

Hans Kirk

The Day Laborers

and

The New Times

**Translated and
with an Introduction and Notes by
Marc Linder**

Fānpìhuà Press
Iowa City
2001

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A/S, Denmark, 1936 and 1939

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Cover illustration of "Dania" Cement Factory in Assens courtesy of
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Map of Assens courtesy of Kort and Matrikelstyrelsen.

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Hans Kirk, author of *The Fishermen*, Denmark's all-time best-selling novel, wrote *The Day Laborers* and *The New Times* during the 1930s, and is considered by many to be that decade's greatest Danish novelist. Conceived as the first two parts of a trilogy, the novels offer a vivid holistic account of the transformation of an agricultural community into an industrial society during the first two decades of the twentieth century. The central characters are a group of day laborers who escape the domination of the area's large farmers and their low wages and intermittent work. The novels trace the rise of a cement factory, run by a progressive capitalist back from a long stay in the U.S., and its impact on the workers, who become union members and are thrust into a long strike. The cast of sympathetic characters leaves readers wishing this epic would never have to end.

Kirk (1898-1962), who spent his childhood in the eastern Jutland community on Mariager Fjord at the time of events there depicted in the novels, wrote the manuscript for the last volume of the trilogy while interned by the Danish government at the demand of the Nazi occupying forces. After his escape from the detention camp, the Gestapo destroyed his papers, and Kirk never managed to reconstruct the novel.

Translator Marc Linder, a professor of labor law at the University of Iowa who taught for three years at Roskilde University Centre in Denmark, also translated Kirk's *The Fishermen* and *The Slave*. His Introduction and Notes place the book and the author in the context of twentieth-century Denmark. *"I have profound admiration for the excellent translation and important apparatus of notes, undoubtedly the best and most useful work any translator of Danish literature has done."* From the Foreword by Elias Bredsdorff, Professor emeritus of Danish, Cambridge University.

The Day Laborers and *The New Times*, like *The Fishermen* and *The Slave*, can be ordered from Iowa Book & Supply at (319) 337-4188 or iowabook@iowabook.com or Prairie Lights Books at (800) 295-BOOK or info@prairielights.com

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