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Liberated Literature.

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LIBERATED LITERATURE

By K l a u s M a n n

The Allied advance will gradually awake European literature from the ~~deadly~~ coma to which it has been doomed by the anti-literary, anti-spiritual rule of Fascism. Europe is not yet free. It would be premature, at this point, to announce, or even to predict, a European intellectual renaissance. But there are signs foreshadowing, perhaps, such a development -- first efforts and promises which deserve to be recognized and encouraged.

The liberation of France began in North Africa. During the past eighteen or twenty months, Algiers has established itself as the (provisional) ~~an~~ literary capital of Free France.

Tunisia and Morocco are comparatively provincial, as far as literary activities are concerned. L'Afrique Littéraire, in Tunis, is a rather modest affair -- hardly more than a monthly bulletin registering the more important new publications and other literary events. Aguedal, a little magazine in Morocco, is more ambitious and more colourful. Edited by a distinguished critic and novelist, Henri Bosco, Aguedal often presents first-rate literary material and has introduced many a foreign author to the French-reading public. It was there that recently appeared a French version of T.S. Eliot's extraordinary poem, "Little Gidding" -- translated by Madeleine Bosco and André Gide.

The newsstands in Algiers -- although not yet quite so

copiously equipped as used to be those in Paris -- have a definitely metropolitan aspect. Besides the local newspapers and some foreign sheets (Le Journal de Genève, miniature editions of the London Times, Manchester Guardian, etc), there is a variety of ~~political~~ weekly periodicals -- Fraternité, Paris, La Marseillaise, and others --: all of them well-presented and competently edited, but somewhat monotonous in their propagandistic line and without real literary interest.

In the sphere of political thought, the two most significant publications are La Revue Economique et Sociale and Renaissances: Revue de la Pensée Politique Française -- both earnestly striving for new formulas to elucidate and, if possible, to solve the vital problems confronting our civilization in general and the French nation in particular. Another periodical -- Cahiers Antiracistes -- specializes in one aspect of the world situation; its function is -- as the editors put it -- "to defend the dignity of man against tyranny, intolerance, and the primacy of a 'superior race'."

The same spirit of militant humanism prevails in the two leading literary magazines of Free France -- both published in Algiers --: Fontaine and L'Arche; the former already in its fifth year of publication (la première revue littéraire de la France Libérée, as it is proudly called by its editors); the latter, a new venture sponsored by André Gide.

Both are high-class literary reviews in the best French tradition -- more aggressive and more experimental versions of

the pre-Vichy Nouvelle Revue Française. Both try to represent and coordinate all the different schools and shades of French anti-fascist thought, from Catholicism to Communism -- from Georges Bernanos to Jean Richard Bloch, from Maritain to Malraux. Both pride themselves on their intimate contacts with the French patriots, back home, -- while at the same time emphasizing the cosmopolitan aspirations of their editorial policy.

At the first look, it is not quite easy to find any essential difference between the two publications. They have in common, not only the main points of their intellectual program and political credo, but also some of their most important contributors -- writers like Jacques Maritain (who wrote a message for the first number of L'Arche, and whose long essay on contemporary religious philosophy was one of the most significant features of recent Fontaine issues), Saint-Exupéry, Joseph Kessel, Ivan Goll, Philippe Soupaul, Julian Green, Saint-John Perse, Pierre Jean Jouve, and others.

Fontaine is perhaps more emphatically and more exclusively literary -- more "sophisticated," not to say more esoteric, than its newly established rival. The literary criticism exercised by the editor of Fontaine, Max-Pol Fouchet, and his talented staff is indeed most exacting and fastidious. Anything of merely documentary interest -- however well-intended and topical -- is treated in a rather ^{so} depending fashion. One of Fontaine's most sensitive and most acute contributors, Henri Hell, was even bold enough to question the artistic value of a collection of poems by French prisoners-of-war -- enthusiastically received by the Free-French press. The same critic, in an article paying homage to the late Jean Giraudoux, ventured to predict

(a coming renaissance of "pure"

literature," as an inevitable and desirable reaction against the present polemic-propagandistic vogue.

Anticipating, or preparing, such a development, the publishing house connected with Fontaine Magazine -- Editions E. Charlot, Algiers -- presents such exquisite and seemingly untimely things as Rilke's litanies of Death and Poverty (from "The Book of Hours") or a new translation of the Spiritual Canticle by Saint John of the Cross. It was the same firm which brought out the first book André Gide published since he left France -- Attendu que..., containing the "Imaginary Interviews" (originally written for the newspaper Le Figaro, in the then unoccupied zone); a great essay on Goethe's dramatic work; a paper addressed to a young actress who has to impersonate a heroine of Racine; and -- as its last and most important part -- some religious notes of extraordinary inspiration and profundity: André Gide at his best -- another moving fragment from his life-long, candid and complex confession, which remains one of the most valid moral documents of our time.

Other titles on publisher Charlot's impressive list are the Letter to the English, by Georges Bernanos -- a stirring piece of polemic and prophecy --; Souvenirs de James Joyce, by Philippe Soupault -- an extremely vivid and personal, if maybe immoderately enthusiastic study of the Irish genius --; Joseph Kessel's new novel, The Army of Shadows -- dealing with the French underground resistance; Paris, France, and a volume of verse, by Gertrude Stein; an essay by Max-Pol Fouchet on Guillaume Apollinaire --

who, together with Rimbaud, still seems to be the undisputed poetic mentor and idol of the French vanguard --; Poésie sur Alger, by the architect and artist Le Corbusier -- with illustrations by the author; collections of poems by Paul Eluard, Pierre Jean Jouve, and Pierre Emmanuel -- the last being a member of Fontaine's editorial staff and regarded, by an initiated circle, as one of the new stars on the firmament of French poetry.

As for young novelistic talents, the discovery of Fontaine is Jean Orieux, whose first book, Fontagne, is by no means revolutionary but rather on the discreetly conservative side-- beautifully written, full of psychological subtelties and delicate images, somewhat in the Marcel Proust manner.

Fontaine's preoccupation with aesthetic values -- not without a certain boldness, considering the general penchant for the factual or the melodramatic -- is a constructive force and at the ~~the~~ same time a danger. Unorthodox and impressionable, the editors seem at times prone to paradoxical eccentricities. It is slightly irritating, for instance, to be told, by the editor of Fontaine, that Surrealism has been, "since 1918, the only movement for the emancipation of Man." This hazardous statement occurs in an article by Max-Pol Fouchet about the situation of Surrealism in the United States. It would seem, according to this description, that M. André Breton has established himself as the master and oracle of the American intelligentsia -- which happens to be not so. A paper by M. Breton, Situation du Surréalisme entre les

les deux guerres, -- delivered as an address to the French students ^{at} ~~in~~ Yale University, in 1942; and published in Fontaine, No. 32, -- fails in an embarrassing way to justify the high opinion M. Fouchet has of the surrealist pope.

On the whole, however, M. Fouchet and his friends have undoubtedly done, and are still doing, a remarkable job. Handicapped by all kinds of technical difficulties and tactical considerations, they manage to bring out a stimulating, richly various magazine. One might wish, at times, that they were a little more discriminating, as in the surrealist case, or -- to mention another example -- in the case of M. André Maurois, whose contribution seems utterly out of place in a review of French Resistance. But such problematical features can hardly affect the value and the significance of Fontaine's achievement. There is no periodical in London or New York with which the Free-French review could not compete, as regards the literary quality of its material and the intellectual scope of its interests.

The number of the non-French contributors and of international subjects discussed in the pages of the magazine, is at least equal to the number of native authors and topics. Names like Kafka and Kierkegaard, Rilke and D.H. Lawrence are frequently and reverently invoked. Writers of universal reputation, like Aldous Huxley and F.C. Ramuz, appear side by side with the young talents of the French avantgarde. Count Carlo Sforza, with essays on Machiavel and Benedetto Croce, represents liberal Italy; Frederico Garcia Lorca speaks for Spain; a young Portuguese, Eugenio de Andrade,

is introduced with some noble and sensitive poems; the list of future contributors includes the Russians Ilya Ehrenburg and Boris Pasternack.

A special number of Fontaine, published some months ago, was devoted to contemporary American letters -- presenting, among others, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, Henry Miller, Frederic Prokosch, Marianne Moore, E.E. Cummings, William Carlos Williams, and introductory articles by André Gide, Julian Green, and Denis de Rougemont. Robert Sherwood, in an open letter, thanked the editors for "this elegant and generous gesture which will be greatly appreciated by my colleagues in the United States." Another special number of even more impressive dimensions -- "Aspects of English Literature, 1918-1943" -- is in preparation, or may already have appeared when this article goes to press. In short, the editors do their best to live up to the principles formulated by T.S. Eliot in a spirited appeal for intellectual cooperation, the French version of which was the leading feature in a recent Fontaine issue.

This cosmopolitan attitude is all the more remarkable, and all the more laudable, as the general trend of French thought goes undoubtedly toward nationalism. It was Harold Nicolson who pointed out, in the columns of Fontaine, the probability, not to say inevitability, of such an ominous development. In an unusually acute and candid paper, stressing ~~and analysing~~ the necessity of a renewed, intensified Entente Cordiale between France and Britain, he predicted

the coming of an "Isolationist" wave in both countries, after the end of the War. In France -- Nicolson fears -- this tendency may assume the character of extreme chauvinism and downright xenophobia.

If such a danger exists -- and who would dare to deny the disquieting growth of nationalistic currents, not only in France? --, it is reassuring to find the French intelligentsia (its exiled spokesmen at least) fully aware of its gravity. The editors of Fontaine, in particular, are veritable crusaders for the cause of Internationalism. To them, even the editorial policy of their fellow magazine, L'Arche, has a somewhat nationalistic touch. M. Henri Hell, of Fontaine, criticizes L'Arche's opening manifesto for what he considers its too exclusively French outlook and appeal. "One wonders," he says, "whether the right way for France goes into this direction, and if she will find her salvation in the exclusive exaltation of her own virtues.. There are certain international realities which the manifesto seems deliberately to ignore..."

Yet it would seem that André Gide's record as a veteran champion of international ideas suffices to guarantee the cosmopolitan character of any magazine founded under his auspices -- quite apart from the fact that the L'Arche manifesto states expressly that a moral renaissance has a chance to succeed only if conceived and developed on a universal ^{scale} ~~dimension~~ -- the very notion of a "national revolution" being nonsensical in itself: "La Révolution doit prendre comme aire d'action le monde entier."

This supranational pathos, however, is counterbalanced, and at times

contradicted, by the fervent, almost ecstatic patriotism characteristic of all the literary manifestations of Free France. True, the cult of "le Chef" -- namely, General Charles de Gaulle -- which prevails in the daily and weekly papers, is missing in the literary publications. But there is a cult: the object of worship is the beloved country, la patrie, France herself -- la douce France, the most precious flower of Western civilization; the tragic and mystic land of St. Joan, Pascal, and Charles Péguy; la Grande Nation of Louis XIV, Napoleon, and the Great Revolution; the woeful France that was betrayed by its leaders and polluted by the barbarians; the immortal France that will emerge -- purified and rejuvenated -- from its present struggle and ordeal.

The Unknown Soldier of the French Resistance movement is indeed the hero of the Free-French literature as represented by Fontaine and L'Arche. Those who suffered or died for the Country and for Liberty, are not only praised and exalted but actually idolized. "Vous êtes les saints!" Saint-Exupéry cries out to them, in his "Letter to a Hostage" (published in the opening number of L'Arche) -- and all the Free-French poets echo rhapsodically the same feeling of veneration and gratitude.

The Algerian magazines are full of nostalgia for Paris. Each issue contains, as its most important department, a collection of samples from the clandestine Free-French press -- descriptions of French life under the Nazi yoke, flamboyant manifestos, satirical sketches, heroic episodes. ~~The writers who compile and offer these anthologies want to understand, this is France! The France for which our martyrs have died. The France for which our~~

The political review Renaissances formulates the deepest aspiration which it shares with its fellow magazines, when saying: "What we try to achieve -- as scrupulously as possible -- is, to be a true mirror of France -- the France which is now in the process of being created on a mystic plane..."

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Will the France of the future -- the liberated France -- recognize her genius and her drama in the words of those who are today her lovers and heralds in exile? It would be hazardous to make ^{any} predictions.

Was it not Ignazio Silone whom the international reading public acclaimed as the representative author of anti-fascist Italy? Silone's work -- hitherto unknown to his compatriots -- is now available in the liberated parts of Italy. Surprisingly, his master novel, Pontamara, was received without enthusiasm. The Italians, in Italy, don't seem to care much for exile Silone's Italian style, nor do they find his vision of Italy accurate or attractive. Of course, they appreciate the seriousness of his message, the integrity and penetration of his mind. Yet there is a curious lack of response. The opinion prevails that Silone does not live quite up to the great prestige due to his international successes.

The undisputed intellectual leader of Free Italy is a man who remained in ~~his~~ his homeland -- without ever making any concessions to the Fascist regime -- Benedetto Croce. The spiritual authority of the great historian, critic and philosopher is comparable to the one Maxim Gorki enjoyed in in Italy today,

the Soviet Union, during the last decade of his life. Croce, ~~in Italy~~ today, is much more than just a leading literary figure: he is indeed a moral, political and intellectual power.

That is why a new magazine founded under ^{his} ~~the~~ auspices, ~~of Benedetto~~ Croce, has a good chance of playing a significant role in the future ~~history~~ of Italian letters. Aretusa, Rivista di Varia Letteratura, the first number of which appeared in Naples this month, is not directly edited by the grand old man, but it is to his personal prestige and to his stimulating advice that the new venture owes its existence and its character.

Aretusa's editor, Francesco Flora, is one of Croce's friends and disciples; Croce's ^{talented} daughters, Elena and Alda, take an active interest in the new review: the first issue features an essay by Alda Croce on the Spanish ^{poet} Garcilaso de la Vega (whom she presents as "the Spanish Petrarca") and contains a book review by Elena. Other "Crociana" in the same number are an original article by Vincent Sheean dealing with Croce's friend and publisher, Laterza, in the City of Bari, and a paper by Francesco Flora, surveying Croce's recent political writings. Moreover, Croce's spirit is present in the editor's introductory message -- demanding and analyzing a constructive and determined humanistic philosophy as the basis of Italian intellectual life; rejecting Fascism as an "essentially un-Italian concoction of various barbarous doctrines" (including the "extreme romanticism of the bombastic and innocent Nietzsche").

Aretusa, No.1, is not startling or revolutionary, but it contains a lot of significant and sound material. One might have wished to find in the first issue of the first Free-Italian literary review some samples of creative writing in post-Fascist Italy. However, there are only articles -- all of them well-written and topical: a paper about the reconstruction of damaged historic monuments, a piece about Italy's place and function in the post-War world, an essay on contemporary Italian poetry, and an article about Surrealism, by the editor -- Francesco Flora. His approach is more critical and more detached than that of his colleague in Algiers: in fact, Signor Flora has serious objections to the "surrealist revolt against consciousness, common sense, history, and civilization." Yet one cannot help wondering why Surrealism -- that stale and pretentious hobby of yesterday's avantgarde -- seems to be such an attractive subject to the editors of Free-French and Free-Italian literary reviews.

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Fontaine, L'Arche, Aretusa -- these names may be forgotten in a few years from now; or they may be remembered as the names of pioneers -- ~~foreshadowing~~, ^{and, perhaps,} preparing, inaugurating a new era of free literary life in a free Europe.

There will be other reviews in many liberated cities -- from Naples to Amsterdam, from post-Franco Madrid to post-quisling Oslo. There will be creative efforts, bold experiments, discussions, controversies, symposiums, esoteric feuds and coteries, lyrical outbursts, striving talents, masterly achievements. There will be

literary life again -- after so many years of tragic silence and of blatant lies.

Literature is in the habit of rising, phoenix-like, from the ashes of battlefields and destroyed cities. For literature is indeed amazingly tenacious -- not to say, immortal.

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Italy, July, 1944