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A Memorandum to Francis Biddle (Attorney General) Subjekt: Naturalization.

Mann, Klaus

1943-08-10

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T/3 Klaus Mann (32697270)
825th Signal Radio Repair Serv.Co.
Camp Crowder, Missouri

A MEMORANDUM

to
FRANCIS BIDDLE, Esq., Attorney General,
Washington, D.C.

SUBJECT: NATURALIZATION

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CASE HISTORY:

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I left Germany - the land of my birth - as soon as Hitler came to power, in 1933, and have never been there since. In 1934, I was "expatriated" by the Nazi Government; in 1937, I became a citizen of Czechoslovakia. Since 1937, I have been living in the United States.

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THE "SPECIAL INFORMATION":

Of course, I am not in a position to know the exact contents of the last-minute information which prompted the Baltimore Judge to act the way he did. Whatever this adverse information may have been, I presume that it has been refuted or modified by the special investigations made during the past three months. Yet I am eager to contribute whatever I can to the speedy clarification of my pending case.

In doing so, I take it for granted that the suspicions against me are of a primarily p o l i t i c a l nature. Not that I think it likely that anybody would have dared to question my anti-Nazi feelings and my anti-Fascist record. But I am aware of certain rumours according to which my political views are extremely "left" - practically those of a so-called "fellow traveller" of the Communist Party.

These rumours - spread against me by ignorant or malignant people (maybe by Nazi-sympathizers or by jealous fellow-refugees) - are entirely untrue.

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It is true that I have loathed Nazism and Fascism for the past

ten years, and that I have tried to expose and fight, in my writings, those aggressive, autocratic philosophies and régimes. I have done so, however, by no means as an adherent to, or fellow-traveller of, any political party, but as an independent intellectual and liberal.

The truth is that I do not have, and have never had, any affiliations ^{with} ~~to~~ any political groups; that I am not receiving, and have never received, any support or orders from any political organization - neither directly nor indirectly, neither here nor abroad.

The suggestion, or suspicion, that I am somehow connected, or at least in sympathy, with the Communist Party, is indeed absurd. I could quote dozens of statements from my various writings to prove, not only my loyalty to the democratic cause, but also my critical attitude toward Marxism in general and, in particular, toward the Soviet Union and the (defunct) Comintern. But I do not want to burden this memorandum unduly with quotations and therefore content myself with mentioning a few samples.

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literary merits of my book - deplored and angrily criticized what he thinks my "anti-Communist prejudices." (The newspaper clipping in question is in the files of the Post Intelligence Office, Camp Ritchie, Maryland.)

The literary monthly, "Decision", of which I was the editor and founder, was definitely anti-Nazi, pro-English and anti-Isolationist in its policy, at a time when the Communists, confused by the Stalin-Hitler Pact, were against American intervention in the European "imperialistic" war. My magazine was therefore repeatedly attacked by the Communist weekly, "New Masses", and other similar organs.

- Among the literary contributors of "Decision" was not one American or European writer who could be justly called a Communist or Communist fellow-traveller, while the list of our literary sponsors comprised the names of such prominent American and European democrats as President Edward Benes, Robert E. Sherwood, Somerset Maugham, Louis Adamic, Frank Kingdon, and so forth. Even authors as unpopular with the Communists as the Russian refugee Mark Aldanov (attacked as an "anti-Soviet propagandist" because of his novel "The Fifth Seal") contributed occasionally to "Decision."

Also, characteristically, I have never contributed to "New Masses" or any other Communist or semi-Communist periodical, while my stories and articles were published in many other leading American magazines and papers.

Moreover, none of my writings has ever been translated into Russian - as far as I know - ,while many of them appeared in French, Spanish, Italian, Czech, Polish, Danish, and so forth.

I might easily enumerate more incidents and quotations apt to refute the legend of my pro-Communist leanings. But, as I said before, it seems impracticable to charge this document with too much material. Suffice it to say that my political views and utterances have never been influenced, directly or indirectly, by the interests or orders of the Soviet Union or the Communist Party; on the contrary, I found it necessary, on several occasions, to come out in public against certain tactics or slogans dictated by the Communist "Party Line."

As indicated above, I take it that the suspicions against me are of a "primarily political nature." It may be, however, that the adverse "special information" in question includes also rumours or denouncements of a very different kind.

Of course, those friends of mine who were interviewed by Government agents in regard to my case, did not repeat to me any of the things they may have heard or said on such occasions. Yet their intimations seemed to suggest that not all the questions asked by the officials were political. No doubt, the investigators were also interested in the issue of my moral reputation and reliability.

Naturally, I don't know what kind of venomous stories may have come to the attention of the F.B.I. or other investigating bureaus. The Nazis are very good at fabricating slanderous and scandalous rumours designed to compromise their political antagonists. Even before 1933,

when I was still living in Germany - and was much more in the public eye there than I am in this country - the nationalistic press published the most fantastic and most repulsive reports about the alleged "viciousness" of many liberals, including myself. Some of those malicious and mendacious fabrications may have found their way to this country and even into the files of Government agencies. Additional rumours and denouncements may have been contributed by the German employees of a New York hotel (The Bedford: 118 East 40th St.), where I spent a good deal of time, from 1936 to 1943.

It is difficult, if not impossible, for me to discuss or to refute rumours which I do not know. But it is also difficult, if not impossible, for me to imagine that any Government agency would give credence to this type of irresponsible slander - especially when the person thus denounced happens to be a man of my personal background and record.

Since I do not know what has been said against me, I take the liberty to state simply that I have lived in many different countries - for more than six years in the United States - and that my conduct has never and nowhere provoked anything like a scandal. I was found acceptable by the U.S. Army, and my military record confirms what nobody has yet dared to doubt or to deny into my face: that my character and "sex moral" are "excellent."

There is one minor incident which I would like to mention as it has probably come to the knowledge of the authorities and may require some additional explanation.

Among my acquaintances in New York was a man named John T. Fletcher. I met him in the fall of 1940 - if I remember correctly - and saw him last in November (or October?), 1942. It was then, in my apartment, that a F.B.I. (or Military Intelligence?) agent arrested him as a deserter from the U.S. Army.

The official who arrested Fletcher in my room - and then took him to Governors Island - did not choose to ask me any questions. I did not have the opportunity to tell him what I state herewith: that I was completely unaware of Fletcher's military status. All I knew, at the time, was that he had once been drafted and that he had subsequently been granted a medical discharge. I did not have any reason to doubt the truthfulness of his story, nor would I have been in a position to find out the truth, even if I had tried to do so. I am sure that Fletcher would be willing to confirm these facts, if he has not done so already. Yet I consider it important enough to stress my innocence in this case; for, if I had given wittingly shelter to a deserter, such an action could not but speak against me in the eyes of the authorities.

III

WHY I AM EAGER TO SPEED UP MY PENDING NATURALIZATION:

If I were interested in an easy, not dangerous job, I might be quite satisfied with my position in the Army as it is just now. Why should I not try to keep my convenient desk job for the duration? No doubt, I would have a comparatively easy time and still would probably become a citizen as soon as the War is over.

But, frankly, my ambitions are of a different kind. I want to participate in this fight where my services can be used most effectively - regardless of the risks and hardships involved.

It is not that I insist on my speedy naturalization as a recompensation for my services as a soldier in the American Army. But the Army insists on the citizen status of those whom it entrusts with any responsible duties.

I want to go overseas, and, in order to do so, I have to be naturalized. What I am really desirous to do is, to rejoin the First Mobile Radio Broadcasting Company - now stationed somewhere overseas. I am positive that there is no second place in the Army where I could be as useful as in that particular organization - a belief which is shared by the officer in charge of my special section, as pointed out by Capt. Herz in his letter a copy of which I enclose herewith.

I trust - as does Capt. Herz - that "the misunderstanding attendant to the various formalities" of my naturalization may have been cleared up by now, and that it may be possible at last to recognize me as a citizen of the country for which I am willing to risk my life.

Klaus Mann /

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PRESIDENT

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FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

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=550 SAN REMO DRIVE PACIFIC PALISADES CALIF=

IN VIEW OF PRESENT STATUS OF YOUR CASE I DOUBT THAT ANY
USEFUL PURPOSE WOULD BE SERVED BY SEEING ME AFTER A CASE HAS
BEEN SUBMITTED TO THE COURT IT IS VERY MUCH OUT OF OUR HANDS
NEVERTHELESS SHOULD YOU FEEL YOU MUST COME EAST SUGGEST YOU
SEE EITHER COMMISSIONER OF NATURALIZATION HARRISON AT
PHILADELPHIA OR DEPUT COMMISSIONER SHAUGHNESSY IN WASHINGTON
EACH IS FAMILIAR WITH YOUR CASE AND WILL DO ALL THAT CAN BE
DONE UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES=

FRANCIS BIDDLEE ATTORNEY GENERAL.

TELEPHONE NO. 54403

TELEPHONED TO Adsee

TIME 1530

BY mv

TO BE

W.C. farmsg

T/3 Klaus Mann (32697270)
825th Signal Radio Repair Serv.Co.
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I might easily enumerate more incidents and quotations apt to refute the legend of my pro-Communist leanings. But, as I said before, it seems impracticable to charge this document with too much material. Suffice it to say that my political views and utterances have never been influenced, directly or indirectly, by the interests or orders of the Soviet Union or the Communist Party; on the contrary, I found it necessary, on several occasions, to come out in public against certain tactics or slogans dictated by the Communist "Party Line."

As indicated above, I take it that the suspicions against me are of a "primarily political nature." It may be, however, that the adverse "special information" in question includes also rumours or denouncements of a very different kind.

Of course, those friends of mine who were interviewed by Government agents in regard to my case, did not repeat to me any of the things they may have heard or said on such occasions. Yet their intimations seemed to suggest that not all the questions asked by the officials were political. No doubt, the investigators were also interested in the issue of my moral reputation and reliability.

Naturally, I don't know what kind of venomous stories may have come to the attention of the F.B.I. or other investigating bureaus. The Nazis are very good at fabricating slanderous and scandalous rumours designed to compromise their political antagonists. Even before 1933,

when I was still living in Germany - and was much more in the public eye there than I am in this country - the nationalistic press published the most fantastic and most repulsive reports about the alleged "viciousness" of many liberals, including myself. Some of those malicious and mendacious fabrications may have found their way to this country and even into the files of Government agencies. Additional rumours and denouncements may have been contributed by the German employees of a New York hotel (The Bedford: 118 East 40th St.), where I spent a good deal of time, from 1936 to 1943.

It is difficult, if not impossible, for me to discuss or to refute rumours which I do not know. But it is also difficult, if not impossible, for me to imagine that any Government agency would give credence to this type of irresponsible slander - especially when the person thus denounced happens to be a man of my personal background and record.

Since I do not know what has been said against me, I take the liberty to state simply that I have lived in many different countries - for more than six years in the United States - and that my conduct has never and nowhere provoked anything like a scandal. I was found acceptable by the U.S. Army, and my military record confirms what nobody has yet dared to doubt or to deny into my face: that my character and "sex moral" are "excellent."

There is one minor incident which I would like to mention as it has probably come to the knowledge of the authorities and may require some additional explanation.

Among my acquaintances in New York was a man named John T. Fletcher. I met him in the fall of 1940 - if I remember correctly - and saw him last in November (or October?), 1942. It was then, in my apartment, that a F.B.I. (or Military Intelligence?) agent arrested him as a deserter from the U.S. Army.

The official who arrested Fletcher in my room - and then took him to Governors Island - did not choose to ask me any questions. I did not have the opportunity to tell him what I state herewith: that I was completely unaware of Fletcher's military status. All I knew, at the time, was that he had once been drafted and that he had subsequently been granted a medical discharge. I did not have any reason to doubt the truthfulness of his story, nor would I have been in a position to find out the truth, even if I had tried to do so. I am sure that Fletcher would be willing to confirm these facts, if he has not done so already. Yet I consider it important enough to stress my innocence in this case; for, if I had given wittingly shelter to a deserter, such an action could not but speak against me in the eyes of the authorities.

III

WHY I AM EAGER TO SPEED UP MY PENDING NATURALIZATION:

If I were interested in an easy, not dangerous job, I might be quite satisfied with my position in the Army as it is just now. Why should I not try to keep my convenient desk job for the duration? No doubt, I would have a comparatively easy time and still would probably become a citizen as soon as the War is over.

But, frankly, my ambitions are of a different kind. I want to participate in this fight where my services can be used most effectively - regardless of the risks and hardships involved.

It is not that I insist on my speedy naturalization as a recompensation for my services as a soldier in the American Army. But the Army insists on the citizen status of those whom it entrusts with any responsible duties.

I want to go overseas, and, in order to do so, I have to be naturalized. What I am really desirous to do is, to rejoin the First Mobile Radio Broadcasting Company - now stationed somewhere overseas. I am positive that there is no second place in the Army where I could be as useful as in that particular organization - a belief which is shared by the officer in charge of my special section, as pointed out by Capt. Herz in his letter a copy of which I enclose herewith.

I trust - as does Capt. Herz - that "the misunderstanding attendant to the various formalities" of my naturalization may have been cleared up by now, and that it may be possible at last to recognize me as a citizen of the country for which I am willing to risk my life.

Klaus Mann