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BOOKS *and the* ARTS

DISCIPLINE FOR GERMAN WRITERS

BY KLAUS MANN

RECENTLY Dr. Joseph Goebbels, German Minister of Propaganda, and Councilor of State Hanns Johst, German writer, president of the Poet's Academy, and friend of the *Führer*, let themselves be heard again on the subject of German literature. "Not another day will we tolerate having the nation read German authors who reveal an indifferent attitude or who show secret reserve toward the doctrine of National Socialism, or who live abroad. The end has come for these despicable writers; they shall no longer be permitted to poison German hearts. We, Goebbels and Johst, will attend personally to the disappearance of these writers from the sphere of public interest. We will do everything possible in order that the German public may read true and actual Nazi authors." Thus, or similarly, the German minister and the German poet spoke, and accompanied their speeches with many insulting thrusts against the indifferent or undecided writers of the Third Reich.

The representatives of Nazi literature—and consequently government officials and officially recognized writers like Johst—are enraged that the books of the emigrant German authors are preferred abroad to works produced in the Third Reich. I do not believe that the reasons for this attitude of the public outside Germany are predominantly political. Most people, in New York or in Zurich, in Paris or in Rio de Janeiro, simply find the works of Thomas Mann or Stefan Zweig, of Lion Feuchtwanger or Franz Werfel more interesting than books by Kolbenheyer, Ponten, or Johst—names which are quite unknown outside Germany. The international successes of émigré German authors, such as Vicki Baum or Emil Ludwig, are a constant cause of embitterment to authors still living in Germany. The Ministry of Propaganda has dumped German literary products on the international market at a price from 25 to 30 per cent less than the same books cost in Germany. But despite this practice, the sale of books which come from Germany continues at its former low figure abroad.

Moreover, in Germany itself the public favors and demands the books of those authors who are not completely coordinated. This demand can be effective of course only for "Aryan" and politically neutral writers, since the works of Jewish and left-wing authors are forbidden. Particularly striking is the popularity of an author like Hans Fallada, who formerly belonged to the moderate left and is today emphatically non-political. His success in Germany is to be explained in part by the circumstance that he is not a Nazi. A great moral prestige, particularly among German youth, is enjoyed by certain conservative authors who are known to be definitely nationalistic but

not Nazi; to this group belong Wiechert, Hans Carossa, and Ricarda Huch. All these writers are much preferred to those of the avowed "coordinated" camp. A special attraction for the more exacting literary public is also exercised by those few writers who no longer live in Germany but whose works could until recently be published and read there. Thomas Mann is one of these. My father lives in Zurich, but his books appeared in Berlin until January, 1936. Although they were not allowed to be much advertised or discussed in the press, they were far more widely read than the works of most Nazi writers.

The irascibility and aggressiveness noted in those circles which bear the responsibility for Nazi culture may be understood when one considers that the Nazis themselves, during their rule, have not produced a single author who enjoys international or even great national fame. With regard to stage and screen the situation is no better. Within the last few years German films have suffered almost complete loss of their international appeal, and in German cities the theater is no longer an outstanding attraction. Doctor Goebbels himself is in despair. He complains and uses abusive language. He arranges prize competitions for young dramatists, but all to no avail; and the poor theater director of the Third Reich must have recourse to old farces or to the few classics in whose works no trace of "despicable" convictions is to be found.

It is now a question whether anything of Germany's cultural life will remain after Goebbels's latest decrees have been carried into effect. Will it still be possible to stage a play of Gerhart Hauptmann's? To be sure, the old and enervated author of "The Weavers," makes every conceivable effort to be on good terms with the present regime, but we all know that at the bottom of his heart he is far from being a Nazi. Therefore does he not also belong to that group which is to be exterminated and silenced? In any case Thomas Mann belongs to this group, and it is a fact that his latest book, the third volume of the Joseph series, cannot be sold in Germany.* And now must vanish those last journalistic retreats for the comparatively liberal spirit, those last oases in the desert of German "coordinated" culture—the feuilleton of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and the literary review of the *Neue Rundschau*, which have been dull and reactionary but not, until recently, completely pro-Nazi.

A people which is soon to serve as food for cannon must first be dulled to the point of stupidity. The Ministry of Propaganda, together with the press, is doing everything in its power to hasten this process.

* Since I wrote this article Thomas Mann has been deprived of his citizenship by the German government, and now all his books are forbidden and confiscated in Germany.—K. M.