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KLAUS MANN:
EUROPE-AMERICA

Speech at General Delegates Session:

"WRITERS IN EXILE"

Third American Writers Congress, June 4, 1939

I HAVE never been a German nationalist, never in my life. But I used to be a European nationalist. I am afraid many of us, in Paris and in Vienna and in Oxford and in Heidelberg and in Rome, were inclined to that silly attitude of the decadent Greeks, who thought everything that was not Greek was "barbarian." Well, and suddenly we had to find out that refined, dear old Europe was not at all threatened by barbarism from abroad. We recognized the merciless, abhorrent foe within our homelands. He was active everywhere, and in some countries he turned out to be victorious. The deadly foe conquered Germany, our country, by means of force and propaganda and abject intrigues, and his helpers were stupidity and cowardice and weakness.

We left Germany, our hearts filled with shame, grief and anger, and we tried our best to fight the enemy of our people from abroad, since we had lost the possibility to do so within the country. We lived in France and Switzerland and England, in Holland, Czechoslovakia and the Scandinavian countries. We found friends and comrades in all of those countries, and we remain grateful to all of them.

But the barbarian enemy gained more and more ground. We lost Vienna and the Sudetenland and Prague and Barcelona and Madrid, like an unhappy general would lose one fortress after the other. That opposition was growing among the oppressed people themselves, we knew. Yet the atmosphere in Europe, for a while, was not encouraging for active anti-fascists. So we came to America. In my special case, I rather should say: I came *back* to America, as I had been here in 1927-28. And I still was a European; but a less narrow-minded one than I had been ten years before.

I had realized in the meantime that liberty and social progress and civilization are *not* matters of course which we can enjoy conveniently. I had learned that those notions and values are threatened everywhere, and that it is our task to defend them and to fight for them. I had

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understood that Democracy is not anything we possess and can be peacefully proud of. Real Democracy means an aim and a task—not a possession; it means *our* aim and task. It is our problem and our future, our struggle and our life.

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