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Pacific Palisades, 1947-11-13

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Erika Mann
1550 San Remo Drive
Pacific Palisades,
California,
November 13th, 1947.

Dear Mr. Shane.

Sorry to say, I was born in Munich and educated right there but studied for the stage in Berlin under the great and late Max Reinhardt. Became an actress at age of 18 and appeared in Berlin, Munich, Hamburg and other German centers. In between went on car races and once won one for Ford (10 000 kilometers in 10 days all over Europe including roadless ~~hah~~ Balkans etc.). In 1932 wrote my own show, - a political satire called "The Peppermill" and not a show, really, but the sort of literary "cabaret" they have on the continent. Directed it, too, and played main part even while Hitler made his inaugural speech as Reichskanzler two blocks away. Shortly afterwards, I left on a sudden taking my troupe with me and soon re-opened the thing in Zuerich / Switzerland. The only anti-nazi theatrical venture in Europe, the Peppermill was highly popular in six countries and stayed that way for 1034 performances. Then, - by the spring of 1936 - everybody was sufficiently frightened and since the German embassies kept protesting (I'd long since been deprived of my German citizenship; in fact my name figured on the second expatriation list issued by the Nazi regime), I was asked by the various governments kindly to omit all anti-nazi allusions. Since show consisted of such, I left Europe for U.S. Spoke no English and had tough time. After a year or so had picked up enough to start lecturing, - first in churches and small time clubs finally in Madison Square Gardens - at anti-nazi rally etc. Also wrote. Had formerly been active as journalist (for instance during race when telephoned stories at check points) and written a couple of books. Now did one called "School for Barbarians" - a best-seller on education under Nazism - the first of its type. Subsequent books: "The Lights Go Down", - "A Gang of Ten" (for children) and, in cooperation with my brother, Klaus Mann, "Escape to Life" and "The Other Germany".

In 1940 and 41 was in England upon invitation of then Minister of Information, Duff Cooper, to broadcast to Germany for BBC. Did so during all of the major blitzes. ~~hahahahahaha~~ When U.S. got into war joined "Coordinator of Information" under Bob Sherwood. Since spring 1943 war correspondent accredited to U.S. Forces. Covered Middle East, - particularly 9th Airforce and Persian Gulf Command for "Liberty" and "Toronto Star ". In June 1944 (working for same publications) went into France, Belgium, Holland, Germany with first, third and ninth armies until December 1944. Then went back here to lecture and to return to Germany shortly after V.E. Day. Covered first year of occupation, including Nuernberg Trials. Was only woman to visit with criminals in their cells in Mondorf - before they were shipped to Nuernberg.

Upon return here (summer 46) took up lecturing again, giving some 90 lectures on foreign affairs within four months and from coast to coast. Then back to Europe, - this time behind little old curtain, - doing pieces for N.Y. Herald Trib (mostly European Edition) and Swiss weekly "Sie und Er". Ever increasing shortage of reliable over-all news from Soviet sphere made C.S.R. and Poland logical choice. (Jugoslavia, too, where, however, owing to State Department polite paper curtain, U.S. correspondents couldn't go.) In Poland was - for objective as well as personal reasons - especially interested in "recovered territories" which as former German I knew well and which as reporter I knew would still cause a lot of international bickering. Was prepared to find things bad there - as conditions when Poles took over were desperate and Polish reconstruction task seemed prodigious. Although - as stated in article - found much that I didn't like (shall never be able to like dictatorship) was truly impressed with achievements and felt "we" had better know what's going on .

That, I suppose, is all. Am married to Wystan H. Auden, British poet to whom betrothed in 1935. He living here (teaching and poeting) and U.S. citizen.

Am at present lecturing once more but hope to go back to reporting (abroad) next summer.

Have asked my agent, Mr. W. Colston Leigh, 521 Fifth Avenue, N.Y.C. to send you picture, as , handsome though I am, never use own photos around house.

My most highly advertised (NOT by myself) feat : went back to Germany in summer of 1933 when our house in Munich had been confiscated and was occupied to rescue manuscript of father's novel "Joseph and his Brethren". Since name (mine) high on death list had to go secretly and in middle of night - crossed boundary by car - and had quite a time of it. Dad was pleased. Had lost everything including Nobel price, but minded manuscript most.

Will that do? Get her from wire that you in hurry and hence hurry myself. Let me know if anything missing.

Thanks for interest. I am not certain just what you meant by "account of how you came to write ~~xxxxxx~~ article". How does journalist come to write anything? Hope above explanation satisfactory.

Regards

yours very sincerely

P.S. As for my "politics" - just in case, - consider myself "militant liberal" in sense of definition of term recently given by somebody who said : "Militant liberal is conservative with social conscience".