensed.⁴⁰ When a rumor that Clara was sleeping with one of the pilots began to circulate, Malraux prevailed upon her to return to Paris.

Malraux went to Paris occasionally, in an effort to obtain more airplanes and other necessities for the squadron. On 4 September 1936, André Gide visited the Malraux apartment.⁴¹ When her husband was busy taking a bath, Clara indignantly told Gide that André had said that he felt much more free to act without her presence in Madrid. Gide observed that although Malraux looked exhausted, he appeared to be less afflicted with the characteristic facial tics and

³⁶Quoted in Suzanne Chantal, La Coeur battant: Josette Clotis, André Malraux (Paris: Editions Grass et Fasquelle, 1976), 83.

³⁷Nenni, La Guerre d'Espagne, 164.

³⁸Clara Malraux, Le Fin et le commencement, 31-32, 65-68.

³⁹Cate, Malraux, 304; Lacouture, 250.

⁴⁰The P.O.U.M. was the Partido Obrero de Unificación de Marxista.

⁴¹André Gide, Journal, 1889-1939 (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1951), 1253.

nervous gestures than was usually the case. On the following evening, Gide dined with André and Clara. As always, Malraux overwhelmed Gide with a continued flow of conversation, spiced with anecdotes and analyses of the political and military situation in Spain.

Even though the Soviet Union began to ship arms to the Spanish Republic in October 1936, this action had little direct affect on the Escadrille España until November. The Soviet aircraft stationed in Madrid seldom flew with the Malraux squadron.⁴² In spite of the makeshift arrangements that prevailed, several of the pilots in the squadron had enjoyed great success. Abel Guidez shot down ten Nationalist aircraft, four bombers and six fighters. Jean Gisclon, Jean Darry, and Michel Bernay each had three kills, and other pilots had one victory apiece.⁴³ Yet the squadron had suffered losses as well. Because only a few airplanes were still fit to fly by early October, the pilots were forced to take turns flying them.⁴⁴ Guidez complained to Koltsov that the French government had done little to help the squadron.

The influx of German and Italian aircraft on the Nationalist side had a telling effect on the air war. For the most part, the fascist airplanes were more modern and were faster than the aircraft flown by the Escadrille España.⁴⁵ Even with a fighter

⁴²Segnaire, "L'Escadrille André Malraux," 16.

⁴³Salas Larrazábal, La guerra de España desde el aire, 85.

⁴⁴Koltsov, Diario de la guerra de España, 120-122.

⁴⁵Ibid., 121.

escort, the French Potez 54 bombers were very vulnerable to air attack. On 5 October 1936, a Potez 54, escorted by three fighters, was due back at the base. The men of the squadron were on edge, because they knew that the bomber had to be running low on fuel. Finally, the bomber appeared, and made a rough landing on the dry grass. It

was badly damaged: the windows were shattered and the fuselage was riddled with bullet holes. The ground crew ran toward the aircraft, even before the pilot had shut down one of the engines. When they opened the hatch, they saw that the cabin was covered with blood. The exhausted pilot, strapped into his seat, was leaning over the controls. Around him was a large red puddle. He had been shot through the shoulders, legs, and arms. In spite of the fact that he had been badly shot, he had managed to keep flying, thereby saving his comrades. The bombardier, the gunner, and the others were also wounded, but not as badly as the pilot. Enemy fighters had attacked the lumbering Potez 54 from below and from the front. The crew was lucky to have survived.

Three of the most experienced pilots, Abel Guidez, Victor Véniel, and Jean Darry, were sent out on a bombing mission over Talavera de la Reina on 24 October 1936.⁴⁶ They flew in two Potez 54 bombers and a Bloch 210, without fighter escort. They took off at night, timing the attack so that they would arrive over the target at daybreak. The three bombers arrived according to plan and

⁴⁶Victor Véniel, "Une mission très réussie," *Icare*, no. 118 (1986): 134-136.

released their bombs on the Nationalist headquarters for the Madrid front, destroying several Fiat fighters on the ground as well. Their mission was a total success. Unfortunately for the Escadrille España, the Nationalists retaliated with a vengeance.⁴⁷ On 26 October 1936, a dozen Ju-52 German bombers, with a fighter escort, pounded the airfield at Barajas, destroying a fuel tank and five Dewoitine fighters. The squadron could not long sustain such losses.

By the beginning of November, Nationalist forces were preparing to attack Madrid, as Nationalist aircraft were regularly bombing the city. Because it appeared that Madrid might soon fall, the Republican government was evacuated from the besieged city and transferred to Valencia. In the early morning of 5 November 1936, foreign correspondent Louis Fischer stopped in front of the Gran Vía Hotel, looked in the window, and saw Malraux sitting at a table smoking a cigarette.⁴⁸ Fischer was trying to decide whether or not to leave Madrid. He entered the hotel and asked Malraux about the military situation. Malraux told him that the Nationalists were in Carabanchel Alto, southwest of Madrid. When Fischer asked him how he knew that Nationalist forces were so close to the city, Malraux replied: "We bombed them there this morning." When Fischer asked Malraux if he should remain in the city, Malraux advised him to leave. He offered to fly Fischer out of Madrid the following morning, telling

⁴⁷Laureau, *La Aviación republicana, 1930-1939*, 1:56.

⁴⁸Louis Fischer, *Men and Politics* (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1941), 363-365.

him: "But first you'll have to go bombing with us."⁴⁹ Fischer left Madrid the next day, but not in one of Malraux's bombers.

After the squadron was formally incorporated into the Republican air force, there were some significant changes. For one thing the squadron was relocated to Alcalá de Henares in early November, and from there it was shifted again to the town of Alcantarilla, outside the city of Murcia in southeastern Spain.⁵⁰ Then the officers of the squadron found a splendid opportunity to acquire replacements. As the Soviets began to play an important role in the reorganization of the sagging Republican war machine, the International Brigades were forming at Albacete, a town in Murcia, southwest of Valencia.⁵¹ As volunteers arrived from several countries, Albacete became a training base. Malraux and the officers of the Escadrille España were looking for men with a background in aviation (especially mechanics), so they began to recruit volunteers from the International Brigade at Albacete.⁵² They found several mechanics and pilots to replace the mercenaries who had left. Because the pilots of the reorganized squadron would henceforth earn the same pay as the other Republican pilots, most of the mercenaries were unwilling to accept a drastic cut in pay. So the Escadrille España became a unit consisting of committed volunteers. As the number of communists in the unit increased, so did the

⁴⁹Ibid., 364.

⁵⁰Cate, Malraux, 315; Hugh Thomas, The Spanish Civil War, 301.

⁵¹Hugh Thomas, The Spanish Civil War, 299-301.

⁵²Segnaire, "L'Escadrille André Malraux," 16, 12.

overall level of discipline and dedication. In keeping with the transformation of the squadron, the Belgian bombardier, Julien Segnaire, was promoted to lieutenant and appointed as political commissar for the unit.

Unbeknownst to Malraux, Segnaire had requested, in the name of all of the men, that the Air Minister rename the squadron the "Escadrille André Malraux."⁵³ When the petition was granted, members of the squadron painted the new name on their official automobile. When Malraux saw it for the first time, he was dumbfounded. Recalling the incident, Segnaire said: " We were very proud . . . of having him as chief."⁵⁴ According to a veteran of the International Brigades who enlisted at Albacete, Malraux had become something of a legend on the Republican side.⁵⁵ The veteran said that whenever the men of his unit saw a Republican airplane flying into combat, they knew that it was Malraux. The men in the International Brigades spoke of him often, "as a legendary man." The veteran remarked further: "And it seemed to me that Malraux had become a man of myth, not a god, no, but an important type, a visionary."⁵⁶ According to the communist veteran, the men of the brigades talked about the things that Malraux had said, and read things that Malraux had written in the newspapers, although they did

⁵³ibid., 16.

⁵⁴ibid.

⁵⁵Interview in Patrice Hovald, Toutes ces années . . . et André Malraux (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1978), 154-155.

⁵⁶ibid., 155.

not always understand his thoughts and remarks. They discussed his trips to France, his efforts on behalf of the Republic, and his participation in combat missions. The veteran said that the men of the brigades regarded him as "a man ahead of his time."⁵⁷

On the other hand, the communist commander at Albacete, André Marty, did not share the admiration for Malraux that was common in the ranks.⁵⁸ At political meetings, Marty and his staff told the political commissars, and all others in responsible positions in the brigades, to remind the men that Malraux was not a communist. Malraux saw the Spanish revolution differently from the communists, and he was not to be trusted. A veteran who attended these meetings said that it was common knowledge that because some of the communist leaders mistrusted Malraux, there had been heated arguments over the famous fellow traveler within the government. Although the squadron was technically not a part of the brigades, it had been incorporated into the Republican air force. The veteran recalled that he was surprised to hear Marty, the base commandant, say that it would be necessary to get rid of men like Malraux when the war was won. Within the brigades, the veteran recalled, an outsider, or a non-communist who had been an officer in another army, was often regarded with suspicion. But a communist without military experience, and lacking in competence, was often put in a position of responsibility.

⁵⁷ibid.

⁵⁸ibid., 154-156. Hugh Thomas is very critical of Marty, regarding him as "arrogant, incompetent, and cruel." See Thomas, The Spanish Civil War, 301.

During December 1936, the Escadrille André Malraux flew missions in support of the Republican troops fighting on the Aragon front. Malraux flew on several missions over Teruel.⁵⁹ On one occasion a peasant from an area occupied by the Nationalists arrived at their base and claimed to know the whereabouts of an enemy airfield. He said that he could show the squadron the location.⁶⁰ A French air crew brought the peasant with them on their next mission, but the peasant could not find the airfield from a high altitude. The pilot then brought the bomber down to a lower altitude, enabling the peasant to spot the target. They bombed the airfield, but when the defenders opened fire, the mechanic on board was seriously wounded.

On 24 December 1936, the squadron prepared two bombers for a raid in the Teruel sector.⁶¹ One of the airplanes, with Malraux aboard, crashed during takeoff. No one was killed in the accident, but all of the crew members were banged up. The other Potez 54 bomber reached its target, but was attacked by a German Heinkel 51. The Potez absorbed some heavy fire: one gunner was dead, several other crew members were wounded, and an engine was failing.⁶² As the bomber lost altitude, the pilot guided the airplane through rugged terrain, full of canyons, rocky gorges, and jagged mountain

⁵⁹Segnaire, "L'Escadrille André Malraux," 18.

⁶⁰Ehrenburg, Memoirs 1921-1941, 396.

⁶¹Salas Larrazábal, La guerra de España desde el aire, 154.

⁶²Patrick Laureau, "La Guerre d'Espagne: les mercenaires et les volontaires," Icare, no. 130 (1989): 83.

peaks. When he found a reasonably level stretch of ground, the pilot attempted a crash landing. Although the snow cushioned the impact somewhat, the bomber broke apart. Three men were seriously hurt during the crash. One man was disfigured to such an extent that the pilot had to struggle with the injured man to prevent him from shooting himself in the head with his service pistol. Back at the airfield, Malraux received word that the bomber had crashed in the mountains. Along with several other men, Malraux ran to the squadron automobile and went to search for the survivors.⁶³ He and his men found the surviving airmen, and with the help of the local peasants, the rescue party brought the dead and the wounded out of the mountains. Malraux dramatically recounted this episode in his novel L'espoir.

By the end of 1936, most of the aircraft in the squadron had been destroyed or damaged beyond repair. Only two or three bombers were operational. Many of the men that had served with Malraux were dead or seriously injured. The war had entered a new phase, as Soviet advisors and Soviet military equipment arrived on a regular basis. Soviet instructors began training Spanish pilots and volunteers from the brigades. It became apparent that because France was observing the non-intervention treaty, no more French aircraft would be forthcoming. The shrunken remnant of Malraux's squadron was absorbed by the international air squadron.

⁶³Ibid.; Segnaire, "L'Escadrille André Malraux," 16.

But Malraux found other ways to support the Spanish Republic. He would continue to serve as a spokesman for the Spanish Republic at conferences and rallies in Western Europe and North America. During a six-week trip to Canada and the United States, he would raise funds for humanitarian aid for the Republic. He would write an antifascist novel about the Spanish Civil War, L'Espoir, and would direct a movie that depicted several key scenes from the novel. Until the end of the war, Malraux remained an energetic spokesman for the Republican cause.

CHAPTER IX

THE DESPERATE YEARS

From 1937 to 1939, Malraux engaged in a variety of activities, including a trip to North America as a fund-raiser for the Spanish Republic, a trip that led to a bitter dispute with his former friend Trotsky. He wrote the antifascist novel L'Espoir, and directed a movie set in the Spanish Civil War. Throughout a wide range of activities, he was consumed with the struggle against fascism. In early 1937, Malraux was still optimistic about the future of the Popular Front in France, as well as the prospects for the survival of the Spanish Popular Front. Even though Germany and Italy were sending men and materiel to the Spanish Nationalists, Malraux hoped that Soviet military aid, and the creation of disciplined military formations, such as the International Brigades, would enable the Spanish Republic to survive and to prevail ultimately.

Because of Malraux's literary fame, and his reputation as a militant antifascist, he was an ideal spokesman for Republican Spain in Western Europe and North America. Malraux agreed to visit the United States and Canada for a round of conferences, banquets, and newspaper interviews. His tour was organized by Louis Fischer, European correspondent for The Nation, and Robert Haas, vice-

president at Random House, Malraux's publisher in America.¹ The main purpose of the trip was to solicit humanitarian aid for the Spanish Republic, especially ambulances and medical supplies.

When Malraux arrived in New York City aboard the liner Paris on 24 February 1937, Louis Fischer and Marcel Acier, of the American Writers' Union, greeted him at the pier.² The organizers of the tour had arranged for Malraux to give several speeches in New York City, as well as in Philadelphia, Washington D.C., and the campuses of Harvard and Princeton universities. Later in his visit, he was scheduled for meetings on the West Coast, at Los Angeles and San Francisco. The final cities on his itinerary were Toronto and Montreal. Although Malraux read English quite well, his command of the spoken language was limited. During his public appearances and interviews, an interpreter would interject an English translation of Malraux's statements at regular intervals. Because of his volubility in French, and the rapidity of his thought, Malraux grew somewhat impatient at times with the forced pauses.³

During interviews with the press, reporters asked Malraux why he had become politically committed to the Spanish Republic.⁴ In a brief description of his political evolution, Malraux said that he had

¹Walter G. Langlois, "Un mois à New-York," in Michel Cazenave, ed., André Malraux, Cahiers de l'Herne (Paris: Editions de l'Herne, 1982), 184-185; Françoise Dorenlot and Micheline Tison-Braun, eds., André Malraux, Metamorphosis and Imagination (New York: New York Literary Forum, 1979), 223.

²Dorenlot and Tison-Braun, eds., André Malraux: Metamorphosis and Imagination, 223; Langlois, "Un mois à New-York," 186.

³Ibid.

⁴Langlois, "Un mois à New-York," 186.

come from a comfortable bourgeois family. As a result of his experience in Indochina in 1923, however, he had come to be an "anti-imperialist."⁵ Having gone to Indochina on an archaeological expedition, he had seen for himself how Europeans treated Asians in the Far East. Because the economic exploitation of native peoples was characteristic of colonialism, Malraux said that in the colonies one could see the dark side of capitalism. He reasoned that if a European country were fascist, then one could assume that its colonies would be under a fascist system as well. Yet what had disturbed him the most in Indochina was the fact that even though France was a democracy, he had encountered in the French colonies a form of fascism which was grounded in the "abuse and exploitation . . . of the colonial peoples."⁶ Because of his firsthand observations of the oppressive colonial system, Malraux said that he became interested in social and political issues. When he returned to France, he later developed strong political ties with antifascist organizations on the far left. He explained that his support for the Spanish Republic arose from his antifascist commitment. As a spokesman for the Republic, Malraux said that during his tour of America he wanted to clarify for his audiences what was at stake in Spain.⁷

⁵ibid.

⁶ibid. From the vantage point of 1937, the oppressive colonial apparatus reminded Malraux in retrospect of a fascist political system. He would not have drawn an analogy with fascism in 1923.

⁷ibid., 187.

At a banquet organized by the staff of The Nation on 26 February 1937, Malraux offered an analysis of what he considered to be the fundamental characteristics of fascism.⁸ He maintained that the essential feature in all varieties of fascism was "the exaltation of differences that were "essential, irreducible, and constant, such as race or nation."⁹ In the term National Socialism, for instance, the key word was "national."¹⁰ Because of their exclusivity, fascist ideologies were "static and particular."¹¹ Because fascism exalted war and the struggle of peoples against one another, in a fascist political system, the only authentic communion existed within "the Military order." Therefore, he asserted: "fascist civilization, at its extreme point, leads to total militarizing of the nation."¹²

Malraux argued that democracy and communism shared common values, in spite of differences over the best means of achieving a viable democratic system.¹³ For Marxists, economic democracy was the foundation of political democracy. Therefore the dictatorship of the proletariat was a necessary stage of political development in the dialectical evolution of a true democracy. Whether one was a communist or a supporter of liberal democracy, Malraux declared, "What unites us all is that . . . we aim to preserve or to recreate, not

⁸André Malraux, "Forging Man's Fate in Spain," The Nation, 144 (20 March 1937): 315-316. Malraux delivered the same speech, with slight variations, throughout his North American tour.

⁹*Ibid.*, 316.

¹⁰In Malraux's opinion, the Nazis misused the word "socialism." He remarked that "the best way to achieve socialism is not to shoot the Socialists." *Ibid.*

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³*Ibid.*

static and particular values, but humanist values--humanist because they are universal"14 Rather than glorifying human conflict, democrats and communists alike were involved "in the struggle against nature, in the exaltation arising from the conquest of things by men," one of the most pervasive western traditions.¹⁵ Although democrats and communists alike would fight against fascism, Malraux avowed: "we nevertheless refuse to make fighting a fundamental value."¹⁶ Those who opposed fascism hoped for peace rather than war. Many antifascists had made great sacrifices, but their suffering had ennobled them because, Malraux stated, they wanted "to make a world worthy of man."¹⁷

During press interviews, Malraux commented extensively on the military situation in Spain.¹⁸ He maintained that the Republic could have quickly suppressed the military revolt led by Franco if it had possessed sufficient arms. The Nationalists suffered from a shortage of men, but they were well armed. On the other hand, Malraux continued, the Republicans enjoyed an abundance of manpower, because of volunteers and citizen's militias, but there was a serious shortage of arms and equipment. Another problem for the Republican side, according to Malraux, was the lack of organization and discipline.¹⁹ This was a glaring deficiency on the Loyalist side. Although the Republican troops included some units of

¹⁴ibid.

¹⁵ibid.

¹⁶ibid.

¹⁷ibid.

¹⁸Langlois, "Un mois à New-York," 190.

¹⁹ibid., 191.

the Civil Guard, detachments of Assault Guards (special police forces), and regular army formations, there were citizens' militias--many of them anarchist--which were often little more than an undisciplined mob. As a spokesman for the Loyalist side, Malraux alluded to the lack of organization, without dwelling on the problem. He was undoubtedly aware that volunteer militias had faced disciplined, well-armed formations of the Spanish foreign legion, or Moorish units of the African army. In battles between Republican militiamen and veterans of the Army of Africa, the Loyalist amateurs usually got the worst of it.

When a journalist asked Malraux if the Republic had attempted to win over some of the Moroccan troops to the Loyalist cause, he said that the Escadrille España had played a small role on the propaganda front.²⁰ Malraux explained that it was not easy to provide information about the Republic to the Moors in Franco's army. Because the Moorish troops spoke Arabic, a language barrier isolated them from Republican propaganda. According to Malraux, the Moors liked to smoke, and when they ran out of manufactured cigarettes, they would roll their own. Knowing that the Moors needed cigarette papers, the squadron would occasionally drop packets of cigarette papers over their positions. An antifascist message, written in Arabic, was printed inside each packet. Malraux claimed that a number of Moors, whom he assumed to be of working

²⁰ibid., 190.

class origin, had deserted the Nationalists and joined the Republican side.²¹

Malraux took great pains to explain that the Republic represented a genuine popular movement.²² He told the press that the reactionary Nationalists would never subjugate Spain because the Spanish masses supported the Republic. Overstating his case, he maintained that it was "impossible to find the Spanish people in the armies of Franco," because his forces were "composed of mercenaries of the foreign legion, the Moors, the Italians, and the Germans."²³ This was an exaggeration. Actually there were plenty of Spaniards in the Nationalist armies. Malraux asserted that the working classes in other European countries supported the Republic. He recalled an incident during the war, in which the fascists bombed the air base where he was stationed. The bombs did not explode. When they unscrewed the detonators, they found a message from Portuguese workers inside the bombs: "This bomb will not explode."²⁴

Malraux told the press that in order to successfully defend itself against the Nationalists, the Republic needed "revolutionary discipline."²⁵ The organization of the first International Brigades had strengthened the Republican war effort. The brigades had been of critical importance in defending Madrid in November 1936, when there was desperate fighting in the outskirts of the capital. In

²¹ibid.

²²ibid., 191.

²³ibid.

²⁴ibid.

²⁵ibid.

Malraux's opinion, the successful defense of Madrid marked the moment when the popular revolt of the Spanish people, in response to the attempted military coup, had become a war for Spain itself. Malraux denied the allegations in the conservative press in the United States that Soviet troops had arrived in Spain.²⁶ He admitted that Soviet technicians and military supplies had arrived at an opportune moment in the war, just before the heavy fighting outside Madrid a few months before. In his opinion, it was obvious to the Soviets that sending military aid to the Popular Front government of Spain was the most effective way to combat fascism.

Malraux complained that because most of the press coverage of the war in the United States was hostile to the Republic, it was difficult for Americans to understand what was happening in Spain.²⁷ He argued that press reports stating that Republican aircraft bombed civilians were false. Although bombers sometimes missed their targets in and around towns, which resulted in civilians being accidentally wounded, Republican airplanes bombed only military targets. The Nationalists, on the other hand, systematically bombed and shelled civilian districts, in an effort to terrorize the population and to spread panic. He pointed out that Madrid was an example of a city that had been bombed repeatedly by the Nationalists. In spite of press reports to the contrary, Malraux

²⁶Ibid., 193.

²⁷Ibid., 191.

stated that it was the Nationalists who committed "atrocities," and not the Loyalists.²⁸

Along with his role as a spokesman for the Republic, Malraux had traveled to North America to solicit donations for ambulances and medical supplies. He described to his audiences the problems that had arisen, because of the severe shortages of medical supplies.²⁹ Because anaesthetics were in short supply, doctors had been forced to treat thousands of bullet wounds without adequate means of easing the pain. Because medical procedures had been haphazard at times, within an overburdened system flooded with wounded men, there had been too many amputations. Many wounded men, who might otherwise have recovered the normal use of their legs, were crippled because of a lack of X-ray equipment, medical instruments, and drugs. There was an acute need for X-ray plates and ambulances. Malraux noted with satisfaction that before leaving Spain, he had seen the first ambulances sent by sympathetic American organizations.³⁰

On several occasions, Malraux commented on the non-intervention policy of the French government. In an interview on 1 March 1937, by Ernest Madero, a correspondent for the Mexican newspaper El Nacional, Malraux did not mince words: "Léon Blum, following the unmistakable path of Social Democracy, has naturally fallen into the most cowardly of betrayals."³¹ He stated further that

²⁸Ibid., 192.

²⁹Ibid., 189.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹André Malraux, "Mexico Shows the Way to Democracy," interview by Ernesto

if France had come to the aid of Spain when the military coup began, then the Spanish Popular Front government could have established its authority throughout Spain within three months. On the subject of French Premier Léon Blum, Malraux moderated his comments in a speech in New York on 18 March 1937.³² He remarked that Blum was a committed pacifist who believed that the non-intervention policy was necessary to prevent a general European war. Malraux reaffirmed his confidence in the French Popular Front, arguing that it would prove to be a durable political alliance that would keep fascism in check within France.

During his visit to the United States, Malraux found himself involved in a bitter dispute with Trotsky, a man he had long respected and admired. Before Malraux's arrival in the United States, Trotsky had been energetically refuting the preposterous charges that had been levelled against him at the Moscow trials.³³ During the trial of the "Anti-Soviet Trotskyite Center," Soviet prosecutors accused Trotsky of engaging in foreign intrigues against the Soviet Union. The absurd charges included the allegation that he had conspired with Hitler and the Japanese emperor, and that he was prepared to turn the Ukraine over to Germany. The prosecutors maintained that Trotsky was responsible for widespread industrial sabotage in the Soviet Union, and that he had tried to assassinate Soviet leaders. Vladimir Romm, the *Izvestia* correspondent in Paris,

Madero, in André Malraux, Metamorphosis and Imagination, Françoise Dorenlot and Micheline Tison-Braun, ed., 221.

³²Langlois, "Un mois à New-York," 193.

³³Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, Trotsky: 1929-1940, 360-361.

confessed that he had been an agent for Trotsky.³⁴ Romm testified that he had relayed messages from Trotsky to Karl Radek, who was one of the men on trial. According to Romm, Trotsky's son was also a part of the conspiracy. Romm claimed that he had met Trotsky in Paris in July 1933, and had delivered five letters to him from Radek.³⁵

Trotsky defended himself vigorously against the trumped-up charges.³⁶ In a statement to the press, he discussed his arrival in France in July 1933, and the conditions of his residence, which included the stipulation that he was barred from Paris. Because he had been ill for two months, he was under a doctor's care in a small town hundreds of miles from Paris. Trotsky denied that he had ever met Romm in Paris. In fact, he maintained that he could not have been in Paris at the time when Romm had claimed that the meeting took place. Of the dozens of visitors that he had received at Royan, Trotsky named three of the most prominent guests--including Malraux--who could certify that he had been residing in southern France, and that he had been ailing, during the time in question.³⁷

Malraux read Trotsky's appeal when he arrived in New York, but he did not respond.³⁸ During the Moscow trials, Soviet officials

³⁴ibid., 378-379.

³⁵"Trotsky Gives His Proof of Moscow Trial Falsity," The New York Times, 16 February 1937.

³⁶ibid.

³⁷ibid.

³⁸"Trotsky vs Malraux," The Nation, 144 (27 March 1937): 351. The page consists of a news dispatch, which is composed largely of quotes from Trotsky, and Malraux's extensive public reply.

vilified Trotsky, but Malraux never attempted to defend him from the slanderous allegations that were put forward by the prosecutors. At a time when Soviet military aid was arriving in Spain, and the communists were organizing the International Brigades, Malraux was hardly in a position to criticize the Soviet government. Even though Malraux would not condemn the Moscow trials, he mentioned Trotsky in a speech in New York: "Trotsky is a great moral force in the world, but Stalin has lent dignity to mankind, and just as the inquisition did not detract from the fundamental dignity of Christianity, so the Moscow trials do not detract from the fundamental dignity of communism."³⁹ Malraux's praise of Stalin, and his lofty analogy about the trials, was bound to set Trotsky's teeth on edge.

In the interview for El Nacional, Madero repeatedly attempted to goad Malraux into commenting on Trotsky, or André Gide, who had repudiated the communists a few months before.⁴⁰ Gide had provoked a controversy with the publication of his Retour de l'U.R.S.S., which contained trenchant criticisms of the Soviet Union.⁴¹ Malraux adroitly dodged the issue, and said that Gide was preparing another book; therefore, he would prefer to withhold judgment.⁴² Malraux finally told Madero that he preferred not to talk about Gide. In light of the fact that Gide was a close friend of Malraux, the

³⁹Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, Trotsky: 1929-1940, 370.

⁴⁰André Malraux interview by Madero, 222-223.

⁴¹David Caute, Communism and the French Intellectuals, 1914-1960 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), 120-121; André Gide, Retour de l'U.R.S.S. (Paris: Gallimard, 1936).

⁴²André Malraux interview by Madero, 223.

reporter was probing a sensitive subject. Because the Soviet Union was the only great power that was providing significant aid for the Spanish Republic, Malraux thought that Gide's criticism of the Soviet system was badly timed. Months before, he had examined a proof of Gide's work while in Spain, and he had felt then that publication should be deferred until the war in Spain was finished.⁴³

Madero was persistent in his attempts to elicit comments from Malraux about Trotsky or the Moscow trials.⁴⁴ He reminded Malraux that Trotsky had criticized the Soviet Union for not providing sufficient aid to the Republic, and for subverting the Spanish revolution. Malraux answered that even though Madero was persistently trying to lead the conversation into a discussion of Trotsky, Trotskyism, and the Moscow trials, he could only say "that the fate of mankind is at present at stake in Spain and that we should all set matters of opinion and argument to one side, so as to devote ourselves wholeheartedly to defending and assisting the Spanish people."⁴⁵ He told Madero that it was a pernicious waste of time and energy debating questions that should be put aside for the present. It was necessary to focus on Spain "at a time when the blood of her children is being shed in a titanic struggle against the most barbaric and inhuman forces."⁴⁶ Malraux urged his fellow antifascists to persevere in the Spanish war, as well as in the struggle against those who created discord and divided the people on

⁴³Gustav Regler, *The Owl of Minerva*, 278-279.

⁴⁴André Malraux interview by Madero, 222.

⁴⁵*ibid.*

⁴⁶*ibid.*

the Republican side. Understanding the difficulties involved in forging a wartime alliance of disparate political groups (including liberals, socialists, orthodox communists, Trotskyites, and anarchists), Malraux said that it was "necessary to put a stop to those unscrupulously futile critics" who obstructed the unification of the Spanish people under the Republic, and who consequently helped the fascists.⁴⁷

During the Madero interview, Malraux lavished praise on the Soviet Union.⁴⁸ He claimed that the new constitution of 1936 signified that the Soviet state had moved beyond the dictatorship of the proletariat into a unique phase of its development. Echoing the communist party line, Malraux declared that the 1936 Soviet constitution was "a firm expression of the triumph of socialism and the only true democracy."⁴⁹

It was only a matter of time before Trotsky responded to Malraux.⁵⁰ In a scathing attack, Trotsky asserted that Malraux was one of the men who had worked for the Comintern and the Kuomintang in China in 1926, and was, therefore, one of those responsible for the defeat of the Chinese revolution. In his strict adherence to the Moscow line, Trotsky alleged, Malraux had proven that he was "organically incapable of moral independence."⁵¹ Malraux's concern for Spain did not mask the fact that he was an

⁴⁷ibid.

⁴⁸ibid.

⁴⁹ibid.

⁵⁰"Trotsky vs. Malraux," 351.

⁵¹ibid.

apologist for Stalin, who was at that time busy killing off old Bolsheviks. According to Trotsky, Malraux was a Stalinist agent intent on obstructing the campaign in favor of subjecting the Moscow trials to closer scrutiny, a movement based in New York.

In his published reply, Malraux noted that Trotsky had never before attributed to him a significant part in the failed Chinese revolution.⁵² Now Trotsky had unexpectedly done a volte-face and had accused Malraux of playing a key part in the defeat of the Chinese revolution. Malraux speculated that perhaps Trotsky's attack resulted from the fact that he had consistently supported the views of the Popular Front government in Spain, as opposed to the Spanish Trotskyite party.⁵³ In Malraux's opinion, if one did not adopt Trotskyite policies, this did not automatically imply that one was a Stalinist tool. He recalled that he had publicly supported Trotsky when the French government had ordered him to leave France. Although Trotsky had alleged that the purpose of Malraux's visit to the United States was to support the Moscow trials, Malraux declared that he had not mentioned the trials in any of his interviews. Malraux said that Trotsky was "obsessed with whatever concerns his personal fate" When Trotsky asserted that no country, aside from Mexico, had provided tangible support for the Spanish Republic, he knew that he was lying. According to Malraux, Trotsky's attacks would provide ammunition for the French fascists, who were anxious to discredit those who supported the Spanish

⁵²ibid.

⁵³The P.O.U.M., or Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista.

Republic. Furthermore, if anyone had believed Trotsky's accusation that Malraux worked for the Comintern, it would have undermined his credibility in the United States and hurt the Spanish cause. Near the end of his letter, Malraux censured Trotsky: "I deplore now the incredible levity with which Mr. Trotsky is ready to hurl any accusation in order to dramatize his personal conflicts."⁵⁴ This was Malraux's last word on the subject. After the letter to The Nation was published, he abandoned the dispute with Trotsky.

Even though Malraux let the matter drop, Trotsky later attacked him again more than a year later in a published letter.⁵⁵ Trotsky wrote that although years before he had placed great hopes in Malraux, the writer had become "a reporter for the GPU" ⁵⁶ In spite of his talent, Malraux's writing was pretentious and dishonest. According to Trotsky, Malraux's report from Spain (a reference to L'Espoir, which he would write after this trip) was merely an artistic lie, typical of a man who only feigned support for the Russian Revolution. Trotsky decried the lack of revolutionary spirit among artists and writers: "The sheep-like servility of the intelligentsia is, in turn, a not unimportant sign of the rottenness of contemporary society. France is no exception."⁵⁷

Although Trotsky had held Malraux in high esteem for several years, by 1937 he had clearly lost faith in him. Malraux's praise for

⁵⁴"Trotsky vs. Malraux," 351.

⁵⁵Leon Trotsky, "Leon Trotsky to André Breton," Partisan Review, 6 (Winter 1939): 126-127. The letter is dated 22 December 1938.

⁵⁶*ibid.*, 126.

⁵⁷*ibid.*

Stalin offended and provoked Trotsky. As Malraux told audiences that the Moscow trials did not "detract from the fundamental dignity of community," Trotsky sadly watched old Bolsheviks, his former associates, perjuring themselves before their executions.⁵⁸ He witnessed the denigration of his own reputation as his former rival, Stalin, entrenched himself as sole authority within the Soviet state. Trotsky's younger son had been sent to a concentration camp in the Soviet Union. It was for good reasons that Trotsky was bitter.

For Malraux, Trotsky was a man he had respected and admired for many years. Only three years before, Malraux had toasted Trotsky at Gorki's banquet, in the midst of Soviet writers and government officials. On several occasions, Malraux had defended Trotsky, or had referred to him in heroic terms. But, in the heat of the Spanish Civil War, Malraux took a pragmatic approach. Because the priority was victory over the Nationalists, all other considerations could wait. The communists were providing technicians, war materiel, organization, and much-needed discipline for the Republican war effort. In Malraux's opinion, anything that threatened the unity of the Popular Front in Spain would benefit the Nationalist rebels. Once again, at a time when propaganda was a weapon, criticism of the Soviet state would be inopportune and foolish.

After spending almost a month on the east coast of the United States, Malraux traveled to the West Coast during the last week of

⁵⁸Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast, Trotsky, 1929-1940*, 390.

March 1937, then finished his tour in Canada 1-6 April 1937.⁵⁹ In Toronto he delivered a speech at a meeting organized by the Toronto Council of the League Against War and Fascism, and on the following day, he gave two speeches at the University of Toronto, where he made an appeal for contributions for medical supplies. In an interview, Malraux praised President Franklin D. Roosevelt as the world's most outstanding democrat, with Stalin as a close second. In Montreal, Malraux's visit created some controversy among the organizers of his Canadian tour. Several members of the local committee that made arrangements for Malraux's stay in Montreal dropped out of the activities once they realized that Malraux had strong communist sympathies. In fact, Malraux seldom referred to communism in the speeches he delivered in North America, for fear of arousing the latent anti-communism of many of his listeners. On 6 April 1937, Malraux left Canada and began his journey back to France.⁶⁰

Between May and September, 1937, Malraux wrote L'Espoir, a novel that depicted incidents from the first few months of the Spanish Civil War.⁶¹ This hastily written novel was available in French bookstores by November, 1937. The action in the novel is highly compressed, and many sections end abruptly. The work consists of brief scenes, usually only two or three pages long. Throughout the novel, there are sudden shifts from one setting to

⁵⁹John J. Michalczyk, "André Malraux in Canada on Behalf of the Spanish Republic," Mélanges Malraux Miscellany, 5 (Spring 1973): 21-32.

⁶⁰*ibid.*

⁶¹Cate, Malraux, 324; Lacouture, André Malraux, 276.

another.⁶² Because several of the characters are intellectuals or artists, action scenes are interspersed with conversations. L'Espoir differed from the China novels in that Malraux was able to draw upon his own firsthand experiences in the Spanish war, particularly in the segments dealing with aerial combat.

When Malraux wrote L'Espoir, he was in the midst of his most militant phase as an antifascist. Clara Malraux was surprised by the political tone of the novel. In spite of the fact that relations between the two were strained, he showed her the manuscript of L'Espoir during late summer, 1937. Clara regarded the work as "reportage on the war in Spain as seen by an orthodox communist."⁶³ Although Clara's evaluation was an overstatement, it was true that his political slant made the novel unlike anything that Malraux had written before. In part, L'Espoir differed from the earlier works because it was a propaganda novel as well as a literary work. L'Espoir reflected Malraux's preoccupation with the lack of discipline and organization on the Republican side. In the novel, Malraux portrayed the exaltation that arose among the Republicans in the early days of the conflict when mass enthusiasm and a fraternal sense of sacrifice had enabled Loyalists to defeat the Nationalist uprising in several parts of Spain. After the revolutionary intoxication wore off, however, there were leaders on the Republican side who came to the sober realization that the

⁶²William Frohock discusses Malraux's "reluctance to furnish transitions." See André Malraux and the Tragic Imagination, 105.

⁶³Clara Malraux, La Fin et le commencement, 174.

Loyalists would have to build a disciplined army capable of waging a modern, mechanized war against the Nationalists. In L'Espoir, Malraux depicted Republican officers who were often mired in the slovenly incompetence which surrounded them. Malraux believed, as did many others at the time, that only the communists could provide the military discipline and organization necessary for a Republican victory. Without disciplined formations armed with modern weaponry, the Republic would not be able to withstand the onslaught of the well-armed Nationalists. In other words, revolutionary élan by itself would not ensure a Republican victory. In L'Espoir, one Republican officer said to another: "Our modest function . . . is to organize the Apocalypse."⁶⁴ In the novel, there were Republican officers attempting to temper revolutionary enthusiasm with discipline.

With the support of the Spanish Republic, Malraux decided to make a movie based on several episodes from the novel L'Espoir.⁶⁵ He had long had an interest in movies. Malraux assembled a film crew in Paris and found an available studio in Barcelona. The Spanish government provided limited financial backing, with the proviso that Spanish actors be used in the film. While Malraux's assistant, Max Aub, found Spanish actors, Malraux wrote a screenplay, which Aub later translated into Spanish. When shooting began in June 1938, conditions were difficult.⁶⁶ Because Nationalist

⁶⁴André Malraux, L'espoir (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1937), 140.

⁶⁵Cate, Malraux, 331-332.

⁶⁶Denis Marion, "Comment fut tournée 'Espoir'," Magazine Littéraire, no. 11

forces were not far away, there were military alerts almost every day. When Nationalist airplanes bombed the area, the electrical power was often out for several hours. There were food shortages at the time, so the crew drank weakened tea and coffee. Items like sugar, milk, bread, butter, and tobacco were often unavailable. Crew members and friends brought food and other essentials from France whenever possible. Because all of the film was sent to Paris to be developed, Malraux had to wait a month to see the scenes that he had filmed. For the aerial scenes, the Spanish government allowed him to use an old bomber, which could still fly, though it was no longer in service. When they filmed scenes in the mountains, the crew worked from seven in the morning until dusk, in order to utilize all of the available daytime light. In order to put together a scene in which peasants brought wounded airmen down from the mountains, the Spanish army loaned Malraux twenty-five hundred conscripts who had not yet been issued uniforms or weapons. By January 1939, Republican defenses in Catalonia were crumbling and Nationalist forces were driving towards Barcelona. Before the Nationalists entered Barcelona, Malraux and his crew loaded their equipment into several cars and moved the entire operation to France. In April 1939, Malraux moved the filming to Villefranche-de-Rouergue, which was a French location that bore some resemblance to Catalonia.⁶⁷

(October 1967): 18-20.

⁶⁷ibid.

After the cutting and editing was completed, Malraux titled the movie Sierra de Teruel. There was a private showing of the film in Paris on 3 June 1939.⁶⁸ Afterward Malraux and his friends and co-workers went to a Spanish restaurant and ordered paella, a traditional dish of Valencia. In July 1939, Malraux arranged a private showing of the film for the members of the Spanish Republican government-in-exile.

With the fall of Madrid, the film could not be exhibited in Spain. It was not shown publicly in France, either, until after World War II. When France declared war in September 1939, only movies that had obtained government permits could be shown. The French government may have found Sierra de Teruel to be too provocative.⁶⁹ Malraux tried to convince officials to lift the ban on the film, but to no avail.

After the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact was signed on 23 August 1939, Malraux told Louis Fischer: "We are back at zero."⁷⁰ Even though Malraux knew that the antifascist movement was virtually defunct, he was apparently prepared to find some other way to combat fascism. Malraux did not, however, publicly repudiate the communist party, despite the fact that communism was in ill repute in France.⁷¹ Nor did he say anything against the communists.

⁶⁸Cate, Malraux, 336.

⁶⁹Denis Marion, André Malraux, *Cinéma d'aujourd'hui*, vol. 65 (Paris: Editions Seghers, 1970), 26.

⁷⁰Louis Fischer, Men and Politics (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1941), 334, 573.

⁷¹Cate, Malraux, 338.

Because many of his antifascist friends had been imprisoned in the Soviet Union, the fate of these men weighed heavily on him.

Anxious to find another avenue of resistance to fascism, Malraux tried to enlist in the French air force but was rejected.⁷² He then tried to enlist in the armored corps but was turned away. He became very depressed. After rising late from the bed, he would sit silently and stare out of the window. Usually an energetic man who required little sleep, he became somber and listless. Fortunately, Malraux ran into André Maurois, who was then working for the Commissioner General of Information of the French Republic.⁷³ When Malraux told Maurois that he wanted to join a tank regiment, the latter discussed the matter with his commanding officer. Finally Malraux was accepted as a recruit in the French army.

So, Malraux found himself a private in the French army assigned to a tank regiment based near Paris.⁷⁴ Unfortunately, the French tanks in Malraux's unit were antiquated. On 10 May 1940, the Germans launched their attack on France. On 16 June 1940, Malraux's unit was in combat with German motorized troops, and he was slightly wounded in the foot. In the melee following the French defeat, Malraux and the other men in his unit were taken prisoner by the Germans. Malraux was interned with thousands of others at an improvised prison camp near Sens. Once again he had been on the losing side. In October 1940, Malraux and nine other men

⁷²Suzanne Chantal, *Le Coeur Battant*, 129-130.

⁷³André Maurois, *Memoirs*, trans. Denver Lindley (London: The Bodley Head, 1970), 225-226.

⁷⁴Cate, *Malraux*, 342, 347-356.

volunteered for a work detail, which was helping with the local harvest. With the connivance of a local mayor, Malraux and several others obtained a little money and some old clothes. Dressed in painters' overalls and carrying a couple of boards on his shoulder, Malraux escaped and eventually made his way to Vichy France.⁷⁵ The antifascist movement had been a failure and France had fallen quickly. With the fascist powers in the ascendant, Malraux would have to find other means of resistance.

⁷⁵Ibid.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSIONS

Malraux's political awakening dated from his first stay in Indochina (1923-1924) when he saw for himself how Europeans treated Asians. In 1937, Malraux claimed that he had become an "anti-imperialist" after seeing the dark side of capitalism in Indochina.¹ Because of his experiences with an oppressive political system, grounded in the "abuse and exploitation . . . of the colonial peoples," he became interested in social and political issues.² While Malraux and his wife Clara awaited trial in Cambodia in 1924, they had wide-ranging discussions about the colonial society in which they were stranded.³ They discussed the abortive uprisings and mutinies by the Vietnamese, and the brutal repression that invariably followed these violent incidents. Both André and Clara were repelled by the smug arrogance of the colons, who made no attempt to disguise their attitude of racial superiority. It was obvious to André and Clara that the colons would never regard Asians as equals, regardless of what advocates of assimilation might think in Paris. In their wide-ranging discussions of colonial affairs, Clara noticed that André's interest in the plight of the

¹Walter G. Langlois, "Un mois à New-York," 186.

²Ibid.

³Clara Malraux, Nos vingt ans, 177-180.

Indochinese masses was leading him to a social awareness that she had never before seen in him.⁴

In newspaper editorials, Malraux advised educated Indochinese to stop coveting the petty administrative posts that were sometimes offered by the colonial government.⁵ He urged that talented Asian students be allowed to go to France to finish their educations. Malraux argued that if Indochinese professionals formed independent organizations, and if agricultural producers organized syndicates, then they would be in a position to demand better schools, adequate health care, a more equitable judicial system, and other needed reforms.

Malraux advocated cooperation between the French and the Indochinese peoples in a constitutional government under French sovereignty. Although writers in the conservative press branded Malraux a Bolshevik, his proposals were consonant with the French liberal political tradition and appeared radical only within the context of colonial politics. Malraux predicted that if the French administration would not permit the peaceful evolution of the Indochinese states under constitutional government, then the future was bleak.⁶ He argued that the greatest and most successful colonizing nations in history had attempted to secure the loyalty of the strongest and most energetic elements in the populations that they ruled. In Indochina, Malraux feared that shortsighted and

⁴*Ibid.*, 177.

⁵André Malraux, "Sur quelles réalités appuyer un effort annamite," *L'Indochine*, 4 July 1925.

⁶André Malraux, "Sélection d'énergies," *L'Indochine*, 14 August 1925.

backward policies would arouse native peoples with a long tradition of resistance to foreign occupation, and would eventually lead to a revolution which would ultimately force France to abandon the colonies.⁷

In Malraux's Indochinese journalism, there was a clear line of development from his earlier efforts, which were overloaded with sarcastic diatribe and personal invective, to his later articles, which represented a more mature, reflective political journalism. His brief career as a political journalist was crucial in his transformation from an apolitical Parisian dandy into a political activist. Malraux's involvement with anticolonial reform politics was his first experience in political engagement. After his return to France, however, he abandoned political journalism as he became preoccupied with writing novels and fashioning a unique literary persona. He resumed his political activism during the 1930s, when Nazism and fascism threatened the peace and security of Europe. Along with many intellectuals of the left during the 1930s, Malraux hoped that a new communist civilization would emerge in the Soviet Union, and that Soviet artists would create a new humanism inspired by a sense of fraternity. The new humanism would be based not on the individuality of each man in isolation, but on his ability to unite with others.⁸ Malraux argued that the Soviet artist would transcend that which divided him from other men, and find values "through

⁷ibid.

⁸André Malraux, "L'attitude de l'artiste," 203.

which men are united," joined together in a "virile fraternity."⁹ Malraux had clearly moved away from what he considered to be an amorphous individualism, with its artistic preoccupation with feelings, dreams, and inner states, towards fraternity and communion with other people.¹⁰ His writing reflected this new emphasis. Instead of the playful, macabre fantasies of the 1920s, such as Lunes en papier, during the 1930s Malraux wrote Le Temps du mépris, in which the hero is a German communist, and L'Espoir, which is a paean to the virile fraternity of men engaged in a revolutionary struggle against fascism. The landscape of fantasy and dreams gave way to the rugged terrain of Spain, which was, for Malraux, a crucial stage in the antifascist struggle.

Before the Spanish Civil War started, Malraux had predicted that there was a good chance that right-wing groups within Spain would attempt to establish a fascist dictatorship. When the war broke out, he responded immediately to the crisis and, in the formation of the Escadrille España, he found a way of supporting the Spanish Republic militarily. It is evident from Malraux's speeches and public remarks that he regarded fascism as a dire threat to European civilization. He maintained that the essential characteristic of all varieties of fascism was "the exaltation of differences" that were "essential, irreducible, and constant, such as race or nation."¹¹ Because fascism glorified war and the struggle of

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰André Malraux, preface to Le Temps du mépris, 10-11.

¹¹André Malraux, "Forging Man's fate in Spain," 316.

peoples against one another, in a fascist political system the only authentic communion existed within the military. Malraux maintained that an armed struggle against fascism in Europe was inevitable.

In the examination of Malraux's evolution from an erudite young fop to a renowned writer and political activist, it is sometimes difficult to separate fact from fiction. As a young man, he sometimes lied, which was evident in the attempt to conceal his modest origins from Clara before their marriage. He once told her with aplomb: "I lie, but what I say becomes true."¹² It has often been said that as a young man Malraux was something of a charlatan. For example he was content to let others assume that he had participated in the Chinese revolution. Occasionally he lied openly, claiming that he had been head of the Jeune Annam party in Indochina, and that he had been a commissar for the Kuomintang in Canton. Usually he remained silent about his past, allowing the legend to develop around him. At times, he posed as an Asian expert, as a man who had been in revolutionary China, one who was qualified to speak on Asian political issues. In spite of his youthful pretensions, however, Malraux was endowed with extraordinary intellectual gifts as well as literary talent.

The Asian adventure matured and seasoned Malraux. During his brief career as a political journalist, he appeared as an arrogant, idealistic, and naive young man, with generous impulses and a flair

¹²Clara Malraux, Les Combats, 210.

for the dramatic. In editorials, he judged the colonial system according to the standard of French republican ideals, and regarded the greed and hypocrisy of the colonial establishment with a scathing contempt. Although his Saigon venture failed, it was a political awakening for Malraux. He dropped the entire business upon his return to Paris and made no effort to keep the promises he had made in the pages of L'Indochine enchaînée, that he would push for colonial reform upon his return to France. Paris proved to be a long way from Saigon, in more ways than one. Instead, he became preoccupied with earning a living and starting his literary career. As a writer and a thinker, Malraux's literary maturity came about after his experiences in Indochina. In The Temptation of the West and the Asian novels, Malraux clearly moved beyond the playful fantasy of Lunes en papier, his first book, a surrealistic tale full of bizarre creatures.

Although Malraux had the effrontery in 1934 to toast Trotsky in the midst of Soviet officials and writers, by 1936 his attitude had changed. In a 1936 interview held just before the Popular Front victory in the French elections of April-May 1936, Malraux remarked: "I regard Trotsky as a moment in the past and not as political adversary to be pursued and crushed."¹³ During the Spanish Civil War, Malraux thought that negative criticism of the Soviet Union was unwise and inappropriate, because the Soviet Union was sending military technicians, officers, and war materiel to the Spanish

¹³André Malraux, "Writers in Politics: A Conversation with Malraux," interview by Henri Lefebvre, New Republic 87 (24 June 1936): 218.

Republic. For his part, Trotsky came to regard Malraux as an apologist for Stalin. Moreover, by 1937, Trotsky considered the writer he had once admired as morally reprehensible. But for his part, Malraux was adhering to the specious unity of the Popular Front, urging his antifascist allies to set controversial questions aside and to persevere in the Spanish war. In Malraux's opinion, anything that threatened the unity of the Popular Front in Spain would benefit the Nationalist rebels.¹⁴ When the German-Soviet Pact was signed in 1939, however, Malraux and other fellow-travellers were left in the lurch. As a committed antifascist, he realized that his next opportunity to take a stand had arrived with the French declaration of war on Germany.

World War Two was a watershed in Malraux's life.¹⁵ After escaping from captivity in November 1940, Malraux went to southern France, where he leased a villa in the town of Roquebrune, overlooking Nice. Varian Fry, an American member of the Emergency Rescue Committee, met Malraux by chance and agreed to send him payments from Random House, the publisher of Malraux's books in the United States. For the time being, Malraux focused on writing. When the Germans occupied the southern zone of France in November 1942, Malraux moved in with Louis Chevasson and his wife for several weeks at a chateau in central France. Later he moved to a house

¹⁴When asked in 1967 if he had any regrets, Malraux replied: "the bombardments that I carried out." He said that although he had felt no misgivings about the bombing missions during the war, years later the memory of the bombardments haunted him. See "Dialogue," interview by Emmanuel d'Astier, 60.

¹⁵For general information on Malraux's life from 1940 to 1976, the sources used were Cate, Malraux, and Lacouture, André Malraux.

outside the village of Saint-Chamant, in the Dordogne region, where he remained for a year and a half.

Although Malraux was not yet a part of the Resistance, he met frequently with his brother Roland and others who were in the French underground. After the Germans captured Roland and several of his companions in March 1944, Malraux went underground, telling his friends that he no longer had an address. At first he was allied neither with the communist partisans, nor with the Gaullists, although he met all of the Maquis leaders in his region. He had developed good contacts with the British, and was able to procure arms for resistance groups in the Dordogne. He was wounded in an ambush, and captured by the Germans in July 1944. At the Saint-Michel prison near Toulouse, the Gestapo interrogated Malraux. As luck would have it, the Germans were forced to evacuate Toulouse before Malraux's interrogation reached a fatal climax.

After his liberation, Malraux became head of the recently formed Alsace-Lorraine Brigade, an irregular formation of resistance fighters numbering between fifteen-hundred and two thousand men. The brigade fought for five months, from September 1944 to February 1945, in the Vosges region, in the battle of Dannemarie, in the defense of Strasbourg, and, finally, in the area of Mulhouse. After the brigade marched into Stuttgart with other French units, General de Lattre presented Malraux with the Legion of Honor.

Because she was Jewish and married to a famous antifascist writer, Clara Malraux lived underground during the German occupation. Clara and André had a stormy meeting in 1941, where she once again denied him a divorce. During the war, Clara and her daughter Florence moved frequently, from town to town in southern France, in the region between Toulouse and Montauban. After the liberation, she returned to Paris, and in 1945, she finally agreed to the divorce that André wanted.

Malraux gravitated towards the Gaullists and met Charles de Gaulle for the first time in 1945, forming a political association that would last for twenty-four years. He served as de Gaulle's Minister of Information from November 1945 to January 1946. When the Gaullist Rassemblement du Peuple Français was founded in 1947, Malraux gave many speeches on behalf of the new political party. He remained in de Gaulle's entourage after the general's retirement.

Malraux never wrote another novel, but he produced a number of art studies during the postwar period. Le Musée imaginaire, the first volume of La Psychologie de l'Art, appeared in 1947. The second volume, La Création artistique, was published in 1948. In 1950, Saturne and the third volume of La Psychologie de l'Art, La Monnaie de l'Absolu, appeared. The three volumes of his Psychologie de l'Art were revised and condensed in Malraux's Les Voix du Silence, published by Gallimard in 1951. In addition to these works, he wrote numerous prefaces to volumes on art. The three volumes of his Le Musée imaginaire de la Sculpture mondiale appeared in 1952, 1954,

and 1955 respectively. The last of his works to appear in the 1950s was La Métamorphose des Dieux, which was published by Gallimard in 1957.

When de Gaulle returned to power in 1958, he summoned Malraux and appointed him Minister of Information. When the Ministry for Cultural Affairs was established in 1959, de Gaulle named Malraux Minister of State in charge of cultural affairs. When opponents of de Gaulle's Algerian policy attempted a military coup in Algiers in 1961, Malraux was incensed and declared that he was prepared to fight for the republic. The Secret Army Organization, a terrorist group that tried to kill de Gaulle on two occasions, planted a bomb in Malraux's house in 1962. Fortunately, Malraux was absent when the bomb went off.

After a ten-year period in which Malraux published nothing, he finished Antimémoires in 1967. When de Gaulle resigned in 1969, Malraux left the government and resumed his art studies. Once retired from office, Malraux became a prolific writer. In 1971, Gallimard published his Oraisons funèbres and Les Chênes qu'on abat. Before leaving on his historic trip to China, President Richard Nixon invited Malraux to come to the White House for discussions about the Chinese leadership. Volume two of Métamorphose des Dieux appeared in 1974, Hôtes de passage in 1975, La Corde et les Souris and L'Intemporel in 1976. By then, Malraux suffered from cancer and heart disease. On 23 November 1976, he died from a pulmonary embolism.

All of these achievements in the thirty-six years after 1940, major ones in the cultural history of France, rested on the intellectual and emotional foundation created in Malraux's early years. His involvement in anticolonial reform politics was instrumental in his shifting away from an artistic preoccupation with dreams and metaphorical fantasies towards political engagement and a more mature literature. In Indochina he discovered within himself what he described a half century later as a prime reason for political activity, "the will to justice."¹⁶ During the antifascist struggle, he opposed an enemy which, in his view, threatened the very existence of western civilization. Yet during the dark days of Nazism and fascism, Malraux concerned himself also with the significance of art and culture. In the speeches he gave during the 1930s, while defending culture against its fascist enemies, Malraux delineated a theory of art that anticipated his later works on art history. He maintained that art works that had survived the ravages of time remained as a testimony to man's transcendence over destiny and fatality. Although Malraux was a man of action immersed in historical events, at the same time he remained an intellectual, who, in a dark and cynical age, engaged in a relentless examination of the human qualities that lent sublimity to man's existence.

¹⁶André Malraux, interview by Guy Suarès, in Malraux, celui qui vient (Editions Stock, 1979), 43.

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