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## Mann, Klaus

## Beverly Hills, 1939-09-28

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Visual Library

Klaus Mann

Hotel del Flores,
409 N. Crescent Drive
Beverly Hills, California.

September 28th, 1939.

To the Editor of "New Leader".

You have invited me to give my opinion on Soviet-Russia's new politics and especially on the " so-called non-aggression pact between Hitler and Stalin and the partition of Poland between Germany and Russia".

I must admit that I regard it as a difficult, almost insoluble task to confine my remarks with reference to such complex and significant questions within the frame-work of a short letter. A comprehensive work might be written about the analogies and differences between Soviet-Russia and the Third Reich. I have never overlooked the similarities between these two new-type state structures and incidentally have already referred to them publicly, before the non-aggression pact. But even to this day I shall not cease to believe in fundamental differences between the Nazi-regime and the Soviets. The Third Reich is bad in its very substance; there is no such thing as " good elements", nor "great purpose" that could justify the low means employed. The goals are as miserable as the means by which their attainment is contemplated. The Third Reich has brought the German people and the world nothing but danger, disturbance, suffering and degradation. Its existence is not an event shaped by history, but murderous assassination upon civilization and progress. - To be

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just the same cannot quite be said of the Soviet-Union. This case is more complicated. I do not wish to nor will I at this point sum up what the Soviets have accomplished - and how much has been sinned. There does not seem any doubt in my mind that in the case of the Russian state we are at least dealing with a problem- possibly a bitter, a tragic problem - ; in the case of the Third Reich it is nothing more or less than filthiness.

It is a matter of course that at the very moment, when Soviet-Russia draws near to Nazi-Germany ~~(or seems to be so)~~ the similarities between the two forms of government become particularly pronounced, while the differences fade into the background. You will believe me when I say that the first indications of such a rapprochment between the dictatorships of Moscow and Berlin profoundly shocked, confused and alarmed me also. I have never been a communist. My sympathies for the Soviet-Union were above all those of a democrat and passionate anti-fascist, who looked upon socialist Russia as one of the strongest potential opponents of facism and one of the most powerful guarantors of European peace. In this my view I have perhaps been mistaken.

I say " perhaps"; for what is ~~unmissing~~ lagging in Northern and Eastern Europe today or is in preparation, does not seem to me clear at all ~~unmissa~~; at any rate the real decisions are still unknown to us. Stalin's intentions and objects are mysterious;

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one thing only is certain, that his power has increased tremendously. That does not mean that I concur with his tactics. On the contrary, I subscribe to the sentence that I read in " The New Republic" of September 27th: "Stalin's invasion of Poland from the east has too much in common with Hitler's invasion from the west for any defender of Soviet morals to feel comfortable about it."

There remains only the question whether this tactics- whose undeniable analogy to Nazi-tactics repel us- will work out favorably for the Nazi-Fuehrer in the long run. To be sure for the time being this question does not seem to have moral significance; but it has all the more political weight. And all things political can -or must - have moral consequences. - In London the view seems to be taken, "that Russia's invasion of Poland, fatal as it was to the Polish cause, will in the long run turn out to be a terrible headache to Adolf Hitler." Bill Henry reports from England: "One week's developments indicate that Russia stymied Hitler in the Ukraine, chased him from the Rumanian border oil fields and, by placing a big army bordering on 3o,ooo,ooo Slavs he is trying to assimilate, will provide a constant threat on his eastern frontier."

The opinion prevails generally, that Hitler walked into a trap when he sent Herr von Ribbentrop to Moscow. He did not succeed in bluffing the Allies into a new appeasement through the Russian pact. So far the only one to profit

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by this sinister business are the Russians.

England and France are still hesitating in officially designating Stalin as their enemy. It seems to me, that we should not be more rash than the governments of London and Paris. I have always known what it is that kept a person of my breeding and convictions at a distance from the Moscow dictatorship, and the recent events have tended to make it clearer to me than ever. In cold calculation Stalin is playing an extremely daring and untransparent game. As long as he is not plainly playing it <u>for</u> Hitler, I should not like to admit, that it must work absolutely <u>against</u> our cause - the cause of peace, of freedom and of social progress.

With comrade-like greeting

P.S. I have no objection to the publication of this letter, provided, of course, that it is published in its entirety.

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To the Editor of / "New Leader".

- Sie fordern mich dazu auf, Ihnen mitzuteilen, was ich über die neue Politik Sowjet-Russlands, und im besonderen über den "so-called non-aggression pact between Hitler and Stalin and the partition of Poland between Germany and Russia" denke.

Ich muss gestehen, dass ich es als eine schwierige, fast unlösbare Aufgabe empfinde, sich zu derart komplexen und bedeutungsvollen Fragen im Rahmen eines kurzen Briefes zu äussern. Ueber die Verwandtschaften - und die Unterschiede zwischen Sowjet-Russland und dem Dritten Reich liesse sich ein dickes Buch schreiben. Ich habe die Aehnlichkeiten zwischen diesen beiden neuartigen Staatsgebilden niemals übersehen, und übrigens auf sie öffentlich, auch vor dem non-aggression-pact, schon hingewiesen. Ich höre aber auch heute noch nicht auf, an fundamentale Unterschiede zwischen dem Nazi-Regime und den Sowjets zu glauben. Das Dritte Reich ist schlecht in seiner Substanz; da gibt es keine "guten Elemente", keinen "grossen Zweck", durch den die gemeinen Mittel gerechtfertigt würden. Die Ziele sind so miserabel wie die Mittel, mit denen sie erreicht werden sollen. Das Dritte Reich hat dem deutschen Volk und der Welt nur Gefahr, Störung, Leiden und Erniedrigung gebracht. Seine Existenz ist kein geschichtsbildendes Ereignis, sondern ein mörderisches Attentat auf die Zivilisation und den Fortschritt. - Von der Sowjet-Union kann gerechterweise nicht ganz das gleiche gesagt werden. Hier liegt der Fall komplizierter. Ich kann und will hier nicht resümieren, was von den Sowjets geleistet - und wie viel gesündigt worden ist. Ausser Frage scheint mir zu sein, dass wir es im Fall des Russischen Staates mindestens mit einem Problem zu tun haben - vielleicht mit einem bitteren, einem tragischen Problem - ; im Fall des Dritten Reiches einfach mit einer Schweinerei.

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Es ist selbstverständlich, dass in einem Augenblick, da Sowjet Russland sich an Nazi-Deutschland anzunähern [illegible] - oder anzunähern scheint - die Aehnlichkeiten zwischen den beiden Regierungsformen besonders deutlich werden, während die Unterschiede in den Hintergrund treten. Sie werden mir glauben, dass die ersten Anzeichen einer solchen Annäherung zwischen der Moskauer und der Berliner Diktatur auch mich tief schockiert, verwirrt und beunruhigt hat. [illegible] Ich bin niemals ein Kommunist gewesen. Meine Sympathien für die Sowjet-Union waren vor allem diejenigen eines Demokraten und leidenschaftlichen Antifascisten, der das sozialistische Russland für einen der stärksten potentiellen Gegner des Fascismus und für einen der mächtigsten Garanten des europäischen Friedens gehalten hat. In dieser meiner Ansicht habe ich mich vielleicht geirrt.

Ich sage "vielleicht"; denn was in Mittel- und Osteuropa jetzt vorgeht oder sich vorbereitet, scheint mir noch nicht entschieden; jedenfalls sind uns die Entscheidungen noch unbekannt. Stalins Absichten und Ziele sind geheimnisvoll; sicher ist nur, dass seine Macht gewaltig zugenommen hat. Dies will nicht besagen, dass ich seine Taktiken gut finde. Im Gegenteil, ich unterschreibe den Satz, den ich in "The New Republic", vom 27. September, gelesen habe: "Stalin's invasion of Poland from the east has too much in common with Hitler's invasion from the west for any defender of Soviet morals to feel comfortable about it."

Die Frage bleibt nur, ob diese Taktik - deren unleugbare Verwandtschaft mit der Nazi-Taktik uns abstößt - sich auf die Dauer günstig für den Nazi-Führer auswirken wird. Diese Frage scheint zwar zunächst keine moralische Bedeutung zu haben; dafür hat sie umso mehr politisches Gewicht. Und alles Politische kann - oder muss - moralisch [illegible] (Konsequenzen haben.) - In London scheint man der Ansicht zu sein, "that Russia's

invasion of Poland, fatal as it was to the Polish cause, will in the long run turn out to be a terrible headache to Adolf Hitler". Bill Henry berichtet aus England: "One week's developments indicate that Russia stymied Hitler in the Ukraine, chased him from the Rumanian border oil fields and, by placing a big army bordering on 3o,ooo,ooo Slavs he is trying to assimilate, will provide a constant threat on his eastern frontier."

Die Ansicht ist weit verbreitet, dass Hitler in eine Falle gegangen ist, als er Herrn von Ribbentrop nach Moskau schickte. Ihm ist es nicht geglückt, die Alliierten durch den Russen-Pakt in ein neues appeasement zu bluffen. Profitiert an diesem düsteren Geschäft hat bis jetzt nur der Kreml.

~~Niemand kann heute voraussagen, wie Stalin solchen Kraftzuwachs~~ nutzen - und bis zu welchem Grade er ihn missbrauchen wird. Sicher ist schon heute: dass die Sowjet-Union moralisches Prestige verloren - und Macht gewonnen hat.

England und Frankreich zögern noch, Stalin offiziell als ihren Feind zu bezeichnen. Mir scheint, wir sollten nicht voreiliger sein, als die Regierungen von London und Paris. Was einen Menschen meiner Art und Gesinnung von der Moskauer Diktatur distanciert, habe ich immer gewusst, und die letzten Ereignisse waren geeignet, es mir klarer denn je zu machen. Stalin spielt, mit eisiger Berechnung, ein äusserst gewagtes und sehr undurchsichtiges Spiel. So lange er es nicht eindeutig für Hitler spielt, möchte ich nicht zugeben, dass es sich unbedingt gegen unsere Sache - die Sache des Friedens, der Freiheit und des sozialen Fortschrittes - wird auswirken müssen.

Mit kameradschaftlichem Gruss

P.S. Ich habe keine Einwände gegen die Publikation dieses Briefes, unter der selbstverständlichen Voraussetzung, dass er ungekürzt veröffentlicht wird.

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~~A. M considers Adolf H. to be~~

M would be absurd to deny that
the comparison of the news agency - photo
between H. and St. meant to me, and still means,
painful surprise and a confusing shock.
M frankly admit that the ~~first~~ photo,
showing Mr. Stalin in ~~friendly~~ conversation
with Mr. von Ribbentr., looked like
a nightmare to me, and that Nazi-propa-
ganda had from yesterday the ~~upper~~ hand
as a "betrayal ----- "/M don't say that
M definitely changed my mind since that
time, but M in the meantime, however, M
began to doubt whether Stalin's ~~motives~~
be understand that St.'s policy —
although in this case cynical and dangerous tactic —
(including my self)
might be more comprehensible, more in the spirit
and even more on the anti-fascist struggle, than
interest of anti-fascist struggle, than
we were inclined to think ~~in the~~
a few weeks ago. M. M read in the
paper this morning, under the headline ---- ,
the following statement: ,
This sounds convincing and significant.
There remains, of course, a great deal of
mystery and dangerous sounds in the present
attitude of the Soviets. One thing, however,
is becoming more and more obvious: the
fact is now the victory of
Nazi-G. — M certainly will be as definitely

against St. as I am against H.,
it and when the Sov. U. would
favour the victory of St. Nazism against our
the Democracies. At this moment I think
that St. is not by any means H.'s
greatest friend. I think but little hope of keeping
the Italian and France don't yet consider
the Soviet Un. as being their enemy.
I should be afraid and
ashamed as the government in Russia and
London. Whatever difficulty I may not forget
that there are many friends and elements
in that so hated Soviet country,
in which there are exclusively bad
Russian elements in the Th. R. With the Soviet-
Nazi-non-aggression-pact should not trade
and for be an alliance, the democratic,
anti-fascist, anti-fascist elements
in

This is an entirely isolated situation, and
there are naturally political reasons for this
development. I may explain my feelings
in the following statement: I was shocked and am
deeply shocked by the so S.-N.
pact

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