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Erika Mann-Auden
1550 San Remo Drive
Pacific Palisades, California

December 11, 1950

REGISTERED

Mr. Edward J. Shaughnessy
Director of Immigration and Naturalization
New York District Office
70 Columbus Avenue
New York 23, N.Y.

Dear Sir:

This is to inform you of my decision to withdraw my pending application for U.S. citizenship - a decision which, I trust, this letter will serve to implement. I have been pondering this crucial step for quite some time, and should wish to assure you that I am taking it only after the most careful and earnest consideration. Please permit me to state my position. I shall endeavour to do so, if not briefly, at least as briefly as possible under the circumstances.

A British subject by marriage, I first came to this country as a visitor in 1936, immigrated in July 1937, and - as I intended to stay - took out my First Papers the day following my return. By 1942 I would have been eligible for citizenship, but the war had long since broken out, and I was too busy trying to help first the British and then the American war effort to take up residence anywhere in the U.S. for the required period of six months. Innumerable are the times I endangered my life while working for the BBC during the great Blitzes and covering the war as a correspondent accredited to the U.S. forces. Nor would I have been permitted to do so without having undergone - and passed - the most thorough investigations. From 1939 to 1946 I spent roughly half of my time in the wars or with the occupation forces and, allowing for some recreation, one third lecturing "at home" in the United States. There were far, but far more offers than I could possibly have accepted. According to my agent, I used to be the most "asked for" woman lecturer in this country and, incidentally, one of the very best he ever worked with. Hundreds of letters from organizations -- universities, schools, churches, clubs, townhall forums -- testify to the constructive and educational character of my efforts. I made a good living, but actually ruined my health, -

not because I needed the money so badly, but because I wanted people to understand what "we" were fighting for and what sort of peace "we" sought to establish. It was also during those years that I received two citations from the Treasury Department for special achievements in the Department's field, as well as one from the War Department, commending me for outstanding and patriotic services in several overseas theaters of operations. Had I been an American citizen, I could not possibly have tried harder to be helpful. In fact, I felt like an American, lived like an American, and to all practical purposes was an American. Thus, as soon as an opportunity offered itself, I asked to be made an American. Not that I ever forgot my gratitude to Great Britain and the allegiance I owed her as long as I continued to be a British subject. But two of my brothers had enlisted in, and served with, the U.S. forces; my parents, too, had become American citizens; and so strong were the ties linking Britain and the United States that I did not feel my proposed change of citizenship to necessitate any major change within me, - any overthrow of principles and beliefs. As it happened, I lived and worked in the U.S., and since I wished to go on doing so I deemed it only fair to add myself legally to the good people of this country. My application was made almost four years ago.

Ever since then an investigation has been going on that could not help casting doubts upon my character, gradually ruining my career, robbing me of my livelihood and, in short, changing me from a happy, busy and fairly useful member of society into a humiliated suspect. Friends of mine have been questioned for two and three hours at a stretch until they all but collapsed. When it had become obvious that I was neither a communist, nor a "fellow traveller", nor a member of any organization listed as "subversive", nor anything considered undesirable, politically, the authorities took to digging into my private life in a way most shocking to those questioned. Bartenders, desk clerks, agents, editors, people who know me well and people who hardly know me at all have been questioned alike. Small wonder, prospective employers felt ardently disinclined to engage my services. During the past three years my lecture dates have decreased from a good 75 during a four months season to 1 this year (winter 1950-51). My agent has seen fit to part with me, and I would hardly dare to show my face in any of the offices I used to work for as a journalist. For even people rightly convinced of my utter "innocence" tend to be frightened these days lest their association with one erroneously suspected be held against them.

It might be said that the views I hold and which I am wont frankly to express in my lectures ceased to be as popular as they were during the war; that, while my every address contained ample criticism of the U.S.S.R., I was hardly less critical of certain trends in contemporary America; and that my

present failure to obtain any "dates" was a result of my own attitude rather, than of a position made precarious and finally untenable by that unending investigation. For two reasons I am convinced that such is not the case: 1.) Years before the war, at a time when isolationism was going strong and many of my audiences, particularly in the middle-west, warmly sympathized with Germany - any Germany -, whereas others were in favor of peace at almost any price, my approach was at least as "unpopular", if not more so, than it is today. Yet, owing, I think, to my evident sincerity, people never seemed to mind, and I "got away" with a very great deal. 2.) I still do, whenever I have an opportunity to make myself heard. In October-November 1949 I spent four weeks as a "Visiting Writer" at four colleges and universities in Southern California. And at no time - not even during the war when my "line" fell happily into the generally accepted pattern - had I been more successful than I proved to be then. The same holds true for my appearance in August 1948 on the "Townhall of the Air" program. Dealing with the question "What Should We Do in the Berlin Situation?", the program - as do all "Townhall of the Air" presentations - called for a dramatization of the problem at stake which in turn necessitated a very clear-cut attitude on the part of the speakers who must carry their respective opinions to the greatest possible extremes. Consequently, it might have been expected that I would have made myself more unpopular than usual, especially, since both my "adversaries" qualified as experts and kept saying precisely what the majority wanted to hear. Nevertheless I was most cordially accepted and received more questions from the floor than did my two partners combined.

All of which I submit merely as evidence substantiating my contention that it was by no means the nature of my lectures that finished me as a lecturer, but that I have been silenced by circumstances beyond my control.

Of course, I understand that anyone wishing to acquire U.S. citizenship has to be investigated, even if several previous investigations failed to produce unfavorable results. No routine investigation would have been out of the ordinary and could have done any harm, had it gone on for half a year or even a year. But that scores of people should have been visited over a period of almost four years was bound to arouse the distrust not only of those interrogated but also that of anyone - and there were many - in whom they confided.

Personally, I am at a complete loss as to what may have prompted the investigation to take on such disastrous proportions. I have never been granted a hearing, and was questioned but once by two gentlemen representing the Los Angeles Immigration authorities, and checking - as far as I could make out - primarily on my various places of residence during the past thirteen years. Yet I - and only I - could have supplied whatever information was required, and should have volunteered

to furnish all the information that could have been wished for. There is nothing whatsoever in my life that I would not have been happy to recount; nothing that I would have any reason to hide; nothing that could possibly have prevented me from becoming an American citizen.

May I say that, more than the actual damage I suffered, it is the injustice of the whole procedure that hurts and offends me to the core. In the long run the facts in my case are certain to prove stronger than any amount of doubts, suspicions and denunciations, unfounded one and all, and hence wholly incapable of ever being substantiated. But even if I had finally been grudgingly accepted, I should have felt most ill at ease, just as the ghost of my ruined career would have haunted my life. Worse - I could not possibly have taken much pride in my citizenship, a privilege acquired by the skin of my teeth. As a British subject, bent on serving my country and its friends and allies to the best of my abilities, I was never made to feel that my services were negligible. Nor, as a resident of this country, have I been denied recognition and the most heartening public acclaim. It was merely as an "applicant" that I had to witness the gradual destruction of all I had built up in more than a decade. This spectacle was the more painful since it involved the third existence I had made for myself. Nazism drove me from my native Germany where I had been quite a success; Hitler's growing influence in Europe caused me to leave the continent which I had been touring with my own show for more than a thousand performances; and now I find myself ruined - through no fault of my own - in a country I love and whose citizen I had hoped to become.

Even so, I wish to make it perfectly clear that I still consider myself to be eligible for naturalization under the law, - including, of course, the Internal Security Act of 1950; that there is nothing whatever in my actual record - my past and present activities, affiliations, convictions, utterances and the like -, capable of barring me from becoming an American; that I am withdrawing my pending application solely on the grounds characterized above; that I have no reason to shun further investigation or to fear ultimate rejection; that, notwithstanding the injuries both mental and material I sustained and which resulted in my decision not to avail myself of my eligibility, I shall continue to comport myself in such a way as to remain eligible - theoretically, in principle and de jure.

I must repeat that I have not taken this decision without very serious thought. Nevertheless, now that it is taken, I must say that I feel no regret whatsoever at the prospect of having to spend the rest of my life as a British subject. And you may be quite sure that as a British subject I shall never cease to try to serve the best interests of Anglo-American cooperation.

Yours very sincerely

Erika Mann-Auden.