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Mann, Erika

Kilchberg/Zürich, 1955-12-17

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Colonel H. M. Steele
716 N. Sixth Street

Leavenworth, Kansas

abgeschickt am 2.I.56

Erika Mann
Kilchberg/Zürich,
December 17th, 1955

Dear Colonel.

It was only yesterday that I chanced to see your letter to my late father. I assume that the latter had not found it possible to reply. And since I feel that you are entitled to as much information as I can give you I shall gladly try to answer your questions.

From Camp Crowder Klaus was sent to the Italian theater. There he joined his old outfit, the "First Mobile" but was singled out for what Washington had rightly called "a dangerous mission". Klaus spent a great deal of time up front, in the first lines, broadcasting straight to the enemy who were close enough to be able to hear the American loudspeaker. Klaus broadcast what he had himself written and he also did a lot of writing for leaflets and other material that was to be distributed to the enemy. His interrogation, moreover, of p.o.w.s took place as soon as they had been captured and in such places up front that would enable him immediately to check on the veracity (or lack of it) of their statements.

While I understoof that Klaus had been in almost constant danger, I never knew that he had volunteered for his mission. I am glad that he never told me. It is so much like Klaus not to boast.

Towards the very end of the war Klaus was transferred to The Stars and Stripes in Rome. His articles became one of the main features of the paper; Klaus travelled widely. In Prague he actually succeeded in identifying a traitor to the American army and surrendered him to the authorities. While he has told me about the incident, he was too casual about it for me to remember more than the bare fact.

and his whole
Klaus, though originally *no* soldier, was happy in the army. And he always felt extremely grateful to both yourself and Colonel Pratt.

After the war, he kept on writing, contributed to one of the first Rossellini films, was given some award for "the best essay of the year" - but was anything but happy. He had had high hopes for the world that would emerge ~~from~~ from all the fighting, - a word in which men of his kind would be needed. His disappointment and frustration were great and gradually robbed him of all confidence in life. He died on May 21st, 1949.

There is not, I am afraid, much more that I could possibly tell you. I do wish, ~~however~~ however, expressly to thank you for your kind interest as well as for what you did for Klaus.

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