

Verbundkatalog Kalliope

Mann, Klaus

Rom, 1945-08-11

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THE STARS AND STRIPES

UNIT No. 1

MEDITERRANEAN

APC 512

Rome, August 11, 1945

Dear Hermann Kesten,

It seems ages ago that I wrote you last. In the meantime, I have been in Germany -- thinking of you in the midst of the ruins of your home-town, Nürnberg --, and I have written many articles, and English Labor has had a nice little success -- one of the few encouraging events since the end of the war ~~of~~ in Europe --, and the valiant Union of Soviet Republics has joined us in our crusade against those nasty little yellow-bellies, and now the war seems to be over -- for the time being...

Yes, and the atomic bomb... To tell you the truth, I have been feeling kind of glum and apprehensive, ever since I heard about that rather alarming invention. Quite seriously, I cannot help feeling that this uncanny novelty may turn out to be the beginning of the end -- I don't mean just the end of our civilization but the end of this globe, in a very literal, physical sense. They won't stop fooling around with devastating gadgets before they'll have blown up our whole little universe. Wait and see!

Not that I think it would be a major loss if our earth went to pieces! On the contrary, I'd rather like to witness this grand finale. This man-made apocalypse is going to be a tremendous spectacle...

On the other hand, I wouldn't mind at all visiting the moon -- or, preferably, the Venus -- in one of the new vehicles driven by atomic energy. To interview the Mars men for The Stars and Stripes -- that wouldn't be a bad assignment!

Speaking of stars -- your COPERNICUS has given me a great deal of pleasure. I've read it during my trip to the pitiful, fearful Old Country -- as I told you I would. My father is right, as usual: this book of yours hits indeed the mark. It's witty, graceful, humane; rich in instructive material and amusing sidelights; at once pleasantly skeptical and full of a sincere moral pathos; colorful, clever, well-written, (well-translated), at times quite moving, always entertaining.

To add some criticism to my sincere praises: It seems to me that you have included a little too many biographical data and details -- not about Copernicus himself, I mean, but as regards minor characters. Some of these secondary portraits are brilliant (Savonarola, Tycho Brahe, Giordano Bruno, etc); it's just that there are TOO

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MANY of them. Of course, I realize that you introduced all these figures in order to make your historical panorama as complete and realistic as possible. Yet such an abundance of sketchy accessories cannot but confuse the composition. The impression I got is, that you were somewhat overly generous in adorning the background of your canvas with innumerable arabesques -- simply because the character in the foreground, Copernicus, had to remain rather barren and linear, for want of biographical material.

(But now I am afraid that I might sound too critical, almost unfriendly! To repeat and re-emphasize it -- I DO like the book! As you know, I have a weakness for the Kesten style, of which COPERNICUS is another typical and engaging example.)

How are your various new novelistic projects getting along?

I am disturbingly busy with all kinds of things of questionable importance -- mostly article-writing. Besides I want to write a comedy -- something about ghosts

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spiritualists which has been intriguing me for quite some time --, and I am gathering material for a book on postwar Europe. Also, I may do some work on an Italo-American film (G.I.s in Italy), which promises to bring some CASH and to be an interesting experience. If only I could get out of the Army before long! There are hopes but no definite prospects. What I try to arrange is, to get myself demobilized over here and then to stay for some more months in Europe, as a correspondent. That's not impossible, in principle. But you know how Mother Army is...

Don't forget to write me! And do let us get together before the great atomic explosion destroys Times Square, Piazza Venecia, Hollywood Boulevard, the Kremlin, and whatever may have remained intact of Kurfürstendamm, Uhlandstrasse, Am Knie, and Wilmersdorf.

As always,

Yours old,

KLAUS
M.