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Klaus Mann: German-American Veteran in the Pursuit of a Pan-European Peace

Having survived two world wars as a German citizen and later as an American soldier, Klaus Mann experienced first-hand the horrors of war and the fragility of peace on the cusp of the Cold War. He was well qualified and inherently well versed to postulate how best to pursue peace from various vantage points throughout his life, which he ended in 1949 at the age of 42.¹ Klaus Mann was a prolific journalist, novelist, essayist, and playwright, and much has been written about his famous family and their contributions to the literary world. Mann's active pursuit of peace and a united Europe however, is often overshadowed by the traumatic events of his life that inspired many of his works.

Although he left no suicide note, one clearly sees Mann's bitter disappointment with world events in his writings particularly towards the end of his life.² His moral commitment to a better world became evident in his politically oriented fiction, journals, editorial works, and autobiographies written in exile. The latter not only chronicle his experiences, but illuminate his evolving outlook on war and peace and include *The Turning Point* published in 1942 and *Der Wendepunkt*, the German-language version published posthumously in 1952. The cleft between his ideals, expectations, and reality developed over the course of his lifetime beginning with the First World War.

Klaus Heinrich Thomas Mann was born in Munich in 1906 and was the second of six children born to Thomas Mann and his wife Katja. The family, initially a privileged and formal household, lived in Bavaria during the First World War, which Mann described in detail in chapter two of *The Turning Point*. Mann began by mentioning how his parents, similar to many other

families, hurriedly said good-bye to various relatives before they joined the ranks at the outset of the war.³ His mother and grandmother were particularly upset because his Uncle Peter, a physicist, was in Australia at the time at a scientific congress. Australia had just declared war on Germany, leaving them to wonder about the status of Klaus's Uncle Peter.

Mann was not yet eight years old when the war began and twelve when it ended, and while many of his recollections of life on the home front with its dire food and material shortages are remembered through the lens of a wanting child, some of Mann's other observations take on a more mature and worldly altruism. He recalled his eagerness to take part in the "bloody events" in the trenches out of curiosity, masochism, vanity and fear, but he also recalled falling asleep in his darkened bedroom and wondering about those involved. He wrote:

And what sort of complicated torture had the Australians in store for the miserable Uncle Peter? They probably treated him as the Negroes were treated in the tale of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Would I ever have to undergo such martyrdom? Poor Uncle Peter! Poor Russians! Poor General Hindenburg! It could be not easy, I figured, to perform such heroic but grisly deeds—compelled to act like a monster on account of professional duty and martial genius. Poor generals who had to become inhuman! Poor soldiers who were sacrificed by inhuman generals! I melted away with pity.⁴

Although Mann's recollection may sound sentimental to some, he nonetheless, recognized the corporeal and emotional underbelly of war at a young age. He explained that he and his siblings were always hungry and that the state of constant privation left marks on their physical and moral constitution.⁵ They learned not to take wealth and plenitude for granted, but as the war dragged on, they began to wonder if things like whipped cream and peace actually existed. Their teacher had led them to believe Germany would soon win the war, but until they did, Mann recalled the questions they posed to their "strangely sorrowful" Mother, "What is peace like, really? We kept asking her. Is everybody very fat and merry when there is no war? Did people actually eat a whole fish between the soup and the meat, and a huge chocolate cake afterwards?"⁶

Moreover, Mann stated that even his "inexperienced mind" was affected by humanitarian concerns that challenged official phrases, and that his "inner awakening" was accelerated when he received a book for Christmas in 1917.⁷ The book, given to him by the very same grandmother who worried over Uncle Peter, was Bertha von Suttner's novel *Die Waffen nieder*. He wrote:

Bertha von Suttner's classic anti-war novel "Die Waffen Nieder!" certainly is not a literary masterpiece, but no matter how obvious and trite its plot and style may be, its sturdy emotionalism seized my imagination and actually changed my mind. It was partly, or mostly, thanks to Bertha von Suttner's naïve but skillful appeal that I began to grasp certain essential facts and to ask certain questions. Could it be that our teachers and the newspapers and even the General Staff had tried to delude and to cheat us for three years and a half?⁸

When Germany did lose the war, Mann recalled from his diary entries that nobody seemed to like the peace and that something was wrong with it. He lamented, "In fact, people now looked more apprehensive even than during the war. Besides, there was no whipped cream, which had been promised to us as a token of victory. As far as food was concerned, the winter of 1918-19 was at least as bad as the preceding one had been."⁹ Such was Mann's first of many disillusionments and disappointments related to war and peace.

In the post-war years that followed, Mann published his first essays in 1924, organized a theater ensemble with his older sister Erika, Pamela Wedekind, and Gustaf Gründgens in 1925, published his first novel, *Der fromme Tanz*, in 1926, and traveled to America and Asia with Erika in 1927-1928.¹⁰ Before examining Mann's ensuing fight against fascism, the relationship between Mann and his sister Erika is worthy of discussion for reasons which will become clear later on.

As Peter T. Hoffer explains, Klaus and Erika worked together creatively as young adults and their spiritual bond was unusually close for most of their lives.¹¹ In fact, Mann dedicated *Der Wendepunkt* to his sister and mother.¹² Mann's autobiographies confirm their close-knit relationship and the siblings co-authored several books together. They include: *Rundherum* (Roundabout), published in 1929; *Escape to Life*, a book about European emigrants published in 1939; and *The Other Germany*, published in 1940 in an attempt to exonerate those Germans who opposed National Socialism.

So close were the two that they were often mistaken for twins, despite the fact that Erika was one year older than Klaus. Mann wrote in *The Turning Point* that although his birthday was November 18, it was celebrated throughout his childhood with Erika's birthday "like twins" on November 9.¹³ When they embarked on their lecture tour through America later on, Shelley L. Frisch points out that Klaus had joked they were twins and that they were thereafter known as the "literary Mann twins."¹⁴ Klaus mentioned the "twins trick" in *Der Wendepunkt* and stated that from then on, the press captioned their photographs and interviews with that title.¹⁵

Erika and Klaus not only resembled each other, but also shared a mutual disdain for Hitler. When the National Socialists seized power in 1933, Mann took an active stand against their agenda. He and Erika left Germany in March of the same year. He was stripped of his German citizenship the following year and was found guilty of high treason for endorsing an anti-Nazi declaration addressed to the Germans of the Saar zone. Mann, however, stated that the Saar manifesto was just one reason among others that prompted the Nazis to excommunicate him. He irritated them in many ways.¹⁶ Mann, after all, was an engaged intellectual, politically left, half Jewish, and gay. In 1937, Mann moved to the United States and returned to Germany only after the war ended.¹⁷

Once in exile, however, Mann was still able to publish. His works were published by Querido Verlag in Amsterdam, headed by Fritz Landshoff who became Mann's best friend.¹⁸ During this time, they published *Flucht in den Norden* (Journey into Freedom) in 1934, *Symphonie Pathétique* in 1935, and *Mephisto: Roman einer Karriere* in 1936, the latter becoming Mann's most controversial and best-known work.¹⁹

Mephisto is a scathing criticism of the Third Reich and was not published in Germany until the early 1960s, at which time it became embroiled in one of the longest lawsuits in the history of German publishing.²⁰ The novel's title character is a talented but vain actor named Hendrik Höfgen, whose characteristics and career appeared to have closely resembled that of Klaus's former brother-in-law Gustaf Gründgens. Gründgens, who had been married to Erika, enjoyed success as an actor and had been appointed director of the Prussian State Theater in the Third Reich. His most celebrated role was that of Goethe's Mephistopheles in *Faust*.²¹

Prior to writing *Mephisto*, however, Klaus fought fascism and National Socialism on the lecture circuit and with other literary means, contributing to the exile weekly *Europäische Hefte*, and publishing his own journal entitled, *Die Sammlung* (The Collection) in 1933.²² The journal was also published by Querido-Verlag, the publisher of other prominent German emigrants.²³ Mann published not only German writers, but translations from various European languages as well as reports on cultural conditions in the United States, Brazil, China, and Palestine, among others. An integral part of each issue was devoted to "anti-Nazi exposures, anti-Nazi satires, and anti-Nazi statistics."²⁴ Because of Mann's firm anti-fascist stance, however, four of his major contributors, René Schickele, Stefan Zweig, Alfred Döblin and his father Thomas Mann revoked their support, bowing to the indirect pressure that Propaganda Minister Goebbels exerted on them through their German publishers.²⁵

Despite the support and contributions of Heinrich Mann (Klaus's uncle),

Aldous Huxley and André Gide, who had been listed among the journal's original patrons, as well as the literary and political viewpoints of Albert Einstein, Bertolt Brecht, Christopher Isherwood, Ernst Toller, Jean Cocteau, and Ernest Hemingway, *Die Sammlung* succumbed to financial difficulties in 1935.²⁶ Mann tried again in 1941 when he moved to New York City and founded a second journal entitled, *Decision*.²⁷ One year later, this journal succumbed to financial difficulties as well, but as Hoffer observes, "Despite its brief existence, *Decision* stands as a monument to Klaus Mann's efforts and as an important document of the influence of the European intellectuals in America at the start of the Second World War."²⁸

Before the war began, both Klaus and Erika originally shared a pacifistic outlook. Their take on pacifism, however, changed when they worked as reporters on the front in 1938 during the Spanish Civil War. They realized one must fight fascism not only with words, but also with weapons.²⁹ In *Escape to Life*, for example, they espoused, "Die antifaschistische Solidarität aller, die in der spanischen Republik an der Arbeit sind, ist stark und ermutigend. Auch Menschen, die ursprünglich politisch nicht oder wenig interessiert waren, werden von ihr ergriffen."³⁰ They also emphasized that they had recognized the urgency in responding to Hitler from the start of the regime. For example, they wrote, "Von den Nazi-Emigranten trennt uns viel. Wir waren Hitlers geschworene Feinde, seit er in München seine ersten Reden hielt, über die so viel gelacht worden ist."³¹ And they concluded, "Solange Hitler herrscht, wird es keinen Frieden in der Welt geben."³²

Although the Mann siblings shared much in common, Alexandra Paffen notes they differed in some respects. She posits:

Während Erika ganz aufging in ihrer Generation, übte Klaus seit der Mitte der 1920er Jahre an dem Verhalten seiner Generation heftig Kritik. Seine Altersgenossen, so meinte er, suchten ihr Heil mehr in Sport und Entspannung wie Boxen und Autorennen, als in geistigen Angelegenheiten wie zum Beispiel der Literatur. Außerdem fand er es schade, dass moderne Entwicklungen wie der Film, Theater und Literatur sie immer mehr verdrängten. Er sah auch einen gefährlichen Zusammenhang zwischen der massenhaften Begeisterung für Sport und Unterhaltung und der wachsenden Anziehungskraft von Militarismus, Nationalismus und Faschismus.³³

In the 1930s, for example, Mann expressed his concerns about attending the Olympics and his caveat took on a political tone characteristic of many of his essays written in that decade. As James Robert Keller observes, from the time that Mann went into exile in 1933, the themes of responsibility,

duty, and obligation appear in his works and he became a political moralist.³⁴ Supporting Paffen's assertion that Mann saw a dangerous connection between mass enthusiasm for sports and entertainment and the growing allure of militarism, nationalism, and fascism, Mann urged peace-loving Europeans to boycott the Nazi Olympics. In his essay "*Pour la Paix*" (For Peace) written in 1936, the year of the Berlin Summer Olympics, Mann argued:

Wer den Frieden liebt, fährt nicht zu Sport und Propaganda-Festen in ein Land, wo alle, die anders denken als die herrschende Clique, zum Schweigen gebracht, verbannt oder getötet werden. Jeder anständige Europäer müsste die Monstre-Reklame-Veranstaltung des Dritten Reiches-müsste die Olympiade boykottieren.³⁵

The Winter Olympics had previously taken place in February of the same year at Garmisch-Partenkirchen in the Bavarian Alps. The Games were, as Mann described, heavily infused with Nazi propaganda. The overwhelming presence of the German military, in particular, had stifled the festive spirit for international visitors, prompting the regime to lessen its presence at the Summer Games.³⁶

When the Second World War broke out, Paffen maintains that Erika welcomed the war more so than Klaus and asserts, "Für Klaus dagegen ging das Ausbrechen des Vulkans einher mit Gefühlen von Erleichterung und Entsetzen. Viel mehr als seine Schwester hatte Klaus ein Auge für die Kehrseite des Krieges: die vielen Opfer und die ungeheure Destruktion."³⁷ At the same time, Mann recognized Hitler needed to be stopped and cautioned against absolute pacifism. He maintained that war was not the greatest evil; the new order that a victorious Hitler would establish was far worse.³⁸

In *Der Wendepunkt*, Mann had stated that he hated nationalism, especially the German kind. He saw himself as a European nationalist and stated that his great love, passion, and problem remained Europe.³⁹ In *The Turning Point*, Mann referred to a diary entry from August 18, 1941, in which he further argued that nationalism was "the most devastating fallacy of modern man" and that he was not interested in countries or their spheres of influence. He wrote, "All I believe in is the indivisible, universal civilization to be created by man."⁴⁰

A year earlier, in 1940, Mann had drafted a movie script entitled, "The United States of Europe." The movie was never produced, but was targeted for an American audience.⁴¹ The script is now housed in the Klaus Mann Archives in the Munich Public Library and is noteworthy because it demonstrates that Mann attempted to show that there was another side to Germany, "the other Germany" that was in development for the better. Paul

Michael Lützel maintains:

Offenbar wollte Mann in dem Film auch das "andere," das europäisch orientierte Deutschland zeigen, das, glaubte man der nationalsozialistischen Selbstdarstellung, gar nicht mehr existierte. Ferner wurde die mögliche Wandlung eines enttäuschten Nationalsozialisten zum Paneuropäer gezeigt, womit demonstriert werden sollte, daß die junge Generation Hitler keineswegs hoffnungslos verfallen war.⁴²

Mann emphasized "the other Germany" the same year in a book as well. In 1940, and as previously mentioned, he and Erika co-authored *The Other Germany*. They began by stating that they left Germany because they "literally would have suffocated in the poisoned atmosphere of the Third Reich."⁴³ They argued that unless Germany recovered, there could be no cure for a sick Europe. The purpose of their book was to win sympathy and friendship for "the other Germany" that was suppressed and silenced, while at the same time arraigning and condemning the Third Reich.⁴⁴

It is in the concluding chapters of *The Other Germany*, however, that Klaus and Erika elucidated most succinctly their perspective on the war, the questions of guilt and responsibility, and Europe's best hope for a peaceful future. They wrote, "Who desired this war? Statesmen and intellectuals have long known that war no longer serves to solve political, moral and social problems. Today the "man in the street" knows it too."⁴⁵ They argued:

Mankind has "outgrown" war, in the same way that a young man of twenty can be considered to have outgrown the youthful folly of his teens. All of us know this fact; it has long since come to be general opinion.

One man alone is responsible for this war. The world knows his name-it has unhappily been forced to remember it.⁴⁶

They further emphasized that the defeat of Hitler and the Nazis was only the prerequisite to a more important goal, that being the struggle for a new Europe. They wrote:

Let none reproach us for underestimating the danger of the Third Reich. We hope we have made the depth of our hatred for it and the urgency of our desire for its destruction sufficiently plain. Once it has disappeared, once this focus of infection has been thoroughly cauterized, there will be a great reawakening. Everywhere moral and

intellectual forces will come into flow and play, will be rendered free and productive. The fall of Hitler is not only the prerequisite, but almost in itself the guarantee, for the moral, political and spiritual regeneration of the world.⁴⁷

And what did they propose to ensure a lasting peace? Klaus and Erika provided a concrete, albeit idealistic solution to Europe's problems. They argued for a chance at redemption and a Pan-European democracy:

To us it seems that could the masses of Europe be asked today what in their opinion was the best solution to the problem of Europe, they would say almost unanimously: the creation of a European Federation of States.

We must make up for the failures of 1919. The demand and hope of Europe's best for hundreds of years-now it is in sight. Europe is ripe-overripe for union. A stable federation is to be established in which all nations will collaborate as members entitled to equal privileges and obligations. A customs union must be organized, as well as a super-national army as an international guarantee of order, and a super-national court of law as the highest political instance, equipped with moral and material power.

This is the goal, the realistic ideal. It is worth much thought and many sacrifices.⁴⁸

This notion of a Pan-European democracy, however, did not originate with the Mann siblings. In *Escape to Life*, they explained that the Austrian count Coudenhove-Kalergi was the leader and founder of the Pan-European movement.⁴⁹ In 1923, Coudenhove-Kalergi published *Pan-Europa* in which he offered a utopian vision of a United States of Europe in the hopes of raising the continent's status to that of a world power.⁵⁰ His *Pan-europa* movement garnered numerous supporters between 1923 and 1933.

In the concluding pages of *The Other Germany*, Klaus and Erika attempted to answer questions about the proposal from a fictional skeptic. They believed that Germany should be invited into the "Pan-European paradise" for the Allies had made it clear that they declared war on Germany's tyrants and not against the German people; that German rearmament must be made impossible; and that the new Germany must not be ruined economically by the imposition of unlimited reparations.⁵¹ They also stated that America should firmly and consistently intervene in Europe's destiny and that Europe should be more willing to follow America's leadership than in 1919, exclaiming, "We put our trust in the United States as our strongest ally-not

for war, but for peace.”⁵²

From a more universal perspective, however, they believed that one should be able to rely on one's fellow human beings to do the right thing. They asked, “Would life be worth living if one could not expect a certain reasonable degree of good will of men?”⁵³ After witnessing the catastrophic consequences of the Second World War, the perceived lack of contrition on the part of the German people, and the beginning of the Cold War, Klaus Mann, however, came to the painful conclusion that it was not.

As a young, idealistic, liberal writer in the late 1920s, however, it is understandable why Mann would have been attracted to the Pan-European movement. Given the importance Mann placed on morals and “good will,” the following description demonstrates how he could have been taken with the count's proposal. He stated that the count did not expect much improvement to the state of affairs from purely economic reforms and wrote, “On the contrary, his primary concern was in the moral aspects of the evolutionary process. No violence would be necessary, according to Coudenhove-Kalergi, if all Europeans, employers and employees, accepted the code of gentlemanly conduct.”⁵⁴

Yet, at the same time, Mann had always harbored some reservations about the count's Pan-European proposal and knew that it would have to be revised. In *The Turning Point*, he provided additional details to the scheme, such as the fact that Coudenhove-Kalergi's plan was strictly continental excluding the British Isles and the Soviet Union, which Mann described as “autonomous spaces in his reorganized universe.”⁵⁵ Mann acknowledged that despite the Pan-European movement's shortcomings and ambiguities, young intellectuals found it attractive.⁵⁶ When the anti-Soviet slant became predominant and bankers and big business took an interest, liberals such as Mann became skeptical and withdrew.⁵⁷ Although Coudenhove-Kalergi was against Hitler and did not care for Mussolini's fascism, he believed an alliance with the European fascist states was still conceivable. Mann disagreed and maintained that the real danger threatening civilization was not socialism, but rather fascism, especially Germany's racial kind.⁵⁸

In an effort to do his part, Mann joined the American army in 1943. He risked his life on several occasions and was frequently under enemy fire. His commitment to fighting fascism, first with the pen and then with the proverbial sword, is admirable given the challenges he must have faced not only as a German exile in his late 30s, but as a homosexual in the US army. His diary entries illuminate the anxiety and depression he endured while waiting months to hear if he would be accepted. Several entries from October 1942 were punctuated with “*Der Todeswunsch*.”⁵⁹ Once enlisted, Mann was assigned to the Psychological Warfare Branch of Military Intelligence, the

propaganda arm of the American armed forces.

After a brief time in North Africa, Mann's unit joined the Italian campaign, where he composed propaganda leaflets, interrogated German prisoners of war, and appeared at the front with a loudspeaker, urging the Germans to surrender.⁶⁰ Although Mann had always been haunted by suicidal thoughts and had made five attempts to take his own life before succeeding, he put his life on the line during the Second World War.⁶¹ When it came to the lives of others, Mann believed that involuntary death as a result of war was unacceptable.⁶²

When the war ended, Mann became a staff writer in Rome for the American military journal *Stars and Stripes*. Herbert Mitgang, then the managing editor, emphasized that Mann's articles underscored what the war was all about for everyone else, both colleagues and readers.⁶³ In his piece entitled, "My Old Countrymen," Captain Klaus Mann answered the question about how he felt fighting his former countrymen and alluded to a theme prevalent in many of his works, namely the importance of adhering to one's moral duty. He replied:

I am sure I speak also for the thousands of other former German citizens now active in the various armies of the United Nations in saying our militant resolution has a two-fold psychological and moral source: first, our natural loyalty to a new homeland to which we are deeply indebted; and, second, our intimate first-hand knowledge of the mortal danger which Hitlerism means to civilization.⁶⁴

Mann explained that German anti-Nazis in exile could not remain aloof, hesitant or waiver. The Germans had failed twice in their "historic duty" by not preventing Nazism in Germany and for not arousing public opinion against the Nazi danger. By participating in the fight against Nazism, Mann felt that the Germans in exile had a new opportunity to prove the sincerity of their convictions and "to make good" for their previous failures.⁶⁵

In 1946, however, three years prior to Klaus Mann's suicide, his hope for a Pan-European alliance was fading fast on account of post-war realities. In an open letter to the editor of *European World*, Mann began by stating that he agreed with the editor's long-term goal of a European Union and again referred to Count Coudenhove-Kalergi's Pan-European plan. He maintained that the idea was fundamentally reasonable and justified.⁶⁶ He now believed, however, that a Pan-European alliance should develop later when the world's political situation improved. Mann maintained there were two barriers to a peaceful and rapid Pan-European Union, the vanquished German Reich and the victorious Soviet Union.⁶⁷ In the same letter, his angst and anger over the

lack of trust between the Russians and Anglo-Americans became apparent and Mann argued that one must do everything humanly possible to reduce and overcome the tension between East and West, between socialism and democracy. He asked the editor and Europeans in general to give Germany time to recover from its crisis and to find its moral, political, and economic equilibrium.⁶⁸

By preserving peace, Mann believed a Pan-European solution would be ultimately possible, however, not in the short-term. The optimism Mann had previously expressed in *The Other Germany* about including Germany in the Pan-European Union had all been extinguished, at least for the time being. There could be no United States of Europe without Germany, but Germany was still a dynamic nation that in Mann's estimation might use the federation's war ministry and army for its own aggressive purposes. He believed Germany could not yet join the alliance, having caused too much suffering to European nations that would not be ready to trust or collaborate with the Germans.⁶⁹ Again, Mann alluded to the importance of moral responsibility and when it came to considering Germany as part of Pan-Europe, he emphasized:

Deutschland ist inakzeptabel nicht so sehr wegen seiner Vergehen und Fehler der Vergangenheit, sondern wegen seiner jetzigen moralischen und politischen Verfassung. Es sind nicht die kleinsten Anzeichen von Reue oder Einsicht bei den Deutschen zu erkennen. Die Deutschen sind erschreckend unverändert-arrogant, heimtückisch und gefährlich wie eh und je. Sie sind im Inneren Nazis geblieben und bereuen nichts, außer ihrer Niederlage. Sie sind nicht an Europa, sondern allein an ihrer Rache interessiert.⁷⁰

In 1947, a year later, in a broadcast for Swedish radio, Mann began by quoting the American novelist Thomas Wolfe who said, "You can't go home again" and ended by affirming Wolfe was right.⁷¹ When Mann did return to his homeland after the war, he confessed he could no longer indulge his illusions, the ones he and Erika had expressed in *The Other Germany* almost a decade earlier. He, like many other German exiles wanted to believe the Germans would revolt against Hitler, but he conceded, "The awful truth is that the Germans adored their *Führer*-in fact, quite a few of them have remained faithful to him up to the present day and would be only too happy if they could have him back."⁷²

From 1945 on, Mann lived in Europe, then in America for a short time and finally on the French Riviera, disillusioned and disgusted with both Germany and America for its Cold War policies.⁷³ In this short time span, Mann's once hopeful idealism gave way to resignation and despair. Despite

encouraging the American authorities to help establish a genuine democracy in Germany as quickly as possible, Mann saw no possibility of an improvement to the political situation in post-war Germany.⁷⁴ Mann expressed his final plea for peace in an article that appeared in *Tomorrow* in June 1949, entitled, "Europe's Search for a New Credo." The subtitle read, ". . . Each age is a dream that is dying or one that is coming to birth."⁷⁵ Mann did not see the publication, having overdosed on sleeping pills the month prior.

In "Europe's Search for a New Credo," Mann explained how he had traveled extensively throughout Europe and spoke to men on both sides of the Iron Curtain, hearing many dissonant voices but "no coordinated discussion to give the mass of intellectuals a basis of harmonious belief and action."⁷⁶ All he heard were false credos, contradictory arguments, and violent accusations and he believed that the breakdown of civilization was imminently at hand. He wrote:

The ordeal, having increased in magnitude and momentum ever since the beginning of the first world war, is now approaching its final, decisive stage. The current crisis or, to be more precise, the permanent crisis of this century is not limited to any particular continent or any particular social class.⁷⁷

Unlike the sentiments he expressed in his previous letter to the newspaper editor in which Mann pleaded for patience and time, he now saw the European situation, and that of the world, in its darkest and deadliest stage, suggesting that despair was an appropriate response to the post-war world.⁷⁸ He alluded to the millions of frightened people who were longing and praying for peace while ominous preparations for war continued and wrote, ". . . the fatal rift between two world powers, two philosophies, is deepening day to day."⁷⁹ Mann exclaimed:

In Vienna, Athens and London, the "falling towers" which T.S. Eliot saw in *The Waste Land* are not just poetic symbols any more. In the midst of ruins, in view of crippled men and starving children, no adult, clear-sighted person can overlook or belittle the deadly seriousness of the permanent crisis.⁸⁰

Mann hinted at his own suicide at the end of the article when describing a conversation with an imaginary Swedish student who wondered if a mass suicide wave among thousands of intellectuals would shock the world out of its lethargy and make people realize the extreme gravity of the situation.⁸¹

Although the Cold War weighed heavily on Mann's mind, Hoffer

believes it does not fully explain his motives for suicide and points out that Mann had not published a major work in several years, was having difficulty finding a market in Germany, had no money when he died, and was no longer as close to Erika as they had been in earlier years.⁸² Moreover, when the National Socialists came to power, he and his family were forced to live in exile and Mann never was able to find a permanent home, living much of his life in hotel rooms. When he returned to Germany after the war, he visited his childhood home in Munich and learned that the villa his father had built shortly before the start of the First World War had been confiscated by the Nazis and turned into a *Lebensborn* facility.⁸³

In the spring of 1949, Mann attempted to reprint *Mephisto* in Germany but was informed by his publisher that they would not be publishing his novel. They feared Gustaf Gründgens's popularity and backed out of the contract Mann had negotiated and signed.⁸⁴ Mann had also attempted to publish *Der Wendepunkt* in 1949, but was unsuccessful with that work as well. It was published a few years later as a result of Thomas and Erika Mann's advocacy after his suicide. Mann had submitted the manuscript to Querido Verlag, which was soon after acquired by Thomas Mann's publisher S. Fischer. The publication of the book became controversial with Thomas Mann demanding publication and Gustaf Gründgens, now the most influential theater director in West Germany, threatening to boycott the S. Fischer theater series unless the passages related to him were removed. Only after Thomas and Erika Mann protested and agreed to remove the passages was *Der Wendepunkt* published in 1952.⁸⁵

Although Klaus Mann's life may have been peppered with tragic irony, it appears to have ended in poetic justice. *Mephisto* became an immediate and sustained bestseller and the film adaptation, a Hungarian production, won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film in 1981.⁸⁶ Eberhard Spangenberg, whose comprehensive book examines the controversy surrounding the work, speculates that another reason for *Mephisto's* success was the fascination with Klaus Mann himself, especially by the younger generations.⁸⁷

Mann was the quintessential outsider who strived to make a difference. He had always straddled two entities, living between two world wars, two continents, two languages, two national armies, two genders, and two political systems and ideologies. Mann did not see himself as a Communist, however, he never became anti-Communist in the strictest sense either.⁸⁸ The Cold War had polarized the globe, and according to Mann, left no room for intellectual integrity or independence.⁸⁹ Years later, however, the Cold War ended and yet, other wars persist. Indeed, regional conflicts and insurgencies continue to flare half a century later. Perhaps Klaus Mann was right after all. War is a permanent crisis. Mann's life and legacy however, are more reflective

of Bertha von Suttner's imperative to look to the future than he could have imagined.⁹⁰ Mann's books have appeared in various languages and his ideas continue to resonate with many today.

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Notes

- ¹ Peter T. Hoffer, *Klaus Mann* (Boston: Twayne-Hall, 1978), 21.
- ² *Ibid.*, 130.
- ³ Klaus Mann, *The Turning Point: Thirty-Five Years in This Century* (New York: Wiener, 1984), 29. First published in 1942.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, 33.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 44.
- ¹⁰ Hoffer, *Klaus Mann*, 11.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 22-23.
- ¹² Klaus Mann, *Der Wendepunkt: Ein Lebensbericht* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1952), 5.
- ¹³ Mann, *Turning Point: Thirty-Five Years in This Century*, 43.
- ¹⁴ Shelley L. Frisch, *The Turning Point: Thirty-Five Years in This Century* (New York: Wiener, 1984), 2. See Frisch's Introduction: 1-13.
- ¹⁵ Mann, *Der Wendepunkt: Ein Lebensbericht*, 192.
- ¹⁶ Mann, *Turning Point: Thirty-Five Years in This Century*, 273.
- ¹⁷ Hoffer, *Klaus Mann*, 12.
- ¹⁸ Mann, *Der Wendepunkt: Ein Lebensbericht*, 326.
- ¹⁹ *Flucht in den Norden* is a story about a politically conscious woman who renounces love for duty and *Symphonie Pathétique* is a fictional rendering of the last years in the life of Peter Tchaikovsky. Both works deal with the "drama of uprooting" which Mann maintained was the cruc of his own life. Mann, *Turning Point: Thirty-Five Years in This Century*, 282.
- ²⁰ Martin Halliwell, *Modernism and Morality: Ethical Devices in European and American Fiction* (Houndmills: Palgrave-St. Martin's, 2001), 180. Peter T. Hoffer, "Klaus Mann's Mephisto: A Secret Rivalry," *Studies in 20th Century Literature* 13, no. 2 (1989): 245. *Mephisto* had been banned in Nazi Germany, but even after the war, West German publishers were hesitant to be connected with the book. (Frisch, *The Turning Point: Thirty-Five Years in This Century*, 5). The novel, however, became known through smuggled copies and those published in the former East Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and the former Yugoslavia circulated widely. Officially banned in West Germany from 1968 until 1980 on grounds of libel, *Mephisto* was republished in West Germany in 1980 and 1981. James Robert Keller, *The Role of Political and Sexual Identity in the Works of Klaus Mann* (New York: Lang, 2001), 121.
- ²¹ Mann maintained that the story was not about a specific person and that Gründgens served as the focus of representing a certain "type" of individual, namely those who had collaborated and/or prospered under the Nazis. He explained, "I visualize my ex-brother-in-law as the traitor par excellence, the macabre embodiment of corruption and cynicism. So intense was the fascination of his shameful glory that I decided to portray Mephisto-Gründgens in a satirical novel. I thought it pertinent, indeed, necessary to expose and analyze the abject type

of the treacherous intellectual who prostitutes his talent for the sake of some tawdry fame and transitory wealth." Mann, *Turning Point: Thirty-Five Years in This Century*, 282.

²² Paul Michael Lützeler, *Die Schriftsteller und Europa: Von der Romantik bis zur Gegenwart* (München: Piper, 1992), 378.

²³ Erika Mann and Klaus Mann, *Escape to Life: Deutsche Kultur im Exil* (München: Spangenberg, 1991), 221. First published in 1939.

²⁴ Mann, *Turning Point: Thirty-Five Years in This Century*, 273.

²⁵ Frisch, *The Turning Point: Thirty-Five Years in This Century*, 8. Alexandra Paffen, "Lass uns doch nur den Krieg aus dem Spiele halten: Die Geschwister Erika und Klaus Mann und ihre Einstellungen zu Pazifismus, Kampf und Krieg-ein Versuch," *Ariadne*, 47 (2005): 67.

²⁶ Hoffer, *Klaus Mann*, 87-90.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁹ Paffen, "Lass uns doch nur den Krieg aus dem Spiele halten: Die Geschwister Erika und Klaus Mann und ihre Einstellungen zu Pazifismus, Kampf und Krieg-ein Versuch," 68.

³⁰ Mann and Mann, *Escape to Life: Deutsche Kultur im Exil*, 192.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 141.

³² *Ibid.*, 393.

³³ Paffen, "Lass uns doch nur den Krieg aus dem Spiele halten: Die Geschwister Erika und Klaus Mann und ihre Einstellungen zu Pazifismus, Kampf und Krieg-ein Versuch," 67.

³⁴ Keller, *The Role of Political and Sexual Identity in the Works of Klaus Mann*, 97.

³⁵ Michel Grunewald, *Klaus Mann: Mit dem Blick nach Deutschland: Der Schriftsteller und das politische Engagement* (München: Ellermann, 1985), 93.

³⁶ "Nazi Olympics: The Winter Games," *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, [http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/olympics/detail.php?content=winter_](http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/olympics/detail.php?content=winter_games&lang=en)
[games&lang=en](http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/olympics/detail.php?content=winter_), accessed September 26, 2012.

³⁷ Paffen, "Lass uns doch nur den Krieg aus dem Spiele halten: Die Geschwister Erika und Klaus Mann und ihre Einstellungen zu Pazifismus, Kampf und Krieg-ein Versuch," 68.

³⁸ Mann, *Der Wendepunkt: Ein Lebensbericht*, 431.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 220.

⁴⁰ Mann, *Turning Point: Thirty-Five Years in This Century*, 348.

⁴¹ Lützeler, *Die Schriftsteller und Europa: Von der Romantik bis zur Gegenwart*, 384.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 386.

⁴³ Erika Mann and Klaus Mann, *The Other Germany* (New York: Modern Age, 1940), 8.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 14-17.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 266.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 266-67.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 277.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 288.

⁴⁹ Mann and Mann, *Escape to Life: Deutsche Kultur im Exil*, 173.

⁵⁰ Paul Michael Lützeler, "After Two World Wars: German and Austrian Authors on the Idea of Europe," in *1914/1939: German Reflections of the Two World Wars*, eds. Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermand, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 174-86.

⁵¹ Mann and Mann, *The Other Germany*, 292-99.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 314.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 299.

⁵⁴ Mann, *Turning Point: Thirty-Five Years in This Century*, 166.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 165.

⁵⁶ Mann, *Der Wendepunkt: Ein Lebensbericht*, 221.

⁵⁷ Mann, *Turning Point*, 166.

⁵⁸ Grunewald, *Klaus Mann: Mit dem Blick nach Deutschland: Der Schriftsteller und das politische Engagement*, 55-56.

- ⁵⁹ Mann, *Der Wendepunkt: Ein Lebensbericht*, 468.
- ⁶⁰ Michel Grunewald, ed., *Klaus Mann 1906-1949: Eine Bibliographie* (München: Ellermann, 1984), 8. Hoffer, *Klaus Mann*, 115-16. Mann, *Der Wendepunkt: Ein Lebensbericht*, 498-500.
- ⁶¹ Laurence Senelick, "Klaus Mann: The Dancing Dichterkind," *The Gay & Lesbian Review*, November-December 2003, 13.
- ⁶² Paffen, "Lass uns doch nur den Krieg aus dem Spiele halten: Die Geschwister Erika und Klaus Mann und ihre Einstellungen zu Pazifismus, Kampf und Krieg-ein Versuch," 69.
- ⁶³ Herbert Mitgang, ed., *Newsmen in Khaki: Tales of a World War II Soldier Correspondent* (Lanham: Taylor, 2004), 113.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 114.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 116.
- ⁶⁶ Uwe Naumann and Michael Töteberg, eds., *Klaus Mann: Auf verlorenem Posten: Aufsätze, Reden, Kritiken 1942-1949* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1994) 314.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 314-15.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 323-24.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 316.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 317.
- ⁷¹ Klaus Mann, "An American Soldier Revisiting His Former Homeland," *The Turning Point: Thirty-Five Years in This Century* (New York: Wiener, 1984), 367-72.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*, 367.
- ⁷³ Keller, *The Role of Political and Sexual Identity in the Works of Klaus Mann*, 144.
- ⁷⁴ Grunewald, *Klaus Mann: Mit dem Blick nach Deutschland: Der Schriftsteller und das politische Engagement*, 6.
- ⁷⁵ Klaus Mann, "Europe's Search for a New Credo," *Tomorrow* VIII.10 (1949): 5-11. Erika Mann's German translation of the article, "Die Heimsuchung des europäischen Geistes," appeared in *Neue Schweizer Rundschau* one month later in July 1949. Naumann and Töteberg, *Klaus Mann: Auf verlorenem Posten: Aufsätze, Reden, Kritiken 1942-1949*, 558.
- ⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.
- ⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.
- ⁷⁸ Keller, *The Role of Political and Sexual Identity in the Works of Klaus Mann*, 142-43.
- ⁷⁹ Mann, "Europe's Search for a New Credo," 11.
- ⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.
- ⁸¹ Keller, *The Role of Political and Sexual Identity in the Works of Klaus Mann*, 142.
- ⁸² Hoffer, *Klaus Mann*, 21.
- ⁸³ Mann, "An American Soldier Revisiting His Former Homeland," 368-69.
- ⁸⁴ Richard Wires, "The Opportunist as Hero: Klaus Mann, Mephisto, and Gustaf Gründgens," *West Virginia University Philological Papers*, vol. 32 (1986-1987): 109-18.
- ⁸⁵ Frisch, *The Turning Point: Thirty-Five Years in This Century*, 11.
- ⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 4-6.
- ⁸⁷ Eberhard Spangenberg, *Karriere eines Romans: Mephisto, Klaus Mann und Gustaf Gründgens: Ein dokumentarischer Bericht aus Deutschland und dem Exil 1925-1981*, (München: Ellermann, 1982), 224.
- ⁸⁸ Dieter Schiller, "Geistige Differenz und politische Disziplin: Klaus Mann zwischen 1930 und 1935," in *Wer schreibt, handelt; Strategien und Verfahren literarischer Arbeit vor und nach 1933*, ed. Silvia Schlenstedt, (Berlin: Aufbau, 1983), 163-98. Dieter Schiller, "Ich bin kein Deutscher." Klaus Mann in den USA," *Etudes Germaniques* 63, no. 4 (2008): 701.
- ⁸⁹ Andrea Weiss, *In the Shadow of the Magic Mountain: The Erika and Klaus Mann Story* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 208.
- ⁹⁰ Bertha von Suttner, *Lay Down Your Arms: The Autobiography of Martha Von Tilling*, trans. T. Holmes (New York: Longmans, 1918), 435. First published in 1889 as *Die Waffen nieder*.