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Henry Poulaille

Response to Paul Nizan's *Crise* Manifesto

1931

La Littérature et le peuple. Edited by Jérôme Radwan. Les Amis d'Henry Poulaille & Plein Chant, 2003; Translated for marxists.org by Mitch Abidor 2017.

<https://www.marxists.org/subject/anarchism/poulaille/1931/crise>

The manifesto referred to by Poulaille, apparently calling for writers to rally to the review *Crise*, sent by Communist writer Paul Nizan, has not been located. This response, apparently sent to other writers, was not published in Poulaille's lifetime, but is a clear statement of his artistic and political beliefs – Tr.

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Response to Paul Nizan's *Crise* Manifesto

Henry Poulaille

1931

Paris, September 18, 1931

Comrade:

You have perhaps received the manifesto of *Crise*, a group of intellectuals, journalists, scholars, pedagogues, etc. We must point out to you that we will answer NO to *Crise's* appeal, and are determined to answer NO en bloc (France and Belgium). We are more determined than ever to work outside the political framework, without being controlled by any political party.

We are resolved not to mix with intellectuals, even if they call themselves revolutionaries. We who are of the proletariat consider that the principled adherence to the proletarian cause does not give one the right to say that one is of the proletariat. *Crise* wants to bring together revolutionary intellectuals; we see nothing wrong in this, but we who are nonintellectual revolutionaries do not feel obliged to follow them. At *Nouvel Age* we want to bring only proletarians together.

Crise wants to be a review of proletarian culture. They want to "ally with the proletariat, assist it, etc. We would like to point out

this declaration in the letter from M. Paul Nizan that accompanies the manifesto: “*Crise* hopes to connect intellectuals to the social class that holds the future in its hands.”

It is thus less a disinterested than an interested adherence: “Which branch should we grab hold of? Towards which way out should we head?” we read in the manifesto. And further: The future rests on the shoulders of the proletariat.”

It is thus because the future belongs to the proletariat that intellectuals want to adopt its class philosophy. In other words, it is on the shoulders of the proletariat that proletarian literature will be made.

“The anemia of ideas can only be cured by the contribution of proletarian blood. It is time to turn again to the class that gives a new impulse to man’s destiny.” (*Crise* manifesto.)

These declarations seem to us to be more opportunistic than revolutionary, and we cannot allow ourselves to be confused with opportunists, however well-intentioned they might be.

In addition, since the program of *Crise* is close to ours, it’s not up to us to go to them. Ten issues of *Nouvel Age* attest to the vitality of our review and our group. *Nouvel Age* is open to all; it wants to be the laboratory of proletarian literature; it has lived and will continue to live without the support of the litterateurs and journalists of *Crise*. Let *Crise* find its members elsewhere.

If you share our opinion please send us a note to this effect or return this circular to us signed.

Signed: L. Gachon, E. Peisson, H. Poulaille, T. Rémy

The other members of the editorial committee of *Nouvel Age* could not be reached in time.