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Allies Hunt Nazi Books.

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German Literature:

Allies Hunt Nazi Books

By **Klaus Mann**
Staff Writer

The Coordinating Committee of the Allied Control Council recently issued an order "designed to eradicate in all forms Fascist, Militarist and Anti-Democratic ideas in Germany through the confiscation of Nazi literature and other media of propaganda."

In the American press this new measure has been criticized as "anti-democratic." Official sources disclosed that the order—initiated by the French—had been "warmly debated" at the Committee meeting, and that the U.S. delegation, early in the discussions, had termed it "too vague" and reminiscent of Nazi methods.

Miss Vivian Cox, assistant to the deputy director, Armed Forces, who revealed these details to a press conference at the Berlin Press Camp, kept saying that, in her opinion, the new regulation was "something like the Reichstag Fire." She got things a little bit mixed up...

OBJECTIONS

Now, as for the two objections of the American coordinators, the first one at least is surely not without foundation. The order is confusingly, shockingly vague—too vague indeed to be practicable at all.

Under the provision of the new directive, "owners of circulating libraries, bookshops, and publishing houses, all former state and municipal libraries, and director or heads of universities, scientific academies, secondary and elementary schools must hand over to the Military Commandants Nazi and military propaganda in their possession."

But what exactly is "Nazi and military propaganda?" Are the owners of circulating libraries compelled, under the new law, to turn in a biography of Frederick of Prussia or a book on Bismarck? What about the intellectual forerunners of Nazism—authors like Gobineau, Chamberlain, Sorel, Spengler, Ernst Juenger? What about Nietzsche, whose "superman" philosophy

certainly influenced Nazi doctrines?

Are Emil Ludwig's *Conversations With Mussolini* to be regarded as "Fascist propaganda"? Is Heinrich von Kleist's drama, *The Prince of Homburg*, a glorification of Prussian militarism?

The decision in all doubtful cases—we are told—is up "to discretion of the zone military commanders." American Military Government officials assured the press that there will be "no book bonfires and no witch hunts" in the American execution of the new four-power order.

LENIENCY

"You can count on it," said one official, "that Gen. Joseph T. McNarney isn't going to persecute a German for owning and failing to surrender a history of World War I."

But if the new directive is not to be enforced anyhow—why then irritate the Germans and provoke criticism at home with a grandiosely worded announcement? No new order was needed to make public libraries surrender copies of *Mein Kampf* and other standard works of Nazi literature.

All notorious titles had been removed from the catalogues, long before the disputed directive was issued. As for private libraries, they are exempted from the search for banned books, at the insistence of American and British representatives in the four-power Committee. But it is just in private libraries that billions of "objectionable volumes" could be found, if it were not "undemocratic" to search for them.

No doubt, the new order is inadequate, not for ideological reasons, but because it has too many loopholes and is not specific enough. Even presuming, however, that the directive were perfect in itself—it would still remain futile on account of its purely negative, unconstructive character.