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Partisan of Greatness: Andre Malraux's Devotion to Caesarism

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PARTISAN OF GREATNESS: ANDRÉ MALRAUX' DEVOTION TO CAESARISM

**A thesis submitted to
Regis College
The Honors Program
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for Graduation with Honors**

by

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Introduction

André Malraux (1901-1976) was a captivating figure of French history due to his involvement in the chief issues of his time and the ideas he expressed through his writings. Malraux confronted the abuses of colonial administration in French Indochina, joined the Republican cause in the Spanish Civil War against Francisco Franco, participated in the Resistance to Nazi occupation in France, served as a minister in Charles de Gaulle's governments, and advocated the reorganization of culture in France and the international community. In addition to direct political participation, Malraux expressed his evolving worldview through his writings. Almost all of his books were set in the context of a revolution or a war and reflected the dramatic times in which he lived. Jean-Paul Sartre, a contemporary and rival thinker of Malraux, praised him in a foot note of his treatise *What is Literature?* for the prescient nature of Malraux' work. He says: "But whereas we [the Existentialists] needed the urgency and the physical reality of a conflict in order to find ourselves, Malraux had the immense merit of recognizing as early as his first work that we were at war and of producing a war literature when the surrealists and even Drieu were devoting themselves to a literature of peace."¹ Massive wars shaped the intellectual and philosophical framework from which most 20th century thinkers conceived of the world, and Malraux preceded many of his contemporaries in discussing the war time environment in which he lived. In his novels, Malraux embraced an idealism based upon individual action, solidarity, and resistance. These important themes formed the foundation of Malraux' world view, namely that great individuals direct societies and history to their greatest ends.

¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *What is Literature?*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965), 205. The "first work" that Sartre notes likely refers to *Les Conquérants*, published in 1928.

This belief explains the apparently contradictory political odyssey that shapes this work. Malraux' denunciations of French Indochina, though radical in their demands of the colonial government, were not critical of the colonial system but of specific leaders. His support for the Soviet Union before World War II is comprehensible because for Malraux it represented the greatest hope of stopping the Fascism in Europe. Similarly Malraux viewed Charles de Gaulle as a great military hero that could have come from one of Malraux' own novels. Malraux saw in de Gaulle a hero come to expel the foreign invaders and lead France into its bright future. Although there was not always a great deal of ideological continuity between the leaders that he supported, Malraux imagined them to be the best vehicles towards solving the problems of his time. Specific ideological differences were less important when weighed against the overall value that Malraux assigned to a specific leader.

His willingness to excuse the absolutist abuses of Stalin and de Gaulle could classify Malraux as a Caesarist. A fascination with Caesarism, or a government formed around an individual's cult of personality, has existed in France ever since Napoleon Bonaparte was voted to power. People generally turn towards Caesarist leaders during times of instability and uncertainty in order to reestablish normality. France in the 20th century was extremely unstable militarily, politically, and economically. For Malraux, efficient government in France required a clear and decisive leader who spoke on behalf of the French people as a whole.

While discussing Malraux' desire for efficiency and boldness of political leaders, it is important to remember his idealism in this matter. Malraux was not simply a political cynic who was willing to sacrifice all principles in the name of a strong state. Instead, he

became very attached to an idea that de Gaulle espoused frequently in his public discourse: grandeur. This idea of greatness (whether or not it was always explicitly stated as such) was an important concept to Malraux' conception of the world. One can see how Malraux celebrated the great, whether in revolutionary ideals, the Communist promise of a better world, or de Gaulle's restructuring of the French Republic. The relationship between Malraux and de Gaulle was at the same time very distant and affectionate, and it is through this relationship that Malraux solidified this idea of greatness. Malraux' belief therefore had very personal roots and did not arrive merely from abstract reasoning. As a result of this connection, Malraux believed that French greatness left when de Gaulle did. For Malraux, de Gaulle completely epitomized greatness. The following history recounts how Malraux developed this worldview and how he ultimately married it with one man.

The Ambitions of a Young Man:

1901-1923

Formulative Years

André Malraux was born at the beginning of the 20th century in 1901. His parents were Fernand and Berthe Malraux and they came from different realms in society. Berthe was a baker's daughter in Paris and she came from a rather modest family. Fernand's father and Malraux' grandfather, Alphonse, was a very successful merchant in Dunkirk at the tip of northern France. Determined to be as successful, Fernand began to search for the opportunities that the times offered. The year 1900 was the year that the universal exposition came to Paris. The city unveiled the Eiffel Tower, the Petit Palais, and the Grand Palais as marvels of art, science, and technology at the turn of the 20th century. In this environment Fernand was extremely confident. He, "thought up ideas to patent: unbreakable lightbulbs, self-acting pumps, puncture-proof tires [...] but never filed any patents."² At different points in his life Fernand wishfully claimed the titles of a broker, a banker, and inventor.

The marriage between Malraux' parents was not a happy one. When Malraux was still quite young, Fernand left the family while still remaining officially married to Berthe. Malraux and his mother moved in with his grandmother and aunt. He was raised by these three women throughout his formative years and only saw his father once per week. The three women did not give Malraux any of the responsibilities of the household and he was never asked to help with the grocery store that the women ran. Todd adds that Berthe, "had little physical closeness with her son. A sensual component was missing."³

² Olivier Todd, *Malraux: A Life*, trans. Joseph West (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 5.

³ *Ibid*, 8

While he was well taken care of by these three matriarchs Malraux felt distant from them.

When Malraux would see his father, Fernand would continue to boast about himself and his skill in playing the stock market. His father would send him to see his grandfather in Dunkirk, making Alphonse the only other masculine figure in Malraux's life. This relationship did not have very long to develop, however, as Alphonse died when Malraux was only eight. During the Great War, Fernand was drafted into military action. Although his service was mediocre during the war, Malraux saw in his father a vision of heroic glory. At the same time, Fernand started a relationship with another woman and gave his name to the new child they had together even though this was illegal at the time. The relationships that Malraux developed between his feminine influences and his masculine influences were conflicting. His mother was physically present and emotionally removed, and his father was physically absent while providing a distorted perception of financial success and military glory.

Malraux progressed well through his early education despite the Tourette's syndrome that he had to learn to control. As he continued his studies, Malraux discovered that he loved to read and in his choice of works one finds that he had a love of the heroic. In particular, he admired Victor Hugo as a man of intellectual and political action. In his conception of history, Hugo saw the world as moved by large important figures (such as Napoleon I) and advocated in the Voltairian tradition that writers and intellectuals be active in the public sphere. When it came to philosophy Malraux esteemed Friedrich Nietzsche and his ideas on the demise of God and of the Superman in particular. At the age of eighteen Malraux decided that he wanted to abandon a formal education and make out his own future.

During the next few years Malraux' love of books grew and a love for writing and art developed. He started selling second hand books and read a lot, specifically poetry. He wrote his first review, a piece on the development of cubist poetry, that was published in *La Connaissance, Revue de Lettres et d'Idées*.⁴ Malraux took advantage of the many salons, galleries, and museums to become introduced to art and its intricacies. Through reviewing poetry Malraux made the acquaintance of Max Jacob, one of the most prominent poets of the period. Malraux edited some works, first a collection of "original" literary texts from famous writers and a book in an art series funded by the German art dealer Daniel-Henri Kahnweiler.⁵ All of this provided Malraux exposure to the intellectual and artistic circles of Paris, but he still had a desire to write his own original works.

In 1921 Malraux met Clara Goldschmidt, a young woman from a wealthy German Jewish family living in Paris. Clara introduced Malraux to many different aspects of life that he had not yet encountered. Clara had travelled extensively in Europe whereas Malraux had not. Clara came from *la haute bourgeoisie* and Malraux from *la petite bourgeoisie*. Clara elaborates in her memoirs that Malraux found her "an adequate interpreter between life and himself. I paraded before him an everyday nation of men, women, and children, a nation with which he had never come into contact up until then and which did not react to life as he did at all; and I explained it to him."⁶ This growing list of contacts and intellectuals helped train Malraux to think about the world in ways that he had never considered before. Most importantly, she was an intellectual match for Malraux. Todd explains that, "In this Jewish family [the Goldschmidts], girls enjoy the

⁴ Todd. *Malraux*. 15.

⁵ *Ibid*, 21.

⁶ Clara Malraux. *Memoirs*, trans. Patrick O'Brian (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1967), 236.

same rights as boys, except where sexual freedom is concerned.”⁷ The two fell quickly and recklessly in love and soon decided to travel to Italy together to explore art without telling Clara’s family. The Goldschmidts found out about the trip and ordered Clara to return home, a demand to which the couple responded even more rashly by getting married in Paris on October 21, 1921.

Malraux did not have any financial wealth to contribute to the marriage. Alfred Goessl and Roland Champagne point out that, “Malraux, reacting to his financial predicament, knew that he needed economic security to launch his career as a writer.”⁸ Clara and her family more than met this need providing “300,000 francs ors and some shares, about \$800,000 worth today.”⁹ Using this money the couple travelled extensively throughout Europe, often by the contemporary luxury of the airplane. Malraux also decided to invest this money in overseas investments, utilizing the advice of his “stock broker” father.¹⁰ He was determined not to work at a normal job and wanted to use this money to ensure this. One can see in this investment scheme a desire to live above and beyond the lower classes and even the bourgeoisie from which Clara and her family made their fortune. Malraux wanted to launch himself immediately into the Hugo model of the great writer without working amongst the people.

Malraux and his family brought nothing to the union except his drive for intellectual pursuits. Clara recalls in her memoirs someone telling her that Malraux only had his “erudition.” She comments: “But erudition doesn’t stand in the way of delicacy of understanding, quickness and deep originality: intelligence is a sack that stands up all by

⁷ Todd. *Malraux*. 22.

⁸ Champagne, Roland and Goessl, Alfred. *Clara Malraux’s “Le Bruit de nos pas: Biography and the...*

⁹ Todd. *Malraux*. 25.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 26.

itself if you stuff it well.”¹¹ Clara had faith in Malraux and his writing career and continued to nurture his intellectual development through travel and societal connections. Malraux wrote and tried desperately to be published in the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, the preeminent literary magazine of the time, but without success. Despite his failures his worldview *did* expand beyond the French borders, particularly in the realm of artistic expression. If Malraux’ understanding of the financial world had only improved as much, the young couple’s story might have been different. As it was, the Mexican shares in which Malraux had invested their money plummeted in 1922 and left the couple penniless.¹²

Still unable to get his writing published and finding firms unwilling to let him edit any art history texts, Malraux decided to engage in what would be known as his controversial Indochinese adventure. He became increasingly interested in leaving France for Indochina after he started studying East Asian art. It seemed even more appealing after Malraux learned of the prices Western collectors were willing to pay for original sculptures brought back from the Indochinese colony. Todd announces that “in London and New York, a ten-inch statuette sells for 30,000 francs; a sculpture of a dancing goddess, an *aspara*, for 200,000 francs (more than \$12,000 at the time).”¹³ On the one hand this plan was certainly risky and definitely illegal, but on the other it was the perfect solution to the young couple’s problems. The Malraux’ would have the chance to travel, learn, and explore while making enough money to continue their extravagant lifestyle and Malraux tried to get published.

¹¹ Malraux, Clara. *Memoirs*. 157-158.

¹² Todd. *Malraux*. 29

¹³ *Ibid*. 31.

Clara was intrigued by this proposal and had wanted to see the colony ever since her father's death when she was thirteen.¹⁴ But she felt unsettled by some of the vague details within the plan and felt that the couple was not prepared. In her memoirs Clara enumerates her fears during the preparatory stages of the expedition:

There were so many dubious or infantile possibilities within me that suddenly found that they might be realized [...] since we were about to confront a continent unknown to us, and to confront it on the wrong side of authority. I was frightened. A man and a woman, almost penniless, ignorant of the language and customs of those around them, an untamed landscape . . . and why not also reflect upon the tigers, the snakes, and the anopheles mosquito, whose name I had just heard for the first time.¹⁵

Clara's confession demonstrates the many obstacles ahead of the couple ranging from practical travel problems to very real legal implications, to imagined and threatening jungles that they would be facing. Malraux' friend, Louis Chevasson, decided to join them, relieving some of the pressure on the couple.

But before the voyage could even become a reality Malraux needed to secure funding and legitimacy to get them into Indochina. To these ends Malraux secured a hearing with the Ministry of Colonies in 1923 where he asked the seven member council to fund his expedition to study Khmer archaeology with the promise of financial recompense of around \$6,000 to \$12,000.¹⁶ The council approved his studies qualifying that it was ultimately up to the governor of the colony to allow Malraux full permission there within.

With a loan from his father, Malraux believed he was ready to set out on his first adventure to explore Indochina and restore his financial status. He stepped lightly into the role of archaeologist as easily as he adopted one as a writer, an art critic, and an editor.

¹⁴ Malraux, Clara. *Memoirs*. 245.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 246-247.

¹⁶ Todd, Oliver. *Malraux*. 32.

He was confident in himself as his father was at the turn of the century and knew that he would be a great figure in whatever role he adopted. Malraux believed the trip would be quick and profitable. In reality it would lead to ten years of discovery.

Hidden Temples and Hidden Struggles:

1923-1933

Statues and Statutes

In early November, 1923, Malraux and Clara arrived in Hanoi, the seat of the Governor General and the École Française d'Extrême Orient (E.F.E.O) of Indonesia. Malraux had to speak with the acting director, Léonard Arousseau, of the school in order to gain approval for the mission. Langlois reports that Malraux, “presented his project to the Colonial Office as [...] an attempt to relocate the main Khmer road linking the capital at Angkor with the northern provinces of the empire in the area of present-day Laos.”¹⁷ The quest for this road left a vague enough expanse of territory to be searched that it was unlikely that the authorities would question their choice of locales to investigate. Arousseau cleared up any confusion that may have existed regarding the legality of artifact extraction due to prior vague edicts. Langlois notes, “The Acting Director pointed out that according to a new policy adopted by the government at the suggestion of the School authorities, any objects found in the jungle must be left *in situ*. A detailed report was then to be filed with the School, whose Archaeological Service would decide what should be done with them.”¹⁸ Malraux further had to sign a document affirming that any discoveries would be reported to the E.F.E.O, granting them the status as nominal sponsors of his expedition.

Soon after this meeting Malraux found Chevasson and they found a villa in which to stay. Increasing pressure soon followed from the colonial authorities. Todd notes that, “Before their [the couple’s] arrival in Phnom Penh, the governor-general of Indochina

¹⁷ Walter Langlois, *André Malraux: The Indochina Adventure* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1966), 17-18.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 18.

alerted the resident superior in Cambodia: ‘Certain information gathered on Monsieur Malraux’s previous history leaves some doubt as to his real intentions.’”¹⁹ The authorities gave the Malraux lodging but, as Todd explains, “Their rooms in the Siem Reap bungalow are next to an annex of the police station. The bungalow manager spies on them for the police.”²⁰ Despite all of these alarming signs, the group was determined to carry out their expedition. In December the group set off through the Cambodian jungle with some carts, some water buffalo, and some indigenous Cambodians hired by Malraux to reach the small temple of Bantey Srei.

Langlois and Todd disagree over how the excavation proceeded. Langlois, following Malraux’ own rendition of events in *La Voie Royale*, claims that the temple, “was little more than a mound of stone buried in a tangle of undergrowth,” and that Malraux and Chevasson, “Exercis[ed] great care” in removing the few exceptional pieces remaining.²¹ In contrast, Todd explains that, “Centuries, rains, and people have hardly damaged the foliations, checkered patterns, and pediments [of the temple]” and recounts that, “Malraux and Chevasson do more ripping out than detaching” when it comes to extracting the bas-reliefs. Langlois’ vision of the scene attempts to soften the blow of the expedition’s actions, but removing the pieces from the temple was certainly a violent one.

In any event, after the group finished loading around seven fine representations of Khmer statuary they proceeded back to their lodgings where, according to Langlois, “they were met by the manager, M. Debyser. It was obvious that the water buffaloes were hauling more than the personal effects of the party.”²² The manager immediately told the

¹⁹ Todd. *Malraux*. 33.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 33.

²¹ Langlois. *André Malraux: The Indochina Adventure*. 22.

²² *Ibid.* 23.

local authorities and the group was even more carefully watched. They decided to leave by boat on December 22 with the statues packed in a trunk addressed to a chemical company in Siam. Upon their arrival they were all arrested.²³

Although Clara was equally complicit and responsible for the theft, she was soon released from prison. De Courtivron explains that Clara had made efforts to return to France and help their case, and “staged a hunger strike and feigned episodes of madness. The authorities became alarmed; a preliminary hearing was granted during which charges against Clara were dropped.”²⁴ Perhaps even more helpful to Clara’s case than concern over her well being was her status as a woman. The courts found that Clara was only along on the mission because her husband had told her to come and was not responsible for her actions. De Courtivron elaborates, “In 1923 a wife was required by law to follow her husband; she was considered to have no legal free will and thus to bear no responsibility for her whereabouts as long as she was fulfilling her conjugal obligation.”²⁵ After her release from prison Clara left Indochina for Paris to ask for help from the Malraux’ connections if the trial should go poorly.

Malraux and Chevasson had a plan prepared in the event of their arrest in order to save Malraux from prison: sacrifice Chevasson. The two would claim that Chevasson had devised the whole situation and that Malraux was an unwitting victim in the process. Langlois clarifies that if one admitted their guilt, “the other, if acquitted, could immediately return to Paris to prepare an appeal to a higher French court. Since Malraux was better known and had more contacts in Paris, Chevasson had insisted on assuming

²³ Todd. *Malraux*. 34.

²⁴ Isabelle De Courtivron, “The Other Malraux in Indochina,” *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (1989): 36.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 36.

the entire responsibility for the theft and affirmed his guilt from the very beginning of the inquiry.”²⁶ This plan, however, did depend upon Malraux being found innocent and that seemed to be an unlikely possibility.

In addition to being caught with stolen artifacts in their possession, there were other factors that had the potential to hurt their case. Langlois explains that traditional court proceedings common in France were rare in Indochina: “Indochina, like most of the colonial empire, was governed primarily by direct administrative decrees rather than through legislation by the Chamber of Deputies. These decrees were issued by the Colonial Office, which also appointed the Examining Magistrates and the Colonial Judges.”²⁷ Being outside of the direct observation of many institutions in France gave the local judiciary much more authority than was officially required. Furthermore the authorities called for two investigations of Chevasson and Malraux’ past. The first investigation was a standard report on their criminal backgrounds (which didn’t exist) and the second was a report on their political actions and affiliations.²⁸ This second examination of the witnesses did not pertain to the legal matter at hand but had the potential to prejudice the presiding judge against the defendants.

The case finally reached court on July 16th, 1924, in Pnom Penh. During the proceedings Malraux proved himself to be his own worst enemy. His defense was predicated on the lie that Chevasson had concocted the plan and that Malraux was his assistant. Yet, when the prosecution tried to claim that Malraux was no scholar but an adventurer, “Malraux replied at length to a variety of questions, going so far as to recite

²⁶ Langlois. *André Malraux: The Indochinese Adventure*. 33.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 31.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 31.

from the *Aeneid* to show that he knew Latin.”²⁹ Malraux further tried to make his own case rather than let his lawyer make it for him. Todd reports that Malraux twisted the facts as, “he informs the press that this whole affair is ‘a misunderstanding.’ He may, on his way past an isolated temple in the jungle, have inadvertently removed some bas-reliefs that were ‘already cut.’ Malraux *saved* these bas reliefs.”³⁰ Not only was the argument absurd, it showed that Malraux was a conniving figure. The illusion that Chevasson was the brains of the operation disappeared.

The original case ended with Malraux sentenced to “three years’ imprisonment without remission and received a five-year ban on re-entering the country. Louis Chevasson received eighteen months.”³¹ They began their appeal to the highest court in Indochina. Meanwhile, in France, Clara worked to mobilize the defense. Todd notes that she had only the support of Malraux’ family as the Goldschmidts, seeing that their misgivings about their son-in-law were proving to be truer by the moment, refused to help her.³² Clara was successful in eliciting aid from their connections in Paris, convincing intellectuals such as Max Jacob, André Breton, Anatole France, François Mauriac and others to agitate on Malraux’s behalf. The work of the intellectuals and the defense lawyers convinced the judges to be lenient to the two defendants. Langlois mentions that the ruling of October 28, “reduced Malraux’s punishment to one year in prison, Chevasson’s to eight months, and granted both prisoners the right to petition for a suspended sentence.”³³ With Malraux and Chevasson returning to France to make their

²⁹ Ibid. 33.

³⁰ Todd. *Malraux*. 38.

³¹ Ibid. 38.

³² Ibid. 39.

³³ Langlois. *André Malraux: The Indochina Adventure*. 50-51.

appeals, the first part of Malraux's Indochina adventure came to a close. A return voyage to Indochina would change Malraux as a person and his conception of the heroic.

The Return Voyage

Not long after arriving in France, Malraux planned a return to Indochina. This time his objective was not to steal and sell rare art, but to start a newspaper in the French colony. While he was undergoing the trial process in Phnom Penh, Clara and Malraux had a chance to see the miseries in Indochina. As Todd puts it, "Without exoticism, André Malraux soaks up the social reality of colonialism. The bourgeoisie of Phnom Penh have no doubt that these 'natives' are happy with malaria, TB, and French rule."³⁴ Malraux also noticed that the newspapers in Indochina were not speaking out about the problems of colonial rule. He wanted to return, to really experience the territory that he had only seen as a prisoner, and to stand up to the authority there, the same authority he associated with his trial. On her voyage back to France after being released, Clara made the acquaintance of a Paul Monin, "an outstanding lawyer, newspaperman, and politician from Saigon."³⁵ Monin became Malraux' chief collaborator and the two plotted to establish an independent newspaper in Indochina. After taking out another loan from his father³⁶ and selling some of their art,³⁷ Malraux and Clara left France for Indochina on January 14, 1925 only ten weeks after Malraux' return.

Monin and Malraux viewed this new paper as the real voice of the indigenous population in an overbearing colonial system. There were many faults with this repressive system. In addition to the obvious political domination and economic

³⁴ Todd, *Malraux*, 36.

³⁵ Langlois, *André Malraux: The Indochinese Adventure*, 52.

³⁶ Todd, *Malraux*, 43.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 44

subjugation, criticism of the colonial administration was squashed out at every possible turn. Langlois elaborates, “A loophole in local regulations permitted a group of Annamites to establish a French-language paper if they could find a French citizen to act as its guarantor, but such a paper would reach only the French-speaking minority of the population.” Any papers printed in “*quoc-ngu*, the Romanized form of the Annamite language,” faced practically impossible censorship standards in order to be published.³⁸ Any periodical critical of the local administration would certainly be met with oppressive tactics and, therefore, public dissent within the colony was non-existent. The two chose the name *L’Indochine* for the paper.

On June 17th, 1925, Malraux and Monin produced the first issue of *L’Indochine*, distributing it for free for a couple of days. Todd describes the paper: “Issue No. 1, price ten centimes, date missing by mistake, bears the subtitle ‘Journal quotidien du rapprochement franco-annamite’ (A daily newspaper of mediation between France and Annam).”³⁹ The subtitle explains a great deal about the intentions of the creators. The word “rapprochement” is translated above as mediation, but the word can also signify connection. The translation is telling in both senses. Malraux and Monin wished to mediate the differences between the French and Annamite populations and to bring them closer together at the same time.

The editors of *L’Indochine* attempted to be appealing to a wide audience. The general layout of the paper, detailed by Langlois, reveals the tactics of the creators:

Page 1: Editorials, news bulletins, and political news.

Page 2: International dispatches from “our special correspondents.”

Page 3: International wire-service and radio bulletins.

Pages 4, 5: Advertisements and serial fillers.

³⁸ Langlois, *André Malraux: The Indochinese Adventure*, 56.

³⁹ Todd, *Malraux*, 45.

Page 6: Local events.

Page 7: The elite page.

Page 8: Miscellaneous—photographs, crossword puzzles, run-over of front page articles, documents reproduced in connections with various exposés, etc.⁴⁰

This layout emphasized the importance of the political within the paper. Editorials and political news took up the front page of the paper and occasionally “ran-over” to the last page. A thirst for international news from colonists who received infrequent news from Europe was also evident as this section made up the next two inside pages. The paper relied upon advertising, but could only fill two pages worth, whereas the rival paper *L’Impartial* printed four pages of advertisements in each issue.⁴¹ The seventh page of the journal is also interesting because it indicates a more entertaining aspect of the publication. Todd explains, “‘The Elite Page’ is a literary section, printing Parisian theater news to keep the conversation going over dinner in Saigon, as well as short stories by known authors [...] or stories sent in by readers.”⁴² By adding this section Malraux hoped to keep the readership from abandoning their paper even if they had printed something the reader found too shocking.

Clara contributed heavily to the paper as well. As De Courtivron reasons, “Clara was the only one to speak several foreign languages. (All of André Malraux’s biographers acknowledge that he never learned English.) Consequently, she was in large part responsible for the international section, which represented approximately one quarter of the eight-page paper.”⁴³ The hunger for international news in Indochina was strong as their readers clamored for news of riots in China. Todd notes however that the international section, “despite Clara’s hard work [...] is somewhat of a hodgepodge: they

⁴⁰ Langlois, *André Malraux*, 65.

⁴¹ Ibid, 65.

⁴² Todd, *Malraux*, 51.

⁴³ de Courtivron, “The Other Malraux,” 38.

would like it to be truly international, but the newspaper cannot afford foreign correspondents.”⁴⁴

Hard hitting editorial pieces were the strength of the paper, however. Monin favored targeting the governor of Cochin China, Maurice Cognacq, and Malraux liked to criticize the editor of *L’Impartial*. The tone of these pieces varied from the serious to the farcical. Perceiving that the government was trying to intimidate them into shutting down, Malraux denominated Cognacq as M. Je menotte or “Mr. I handcuff.”⁴⁵ Monin addressed the governor stating that he would buy the governor a hat on which would be printed “the three words that sum up your administration: Disorder, Inequality, and Anarchy.”⁴⁶ The invective and criticism used against their opponents were harsh.

The colonial government leveled accusations of Bolshevism concerning *L’Indochine*, but the paper was certainly not revolutionary. Langlois links Malraux and Monin’s opinions with those of most of the Annamite elite during this time who “continued to agitate for [the colonial government’s] *reform*, rather than for revolution that would oust the Europeans.”⁴⁷ Malraux was more concerned with the reformation of administrative incompetence, greed, and abuse than with Annamite independence. It is important to recall here the editors’ appeal for “*rapprochement*” rather than severing franco-annamite relations.

Although the reforms proposed by Monin and Malraux were not communistic in origin, they posed a threat to the way that the colonial government was being run. Two months after the start of publication, the government reacted more directly. The

⁴⁴ Todd, *Malraux*, 51.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 47.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 49.

⁴⁷ Langlois, *André Malraux: The Indochinese Adventure*, 57.

government started to place pressure on the paper's printers. As Madsen recounts, "It didn't take Monin, André, and De la Batie long to get it out of him [*L'Indochine's* printer]. Anonymous callers had told Minh that if he continued to print 'that Bolshevik rag,' his workers would surely be so disgusted that they would strike."⁴⁸ Unable to find any other printers willing to risk the wrath of the colonial machine, Malraux had to decide between shutting down and printing the paper himself. The last issue of *L'Indochine* with their old printer was published August 14, 1925. Malraux had been unable to find anyone willing to sell him any type within Saigon. Madsen continues that in Taiwan, "Luck was with them [the Malraux]. In a week-old newspaper left in the room, André spotted an ad that, Clara verified, said "Type for Sale." A telephone call confirmed that local Jesuits were the publishers of a modest newsletter. They were modernizing their printing shop and indeed selling their old type."⁴⁹ The Jesuits' newsletter had been printed in English and thus did not contain any of the French accents that would be necessary for a French publication. It was all that they needed, nonetheless, to get a new start with the paper.⁵⁰

On November 3rd, 1925, Malraux resurrected the paper shut down by the government, and renamed it *L'Indochine Enchaînée* or "Indochina in Chains." Madsen describes the new paper, "Cut down to half the size of *L'Indochine*, it was a biweekly appearing on Wednesdays and Saturdays. According to a front-page editorial in the first issue, it was a temporary issue 'awaiting the day, certainly far distant, when the

⁴⁸ Axel Madsen, *Silk Roads: The Asian Adventures of Clara & André Malraux*, (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd Publishers, 1990), 212.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 218.

⁵⁰ Todd, *Malraux*, 53.

government will agree to return the type that belongs to us.’”⁵¹ This new publication was as different in format as it was in tone. Jean Lacouture, a biographer of Malraux, described in an interview with Karin Müller how different this paper was from any activity in which Malraux had heretofore engaged. He says, He says, “Malraux, jusque-là jeune écrivain aux tendances gauchistes, dont l’engagement révolutionnaire est plutôt littéraire et romanesque, trouve une raison évidente de s’opposer à l’ordre établi en Indochine et décide de mener le combat en publiant *L’Indochine enchaînée*.” (Malraux, up until then a young writer with leftist tendencies, whose revolutionary engagement was more literary and fictional, finds an evident reason to oppose the established order in Indochina and decides to lead the combat by publishing *L’Indochine Enchaînée*.)⁵² In *L’Indochine Enchaînée*, Malraux and Monin came out more forcefully than ever against the colonial government. Todd notes that the two advocated for a committee in Paris to develop a working political system within Indochina, for Indochina to become a dominion, and for just Annamite representation in French parliament.⁵³

Some of the radicalization of the paper came from disappointment with the new Governor General of Indochina, Alexandre Varenne. The socialist leader came into office in late 1925 with hopes of fundamentally changing colonial administration, but soon seemed unwilling to change anything. Madsen points to Varenne’s inflexibility regarding freeing the press and argues that, “From there on it seemed to be all compromises and sellouts to the vested interests. [...] it was with sadness, then with anger that they [Monin and Malraux] heard his official speeches stress that his first order of business was social

⁵¹ Madsen, *Silk Roads*, 226-227.

⁵² Jean Lacouture, interview by Karin Müller, *Malraux: Itinéraire d’un destin flamboyant*, (Brussels: André Versaille éditeur, 2008), 29.

⁵³ Todd, *Malraux*, 56.

reform, 'not Annamese reforms,' and that with regard to alleged abuses of power in the past, it was best to forget."⁵⁴ Malraux had heretofore argued that colonialism in and of itself wasn't bad, it was only bad practice that made it unbearable. But with the disillusionment with Varenne, Malraux came to question the validity of the system as a whole.

Despite the new fighting spirit that had been riled up in Malraux, he and Clara decided to leave Indochina on December 30, 1925. Madsen cites finances as the main issue, explaining, "There was no more money. Clara and André's Continental Hotel bill had not been paid for longer than they cared to know. Every day they feared credit would be cut off and their luggage waiting for them in the hallway."⁵⁵ Furthermore, the friendship and the working relationship with Monin appear to have deteriorated by this point. Todd remarks that Malraux "has broken with Monin, who did not see him off at the dock. Malraux knows how to break a thing off."⁵⁶ No matter the reasons, Malraux' Indochinese adventuring had come to an end. The period had certainly shaken up his ideas and sensibilities, but he was still working on refining them. The several years that followed helped solidify his worldview.

Intellectual Culmination

From the Malraux' arrival in France at the beginning of 1926 to the year 1933 Malraux published a series of works that built upon the political and cultural understanding that he had gathered in Indochina. The first of these works, published in 1926, was *La Tentation de l'Occident* or "The Temptation of the West." The book is not a novel but takes the form of a series of letters written between a Westerner named A.D.

⁵⁴ Madsen, *Silk Roads*, 228.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 229.

⁵⁶ Todd, *Malraux*, 62.

and a Chinese man named Ling. The letters are meant to elucidate the general differences and problems that are endemic to the East and West. One of the biggest contrasts between the two is the conception of action. As Ling implores A.D. in one of his letters, “A peine comprenez-vous encore que pour être il ne soit pas nécessaire d’agir, et que le monde vous transforme bien plus que vous ne le transformez.”⁵⁷ (At least understand that in order to be it is not necessary to act, and that the world transforms you much more than you transform it). In Malraux’ conception, Easterners did not value action because they did not think in individualistic terms. Instead they saw themselves as a small part in a spectrum that forms life.

By contrast, Westerners, who *were* individualistic, sought action. As individualists who believed that they could change the world, action added meaning to the Westerner’s life. They did not merely seek action in their own lives but through the shared experiences of others. A.D. says in one of his letters, “Nous ne dessinons pas une image illusoire de nous-mêmes, mais d’innombrables images [...] une sorte de puissance latente... Comme si l’occasion avait seule manqué pour que nous accomplissons dans le monde réel les gestes de nos reveries, nous gardons l’impression confuse, non de les avoir accomplis, mais d’en avoir été capables.”⁵⁸ (We [Westerners] do not draw one illusory image of ourselves, but innumerable images [...] a sort of latent power... As if only the occasion had been lacking for us to accomplish in the real world the actions of our reveries, we hold on to the confused impression, not of having accomplished them, but of having been capable of it). In this conception, Westerners did not have a unique

⁵⁷ André Malraux, “*La Tentation de l’Occident* ‘Quatrième lettre,’” in *Lectures choisies*, ed. Anne Prioleau Jones (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965), 17.

⁵⁸ André Malraux, “*La Tentation de l’Occident* ‘Huitième lettre,’” in *Lectures choisies*, ed. Anne Prioleau Jones (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965), 21-22.

idea of themselves, per se, but the belief that they were capable of being anyone, real or imagined. Westerners could thus feel empowered by the accomplishments of humankind because they were also the individual's accomplishments. This imagination also gave Westerners the ability to ignore the unfavorable qualities of those they emulated. As A.D. explains, "La fièvre de puissance dont sont parées les grandes individualités nous touche plus que leurs actes – qui ne sont qu'une préparation pour atteindre leur attitude – et les en détache lorsqu'une inopportune intervention de la vie réelle les met en désaccord avec elle."⁵⁹ (The fever of power that is attached to grand individuals touches us more than their actions – which are only a preparation for attaining their position – and detaches itself from them when an inopportune intervention of real life puts them in conflict with it). The grand individual (or hero) was a collaboration of ideas about that hero rather than the accumulation of their actions. The facts were only as useful as far as they supported the image created by the observer. Malraux/A.D. does not explain this phenomenon in a condemnatory manner, but merely describes it. The idea of an invented hero is not troubling for either writer.

Malraux' first novel, *Les Conquérants* (1928) expanded upon the ideas of action and heroism presented in *La Tentation de l'Occident*. *Les Conquérants* takes place in China amidst a struggle between Communists and the British. The story thus picked up the political and revolutionary side that Malraux had developed in Indochina. It also changed tone significantly from the dreamy ruminations of *La Tentation* and took on a catchier style. The story starts with a journalistic timestamp "25 juin" and then a brief phrase to set the scene, "La grève générale est décrété à Canton."⁶⁰ (The general strike

⁵⁹ Ibid, 21.

⁶⁰ André Malraux, *Les Conquérants*, (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1928), 11.

is declared in Canton). Lacouture asserts that Malraux breaks from an older French tradition which requires lengthy exposition.⁶¹ This stylistic change created a cinematic element that appealed to a twentieth century reading audience. The writing style also becomes more thrilling, lending itself to a dramatic story.

Garine, the main character, is a European revolutionary who represents Malraux' thoughts in many ways. He highly values the actions that individuals undertake and believes that they shape history. In one revealing section, Garine stewes over the actions of his political rival, Tcheng-Daï. Although Garine admits that Tcheng-Daï had done a lot to resist the English, he now resigned himself to defeat. As he says, "Désire-t-il vraiment, passionnément, depuis des années, délivrer la Chine du Sud de la domination économique de l'Angleterre? Oui. Mais, à défendre et à diriger un peuple d'opprimés dont la cause était indéniablement juste, il a pris insensiblement l'habitude de son rôle au triomphe de ceux qu'il défend."⁶² (Does he really desire, passionately, over the years, to deliver Southern China from England's economic domination? Yes. But, while defending and directing an oppressed people whose cause was undeniably just, he insensitively adopted the role he defends instead of the role of triumph). Tcheng-Daï held great potential to be the hero that the Southern Chinese needed, but he wasted it on his own self image. What the cause needed was decisive action and not symbolic suffering. If Tcheng-Daï had acted more forcefully, the situation with the English might be very different.

Malraux' heroes were therefore very individualistic. Overarching political situations could be altered based upon the choices of actors involved. Lacouture explains that, "Malraux pensait qu'un homme fort, ingénieux, audacieux pouvait changer le cours

⁶¹ Lacouture, *Malraux: Itinéraires d'un...*, 14.

⁶² Malraux, *Les Conquistadors*, 91.

de l'histoire – contredisant ainsi beaucoup d'historiens, notamment marxistes.”⁶³

(Malraux thought that a man strong, ingenious, audacious could change the course of history—thus contradicting many historians, notably Marxists). Malraux therefore clearly developed a vision of history and the individual through *Les Conquérants*. Faced with colonialism, Malraux valorized revolutionary tactics, but in a distinctly non-Marxist way. While calling for a revolution of social rights, Malraux did not see the immutable forces of history at play as Marx prophesized in his *Communist Manifesto*. Rather, he envisioned courageous individuals as chiefly responsible in bringing about a revolution.

In 1933 Malraux released his third novel that would terminate his Asian works. In *La Condition humaine*, (“The Human Condition” but officially translated into English as *Man's Fate*) Malraux follows the 1927 Communist uprising in China and its repression by General Tchang-Kai-Shek. In this work, Malraux more closely considered the questions of Communism and personal action: two forces that meet in the revolution. Malraux justified the revolution by describing the deplorable state that the people were in, but Dye qualifies that, “unlike Zola, Malraux does not dwell on this indictment.”⁶⁴ He did not place as much emphasis on the suffering of the common people because this group was not, according to Malraux, essential to the revolution. He instead focused on several characters, typically intellectuals of the middle class. Once again flying in the face of Marxism, Malraux did not portray a proletariat uprising but intellectuals with their unique reasons to engage in the revolution.

The characters of *La Condition humaine* formed a central path to understanding the role of individual action in this story. Two characters of particular note are Kyo, a

⁶³ Lacouture, *Malraux: itinéraire d'un...*, 15.

⁶⁴ Michel Dye, “André Malraux and the temptation of the Orient in *La Condition humaine*,” *Journal of European Studies* 29, no. 1 (1999) 47-48.

half Japanese, half French young man who engaged in the revolution and his French father Gisors who taught Marxism at a university. Dye says that Kyo, “is aware of his own vulnerability in the face of destiny, and feels that the revolution gives meaning to his life.”⁶⁵ Malraux demonstrated that Kyo not only reflected upon his surroundings but decided to act upon them. His death near the end of the story emphasized to a greater degree the importance of action according to Malraux. Kyo kills himself to avoid being captured and forced to surrender information. The narrator recounts the few moments before Kyo kills himself: “Il [Kyo] avait beaucoup vu mourir, et, aidé par son éducation japonaise, il avait toujours pensé qu’il est beau de mourir de sa mort, d’une mort qui ressemble à sa vie. Et mourir est passivité, mais se tuer est acte.”⁶⁶ (He [Kyo] had seen a lot of dying, and, helped by his Japanese education, he had always thought that it is beautiful to die, a death that resembles his life. And to die is passivity, but to kill oneself is act). Malraux placed emphasis on the heroic quality of action even in the final moments of his main characters life. Malraux was also possibly honoring his father who had killed himself not long before Malraux started writing *La Condition humaine*.⁶⁷

Gisors provided the counter example of the meritorious active life of Kyo. Gisors, who was an ardent professor of Marxism, became paralyzed by the death of his son. Gisors announces that since Kyo’s death, “Le marxisme a cessé de vivre en moi. Aux yeux de Kyo c’était une volonté, n’est-ce pas? mais aux miens c’est une fatalité, et je m’accordait à la fatalité. Il n’y a presque plus d’angoisse en moi [...] Je suis à la fois délivré (délivré!...) de la mort et de la vie.”⁶⁸ (Marxism has ceased to live in me. In Kyo’s

⁶⁵ Dye, “André Malraux and the temptation...”, 48.

⁶⁶ André Malraux, *La Condition humaine*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1946), 303.

⁶⁷ Todd, *Malraux*, 93

⁶⁸ Malraux, *La Condition humaine*, 332.

eyes it was a will, wasn't it? but in mine it is a fatality, and I abided by fate. There is barely any more anguish in me [...] I am at the same time freed (freed!...) from death and from life). Gisors no longer sees Marxism or the struggle associated with it as essential and finds freedom from the obligations of life and death. Dye complicates this vision by arguing that Gisors did not simply retreat from Marxism into a half existence, but instead embraced traditional Chinese wisdom that reduces the importance of human kind. He analyses, "By dispersing human consciousness in the Great Whole of the universe, Chinese mysticism allows Gisors to reach the calm and serenity he longs for."⁶⁹ Gisors thus followed the Eastern conception of life that Malraux developed in *La tentation de l'Occident* and no longer sought action. The Eastern philosophy was charming, as is evidenced by the case of Gisors, but the sort of inaction it advocated made it inferior to Western dynamism and dangerous when it ignored the realities of the world.

Kyo's death did not mark the end of action for all of the characters as it did for Gisors. May (Kyo's wife) made plans to leave for Moscow with Gisors before he refused to go. As she listened to his explanation of being freed from life she thought, "Mais pendant que vous vous délivrez de votre vie [...] d'autres Katow brûlent dans les chaudières, d'autres Kyo..."⁷⁰ (But while you free yourself from your life [...] other Katows are burning in furnaces, other Kyos...). For May the revolution did not end simply because its members die. *La Condition humaine* does not end with the knowledge of victory, but the knowledge that those dedicated to changing history will continue fighting for that change.

Work in Progress

⁶⁹ Dye, "André Malraux and the temptation...", 53.

⁷⁰ Malraux, *La Condition humaine*, 334.

A critique of Walter Langlois was mentioned earlier regarding his treatment of Malraux in Indochina. As further research has proven, he and his contemporary André Vandegans, were too willing to take Malraux at his word regarding many of his exploits. The two scholars were inclined to write favorably of Malraux because they 1.) were writing while he was still alive and 2.) were writing prior to the publication of Clara Malraux' memoirs which dispute many of the common myths formed around him.

However, perhaps an even bigger problem of their analysis is the way in which they regard Malraux over the course of time. De Courtivron elaborates, "both scholars [Langlois and Vandegans] explored the *continuity* between the younger man's philosophical and aesthetic preoccupations and the more mature writer's political commitments and literary accomplishments."⁷¹ The problem with this perspective is that it assumes that there was a natural progression between Malraux's youth and his future self without any defining moments in between. If one does not consider the Indochina experience as distinct, one ignores its formative nature.

At the beginning of this section, Malraux left for Indochina primarily in order to earn some quick cash after having lost his money in the stock market. Through his arrest and trial, Malraux saw the sort of colonial abuses that plagued Indochina and this inspired him to return to start up *L'Indochine*. Through his work with the paper Malraux learned to sharpen his criticism and to dissect one of the biggest problems of his time: colonialism. After returning to France Malraux reflected on his experiences in Indochina and interpreted it through several works. These works defined Malraux' worldview at the time and formed an essential understanding of what he considered to be heroic. Malraux presents a hero as someone actively involved in the problems of their time. These

⁷¹ de Courtivron, "The Other Malraux," 29. Emphasis mine.

individuals are distinct their actions dictate what the future will be. His heroes are not fatalists and are not mere representations of abstractions. In *La Condition humaine* Malraux fashioned a sense of solidarity as May vows to leave for Moscow, in part to prevent future atrocities as happened to Kyo.

On December 7th, 1933 Malraux received the Prix Goncourt for *La Condition humaine*, an immense honor equivalent to the Pulitzer Prize in the United States. This text marks a turning point in Malraux' life. With this work Malraux presented the clearest description of his worldview and had developed an air of celebrity. His experience in Indochina formed Malraux into the man that he was in 1933. Malraux went through another transformation during the twelve years that followed as he wrestled with Soviet ideals, Spanish solidarity, and French defeat.

Internal Battles and External Wars:

1934-1945

Communist Courtship

After January 30, 1933 when Adolf Hitler rose to the chancellorship in Germany a new level of division swept through France. To paint the picture in the broadest terms possible, the French Right began increasingly to support the policies propagated by Hitler and Benito Mussolini and the French Left took up the mantle of the U.S.S.R. For many within France, the arguments for these different systems were only loosely doctrinal. The majority of French citizens lined up with one side or another simply due to fears of what the other side was believed to be capable. Within intellectual circles, however, both systems had a similar foundation: anti-capitalism. Tony Judt explains that after World War I this dialogue of anti-capitalism became specifically directed at America and Great Britain (the Anglo-Saxons) who were seen to have benefited the most from the conflict. Judt states that “There would be many in the Resistance who vociferously asserted their intention of liberating France from the yoke of international Anglo-Saxon capital, even as they were engaged in a life and death struggle with collaborators who thought they were doing the same thing.”⁷² Fascists and Communists alike saw their movements in opposition to the rapaciousness of unchecked British-American capitalism.

Despite this common ground, however, Fascism and Communism were miles apart and French society was visibly divided between supporters of these two movements. Nowhere was this division more prominent than among Catholics. Catholics, who formed a substantial part of the French population at this time, had been ostracized

⁷² Tony Judt, *Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals, 1944-1956* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 193.

from Communism early on due to the belief that Catholicism was part of the old order that Communism was destined to replace. As a result, many Catholics favored Fascism, believing that they would be brutally oppressed under Communist rule. However, as Hellman asserts: "It was the new Communist policy toward Catholics, enunciated most spectacularly in Maurice Thorez's radio broadcast offer of an 'outstretched hand' to Catholics on April 17 [1936], which forced those Catholics who took the gesture seriously to examine the basic assumptions of Catholic-Communist relations in France."⁷³ Many Catholics held beliefs that strongly resonated with Marxist ideals, prominent among them a belief in social justice for those of the lower classes. Hellman's essay details the varying and intricate views of Catholics at this time, some of which helped lead Catholics into the Communist ranks after this announcement.⁷⁴

Malraux was an atheist and experienced none of the concerns held by Catholics. He gravitated more and more towards the extreme Left in this conflict especially after Hitler's rise to power. He was not alone. Kriegel lists the number of Communist members from 1921 to 1966 which reveals some interesting trends. In 1933, the year of Hitler's assumption of power, French Communist Party (PCF) membership was only at 40,000 members. The following year the figure increased to 86,902 members. In 1936, the year that the Popular Front, a political alliance of Moderates, Socialists, and Communists, came into power, membership augmented substantially to 280,000. The following year it reached 328,000 members.⁷⁵ These figures suggest that a growing fear of Fascism provoked a growth in Communist membership, but several other reasons pushed this

⁷³ John Hellman, "French 'Left-Catholics' and Communism in the Nineteen-thirties," *Church History* 45, no. 4 (1976): 508.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Annie Kriegel, *The French Communists: Profile of a People*, trans. Elaine P. Halperin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 32.

trend. Certainly the economic uncertainty of the period when the Great Depression spread around the world helped raise membership levels. Additionally, these increases may be attributable to increased Catholic participation in the party after Thorez' announcement. It may also be a result of the fervor created by the Popular Front, inspiring those to believe in Communist rule when it was once thought unrealistic.

One cannot deny the influential role of writers and intellectuals who argued on the behalf of Communism during this time. In Malraux' own journey towards the extreme Left of French politics he sought out intellectual models upon which he could form his own thought. Logically, someone who became fascinated with Communism would be won over by the central economic thesis of Marx's *Communist Manifesto*. Todd attests, however, that Malraux was not very critical of the economic foundations upon which Marxism is founded. He states, "It matters little to him [Malraux] whether or not Lenin, Trotsky, or Stalin aligns himself with Marx. He accepts without digging too deeply, a certain amount of Marx's economic and social analysis. But he has no time to discuss economics."⁷⁶ The Communist ideal tempted Malraux more due to the values that an economically egalitarian society would foster, such as fraternity and solidarity. These themes dominated Malraux' works of this time including *Le Temps du mépris* and *L'Espoir* where economic discussions were absent.

Leftist leaders distinguished themselves by their personal intrigue and the results that they could exact. Malraux met with Leon Trotsky while he was in exile in France in 1933 despite the fact that Trotsky was becoming increasingly unpopular among French Communists. Malraux sympathized with the exiled revolutionary, but ultimately concluded that Trotsky was not a worthy choice to follow. As Todd explains, "To him

⁷⁶ Todd, *Malraux*, 132.

[Malraux], even with its ‘faults,’ the USSR is the only possible ally against German Nazism and Italian fascism [...] In Malraux’s eyes [Trotsky] is a modern revolutionary with no revolution [...] His followers are a few thousand stubborn militants, persevering but often poor and inefficient.”⁷⁷ Although Trotsky was a compelling and tragic figure, he ultimately lacked a movement with enough cohesion to stop the threat posed by Hitler and Mussolini. Malraux did not claim that Stalin’s control of the Soviet Union was either theoretically or practically superior to Trotsky’s ideas, nor did he critique Trotsky on his own beliefs. Rather he determined that the USSR had more of a chance to stop Fascism and that its defects had to be tolerated.

Malraux defended the Soviet Union consistently during this period. Although never officially a Communist, Malraux was a fierce if unpredictable ally of the PCF. He and other intellectuals often cast a blind eye to the problems within the Soviet Union and reduced the severity of Soviet depredations when pressed for more comment. When in doubt these intellectuals would compare the severity of the USSR with that of Hitler’s Germany, highlighting the best in the former and the worst in the latter. Steel clarifies: “Ainsi, les intellectuels de confiance, telles Nizan, Aragon et Malraux, vont s’atteler à une campagne idéologique qui va transformer l’Union Soviétique en la patrie de l’homme nouveau et du socialisme triomphant.”⁷⁸ (Thus, the trustworthy intellectuals, such as Nizan, Aragon, and Malraux, are going to start out on an ideological campaign that will transform the Soviet Union into the fatherland of the new man and of a triumphant socialism). The language that Steel emphasizes, of the “new man” and the “triumphant,” paint the picture of a forward looking society that has cast off the old through struggle.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 132-133.

⁷⁸ James Steel, “‘Staline l’Humaniste’ ou l’Édification d’un Mythe,” *Revue Française de Science Politique* 36, no. 5 (1986): 635.

This image may have resonated with these French thinkers who would have been able to imagine the Bolshevik Revolution in a tradition similar to that of the French Revolution. Steel gives an example of the exaggerated dichotomy between Nazi Germany and the idealized Soviet Republic. He quotes Paul Nizan, another French Communist supporter: “Deux conceptions du monde, deux visions de la société, résumées par les ‘bûchers de Berlin et les bibliothèques de Moscou!’”⁷⁹ (Two conceptions of the world, two visions of society, summarized as the “butchers of Berlin and the libraries of Moscow!”) In these terms, the choice between Nazism and Communism was an easy one to make.

An element of the PCF’s electoral success was due to the support of literary celebrities such as Malraux. Yet the support of intellectuals was always a tenuous one for the Soviet Union. Bell argues that the foundation of Marxism (presupposing an absolute socio-economic truth) led the Soviet Union to command absolute control over the intellectual to reaffirm this assertion. He claims that, “Because of the Party’s [Lenin’s party] claim to sovereignty over the truth, infallible ‘scientific’ socialism, a clash between the Party and free intellectuals was always a possibility.”⁸⁰ This attempt to mold all thought into one absolute truth was a sticking point for many French intellectuals. In 1934 Malraux and other international speakers were invited to speak at a conference on literature and art in the Soviet Union where it was professed by Gorky that social realism would be the only acceptable art form for Communists. When it was Malraux’ turn to speak, he lambasted the idea of limiting his artistic purview. Todd quotes, “He drives the point home: ‘If writers are the engineers of the soul [essential Stalinist expression], do not forget that the highest function of an engineer is to invent. . . . Art is not a submission,

⁷⁹ Ibid, 644.

⁸⁰ David S. Bell, “Communism and French intellectuals,” *Modern & Contemporary France* NS1, no. 1 (1993): 29.

it is a conquest.”⁸¹ In this speech Malraux not only refused to follow the creative dictums of the Kremlin but argued to a large audience that the logic behind these commands was flawed. Todd notes that, “The clear allusion to Stalin is an incendiary bomb. For a Soviet citizen, it would constitute an offense punishable by imprisonment.”⁸² This scene thus clearly demonstrates the delicate nature of the Soviet-Intellectual alliance. Although leaders within the USSR needed intellectual defenders to help spread the Revolution, they wanted to have authority over these intellectuals. However, the Communist authority would have to sacrifice some control over the artistic work or else suffer embarrassing setbacks such as open chastisement from important figures such as Malraux.

Undoubtedly this Soviet authoritarianism over artistic creation was one of the reasons that Malraux never officially became a Communist. Malraux learned from the conference that he needed to maintain a level of independence or else he would be bound by Soviet designs. Moscow had also learned from the incident, and thus only placed a half-hearted confidence in him. Todd cites Johannes Becher, a German Communist organizer who said, “Malraux is a great success for us. Not only is he close to us in his works, but he is a very good organizer” but, unfortunately, “It is almost impossible to change the ideological opinions of people like Malraux.”⁸³ Though imperfect, this relationship worked to the advantage of both groups. Malraux was able to maintain his autonomy while the USSR was able to maintain distance from the more shocking ideas that Malraux expressed.

Nevertheless, Malraux continued to argue in favor of the USSR after this confrontation. He was even willing to compromise on some of his principles for the

⁸¹ Todd, *Malraux*, 146. Brackets in original.

⁸² Ibid, 146.

⁸³ Ibid, 167.

benefit of the myth. Todd refers to an interview given by Malraux sometime after the conference where he said, “For an artist, what is important is not the freedom to do absolutely anything but the freedom to do what you want.”⁸⁴ Despite having earlier rebelled against this curtailing of the artists imagination, Malraux now argued that absolute freedom was unnecessary. Steel cites another interview given by Malraux in 1935 where the writer avows that “l’URSS revendique la dignité la plus haute qui ait été revendiquée depuis des siècles et qu’elle seule a le droit de revendiquer, à savoir : la défense de l’homme.”⁸⁵ (The USSR reclaims the highest dignity that was ever claimed through the centuries and that it alone has the right to reclaim, to know: the defense of man). In these interviews Malraux fell back into the old pattern of ignoring or excusing Soviet atrocities and exaggerating the situation within Russia. Despite his flare up at the conference in 1934, Malraux did not feel the need to abandon Communism. The emerging war in Spain would ensure that he stayed in the Far Left’s ranks for a while longer.

Bientôt ce sera l’action, sang contre sang⁸⁶

Malraux’ prediction of an inevitable conflict proved prescient as war in Spain broke out in 1936. The recent election of the Frente Popular in Spain in 1936 provoked a military backlash from the Right. Right wing forces, led by General Francisco Franco, threatened the Republican government’s hold of the country. The conflict soon became internationalized as Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy began to supply the insurgent Spanish troops with planes, tanks, and ammunition, while the Soviet Union did the same

⁸⁴ Todd, *Malraux*, 168.

⁸⁵ Steel, “‘Staline l’Humaniste.’” 640.

⁸⁶ Lacouture, *Malraux: Itinéraires d’un...*, 45. “Soon there will be action, blood against blood,” Malraux quoted by Jean Lacouture from a writers meeting in 1932.

for the Republican government. Leaders in France, England, and the United States, though sympathetic to the Spanish Republicans because they represented another democracy, felt that directly supplying the Republicans would lead to an exacerbation of already tense relations between the fascist powers on the continent that would draw them into a war for which they were ill prepared. These leaders were also concerned about the association of Communists with Spanish Republicans and thus did not want to actively support what they feared to be Communist influence outside of the Soviet Union.

Malraux refused to remain non-committal in this conflict. He planned to use his prestige and his financial capital in order to support the Republican government. The Spanish government particularly needed modern airplanes to form an air defense. As Todd states, “Back in Paris on the twenty-eighth [of 1936], Malraux has an idea: to buy these essential airplanes and recruit pilots. He telephones and meets politicians and announces that he is going to fight in Spain.”⁸⁷ Lacouture estimates that through his dealings Malraux was able to obtain more than thirty planes for the movement and that, “He had got permission to form and command a squadron of foreign combatants that was to be known first as the *España*. The Spanish government generously granted him the rank of *coronel* on account of the efforts he had already made in the sphere of mobilization and equipment.”⁸⁸ Malraux, who had never served in the armed forces in France, let alone in Spain, led an air division for the Republic’s desperate defense against the forces of Fascism.

Although Malraux embraced the title of *coronel*, he did not pretend to be an airman nor a master military strategist. Malraux saw himself as someone who could bring

⁸⁷ Todd, *Malraux*, 183.

⁸⁸ Jean Lacouture, *André Malraux*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), 240.

the resources and morale necessary to win this epic struggle. As Lacouture states, “Il est vrai qu’il ne savait pas piloter, mais il n’est pas nécessaire de savoir piloter ou monter à cheval pour conduire des hommes. C’est ainsi que Malraux a insufflé à quelques dizaines d’entre eux [les volontaires] une passion pour le combat.”⁸⁹ (It’s true that he didn’t know how to fly, but it’s not necessary to know how to fly or to ride a horse in order to direct people. It is thus that Malraux instilled in some of them [the volunteers] a passion for combat). None of this is to say that Malraux did not actively fight while in Spain or to denigrate his military service. But through his position as a leader, Malraux was a more powerful inspirational figure, a role that was strengthened by his charisma and ability to express himself clearly. Todd highlights his different roles, insisting that, “He [Malraux] can be mocking with his men or friendly and familiar, playing the Parisian lad and imitating old-fashioned career officers. Or distant and mysterious, disappearing off to meet with Spanish ministers or diplomats or the Soviet ambassador [...]. Next minute he’s talking Plato with Nicolas Chiaramonte, a bomber and gunner.”⁹⁰ In this way, Malraux established a reputation as an important, intellectual comrade in arms, acting in the manner he thought befitting a leftist military organization.

In 1937 Malraux left Europe for the United States in order to elicit more support for the republican government in Spain. As Vance explains, “A l’invitation du ministre des affaires étrangères Albarez del Vayo, Malraux va faire une tournée de propagande en Amérique du Nord sous les auspices du Medical Bureau of the American Friends of Spanish Democracy. Son but: obtenir pour la République Espagnole des fonds et des

⁸⁹ Lacouture, *Malraux: Itinéraires d’un...*, 54.

⁹⁰ Todd, *Malraux*, 195.

secours sanitaires.”⁹¹ (At the invitation of foreign affairs minister Albarez del Vayo, Malraux is going to leave on a propaganda tour in North America under the auspices of the Medical Bureau of the American Friends of Spanish Democracy. His goal: to obtain for the Spanish Republic funding and sanitary aid). His mission was entirely private in nature. As Lacouture reveals, “when he [Malraux] went to Washington there was no official representative to receive him, and there was even some question of withdrawing his entry visa, on the grounds that he was a revolutionary ‘who threatened the security of the United States.’”⁹² Even though Franklin Roosevelt was now in charge of the White House, his administration did not yet want to break away from the policy of non-intervention for which there would be little public support.

Malraux did not curb his message or his tone even though he was there only tenuously. Vance asserts that “Malraux condamnait le principe de non-intervention: le gouvernement royaliste avait besoin de l’aide des démocraties pour écraser le fascisme dont les agressions rendaient une guerre mondiale imminente.”⁹³ (Malraux condemned the principle of non-intervention: the royalist government needed the help of the democracies in order to crush Fascism whose aggressions were rendering a world war imminent). Although provocative, Malraux knew how to evoke sympathy from his audience. He drew on the emotional remarkably well, going into particular detail about Fascist atrocities committed in the war. Vance cites one scene that Malraux described of a recently bombed city street, strewn with death and destruction.⁹⁴ Public opinion did not widely change in the United States because of his actions, especially since Malraux was

⁹¹ Christine Vance, “André Malraux Aux Etats-Unis (1937), *French American Review* 3, no. 3 (1979): 122.

⁹² Lacouture, *André Malraux*, 270.

⁹³ Vance, “André Malraux Aux Etats-Unis...” 123.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 124.

generally speaking to crowds already in favor of supporting the Spanish government. In spite of this, Vance reports that these tactics met with success and that Malraux was able to raise a lot of funds for the cause.

In November of 1937 Malraux met with another great success with his latest novel, *L'Espoir*. The book, translated as *Man's Hope* in English, follows a group of pilots serving an air squadron in the Spanish Civil War. Unlike *La Condition humaine*, *L'Espoir* is based closely on Malraux' actual experience in Spain. This is not to say that the novel is autobiographical, but that it is founded on experienced events, whereas *La condition humaine* was largely inventive. The novel is easily his largest fictional work, nearing 600 pages in length. It is full of the sort of brotherly spirit that Malraux saw in this Left wing struggle. Just a few pages into the text the narrator informs: "L'auto repartit parmi les tapes sur l'épaule, les poings levés et les *salud*: la nuit n'était que fraternité."⁹⁵ (The car started off amongst claps on the shoulder, raised fists and *saluds*: the night was nothing but fraternity). The book certainly celebrates many of the themes that Malraux associated with the Left, as is shown in this passage. Malraux himself once said, "Tout le monde peut aimer *La condition humaine*. Pour *L'espoir*, il faut être de gauche."⁹⁶ (Everyone can like *La Condition humaine*. For *L'Espoir*, you have to be on the Left).

While the book does celebrate the Left wing battle against the fascists, it is not a one-dimensional view of the Left. Malraux makes particular use of the character Alvear to question some of the central principles of this political inclination, Communism in particular. At one point he professes:

⁹⁵ André Malraux, *L'espoir*, (Gallimard: Maleshebres, France, 1937), 19.

⁹⁶ Lacouture, *Malraux: Itinéraire d'un...*, 38. Quoted in text.

La révolution est chargée de résoudre ses problèmes, et non les nôtres. Les nôtres ne dépendent que de nous. [...] Miguel a vécu de son mieux, --j'entends : le plus noblement possible – dans l'Espagne monarchique qu'il haïssait. Il eût vécu dans une société moins mauvaise. Difficilement, peut-être. Aucun État, aucune structure sociale ne crée la noblesse de caractère, ni la qualité de l'esprit; tout au plus pouvons nous attendre des conditions propices. Et c'est beaucoup.⁹⁷
(The revolution is charged with resolving its problems, not ours. Ours depend solely upon us. Miguel lived his best – I hear: the most nobly possible – in monarchical Spain that he hated. He had lived in a society less bad. Difficultly, perhaps. No state, no social structure creates nobleness of character, or quality of the spirit; the most that we can hope for are favorable conditions. And that's a lot).

This passage draws into question the nature of the Revolution. In this vision, it is not meant to solve all of humanity's problems, and indeed, seems incapable of doing so.

Alvear affirms that no state can cause a "nobleness of character" and that the same human problems exist everywhere. The most that one can hope for "are favorable conditions" which he acknowledges is, "a lot." This however contradicts the idea that the Revolution could bring about a utopian society. For Malraux, utopia was not possible and even the favorable conditions were flawed. What is not said in this passage is that the Revolution is a bad means of bringing about these favorable conditions. In the Spanish Civil War Malraux still saw Communism as the best weapon against Fascism. This would change with the much larger conflict that was approaching.

War comes to France

The end of *L'Espoir* predicted an optimistic end to the Spanish Civil War, with the Republic withstanding the Fascist onslaught. Yet on February 27, 1939 France recognized Francisco Franco as the legitimate ruler of Spain. The year prior to this France signed the disastrous Munich Agreement with Great Britain, Germany, and Italy. This accord allowed Germany to take possession of Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland and

⁹⁷ Malraux, *L'Espoir*, 466.

reversed France's earlier commitment to stand with Czechoslovakia against German aggression. On August 23rd of 1939, Leftist hopes were again dashed when the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression treaty with Germany.⁹⁸ Even though British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and French Prime Minister Édouard Daladier were well received after the Munich talks for having preserved the peace at home, these large German gains would be troubling if Germany should go to war with the Western powers. At the same time, neither France nor England seemed to be fully prepared for a large-scale war. France did not have any strong allies to help fend off Hitler should he attack and this added to the uncertainty of the times.

The intellectual reactions to these events were varied. Some Communists, such as Aragon, remained loyal to the Soviet Union despite the signing of the Motov-Ribbentrop Pact. Others became disenchanted with the Russian state, seeing the Pact as the ultimate betrayal to the common European cause against Fascism. Malraux had a mixed reaction. Never a hard line loyalist to the Soviet Union, he did not vow to honor this pact made by two foreign powers. Malraux, however, did not denounce the Soviet Union publicly for their arrangement either. As Lacouture states, "however severely he viewed the pact and what it involved in the short term for the French masses, Malraux – in whom one can detect a rather abstract internationalism giving place to a more concrete patriotism – refused to make any public condemnation of it."⁹⁹ One can extrapolate from this analysis that this decision pushed Malraux to think in more national terms rather than international ones. In *L'Espoir*, Malraux lauded the international volunteers from around the world

⁹⁸ The U.S.S.R signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop despite their opposing regimes and ideologies in part because they did not feel confident that the France and Great Britain would support them after the Munich Agreement.

⁹⁹ Lacouture, *André Malraux*, 287.

who came to Spain to stop the forces of evil. He closely associated this defense with an international spirit supposedly fostered by the Communists. Yet for all of the aid and moral support offered in the Spanish conflict, the Soviets had already decided to not engage Germany should the latter attack France. This decision did not disillusion Malraux about any of the merits that he still saw in the Soviet Union. Malraux still believed in the international ideal, but he no longer relied upon it.

Malraux' time as a soldier in the war was very short. He was drafted on April 14, in 1940, "as a dragoon into the 41st Dépôt de Cavalerie Motorisée near Provins, fifty miles southeast of Paris. [...] It is, at first, a 'phony war': an irritatingly quiet period, making barracks life monotonous when one is stuck in one place."¹⁰⁰ As the German invasion progressed he was in a few fights before his unit was captured. By June 17th of the same year Maréchal Pétain had signed an armistice with Hitler bringing an end to official French military combat. For the rest of the war, France entered a dark and dramatic period of its history. Charles de Gaulle flew to London and launched his appeal for resistance on the mainland. Many took up the call working with (and against) de Gaulle to recover their country from the Germans. Many other French people collaborated with the Germans, seeking advantages in the new occupied system. The majority simply tried to live out their lives as normally as possible amid the war time drama.

Malraux was one of those who simply tried to live his life for as long as he could. He moved to various places on the Mediterranean coast in the so-called "free zone." He lived with his mistress, Josette Clotis, having abandoned Clara and his daughter Florence a few years before. Malraux wrote and edited works during this time while ignoring

¹⁰⁰ Todd, *Malraux*, 249.

many calls for him to join the Resistance. Malraux held no love for the Nazis who he still equated with evil, yet he did not believe that the various Resistance movements posed any serious threats to the Germans. As Todd states: “To a succession of visitors [...] Malraux poses the same question: ‘Do you have money, and weapons?’ Where are the planes and the tanks? The Americans and the Russians have them: ‘serious’ circumstances that implicitly explain Malraux’s refusal to get involved.”¹⁰¹ Todd is too critical here because the lack of resources was a legitimate concern for those considering joining the Resistance. Although many important missions involving sabotage and passing information would not have required much military equipment, large scale combat demanded it. That being said, this sort of inaction does seem bizarre if one recalls Malraux’ valorization of combat in his works and in Spain. Lacouture answers this first by explaining that Malraux had tried to pass a message on to London via a contact of his, but “When he received no reply, he supposed that, like Pierre Cot, the former Air Minister of the Blum government, and a close friend of the ‘Reds’, he had been rejected by the leader of ‘Free France’ on account of his political commitments.”¹⁰² This did not end up being the case, but it helps explain why Malraux did not act at the beginning of the occupation.

Malraux still delayed joining any Resistance group. Both Todd and Lacouture agree on another reason that likely factored into Malraux’ thinking. They both acknowledge that the military defeat in France was only the latest in a long string of personal and public defeats for Malraux. In Indochina, his hopes were dashed with a supposedly sympathetic new governor who continued acts of repression, in Spain the

¹⁰¹ Todd, *Malraux*, 261.

¹⁰² Lacouture, *André Malraux*, 295.

Republican forces were crushed by Franco's armies, and France was being governed by the Fascist forces that he so much detested. What neither of these writers consider, however, is that these defeats probably left Malraux feeling impotent to change the world around him. Even if overcoming these situations is exactly what Malraux had written about up to this point, at this moment he appeared to be defeated.¹⁰³

Ultimately, it would be a very personal connection to the Resistance that would draw Malraux into it. In March of 1944 Claude and Roland, Malraux' half-brothers, were captured by the Gestapo.¹⁰⁴ They had been active members of the French Resistance up until this point and it is at this moment that Malraux decided to join as well. His role within the Resistance was complicated. As he was not a very skilled combatant, Malraux mostly tried to unify different Resistance factions. Malraux had a couple of advantages in this role. As a latecomer into the Resistance, he was not embroiled in the existing disagreements among the groups. Furthermore, he was passable a left-wing author, but was never officially a Communist. This allowed him, theoretically, to communicate effectively with different groups along the political spectrum. His final advantage was that he was a very talented storyteller. As Todd explains, "Colonel Berger [Malraux' alias] tells them [Resistance leaders] (and himself) that he is inspecting these groups. A genius with words, he has a brilliant idea: he invents an 'Inter-Allied Staff Headquarters' for the region: his own. [...] Malraux-Berger, like a king of France in search of a kingdom and troops, goes from château to château."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Todd discusses Malraux' sense of defeat from pages 261-262 and again briefly on 264. Lacouture discusses the same subject on page 299.

¹⁰⁴ Todd, *Malraux*, 276.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 280.

From this invented base of operations Malraux was able to craft something real. In addition to providing some organization and cohesion to various Resistance elements, Malraux ended up forming his own unit that he helped lead.¹⁰⁶ This group, eventually known as the Alsace-Lorraine brigade, served admirably in some of the latter actions of the war, including the re-capturing of Strasbourg. Lacouture avows that Malraux also served with courage, though he was not a military genius. As he says, “Je dirais qu’il s’agissait là surtout de témérité. Il était utile à sa brigade, avait du prestige, était capable de mener les gens au combat par son charisma et sa personnalité. [...] Un chef qui prend de tels risques galvanise ses soldats.”¹⁰⁷ (I would say that it has to do above all with temerity. He was useful to his brigade, was prestigious, was capable of leading people into combat with his charisma and his personality. [...] A commander who takes such risks galvanizes his soldiers).

Although he made great efforts to organize these troops, Malraux’ biggest impact during this period was political rather than martial. On January 23, 1945, Malraux attended the Mouvement de Libération Nationale (MLN), a conference established to link the resistance movements in France. Todd explains that, “The Communists [...] want to melt down all the movements into one. The resulting physical proximity should bring about an ideological osmosis and, indirectly, obedience to the Soviet leaders.”¹⁰⁸ Although this is an oversimplification of the situation, as it is doubtful that all of the Communist maquis groups were united in a Soviet led ideology, there was an attempt to reorganize the groups to favor these groups. Malraux sensed the Communist move to

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 290.

¹⁰⁷ Lacouture, *Malraux: Itinéraire d’un...*, 71.

¹⁰⁸ Todd, *Malraux*, 299.

seize power and when he spoke attempted to stop it. Lacouture quotes Malraux' speech at the conference:

We must carry out a profound reformation of the spirit of the movement. The Communist Party for example is not an organism dedicated to persuasion, but an organism dedicated to action. And we here today must not forget that we too are an organism dedicated to action [...] Although I believe that the overwhelming majority of us is against the idea of a merger, I also believe that this same majority wishes to find the point on which a unity of action on the part of all the Resistance groups could be established. [...] So here and now we must say together, without illusions: 'A new resistance is beginning.' And I say to all of you who were capable, when you had nothing, of making the first resistance, will you, yes or no – and I say yes – be capable of doing the same again when you have everything in your hands?¹⁰⁹

Malraux here makes some clear and bold stances against the proposed Communist merger. He acknowledges that the body must resemble them as a group dedicated to action, but calls them to form a new Resistance to this group's proposed plan of organization. It is also clear from his words that Malraux was seeking a wider base of political participation. Although he had maintained before the war that Communism and the Soviet Union were the best weapons against Fascism (and Communists did prove themselves to be one of the strongest branches of the Resistance), several other groups emerged inside and outside of France that were pivotal in the country's liberation. Perhaps it was due to his time as a unifier in the Resistance or perhaps due to his reflections on the pre-war divisions in France that led Malraux to believe that the country could not maintain itself without an attempt to reconcile the extreme poles of French society. In *L'espoir*, Malraux depicted a Leftist alliance against their Fascist enemies, but he now saw a post-war future that would require participation beyond this allied group of heroes. Malraux' statement was well received as Lacouture reports: "The congress voted

¹⁰⁹ Lacouture, *André Malraux*, 342.

for the ‘Malraux motion’ against the merger of the MLN and the FN by 250 votes to 119.”¹¹⁰

Picking up the Pieces

By May of 1945 Germany surrendered to Allied forces. Even though France’s external enemy had been eliminated, the mix of internal conflicts that had existed before the war continued to exist after it. These schisms grew in different ways as a result of the war as well. Although many intellectuals turned away from the Communist Party after the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, it grew in size and strength after the war due to the undeniable courage of the Communist Resistance and to the Soviet sacrifice made at the battle of Stalingrad. Many others identified themselves with de Gaulle’s movement and saw a larger nationalist appeal with it. The issues that existed before the war became more complicated because of these movements.

What France needed was a unity of purpose, and this is what Malraux advocated in his speech to the MLN. In many respects, this is also what Malraux needed in his life. As was mentioned, the unifying spirit of internationalism that was advocated in *L’espoir* was so optimistic because Malraux believed that it alone could restore order and justice to the world. Yet after suffering many defeats, Malraux rested on the coast during German occupation. Acting as Colonel Berger in World War II and watching the victorious reclamation of France helped re-build Malraux’ confidence, but Malraux had learned from his losses, too. Malraux had learned that while acting was heroic, and acting within the bonds of fraternity was more so, this was not sufficient to lead the world. This direction required a plurality of action and the forming of a consensus. This realization

¹¹⁰ Lacouture, *André Malraux*, 343.

formed the basis of his speech at the MLN and drew him towards the ambitions of Charles de Gaulle.

On the General's Right:

1945-1969

A Different Sort of Combat

At the end of the war Malraux became a devoted Gaullist. Between the Germanic-Soviet pact and his experience among the Resistance, Malraux lost faith in the Soviet Union and the PCF. He became more and more convinced that de Gaulle was the only person capable of reestablishing France to its former position. De Gaulle was seeking to firmly establish control of power in France and to do that he needed the assistance of as many writers/intellectuals as possible. Malraux' novels which valorized the heroic and promoted a spirit of action by which de Gaulle hoped to govern seemed to be a natural fit for de Gaulle. It was this mutual attraction that brought the two together on July 18, 1945.

This meeting was the first time that the two had encountered each other and it gave them an opportunity to examine one another. Malraux reveals many of the key exchanges of this interview that highlight the values of the two men in his *Antimémoires*. While explaining his activity in Spain Malraux says: "D'abord je me suis engagé dans un combat pour, disons, la justice sociale. Peut-être plus exactement pour donner aux hommes leur chance."¹¹¹ (First of all I engaged myself in a combat for, let us say, social justice. Perhaps more exactly, in order to give people their chance). This pleased de Gaulle who needed a writer who could help his government appeal to left wing voters in a different manner than the Communists. Malraux' past working for social justice would calm those who feared that de Gaulle was a re-casted fascist. The phrasing, of giving someone their chance, reformulated this in a sufficiently Gaullist way. De Gaulle asked Malraux what he thought about France's position between the United States and the

¹¹¹ André Malraux, *Antimémoires Volume 1*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), 125.

Soviet Union. Malraux attests: “Quand je suis revenu à Paris, Albert Camus m’a demandé: ‘Devrons-nous choisir un jour entre la Russie et l’Amérique?’ Pour moi, ce n’est pas entre la Russie et l’Amérique, c’est entre la Russie et la France.”¹¹² (When I came back to Paris, Albert Camus asked me: “Must we choose one day between Russia and America?” For me, it is not between Russia and America, it is between Russia and France).

This last pronouncement resonated perfectly with de Gaulle’s vision of France in the post-World War II world. Judt notes that “France had been in steady decline at least since 1871, a grim trajectory marked by military defeat, diplomatic humiliation, colonial retreat, economic deterioration and domestic instability. De Gaulle’s goal was to close out the era of French decay. ‘All my life,’ he wrote in his war memoirs, ‘I have had a certain idea of France.’”¹¹³ De Gaulle thus sought to reclaim France’s glory and did not want to be made the pawn of either the United States or the Soviet Union. Part of this vision came from de Gaulle’s war experience, during which Churchill and Roosevelt often treated him as a minor player and a political opportunist. For de Gaulle, France possessed its own distinct and long-lived culture that did not need an example after which to model itself. In their interview, Malraux won de Gaulle’s approval when he spoke of the nation. As Malraux states: “Dans le domaine de l’Histoire le premier fait capital des vingt dernières années, à mes yeux, c’est le primat de la Nation. Différent de ce que fut le nationalisme : la particularité, non la supériorité.”¹¹⁴ (In the domain of History, Malraux continues, the first capital fact of the last twenty years, in my eyes, is the primacy of the Nation. Different from what was nationalism: particularity, not superiority). De Gaulle

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 290.

¹¹⁴ Malraux, *Antimémoires*, 126.

undoubtedly agreed with Malraux' analysis. He wanted to promote the French nation as a distinct and independent entity, but he did not see himself as a fascist. He was interested in preserving France, not in crushing what was distinct across Europe.

This discussion assured Malraux a place in de Gaulle's movement that would later become the *Rassemblement du Peuple Français* (RPF or Union of the French People). Malraux took on the role of the "propaganda organizer"¹¹⁵ and began to assemble the party's rallies. These rallies were designed to propagate the message of the new party in order to gain a majority in the French parliament. Todd attests that when Malraux spoke out, he mainly addressed the Left and denounced the Communists. As he states, "His stance against communism appears 'visceral' to commentators on the Left: his antifascism has turned into anti-Sovietism. [...] There's nothing quite like an old fellow traveler from the PCF, unless it's a disenchanted card carrying member, to metamorphose into a hardened adversary."¹¹⁶ Malraux balanced these attacks with praise for de Gaulle's more liberal principles; principles that he claimed were more practical than the PCF's. According to Todd: "Everywhere he goes to speak, Malraux calls for a genuine State, genuine social justice, genuine hope."¹¹⁷ Malraux could have easily been less involved in the movement, merely lending his name and its particular sense of celebrity to the cause. Instead he took the position of a real politician. Todd asserts that "No other French writer at the time commits himself as far in public. [...] Camus and Sartre make political speeches, but almost in spite of themselves [...] Malraux is to be found not in the civilian zone but up at the front."¹¹⁸ Todd here forgets to mention Aragon's activity on behalf of

¹¹⁵ Todd, *Malraux*, 323.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 326.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

the PCF, but nevertheless the devotion demonstrated by Malraux to this political cause was very fervent.

On November 21, 1945, Malraux was rewarded for this activity and joined de Gaulle's cabinet as the Minister of Information.¹¹⁹ Lacouture clarifies that "his two main tasks were first to communicate to public opinion the decisions and intentions adopted or expressed in the meetings of the Council of Ministers [...] and, secondly, to allocate the paper rations among the various newspapers."¹²⁰ This was not one of the more powerful positions in the cabinet, and this was an executive branch that did not exert a lot of power in the Fourth Republic. The Fourth Republic, the system of government that was established after the fall of the Vichy regime, gave the most power to the legislature. Post-war France feared a powerful executive after the autocracy witnessed in World War II, but this system was weak due to parliamentary deadlocks. The three largest parties in the parliament (the PCF, SFIO, and MRP) agreed to govern together through *tripartisme*, but these groups had such different goals that the solution was an imperfect one. Malraux questioned the organization of the Fourth Republic. Lacouture reports that Malraux "was in the thick of discussions on the Constitution and proposed a presidential-type system, directly inspired by that of the United States, in which the head of the executive would not be responsible to parliament."¹²¹ Only with a strong executive could France hope to bring itself through the many crises involved in a reconstruction effort. Blum, the former socialist President of the Republic, agreed that parliamentarianism was imperfect,¹²² but he could not foresee more concessions of his party to de Gaulle's government. Despite

¹¹⁹ Christine Clerc, *De Gaulle – Malraux: Une histoire d'amour*, (Paris: NiL, 2008), 85.

¹²⁰ Lacouture, *André Malraux*, 360.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*,

¹²² Clerc, *De Gaulle—Malraux*, 94.

the fact that Blum had good relations with de Gaulle and encouraged Malraux to join de Gaulle's government, he "ne croit qu'en une démocratie de compromis."¹²³ (only believes in a democracy of compromise).

De Gaulle also yearned for more power for the executive branch and thus decided to make a bold political move. On January 20, 1946, only two months after the start of his government, de Gaulle announced to his cabinet that he was retiring. Lacouture notes that de Gaulle viewed this move as a political maneuver and that he expected that the Assembly would plead for his return.¹²⁴ Unfortunately for de Gaulle, this would not be the case. Malraux was cast out of the cabinet after de Gaulle's departure and regained his life as a private citizen. Malraux had attached himself to de Gaulle whom the writer deemed a "man of destiny,"¹²⁵ but de Gaulle had abandoned the government and the RPF effectively stopped its activities in 1953.¹²⁶ Malraux very likely wondered whether de Gaulle would ever reenter politics, and, if so, whether he would be capable of reclaiming the French leadership. The answer to this question came in 1958 while Malraux was in Austria, unaware of events unfolding in Algeria.¹²⁷ On May 15th, French military forces in Algeria called upon de Gaulle to form a government, hoping that the famed General would preserve Algeria as a French possession. Judt recounts: "On May 28th [newly installed] President René Coty called upon De Gaulle to form a government. Without even pretending to demur, De Gaulle took office on June 1st and was voted full powers by

¹²³ Ibid, 95.

¹²⁴ Lacouture, *André Malraux*, 362.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 364. Quoting a letter from Malraux to François Mauriac.

¹²⁶ Todd, *Malraux*, 332.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 343.

the National Assembly the following day.”¹²⁸ De Gaulle engaged in what amounted to a coup and took over as the head of the government.

Malraux approached the General after his seizure of power and became integrated into the new government. This was a contradiction from Malraux’ past actions. The same man who had railed against colonial injustices in Indochina now supported a man brought to power on the principle that he would keep French Algeria indefinitely. His actions, however, do contain an internal logic that explains this change of policy. First of all, Malraux lived through the governance of the Fourth Republic during this time. As was discussed earlier, this system reduced the role of the executive and was only as efficient so long as the competing parties could form a working consensus. During this interim period before de Gaulle’s departure and reappearance, the Republic also suffered from the external pressure of two wars: Indochina and Algeria. The stress from these two conflicts tested the limits of this system and likely left Malraux more convinced of the necessity for a strong executive figure.

In addition to this frustration, Malraux already had a history of supporting figures that he believed would be effective leaders. As has been shown, Malraux supported the Soviet Union for several years even in the face of great contradictions to his principles. He resisted some Soviet ideas that he found distasteful, but on the whole he supported Stalin’s regime because he believed it to be the most likely power to resist fascist machinations. In the same vein, Malraux identified de Gaulle as the best leader to reconstruct France after its crushing defeat. For Malraux, this “man of destiny” had already liberated Paris and was determined to give France the clear direction that it lacked under the Fourth Republic. Essentially, Malraux esteemed that de Gaulle,

¹²⁸ Judt, *Postwar*, 287.

whatever his faults, was the best choice available and therefore had to be supported. Any problems that his administration had would best be resolved by that same administration. In this choice, Malraux merged his future with that of de Gaulle.

Malraux the Minister

The role that Malraux adopted in the new government was vague. Lacouture explains that, “Malraux found himself ‘ministre délégué à la présidence du Conseil’, a sort of Minister without Portfolio, with special responsibility for information as in November 1945, and for ‘the development and promotion of French culture.’”¹²⁹ Once again, Malraux had been barred from the essential ministries and in this instance given an ill defined title and responsibilities. This position essentially called on Malraux to do whatever de Gaulle wanted him to do. In this role, Malraux served as the mouthpiece of the government to spread “la voix de la France” (the voice of France).¹³⁰ He first addressed the government’s policy in Algeria. Algeria was a particularly important issue for de Gaulle considering the increasingly violent actions that the Front de Libération Nationale (F.L.N) undertook to secure independence.¹³¹ De Gaulle hoped to assuage the concerns of the supporters of French Algeria on June 4th, 1958 when he told a crowd of supporters “Je vous ai...compris!” (I have...understood you!) De Gaulle never really intended to maintain the status quo in Algeria. Agulhon remarks that on September 16th, 1959 de Gaulle saw three resolutions to the Algerian conflict including independence, “total Gallicization” or French control, or (the option de Gaulle favored) an independent

¹²⁹ Lacouture, *André Malraux*, 395.

¹³⁰ Clerc, *De Gaulle—Malraux*, 216.

¹³¹ The FLN is a socialist Algerian political party. Created in 1954, its aim was to secure Algerian independence from France.

Algerian government with close ties to France.¹³² This post-colonial vision that de Gaulle announced provoked the ire of those on the Right who were against decolonization. De Gaulle also angered the Left as concerns remained that the policy of torture had not been abolished under the new presidency. In this tenuous situation, Malraux was therefore charged with presenting this Algerian policy in the most favorable light possible. Todd clarifies: “He claims that there have not been any more tortures in Algeria since the General came to power. He must know that he is lying, or else we have to grant him a dose of naïve optimism.”¹³³ Once again Malraux defended those who abuse their power, convinced that their abuses were not as grievous as imagined alternatives. When Roger Martin du Gard, Camus, and Mauriac refused to lead a torture investigation as proposed by Malraux, the minister made no efforts to assemble another group.¹³⁴

After Malraux made these preliminary announcements, de Gaulle sent Malraux to Martinique, Guadeloupe, and French Guiana to propose the creation of the French Community. The French Community was part of de Gaulle’s new proposed constitution that would form the Fifth Republic. It would transform the former French colonies into *départements* provided that the colonies accepted the measure via a referendum. Malraux attests that his speech in French Guiana was dangerous because he was threatened by listeners in the crowd. He was even menaced with a plank of wood with a nail sticking out of it.¹³⁵ Many others shouted defamations of de Gaulle and the French government. Malraux responded to those who cried against de Gaulle: “Si c’est l’indépendance que vous voulez [...] prenez-la le 28 septembre! Et qui, avant de Gaulle, vous avait donné le

¹³² Maurice Agulhon, *The French Republic: 1879-1992*, trans. Antonia Nevill, (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1995), 394

¹³³ Todd, *Malraux*, 345.

¹³⁴ Clerc, *De Gaulle—Malraux*, 210.

¹³⁵ Malraux, *Antimémoires*, 175.

droit de la prendre?”¹³⁶ (If it’s independence that you want [...] take it on September 28! And who, before de Gaulle, had given you the right to take it?) Articulate and passionate when he spoke, Malraux was gifted at this position. Although Malraux certainly was not the primary factor in the decisions of these colonies, Clerc notes that French Guiana and the Antilles voted in favor of the Community by eighty percent.¹³⁷

Malraux would not always remain the minister without a title. Clerc explains that in July of 1959 de Gaulle ordered his Prime Minister, Georges Pompidou: “Trouvez-lui quelque chose de bien”¹³⁸ (Find him something good). The position that Malraux was assigned, the Minister of State, was actually created for him. His essential tasks were to promote the spread and preservation of French culture throughout the world. This task of spreading culture was pivotal to De Gaulle’s strategic use of culture as an integral part of his foreign affairs in Europe and amongst former French colonies. Todd attests that this position was deemed to be of high importance and Malraux sat on de Gaulle’s right hand side in all future cabinet meetings.¹³⁹

The activities of Malraux’ ministry can best be divided into two categories: his efforts to share French art and monuments and his cultural and diplomatic meetings abroad. Both of these categories demonstrate Malraux’ beliefs regarding his conception of the French state and of heroes in history. His first cultural agenda promoted the creation of *Maisons de la Culture*, or community cultural centers. These centers were designed to spread art and culture that had traditionally been centralized in Paris into

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Clerc, *De Gaulle—Malraux*, 217.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 210.

¹³⁹ Todd, *Malraux*, 347.

every department of France.¹⁴⁰ Clerc insists that Malraux saw a change of French culture and values that made these *Maisons* necessary. As she states:

Malraux rêve d'une humanité délivrée par l'Art et la Culture. Puisque les valeurs de la chrétienté – dont la plus haute figure fut celle du chevalier – se meurent, le problème, répète-t-il inlassablement, est de 'savoir quel type d'homme inventera la civilisation de la machine.' [...] Mais une chose est sûre: l'homme nouveau ne sera libre que s'il a accès à la culture.¹⁴¹

(Malraux dreams of a humanity saved by Art and Culture. Since the valor of Christianity – of which the highest figure was that of the knight – are dying, the problem, he repeats incessantly, is “to know what type of person will invent the civilization of the machine.” [...] But one thing is sure: the new person will only be free if he has access to culture).

Clerc essentially believes that Malraux saw France as a society transformed from its feudal and chivalric past (with all of its knightly and heroic implications) to an industrialized world. What may have existed in a world of knightly duty, honor, and action no longer existed, or was at least difficult to emulate, in the “machine” society that Malraux saw emerging around him. It was only through culture that someone living in this modern society could be free from its burdens. This formulation resembles a leftist critique of industrialization. Sentiments like these convinced Malraux and others that he was representing the left wing of Gaullism.

Another project in which Malraux' ministry engaged was the beautification of France's monuments, as years of soot and dirt from industrial and natural sources had rendered historical landmarks and other buildings into lackluster emulations of what they once were. These initiatives fostered an image of France that de Gaulle and Malraux wanted to create. As Judt reports, “like much else in De Gaulle's pursuit of domestic modernization, notably Malraux's ambitious plans to restore and clean all of France's stock of historic public buildings, these changes were always part of a larger, political

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 353. The first *maison de la culture* opened in 1961 at Le Havre.

¹⁴¹ Clerc, *De Gaulle—Malraux*, 260.

objective: the restoration of French *grandeur*.”¹⁴² These programs thus repeated de Gaulle’s general message of independence, regeneration, and glory for a recently damaged and humiliated France.

The *ministre d’état* also served as a cultural ambassador for France. He made periodic international visits and often promised to host cultural exhibits from the countries he visited in Paris. Todd indicates that these offers often irritated the Quai d’Orsay (French Ministry of Foreign Affairs) because they were required to pay for the expenses incurred.¹⁴³ On two notable occasions Malraux’ presence was intended to improve diplomatic relations between France and other nations. The first interaction brought Malraux to the United States to meet with John and Jackie Kennedy in 1962. Jackie Kennedy had already impressed Malraux in a visit to France where she expressed a keen interest in French art and did so in French.¹⁴⁴ This initially positive interaction prompted the American visit during which it was hoped that France and America might gain a better understanding of each other. Their meeting ended with a rousing cultural exchange as Malraux promised to have the *Mona Lisa* sent on an American tour, but produced no real improvement in a political understanding.¹⁴⁵ Malraux’ other significant diplomatic interaction came in 1965 when he made an informal visit to see Mao Tse-tung. Todd remarks that this attempt at communicating with Mao was unsuccessful and that Mao generally rebuffed all of the questions that the minister posed.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² Judt, *Postwar*, 290.

¹⁴³ Todd, *Malraux*, 398. This particular incident refers to a promised Indian exhibit, but was not the only one that provoked anger from the Quai d’Orsay.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 361.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 364-365.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 389.

These diplomatic missions reinforced for Malraux the idea that monumental figures changed the world. Furthermore, his conversations with these personages made Malraux believe that he was one of these heroes making history. Todd refers to a note that Malraux had written after his visit with Mao that summarized Malraux' view of the world. "In the plane," according to Todd, "Malraux writes a succinct summary in his notebook: 'France is de Gaulle, China is Mao.'"¹⁴⁷ This analysis, shocking in its simplicity, goes far beyond Malraux' earlier arguments that individuals shaped the world. In this scenario individuals could represent whole nations of people. The first belief maintains that abstract forces alone cannot determine human destiny. The second conviction not only ignores impersonal movements but other individuals with their own ideas of how the world is formed. Why should one have consulted millions of other French men and women if General de Gaulle *was* France? The protests in France in May of 1968 demonstrated the extent to which contemporary French people disagreed with Malraux' formulation.

The End of an Era

The events of May, 1968, provided a symbolic rupture in French history and in the individual histories of Malraux and de Gaulle. In this month, France witnessed large-scale protests that were impossible to ignore. Judt traces these events back to student demonstrations regarding a university protest that forbade the mixing of men and women in dormitories.¹⁴⁸ These protests reached dramatic levels and lasted for several days, yet Judt asserts that they did not constitute a true revolution. As he says, "It had all the symbolism of a traditional French revolt [...] but none of the substance. The young men

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 390.

¹⁴⁸ Judt, *Postwar*, 409.

and women in the student crowds were overwhelmingly middle-class [...] It was their own parents, aunts and grandmothers who looked down upon them from the windows of comfortable bourgeois apartment buildings as they lined up in the streets.”¹⁴⁹ This revolution unfolding in Paris’ streets lacked the threat of a real class struggle and at first seemed limited to complaints of university policy. Yet soon after their beginning, these protests seemed to provide a good pretext for many other segments of society to express their weariness with the Fifth Republic’s status quo. Strikes and demonstrations spread across the country and a more widespread dissatisfaction emerged into the national consciousness.

The government decided that political action was necessary in order to resolve this conflict. De Gaulle and his ministers proposed the idea of a referendum that would ask voters to approve of a reform program lead by de Gaulle. Malraux supported the referendum proposal with great enthusiasm. Clerc quotes him: “Oui, c’est le référendum et rien d’autre qui s’impose. Le choix doit être fait par tout le pays : c’est ou bien la réforme, que vous [de Gaulle] seul avec votre gouvernement pouvez conduire, ou bien la révolution.”¹⁵⁰ (Yes, it is the referendum and nothing else that is called for. The choice should be made by the whole country: it is that or reform, that you [de Gaulle] alone with your government can conduct, or revolution). Malraux maintained faith in de Gaulle who he viewed as a perennial revolutionary. Only de Gaulle who had liberated France, re-established and reformed the Republic, forged a new relationship between France and its colonies, and pursued a course of French independence could navigate this political crisis as well. Malraux was so confident in de Gaulle’s leadership that he joined a

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 409-410.

¹⁵⁰ Clerc, *De Gaulle—Malraux*, 309.

demonstration in support of the General that proceeded up the Champs-Élysées. Clerc describes this momentous scene: “Ils ne sont pas deux mille [personnes], mais un million qui remontent les Champs-Élysées en scandant : ‘De Gaulle n’est pas seul !’, et ‘Mitterrand, c’est raté!’ Au premier rang, tel un naufragé accroché au bras de Debré comme à une bouée, Malraux ouvre la bouche comme pour crier à de Gaulle qu’il sera toujours là, s’il n’en reste qu’un.”¹⁵¹ (There aren’t two thousand [people], but a million who marched up the Champs-Élysées while chanting: “De Gaulle is not alone!,” and “Mitterrand, it’s over!” In the first row, like a ship wreck survivor clinging on to Debré’s arm as though it were a buoy, Malraux opens his mouth as if to cry to de Gaulle that he will always be there, if there is only one of them left).

Malraux’ loyalty appeared clearly when the referendum was held in April of 1969. Todd reports that, “On April 28, 52.4 percent [of the electorate] vote ‘no,’ 47.6 percent, ‘yes’: the General is rejected.”¹⁵² After this vote de Gaulle decided to resign as President, ceding power to his prime minister, Georges Pompidou. Malraux had the option to stay on in Pompidou’s government but rejected this option out of hand. Lacouture remarks that Malraux even asked Pompidou “to stand down, to declare his determination not to be in any sense the heir of the royal remains.”¹⁵³ For Malraux, Gaullism was a movement that only functioned so long as de Gaulle was directing it. While the General and Pompidou might broadly agree on issues of ideology, the latter could never replicate the ability of the former.

The movement that started in May of 1968 ultimately resulted in a changing of the guard. De Gaulle and, by extension, Malraux left power because the French people

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 310.

¹⁵² Todd, *Malraux*, 425.

¹⁵³ Lacouture, *André Malraux*, 442.

unequivocally refused the General's vision of the future. This decision was symbolic in that it ended the political road created by de Gaulle since the end of the war, but it was not revolutionary. The parliamentary election in June of 1968 gave the RPF 358 seats out of 485 in the National Assembly.¹⁵⁴ It would be hard to classify these protests as purely political in nature when one considers these figures. Several competing ideologies pervaded this movement and no one leader or group of leaders directed protests across the country. What these movements shared therefore was dissatisfaction with the status quo. De Gaulle and Malraux, who were symbols of an older generation, were therefore part of this discontent. When De Gaulle offered the referendum as a final opportunity to express dissatisfaction with his governance the result clearly demonstrated the discontent of the time. De Gaulle's tactic ended his career when the response arrived.

On December 11, 1969, Malraux visited de Gaulle at his residence at Colombey-les-deux-Églises to speak and dine together. Malraux wrote down their conversation from this date and made it into a book in 1971. The book entitled *Les Chênes qu'on abat* (Felled Oaks in English) seeks to paint a portrait of de Gaulle but not a "photographic portrait."¹⁵⁵ Malraux made no claim to a journalistic interview and embraced the artistic element of this work. This book is therefore enlightening not only because of what de Gaulle may or may not have actually said, but because it shows what Malraux thought were his most important qualities and ideas. His depiction reveals a great deal of disappointment and bitterness about the events of 1968-69. Malraux has de Gaulle say, "The contract [between de Gaulle and France] has been broken. Therefore it is no longer worth anything. [...] I was led to take on the defense of France, and of her fate. I

¹⁵⁴ Clerc, *De Gaulle—Malraux*, 313.

¹⁵⁵ André Malraux, *Felled Oaks*, trans. Irene Clephane (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1971), 9.

answered her mute and imperious cry. I have said it, written it, proclaimed it. What now?"¹⁵⁶ The text does not explicitly denigrate Pompidou or anyone who opposed the two during their years in the government, but rather regrets their loss of faith in France.

Likewise, de Gaulle's accomplishments are attributed to his belief in France and its potential. Malraux reflects: "His faith in France was not enough to make him *General* de Gaulle, but without that faith he would have been only an intrusive conqueror among the true believers, or a more or less heroic failure. Napoleon crumbled under his past victories; but he had been obsessed by himself, not by France."¹⁵⁷ De Gaulle is portrayed as a selfless patriot, determined to assist his country. He is compared with Napoleon, another grand figure of history, but is superior because of his national motives. This works well with Malraux and de Gaulle's conversation in *Antimémoires* where Malraux professed a belief in nationhood. For Malraux, De Gaulle was not jingoistic but acted to better his own nation.

Malraux continues with his ruminations:

The word *grandeur*, which the General used so often, and which others have so often taken up for or against him, had come in the end to signify both display, and a theatrical expression of history. Now, the *grandeur* of this study came from the immense wilderness outside; it was no Versailles. The General's idea of greatness was inseparable from austerity [...] inseparable from independence, and from a harsh rejection of the theatrical.¹⁵⁸

Malraux thus envisioned that the greatness that de Gaulle sought was natural, unvarnished by theatrical or ostentatious displays. De Gaulle was no Louis XIV and did not seek a greatness founded on material exhibitions, but on a national force. Malraux' de

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 17.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 28.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 29. Emphasis mine.

Gaulle also says that “Greatness is a road that leads toward something unknown.”¹⁵⁹ Of all of the material displays that Malraux could have used to represent grandeur, he chose the image of a simple road. Greatness, therefore, did not serve its own ends, but lead on to the unknown future. The image of the road also evokes a sense of order, direction, and even progress. A road, by its very nature, indicates a path and an ultimate destination. One can extrapolate that for Malraux this road shaped by glory was what gave France purpose and hope for the future

Ultimately it was a mysterious connection between France and de Gaulle that made him so heroic to Malraux. In his closing reflections, Malraux compares de Gaulle to an honor-bound knight. Malraux announces that “Alone at Colombey between memories and death, like the Grand Masters of the Knights of Palestine before their coffins, he was still the Grand Master of the Order of France. Because he had taken her on himself? Because he had, for so many years, held her corpse upright to make the world believe she was alive?”¹⁶⁰ Malraux was assured of his singular greatness and assured of the knowledge that de Gaulle was the “Grand Master of the Order of France.” Malraux concludes by saying, “Now, the last great man France haunted was alone with her: death agony, transfiguration or chimera. The night fell—the night which knows not history.”¹⁶¹ This final remark affirms the idea of vocation—that de Gaulle had been called upon by France to serve it. This funerary image invokes a sacred tone and finality for the historical reality in which De Gaulle and Malraux lived. These lines mark not just the end of the book and the end of a life, but the end of an era. On November 9, 1970, de Gaulle passed away in his home. As Malraux wrote in his preface to *Les Chênes qu'on abat*, “It

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 128.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

[their conversation] all came to an end with my departure from Colombey and nightfall. Fate took care of the epilogue.”¹⁶² Malraux would die six years later. His formulations of the heroic seem to cease after the death of de Gaulle, the man to whom Malraux attached so much affection.

The Final Metamorphosis

The turn by Malraux towards the idealization of the national hero became apparent at the end of the Resistance. Malraux had lost hope in the methods of the Communist allies he had once defended and was instead inspired by “the Great Liberator’s” tenacity and spirit. There was an undeniable political entente between the two, but the relationship that they developed should not be reduced to this level. Clerc argues in her text *De Gaulle—Malraux: Une histoire d’amour* that de Gaulle and Malraux shared a genuine and mutual affection. After their first meeting in 1945, their futures became inextricably linked. De Gaulle admired Malraux not only for the writer’s defense of his presidency but enjoyed his works and his insights.¹⁶³

Malraux seemed to enjoy being in the presence of a great man of history. De Gaulle undeniably changed history and Malraux admired him for what he did. To Malraux, de Gaulle had liberated France, renegotiated the country’s relationship to its former colonies, freed the country from the dichotomous game of the Cold War, and restored glory to a defeated nation. Malraux was able to contribute to these Gaullist initiatives in his own way through his position as Minister of State and he no doubt relished the opportunity to speak to foreign leaders on the General’s behalf. He came to believe that France’s only hope was Gaullism, and to be a good Gaullist one had to be

¹⁶² Ibid, 9.

¹⁶³ Malraux often sent de Gaulle copies of his works that the General read and commented upon.

loyal to de Gaulle. Malraux strove to be the most loyal member of de Gaulle's entourage and therefore left the government without question when de Gaulle did. In Malraux's estimation there was no more Gaullism without de Gaulle, and no more glory in the government.

Conclusion:

“Entre-ici, Jean Moulin.” Entre aussi, André Malraux

On December 19th, 1964, Malraux delivered his most famous speech, marking the transfer of Jean Moulin’s ashes to the Pantheon in Paris. Todd notes that Malraux had implored de Gaulle to move the Resistance leader’s remains to this honored resting place for French national heroes.¹⁶⁴ Malraux, who had only met Moulin before the start of World War II, wanted to make certain that he would be remembered for his organization of Resistance groups and for his refusal to surrender secrets to German interrogators under torture. As Malraux said in his speech, “Sans la cérémonie d’aujourd’hui, combien d’enfants de France sauraient son nom?” (Without today’s ceremony, how many children of France would know his name?)

This beautifully composed eulogy epitomized Malraux’ ideas of greatness, glory, and national memory. When discussing the different Resistance groups Malraux affirmed that it was the love of the nation that motivated them. It was always “La France, et non telle légion de combatants français.” (France, and not some legion of French combatants.) Malraux also made sure to depict the Resistance in a Gaullist narrative. Malraux declared: “Le Général seul pouvait appeler les mouvements de Résistance à l’union entre eux et avec tous les autres combats, car c’était à travers lui seul que la France livrait un seul combat.” (The General alone was able to call together the Resistance movements to the union between them and with all the other battles, because it was by him alone that France delivered a single battle.) In this version of the history of the Resistance, all of the Resistance factions had a common purpose and were united in their national fervor through their connection to de Gaulle, the presumed father of national glory.

¹⁶⁴ Todd, *Malraux*, 407.

This crafted account, however, did not eliminate the particular roles, actions, or courage of Moulin and the many groups that formed the internal Resistance. Malraux announced that “Jean Moulin n'a nul besoin d'une gloire usurpée : ce n'est pas lui qui a créé *Combat*, *Libération*, *Franc-Tireur*, c'est Frenay, d'Astier, Jean-Pierre Lévy. Ce n'est pas lui qui a créé les nombreux mouvements de la zone Nord dont l'histoire recueillera tous les noms. Ce n'est pas lui qui a fait les régiments, mais c'est lui qui a fait l'armée. ” (Jean Moulin has no need of usurped glory: it is not he who created *Combat*, *Libération*, *Franc-Tireur*, it is Frenay, d'Astier, Jean-Pierre Lévy. It is not he who created the numerous movements of the North zone from which history will re-gather all of the names. It is not he who made the regiments, but it is he who made the army.) Moulin's organization of these groups created an army in Malraux' mind, an army that liberated France alongside the Americans, the British, and the other Allies. This unified movement in the name of the nation represented the glory that Malraux saw in the Resistance.

He especially respected Moulin who, knowing the most about the distribution of Resistance factions in France, refused to reveal any information when tortured. Moulin's ceaseless service to the Resistance made him a symbol for the movement as a whole, for wartime France's struggle with Germany, and for all of those who suffered during the war. Malraux commanded:

Comme Leclerc entra aux Invalides, avec son cortège d'exaltation dans le soleil d'Afrique, entre ici, Jean Moulin, avec ton terrible cortège. Avec ceux qui sont morts dans les caves sans avoir parlé, comme toi ; et même, ce qui est peut-être plus atroce, en ayant parlé ; avec tous les rayés et tous les tondu des camps de concentration, avec le dernier corps trébuchant des affreuses files de Nuit et Brouillard, enfin tombé sous les crosses ; avec les huit mille Françaises qui ne sont pas revenues des bagnes, avec la dernière femme morte à Ravensbrück pour avoir donné asile à l'un des nôtres.

(As Leclerc entered the Invalides, with his procession of exaltation in the African sun, enter here, Jean Moulin, with your terrible procession. With those who died

in the caves without having spoken, like you ; and even, what is perhaps more atrocious, in having spoken ; with all the stripped and twisted of the concentration camps, with the last stumbling body of the dreadful ranks of Night and Fog, finally fallen under the crooks ; with the eight-thousand French women who did not come back from the labor camps, with the last dead women in Ravensbruck for having given asylum to one our own.)

Malraux insisted that honoring Moulin was to honor the whole Resistance, its glories and triumphs alongside its pain and suffering. Moulin thus was a grand figure of the Resistance and the face of a beleaguered France.

For Malraux, there could be no higher tribute than the one he had given Moulin. Malraux' works and life were spent in large part honoring the grand figures of his time. As a minister of the French government, he had the opportunity to meet many of the people that he thought integral to the destiny of the world including Mao, Nehru, and Kennedy. Of course he also served his beloved General de Gaulle, probably the greatest leader in Malraux' estimation. Each of these people and figures represented their own glory in their own time and space. As was mentioned earlier, Malraux equated France with de Gaulle and China with Mao; two figures who represented the grandeur of their countries and their times. Although he had been fascinated with grand figures of history since his youth, his faith in their greatness as a force became solidified as an adult in the government. Certainly these leaders were capable of wrongs and abuses, but Malraux could not see leaders other than these who were capable of shaping the destinies of their nations. In a practical way, he saw these figures as the greatest hopes for the citizens of their countries as well. Caesarism became Malraux' organizing philosophy.

Grandeur was something that Malraux wanted for himself as well. Ever since his days in Indochina he acted as a writer engaged in the world. As a writer/adventurer, Malraux was determined to be a driving force in shaping his historical reality as Hugo

and others had done before him. Reviewing his life, it is easy to see the ways in which he engaged it. Twenty years after Malraux' death in 1976, then President of the Republic Jacques Chirac moved the writers ashes into the Pantheon to be remembered thereafter as one of the great figures of France. Alongside Moulin, Hugo, and Voltaire, Malraux would undoubtedly be happy to be honored as one of the greats of France.

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