

Verbundkatalog Kalliope

Interview von Grant Parr mit Corporal Klaus Mann über die militärische Lage.

Mann, Klaus

Sendetag

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Adresse: Maria-Theresia-Straße 23, 81675 München

E-Mail: monacensia.literaturarchiv@muenchen.de

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This is Grant Parr speaking from Rome.

~~PARR:~~ The main battle of Germany is being fought on the Western front now, but here in Italy we may have a grandstand seat at the last round. With me here is a soldier reporter of the Stars and Stripes staff who has shown himself expert at predicting what the Germans will do. Its not surprising that he knows the German mind and potential for he left Germany only in 1933. For nearly a year and a half in Italy he has observed the Nazis from our side of the line.

My friend is Corporal Klaus Mann, son of the noted German* novelist, Thomas Mann, who brought his family to America because he hated Nazism. Klaus Mann, himself, is the author of several books on Germany.

Corporal Mann, do you expect the Nazis to try to hold out to the bitter end---and if so where?

MANN: Well, that's quite a question! Who knows what a cornered gangster is up to, in his madness and despair? But an increasing amount of evidence seems to indicate--and I'm inclined to believe--that the Nazi leaders may actually have decided to make their famous "last stand" in the Austrian and Bavarian Alps.

PARR: Would they try to hold a large area?

MANN: This last great Nazi bastion--~~was originally~~ will probably be ~~xxx~~ anchored on the high Alps from Salzburg to Lombardy, and will stretch from the Eastern tip of the Lake of Constance to the approaches of Graz in Styria. ~~According to~~ Such an area would be about 280 miles long and 100 miles wide, or somewhat larger than Switzerland. The only strictly German area it includes, is the most southern part of Upper Bavaria, near the Austrian frontier, the mountainous region around Hitler's personal residence in Berchtesgaden.

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PARR: Do you know the place well?

MANN: I should say I do! I was born and brought up in Munich: so of course I spent all my vacations in the Bavarian and Austrian Alps. ~~Naturally I am well acquainted with the whole terrain.~~ In fact, it makes me feel a little nostalgic to think of places like Innsbruck, Salzburg, Bozen, Kitzbuehl, and similar towns in Hitler's fortified Zone. My whole childhood comes back, with the sound of these familiar names. They remind me of my first skiing lessons, of mountain-climbing, of swimming in beautiful lakes...

PARR: Would you recognize these places, under present conditions?

MANN: Probably not. Most of those idyllic localities are now teeming with jittery Nazi bigwigs and Quislings. Of course, the safest, best fortified spots are reserved for the Party top-men!

PARR: Can the Nazis really force us into a long siege?

MANN: The Alpine fortress will not be an easy nut to crack--we may as well face the fact. The terrain is certainly rugged, and it will favor the defenders on all sides. It could be that 26 good German divisions still fighting here in Italy are destined to be sacrificed in the coming final showdown in the Alps--which may be an explanation for the amazing stubbornness, with which the Germans have been resisting in Italy's Apennine mountains.

PARR: You think then that the Nazi fortress might last quite a while?

MANN: No, I don't think so. Hitler's and Himmler's suicide army will soon be completely isolated, ^{and} encircled, cut-off in its hiding place. Consider the supply problem. Before long, they'll run out of ammunition and eventually, even out of food.

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I believe
Question: Recent Russian dispatches from Austria *give the Austrians credit*
~~seem to confirm statements of~~
prisoners: *for really opposing the Germans.*

Answer: Exactly. Knowing the attitude of the Austrians, I was not surprised to hear that the people of Vienna received the Russian troops as liberators rather than as enemies. It seems that the Austrian patriots are actively co-operating with the Red Army. One report says that the people of Austria are answering the Allied call to rise against the Nazis in the still unliberated areas, and that already guerillas are beginning to hamper the escape of the German troops. That sounds pretty gloomy for Hitler, in case he really insists on making his last stand in the Austrian Alps. The natives will give him a lot of trouble. I don't believe ^{that} ~~any~~ ^{any} fortress -- however well protected by natural obstacles -- ~~can~~ ^{could} be held in the long run against the passive or even active resistance of its inhabitants.



PARR: I wonder what the civilian population will think about being in a fortress?

MANN: There you have another ^{significant} ~~interesting~~ factor, which may indeed prove rather disturbing to the "last stand" strategists. The people with whom Hitler will have to deal during his last desperate adventure, are mostly Austrian peasants and small town folk--with a sprinkling of Bavarians. Now, as far as the Austrians are concerned, we may be reasonably sure that practically all of them-- including even those who used to be pro-German--are by now altogether fed up with Nazism.

PARR: Do you know what the Austrians are thinking just now?

MANN: I have many friends among Austrian refugees and among the leaders of the various Free Austrian movements--who, in their turn, try to remain in touch with their homeland. ~~Besides I've questioned, in the course of the past year, scores of Austrian prisoners. Just~~ ^{very interesting} a few days ago, I had ~~another~~ ^{very interesting} talk with a large group of ~~them~~ ^{Austrian P.W.s}. Their only complaint was that they weren't allowed to join the Allied ranks and fight the "Piefkes", as they nickname the Germans. ~~As you may know, there is a Free Austrian unit--consisting mostly of war prisoners and deserters--operating under Marshal Tito's command in the Yugoslav army.~~ Some of the captured Austrians I interviewed had recently returned from home furloughs. They all confirmed that the folks back home felt exactly the same way they do. All the Austrians--they told me--have just one desire: to get rid of the Nazi yoke and to see the independence of their country restored.

PARR: But will anti-Nazi opposition in Austria be able to do much?

MANN: During the past few weeks and days there have been more reports than usual about increasing anti-Nazi activities in Austria--the last one being the recent assassination of Col. General Sepp Dietrich, commander of the Vienna garrison and former chief of Hitler's bodyguard. Also, it seems that the population of Vienna shows itself quite willing to co-operate with the Russians. But the most important chance for the Austrian patriots to prove their good will and efficiency may come in the final phase of the war, if Hitler ~~really~~ chooses to make his last stand in the Alps. A fortress--however well protected by natural obstacles--can hardly be held in the long run against the passive or even active resistance of the inhabitants.

PARR: Reports from ~~the~~ Germany indicate the Nazis are resisting hardest in the south, does that mean the fortress battle is already taking shape?

MANN: As we all know, organized German resistance has collapsed, or is on the point of collapsing, in most parts of the Reich. The drama of the European war--Germany's war against civilization--is approaching its end. It could be that the stage is already set for the last scene, which may be performed against the romantic background of snowcovered mountains and medieval villages. The hour of the Twilight of the Gods, or of the false Idols, has undoubtedly come at last.

Hitler seems ready for his farewell number--his much publicized Goetterdaemmerung act. Lets hope it won't be a long-winded, tragic finale in the grand Wagnerian tradition,--but rather a short, thrilling epilogue like a good American movie. A ^{two}~~three~~-reel duel between cops and robbers isn't so bad, because everybody knows the show will soon be over, and the right side will win.

PARR: And the sooner they ring down the curtain the better. Thank you Klaus Mann---and now we return you to the United States.

