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CITIES IN THE NEWS PARIS

By T/3 KLAUS MANN.

No other city—not even Rome—has been so lavishly described and praised as Paris. The literature about the French capital comprises hundreds of thousands of volumes—novels, diaries, ballads, sociological essays, journalistic sketches, ballets, opera librettos, topographic guides, dramas, farces, mystery stories, sonnets, romances, tragedies, humorous anecdotes, gossip memoirs, historical treatises, lofty hymns and pornographic trash. What profusion of homages couched in all idioms and fashions! What an overwhelming chorus of love declarations, from the days of the troubadours to the time of Gertrude Stein and Ernest Hemingway! Every aspect of Paris, indeed, almost every street has been immortalized by the poets and painters, the scholars, playwrights and story-tellers of five continents and of ten centuries.

What can I add to this vast concert of eloquent and enthusiastic voices? I have tried to write about Paris when I was still living there—reliving, day by day, its smells and rhythms, the splendor of its views, the effortless elegance of its style. When I left Europe it was only Paris I was homesick for. It meant to me the heart and very essence of the continent. So I wrote about Paris again—invoking, nostalgically, the famous names of its boulevards and palaces, its gardens and monuments, its cafe terraces, churches, bridges and restaurants.

In 1935 the City of Light was subjected to blackouts, as are now most capitals all over the world. But its inner radiance had already dimmed before. The fall of Paris—its moral darkening—began (or rather, reached its first climax) as far back as September, 1938, when Premier Daladier and his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bonnet, went to Munich to sell out Czechoslovakia—thus betraying the cause and honor of their own country.

The mistakes and treacheries of 1938, and of the preceding years, prepared, anticipated the catastrophe of 1940. Vichy was the consequence of Munich—logically, almost inevitably. Laval and his ilk announced shamelessly that, if they had to choose between Leon Blum and Hitler, they would much rather see the Nazi troops parade on the

Champs Elysees. That is what happened. Paris was occupied, pillaged, ransacked, tortured. If its destruction would have been a loss bitter beyond repair, its disgrace was even more saddening.

We, the admirers and lovers of the unique city, watched its humiliation—distressed and aghast, speechless with grief and horror. Was it conceivable? Could it be that the glory of Paris tarnished? Was its splendor hollow and corrupt? Was "our" city—forgetting its historic mission—on the point of becoming an easy prey and acquiescent victim of the barbaric invaders? Was its civilized grandeur something that belonged to the past already? Was it just in our memories—and in millions of printed words and painted images—that the City of Light would survive?

But our laments and gloomy prophecies turned out to be rash and exaggerated. Paris continued to live, to resist, to struggle—if only secretly, underground. The city which used to be the much-vaunted center of fashion and elegance—attracting the international masses of pleasure-seeking tourists and adventurers—now revealed, gradually and inconspicuously, a new kind of beauty and of energy. It suffered, starved, endured, and, doing so, assumed a tragic nimbus which it had not possessed before—the woe of martyrdom.

But martyrdom is more than just punishment and atonement; it is also, and above all, a promise and guarantee of future triumph, coming resurrection.

France proves now, in North Africa and at the Italian fronts, its determination to make good for its past mistakes. It prepares and organizes its historic rehabilitation. But how could it be liberated, without the fervent support of its own people? Paris has always been the true center and leader of the French national spirit. If France has a future—and who dares to say it has not?—then the future of Paris, too, is gloriously bright and great.

Tired of dreaming, again and again, of that famous "last time I saw Paris," I prefer to visualize the Paris of the future. At once scarred and rejuvenated, its beautiful face emerges from murk and gloom. The shadows rise—unveiling the most enchanting scenery. What fresh and delicate colors! What superb perspectives! The Seine river, the boulevards, the illustrious parks—everything seems transfigured, purified, bathed in a morning glory.

With infinite delight and gratitude I recognize the beloved, familiar sights: the massive front of the cathedral, Notre Dame de Paris; the festive curves of the Seine bridges; the smiling statues in the Luxembourg Garden; the old, narrow streets of the Latin Quarter. There is the Eiffel Tower—a gigantic caprice in steel, the most useless, most spectacular landmark of Paris. There is the Opera— pompously old-fashioned—and there the Pantheon where the French nation treasures the tombstones of its greatest sons.

Have the Nazis stolen some of the masterpieces in the Louvre Museum? Have they depleted the wine

cellars and markets? Plundered the restaurants, banks and stores? But, happily, they couldn't steal the Place de la Concorde: the incomparable square still is where I saw it last—stunningly vast, triumphantly beautiful; rotating, as it were, around the fragile center of the Egyptian obelisk; facing the royal wideness of the Champs Elysees, at the end of which loom—far away—the Place de l'Etoile and the Arc de Triomphe. Under the marble arch burns the unquenchable flame with which France honors its Unknown Soldier.

It is the unknown French soldiers whom I am eager to see again—not the corrupt politicians, the treacherous journalists, the flighty society women. Paris—for all its splendor—is a city of little people: the most imperial monument of democracy.

I am impatient to shake hands again with the little people of Paris—the waiters and taxi drivers, the striving poets and painters, the poorly paid professors, the working men, the children, the "concierges" of the small hotels; all those, in short, who refused to collaborate with Hitler and Laval; who waited—silently, grimly—for the day of liberation, thus serving our cause, the cause of liberty. For "those also serve who only stand and wait."

I want to salute those anonymous heroes—the next time I see Paris.