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Mann, Klaus

Pacific Palisades, 1946-08-02

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Von
Herbert Schleier
& Minna &
Steinhilber. 31

1550 San Remo Drive,
Pacific Palisades, Calif.

2 August, 1946

Dear Herbert,

Your letter, addressed to the Bermann-Fischer Verlag at Stockholm, reached me here -- almost miraculously! -- just a few days ago. What a pleasant surprise! Yes, I had heard about you in Italy through Herbert Fleischer and other friends; but the last available news was that of your forcible (and unfortunate) induction into the "Wehrmacht." Nobody seemed to know what had happened to you since that time. So I am all the more glad to have now some first-hand information. It was good to learn that you are still alive and in good health and unchanged, as far as your handwriting and your style are concerned. Mes félicitations!

And I? Well, I was an American soldier, a veritable GI, for three years or so. In December, 1943, I was sent overseas -- first to North Africa, then to Italy. I have seen most of the Italian campaign, from Naples to Bologna. Later I was transferred to The Stars and Stripes, Mediterranean Edition, and stationed in Rome as a staff writer. In this capacity I made my first trip to Germany, just after the end of the war (from May to July, 1945). Subsequently I got myself demobilized in Italy and stayed in Europe as a civilian correspondent working for American papers. I spent some time in France, Holland, Switzerland, Austria, and made a second trip to Germany, from which I have only just returned. I was in the British Zone, too. Had I only known your address, at the time of my visit there! It would have been charming to see you again, after so many years.

And now there are once more a continent and an ocean between us! I have just arrived here, coming from Italy, via New York. I am with my parents and with Erika. My father, as you may have heard, has been quite seriously ill, but he is much better now. All of us are working -- my father on his new novel (the life story of a fictitious German composer: quite a curious and arresting literary venture); Erika, on a book about Germany under Allied occupation; I, on various things -- a play about ghost, spiritualists, and the end of the world (a most topical theme!), a book on Rome, the German versions of books I have originally written in English...

Are you doing any literary work? Let me know.

And is there anything I could possibly do for you? I may try to send you a package, but I am not quite sure whether it can be done, from the U.S. to the British Zone.

In any case, I am looking forward to hearing from you again.

As always

Yours old

KLAVS

And Rudolf... To you, his death must be an awful ~~awful~~ loss -- and to me, too, it came as quite a shock. What an insane, abominable thing to do -- to kill so sweet and innocent an old man! What a world we are living in! What a time! And what new cruel ordeals and adventures the coming years may have in store for us!