

## Editor's Forums

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# The International Relations of Thomas Mann in Early Cold War Germany

**Abstract:** As one of the most widely-respected German writers of the twentieth century, Thomas Mann (1875–1955) was a key figure in supporting and communicating the idea of a free and democratic Germany during a period of enormous international tension and conflict. While a professor of literature at Princeton (1938–41) and a resident of Los Angeles (1941–52), he became a highly active participant in the war effort, giving anti-fascist speeches around the country and recording a series of broadcasts to Germany on the BBC, calling for an end to National Socialism. He and his wife Katia became American citizens in 1944, and three of their children served in American uniform. This paper focuses on Mann's position as an "unofficial diplomat" in 1949 while receiving the Goethe Prize, then the most prestigious literary prize in Germany, from two different locations: Frankfurt am Main in western Germany and Weimar in eastern Germany. This situation thus placed Mann in the unique position of being able to address the citizens of two diverging states who were at the heart of Cold War Europe: the two Germanies, and to emphasize what they held in common. During the postwar era, Mann's political position shifted from one who spoke mainly about a democratic Germany to one who was a strong proponent for international peace and cooperation. Nonetheless, some Western journalists depicted him as a dupe for communism, and the FBI increasingly tracked his movements. This paper thus discusses both the opportunities and challenges for international relations by a major cultural figure and one of the leading "unofficial diplomats" during the onset of the Cold War.

**Keywords:** Thomas Mann, Cold War, Germany

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On July 25, 1949, renowned writer and humanist Thomas Mann (1875–1955) received the annual Goethe Prize in Frankfurt am Main, Germany.<sup>1</sup> Officials from

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<sup>1</sup> The anniversary of Goethe's birthdate is August 28, but Mann was unable to come then and agreed on July 25. The literature on Mann's reception of the Goethe Prize is surprisingly limited;

the city of Goethe's birth, then at the heart of the west zone, were celebrating the 200th anniversary of their most famous resident's birthday and had chosen Mann for the honor. A week after this auspicious event, Mann received the "Goethe National Prize" in the Soviet-controlled east zone in Weimar, Germany – a city where Goethe had spent much of his life, and that historically had been a major center of German culture and letters. Why did Mann receive these awards? And what does their bestowal, and reception, tell us about international relations – and Mann's role as an "unofficial diplomat" – during the early Cold War in Germany?

These events were significant for several reasons. First, by virtue of receiving the highest literary awards from the west and east zones of postwar Germany, Mann found himself in the unique position of being able to speak to Germans on both sides; it thus seemed like an ideal moment in international relations. Second, it was a true homecoming, representing Mann's first visit to Germany after almost 17 years in exile, although he came back as an American citizen, having taken US citizenship only five years before.<sup>2</sup> Third, Mann returned not merely to acknowledge the clear admiration that many Germans still had for him but also to promote the idea of peace across borders: to find common ground. He gave numerous speeches across Germany: in Frankfurt am Main, Stuttgart, Nuernberg, Munich, and Weimar. Above all he argued for German unity on cultural grounds. My aim in this article is to consider how Mann expressed this message of unity, and how Germans received that message, when he served as an unofficial diplomat during the early years of the Cold War. As Mann declared rhetorically, "I ask myself, who today should guarantee and represent the unity of Germany, if not an independent author, whose true home is the German language, untouched by the separation of zones?"<sup>3</sup>

Tensions between eastern and western Germany had been increasing well before Mann's arrival. With the founding of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in April 1949, Western states sought directly to counter Soviet aggression and expansion. NATO was formed after almost a year of Stalin's efforts to block all aid and food from the West in reaching Berlin, and in May 1949 the Berlin Blockade finally ended in a triumphant Western victory. In that same month, with American, British, and French oversight, the west zone united under a new constitution, called the Basic Law, as the foundation for the

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see Bürgin and Mayer (1969, 227–30); Hayman (1995, 562–65); Hage (1990); Martin (1999); Glaeßner (2009, 303–14).

<sup>2</sup> Thomas and Katia Mann visited Europe from May through August 1947 (England, Switzerland, Italy, and the Netherlands) but opted not to visit Germany in part over safety concerns. Both took American citizenship on June 23, 1944. Hayman (1995, 502, 540–45).

<sup>3</sup> *Die Welt* (Hamburg) (1949), Newspaper File, July 1949, Thomas Mann Archives (hereafter TMA), Zurich, Switzerland.

Federal Republic of Germany; at the time of Mann's arrival, however, Germans in the west zone had not yet elected a parliament nor chosen a federal president, and the German Democratic Republic did not yet exist. Thus while tensions were certainly growing between the "two Germanies" when Mann arrived in July, they had not yet hardened into two diametrically opposed states. Mann hoped to demonstrate that eastern and western Germany in fact had much in common: culturally if not politically.

## Mann in the West Zone

In returning to Germany after the war, Mann had a strong advantage over all other official diplomats. He was no formal representative of a country, nor to my knowledge did he even come with political instructions from the United States government.<sup>4</sup> Yet he believed deeply in the ideals of democracy, had contact with the administration in Washington over the past decade, and was a highly trusted and admired figure among many Germans and Americans alike. A Nobel prize winner in Literature, regularly lauded as one of the leading writers of the twentieth century of any nationality, Mann was a popular lecturer as well as a widely-read author. He was thus sure to reach a broad cross-section of people, with enormous media coverage that any public figure would envy.

That coverage was widespread indeed. The files concerning the Goethe Prize at the Thomas Mann Archives in Zurich include articles from over 30 different newspapers from eastern and western Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.<sup>5</sup> Clearly, Mann's arrival in Germany was news, and media coverage was largely favorable, despite an undercurrent of resentment for his public statements against Germany before and after the war – a resentment that continually resurfaced throughout his stay. Nonetheless, when Mann and his wife Katia arrived in Frankfurt am Main, their visit seemed to signal a turning point for Germans who sought once again to find their rightful place among other states. Mann was especially impressed, wrote one journalist, by the "diligence and energy" of the rebuilding of Germany.<sup>6</sup> In receiving a hearty welcome by Frankfurt

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4 Three of his children, Klaus, Erika, and Golo, served in American uniform during the war, and Erika aided the FBI in interrogating refugees from Nazi Germany. Secret files released in the early 1990s on Erika Mann revealed her covert activities, as well as the effort by the US government to deport her (unsuccessfully) in 1951 based on suspicion of Communist sympathies. Whitney (1993).

5 Files of newspaper clippings on Mann's reception of the Goethe Prize are mainly in two folders, labeled "July 1949" and "August/September 1949," at the TMA.

6 *Die Welt* (1949), Newspaper File, July 1949, TMA.

mayor Dr. Walter Kolb and other dignitaries, Mann's presence in Frankfurt was a "political event of the first order," according to another writer. In particular, Mann dramatically exclaimed that "I recognize no zones!," thereby seeking to win the hearts and minds of *all* Germans, and assuredly it was a proclamation that no politician would have dared make.<sup>7</sup> It represented, rather, a defiant critique of the idea of two Germanies. He thus upheld the idea of German unity – "Deutschland als Ganzem" – by means of celebrating that which many Germans held in common: reverence for prominent figures of their cultural past.

Such declarations came after a long period of anguish and exile. Thomas and Katia Mann, their oldest children Klaus and Erica, and Thomas Mann's brother Heinrich had been strong and consistent opponents of the Nazi government during the 1930s and 1940s. As early as 1930 in Berlin, Thomas Mann gave a speech in which he called upon Germans to reject the hatred of fascism and to uphold the ideals of democracy that the Weimar Republic represented. Throughout the speech, entitled "A Call to Reason," he was constantly interrupted by Nazi thugs and party members. Heinrich Mann, who fled Germany before his brother did, was a socialist who spoke out against the fascists. Klaus and Erika Mann were also outspoken critics of the regime, and both wrote books against fascism while in exile.<sup>8</sup> Along with their brother Golo, they all served in uniform for the US armed forces. Moreover, Katia (née Katharina Pringsheim) was of Jewish descent, which meant that the Nazis recognized her as Jewish, even though she had converted to Lutheranism. Thus for multiple reasons Mann and his wife fled Germany, spending several months first in France before moving to Switzerland in early autumn 1933. Finding it increasingly difficult to live in Europe, where freedom of expression was growing more and more suppressed, Mann traveled no less than four times to the United States on lecture tours before finally emigrating.<sup>9</sup> At Princeton University he accepted a Lectureship in Humanities in 1938 before the Manns moved to the Pacific Palisades in Los Angeles County two years later to settle down; there they re-united with many of their old friends from Germany, all exiles like themselves. Five of the Manns' six children (Klaus, Erica, Golo, Michael, and Monika; their

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<sup>7</sup> *Badisches Tagblatt* (Baden-Baden) (1949), Newspaper File, July 1949, TMA.

<sup>8</sup> Mann (1936, 1938a), which was published in German as *Zehn Millionen Kinder: Die Erziehung der Jugend im Dritten Reich* (1938b).

<sup>9</sup> His first trip to the US was in May–June 1934 at the invitation by his publisher, Alfred A. Knopf; the second in June–July 1935; the third in April 1937; and the fourth during February–July 1938. He left Europe in exile for the United States in September 1938. Bürgin and Mayer (1969, 110–11, 116–17, 128–29, 131–36). In a speech he gave at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign on 29 April 1938, titled "Democracy and Christianity," he stated that he "recognized the threat to liberty which was beginning to take form in Germany, and ... now even Switzerland, once an impregnable fortress of humanity, appears to be threatened." Detering (2012, 284).

daughter Elizabeth had already married) moved to the Manns' new home, where they remained during the war.

At his new domicile in California, Mann took on a major role: to become the foremost spokesman not only for the German-speaking exiles in the United States but for a democratic and free Germany. From 1941 to 1945 he made a series of radio broadcasts for the BBC directed toward Germany, in which he denounced Nazi crimes and Germans' seeming acceptance of them. In addressing Germans directly in one broadcast, he declared that "to warn you is the sole purpose that I as a German can offer."<sup>10</sup> As a consultant in Germanic literature to the Library of Congress, which his mentor in America, Agnes Meyer, had arranged, he gave annual lectures, which were broadcast on radio, enabling him to reach far more Americans than most other exiles could possibly do. He further met with numerous political figures, including President Franklin Roosevelt, Vice-President Henry Wallace, Attorney General Francis Biddle, and Senator Robert Taft, although Mann increasingly distanced himself from the White House after President Franklin's death in 1945.<sup>11</sup> While in exile he completed his tetralogy, *Joseph and his Brothers*, in which he used Franklin Roosevelt as the model for Joseph. Mann further integrated aspects of Germany's downfall in his novel, *Doctor Faustus*, published in 1947 to enormous acclaim and criticism.<sup>12</sup> Such credentials earned him the reputation in exile as a tireless advocate for human rights.

Mann also spoke for the rights of "enemy aliens" in the United States in wartime. When General John DeWitt, then head of the Western Defense Command, declared all German, Italian, and Japanese residents to be "enemy aliens" after the American declaration of war in 1941, Mann testified before the Tolan Committee in Los Angeles; the committee was chaired by Representative John Tolan, a Democrat who served in the US Congress from 1935 to 1947. As Erich Frey notes, Mann argued that General DeWitt's declaration "was not only unjust and demoralizing for the exiles but [that it] also impaired the moral fiber of America" (Frey 1976, 90). The order was eventually rescinded for most German and Italian exiles. To my knowledge, Mann was one of the only exiles to make such a statement against the violation of rights of those of German, Italian, or Japanese descent during the war.

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**10** Mann (2004). "Euch zu warnen ist der einzige Dienst, den ein Deutscher wie ich Euch heute erweisen kann." March 1941, from Thomas Mann, *Deutsche Hörer! BBC-Reden 1941 bis 1945*, BBC *Deutschsprachiger Dienst*, compact disc, ISBN 3-89940-398-3, Der Hörverlag, Bayerischer Rundfunk.

**11** Mann firmly disagreed with Truman's policies, and when Truman fired Henry Wallace as Secretary of Commerce over his stance with the Soviet Union, the Manns wired Wallace on September 21, 1946: "Like millions of good Americans we not only share your views on foreign policy but are deeply impressed with your courage and consistency in defending them." Quoted in Culver and Hyde (2000, 428).

**12** Mann (1947); Mann (1948). See Marcus (forthcoming, chap. 7).

We can thus view Mann's speeches in postwar Germany within the context of almost two decades of speaking out for human rights. In his acceptance speech in Frankfurt, entitled "Ansprache im Goethe-Jahr" (Goethe Anniversary Speech), he recalled his life in exile. He deeply resented either those who supported Nazi Germany or were silent in the face of endless crimes. If German citizens had shared that hatred of such an infamous government, he asserted, Germany "would not have needed to endure that which occurred to it."<sup>13</sup> He then moved to the meaning that Goethe had for him and for many Germans, as a symbol of that "good Germany" to which Mann often referred. Calling on the power of German culture, and its value more widely for European culture, Mann ended his talk on an optimistic note; Germany can survive its tragic collapse by remembering that which Germans excelled in: arts and letters. As he later told reporters, my "home is the German language."<sup>14</sup> He strongly advocated that Germany should become a central member of a European federation, foreseeing the day when Germany would play a key role for peace in Europe. This was no patriotic stance for German nationalism – Mann's deeply conflicted relationship with Germany rendered that impossible – but rather the reverse: the opportunity for a subdued Germany to achieve acceptance among neighboring states.

Especially moving for the Manns was their visit to Munich, Katia's hometown and where Mann himself had lived from 1891 to 1933. It was the city where they had met, where Mann's fame as a writer began, and where they raised a family. It is important to emphasize that throughout their married life, Thomas worked with Katia very much as a team, and appears to have trusted her implicitly; it seems she remained his main advisor as precisely one of the few figures he felt he could trust.<sup>15</sup> Now in walking through Munich, which had been almost entirely destroyed during the war, they expressed hope in a rebuilt Germany. That optimism was reflected in Mann's speech, "Goethe and Democracy," in which he looked for signs that Germany was once again on the right path. "I view the future of Germany with optimism and I believe the [whole] world does so as well," he declared.<sup>16</sup>

Mann's liberal political views could also border on the radical. In several interviews during his stay he suggested that only the idea of a world state (*Weltstaatsidee*) could save the world from future war and destruction. What

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<sup>13</sup> "es mit Deutschland nicht hätte zu kommen brauchen, wohin es gekommen ist," in *Frankfurter Rundschau* (1949a), Newspaper File, July 1949, TMA.

<sup>14</sup> *Frankfurter Rundschau* (1949a), Newspaper File, July 1949, TMA.

<sup>15</sup> See Mann (1975).

<sup>16</sup> *Schwäbische Landeszeitung* (Augsburg) (1949), Newspaper File, August/September 1949, TMA.

in the past had been a purely utopian vision, Mann argued, had now become a distinct possibility and indeed a necessity.<sup>17</sup> For someone whose earlier models were Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Wagner, this message of hope might come as a surprise. Yet Mann's political views had evolved enormously since his support for Imperial Germany during World War I, to his support for the Weimar Republic in the 1920s, to his constant calls for a return to democracy in wartime Germany. Now he had become a universalist. A world state, according to Mann, would represent not only western, democratic traditions but also Communist beliefs. He was quoted by one journalist in claiming earlier that "Communism belongs to the future!" He couched this alleged statement in other terms; there exists a communist form of government apart from the Russian version, which he steadfastly opposed. Rather, both democracy and communism (assumedly one that recognized individual states and rights) could co-exist under the same roof within one world government.<sup>18</sup> It represented the ultimate form of political unity.

Mann was not alone in this idea of a world state. Another renowned figure and often an unofficial diplomat himself, Albert Einstein, promoted the same idea in considerable depth since he first began exploring it after WWI. Einstein, much like Mann, with whom he had steady contact, saw himself as a "citizen of the world, an internationalist" (Isaacson 2007, 301). Others who upheld this belief in a world state were former US Vice-President Henry Wallace and American socialist writer Upton Sinclair.<sup>19</sup> Idealists all, they were united in the belief that the world had suffered enough destruction as a result of constant war among states; now was the time to set aside these disagreements and join as one state. Only then could world peace ensue.

Such grandiose ideas for world peace aside, Mann overall was heartily received by his former countrymen. Yet it would be wrong to view his stay in the west zone as a joyful reunion with Germans. He also had to grapple with enemies – both those who resented his leaving Germany in 1933 with the takeover of the Nazis and those who condemned his constant attacks on the Nazi regime, and by consequence on the Germans themselves, during his many radio broadcasts during the war. His exile novel *Doctor Faustus*, published only two years before his return, described a Germany in chaos and self-destruction, which

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**17** *Neue Presse* (Frankfurt) (1949), Newspaper File, July 1949, TMA. Mann first explained the idea of a world state in front of over 100 German and foreign journalists during a one-hour interview on 25 July 1949 in the "Club for Commerce and Industry" in Frankfurt am Main.

**18** See Adolphs (2010).

**19** Thomas Mann included his name among 132 renowned American writers and artists, who signed a "Greeting and Friendship to the Progressives of Great Britain," which consisted largely of Wallace supporters. Culver and Hyde (2000, 439).

engendered resentment in some German circles. When he arrived in Germany in 1949, many Germans remembered those attacks, some with clear bitterness, and that he had abandoned the country in its hour of need. As one journalist mockingly wrote, “an American” had come to claim the Goethe Prize.<sup>20</sup> There were also those who asked far more of him than he felt he could give upon his return to Germany. One writer grumbled that the “reservations and distancing, which the guest from California since 1945 made to the Germans and their fate,” could not be easily forgotten.<sup>21</sup> Especially strong criticism arose by western journalists and politicians over his visit to the east zone, notably the critique that he was unwittingly serving as a puppet for Communist propaganda.

## Mann in the East Zone

When Thomas and Katia Mann crossed the east-west border on July 30, 1949, they entered almost into a different world. Not only was their reception exceedingly enthusiastic, but in contrast to their western visit, they met with no open criticism by the media in the east zone. On the contrary: heartily welcoming them were two prominent cultural and political figures, Johannes R. Becher and Klaus Gysi, who set the tone for the rest of their stay. Becher was a poet and President of the Cultural Union for Democratic Renewal (*Kulturbund*) and Gysi was the “Secretary for the East Zone” (*Zonensekretär*). Greeting the Manns further in Weimar were the town’s Mayor Dr. Buchterkirchen, the Ministerpresident Werner Eggerath, the Finance Minister Mr. Moog, and the state church council representative (*Stadtverordnetenvorsteher Kirchenrat*) Mr. Hermann.<sup>22</sup> On August 1st Mann had lunch with General Tulpanov, the Soviet commandant in Berlin. The official welcome the Manns received in the east zone by politicians and generals alike was clearly the result of enormous, coordinated effort.

When Mann received the Goethe Prize in Weimar on August 1st, he spoke about what Germans held in common. In his speech, “Ansprache im Goethe-Jahr,” he stated: “It is a fact, which one should not minimize but rather recognize in its auspicious meaningfulness, that Eastern and Western Germany over and above all differences in governmental organization, all ideological, political, and economic

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<sup>20</sup> Marei (1949), Newspaper File, July 1949, TMA. On the radio broadcasts, see Mann (2004).

<sup>21</sup> *Badisches Tagblatt* (1949), Newspaper File, July 1949, TMA.

<sup>22</sup> *Thüringer Volk* (Weimar) (1949), Newspaper File August/September 1949, TMA. Several of these political positions have their origins in the early modern era; on the *Kirchenrat*, for example, see Marcus (2000, 15–16, 64–66, 86–88).



contrasts, have found a common cultural ground.”<sup>23</sup> City officials made him an honorary citizen of Weimar and named a street after him (Thomas-Mann-Straße) – two events that did not happen in the West zone. As if to return the favor, in a symbolic gesture heavily laden with meaning, Mann donated the 25,000 East German Marks he received with the Goethe Prize (worth about \$1,190 at the time) to help rebuild Weimar’s City Church (*Stadtkirche*).<sup>24</sup> Also called the “Herder Church” after Enlightenment humanist, philosopher, and theologian Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), it had been destroyed during the war; Mann’s purpose was to create enduring, common bonds as a foundation for German unity.

Thus unlike in western Germany, Mann’s reception in the east zone was almost uniformly positive. As one journalist wrote, “The fact that Thomas Mann, one of the most important German writers of the present era, has come to Weimar in order to pay homage to the undying genius [of Goethe] in the year of the Goethe celebration, and at the same time to acknowledge the honors given him, fills us with joyful satisfaction.”<sup>25</sup> The large crowds of adults and children who greeted him seemed to welcome this idea of unity. One of the most touching moments of his entire stay in either the east or west zone was when a group of youth ran to the Manns’ car and he asked them to sing a song. Together they sang the “Song of World Youth” (*Das Lied der Weltjugend*): “Who wants to save the homeland with us, is our good comrade.”<sup>26</sup> As with Mann’s contribution to the Herder Church, it was a symbolic gesture for the future of Germany, indeed for German unity – the kind of gesture that he scarcely saw in the west. Rather, in the east zone Mann would hear no criticism, and would not have to defend himself over his relations with the opposing zone.

Yet therein lay the danger: Mann was surrounded by Communists, or at least those strongly sympathetic to Communism, during his stay. If Mann had wanted to avoid seeming to embrace Communism while in the east zone, that looked increasingly impossible in the company he had to keep. Although in many ways he played his role of visiting dignitary perfectly, westerners argued that he also played directly into the hands of the Communists and their penchant for propaganda.

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<sup>23</sup> “Ansprache im Goethe-Jahr” (1 August 1949), also quoted in Bürgin and Mayer (1969, 228–29).

<sup>24</sup> Bürgin and Mayer (1969, 228). The exchange rate at the time of the award was 5 East German Marks to 1 West German Mark, so was worth 5,000 West German Marks. The exchange rate to the dollar was DM 4.20 in 1950. Originally, the Herder Church was called the Church of St. Peter and Paul.

<sup>25</sup> *Sächsische Zeitung* (Dresden) (1949), Newspaper File, August/September 1949, TMA.

<sup>26</sup> “Wer mit uns die Heimat retten will, ist unser guter Kamerad.” See *Thüringer Volk* (Weimar) (1949), Newspaper File, August/September 1949, TMA. See also *Südbayerische Volkszeitung* (Munich) (1949), Newspaper File, August/September 1949, TMA.

That hospitality in the east zone, however, had its limits, specifically regarding the treatment of political prisoners. At the time of the Manns' visit, over 12,000 political opponents of the communist regime in eastern Germany were being held at the concentration camp Buchenwald, which lay just outside of Weimar – in the same location where Communist followers had been beaten, tortured, and killed during Nazi rule. Now political opponents were being held under evidently deplorable conditions, and in the West a group that called itself the “Fighting Group Against Inhumanity” (*Kampfgruppe gegen Unmenschlichkeit*) urged Mann to visit Buchenwald and make a statement. Mann felt that to make such a request would be insulting to his hosts, arguing that they would never grant the visit, much less approve of a speech that recognized the prisoners' plight. As an unofficial diplomat, such a request, Mann believed, would ultimately destroy the cultural bond he was trying to create.

His enemies in the west zone, however, readied the attack. In an open letter to Mann that several western newspapers published, writer and former Buchenwald inmate, Dr. Eugen Kogon (1903–1987), who now lived in the west zone, threw down the gauntlet. Mann owed it to the inmates, Kogon argued, to recognize their condition, and to urge the Soviet government to release them.<sup>27</sup> Such recognition would be a *direct* appeal to humanity, Kogon argued, rather than a mere “abstract” form of humanity that Mann effectively represented. If Mann truly believed in reaching out to all Germans – to uphold “Deutschland als Ganzem,” as he had stated in his Frankfurt address – then he could not ignore those who were opponents of the regime that was hosting him. Such pressure in the west for Mann to visit the camp and to acknowledge the inmates' suffering was enormous, and it was a pressure that Mann steadfastly resisted. As he stated, “I view this opinion as an indirect way of expressing disapproval of my visit in the East Zone.”<sup>28</sup> The experience revealed in stark terms how far his dream of unity was from reality; the deep animosity between the two sides, as the fate of prisoners at Buchenwald symbolized, was almost impossible to overcome.

## Conclusions

Thomas Mann had returned to an increasingly divided Germany. The Berlin Blockade, the formation of NATO, the announcement of a West German

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<sup>27</sup> *Schwäbische Landeszeitung* (Augsburg) (1949), Newspaper File, August/September 1949, TMA.

<sup>28</sup> *Frankfurter Rundschau* (1949b), Newspaper File, August/September 1949, TMA.

constitution – all preceded his arrival, and tensions escalated rapidly after his stay. The Federal Republic of Germany held its first parliamentary elections in August 1949, with the oversight of the American, British and French allies, and the founding of the German Democratic Republic in the Soviet-controlled east zone took place in October 1949. Yet well before these events, it had become clear that in fact the German east and west zones had precious little in common, as the stream of eastern Germans fleeing to the west amply proved.<sup>29</sup> In the face of such overwhelming conflict and strife, what did Mann actually achieve? And what did these achievements mean for the future of Germany and indeed for Europe?

First, Mann provided a model for German humanity and enlightenment at a critical moment in German history. Despite all the horror and destruction that Germany had caused, few public figures had the public recognition, and the ethical authority, as Mann did. He had been an early and vehement opponent of National Socialism, and had remained consistent in his beliefs of a democratic Germany throughout its darkest days of war and terror. As a widely published and beloved author, he reminded many Germans of the great cultural figures of their past. Far from being a nationalist, Mann was an internationalist, and urged Germans to think likewise. By donating his prize money in Weimar to rebuild the Herder Church, he was making a symbolic gesture: not only to recall an era in German history of tolerance and enlightenment but also to create a permanent reminder for Germany to uphold such ideals in the future.

Second, he reached out to millions of Germans as one of the few proponents for peace across the east/west divide. By making appearances in both western and eastern Germany, and meeting with government officials and common citizenry alike, he could appeal to audiences whom scarcely any other figure, and certainly no official diplomat, could reach at that time. Widely interviewed in both zones in Germany, he received enormous media coverage, from newspapers across Europe and the United States. In other words, his opinion counted, and he emphasized that message of peace across borders in every public appearance he made.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, he encouraged Germans to return to the fold of Europe, and to become fully European. “It is my joyful hope,” he stated prophetically, “that one day a free Germany will join a European federation as a free and honored member.”<sup>30</sup> Such sentiments re-affirm John Lewis Gaddis’s contention that “[i]f we are to grasp the nature of the post-World War II international system, then we will need an analytical framework ... that

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<sup>29</sup> About one sixth of the East German population fled to the west during the period 1945–1961. Gaddis (1997, 138).

<sup>30</sup> *Die Neue Zeitung* (Munich) (1949), Newspaper File, July 1949, TMA.

incorporates variations in the nature of power and the influence it produces, as well as the limitations on power that permit peripheries to make a difference” (Gaddis 1997, 27). Thomas Mann acted as one of those “peripheries.” Indeed, one German host acknowledged Mann’s efforts in this regard, urging him to “make the Germans European,” to which Mann replied, almost Gandhi-like, “Gladly, but I cannot do it alone. The Germans themselves must help me.”<sup>31</sup> Mann could thus serve as that bridge of understanding by promoting the idea of a democratic Germany within the context of other European states. The enormous regard that he enjoyed in the English-speaking world assured that he would be in an ideal position to serve as that bridge. And at least *that* form of unity would become a reality.

Thus in some ways Mann was on the right side of history, and in some ways on the wrong side. He denounced early on, in the strongest terms, fascist and totalitarian aggression; he advocated tirelessly for democracy; and ultimately he called for German inclusion in European affairs.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, he did not escape the Cold War divisions between east and west, as he had hoped he could; his trip to the east was roundly criticized in the German western media, and his unwillingness to visit Buchenwald while in Weimar was met with angry denunciations by some figures in the west, led by Dr. Kogon. Further, in promoting greater cooperation with the Soviet Union and calling for a “world state,” he directly contradicted the words of western diplomats and governments in the early Cold War. Such statements, indeed, would come back to haunt him.

Although there is no known record of the White House’s response to Mann’s trip to Germany to receive the prize, unbeknownst to Mann the FBI had been building a file on him, which intensified during the Cold War. Dating back to as

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<sup>31</sup> Frankfurter Rundschau (1949b), Newspaper File, August/September 1949, TMA.

<sup>32</sup> During the 1940s and 1950s the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) gradually joined European political and economic institutions. Although it was not a founding member of the Council of Europe, which first met on 5 May 1949 and included Britain, France, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Sweden, and Norway, western Germany did form part of the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (founded to administer the Marshall Plan in 1948). The FRG further took part in the Treaty of Paris (18 April 1951), which created a European Coal and Steel Community among France, West Germany, Italy, and the three Benelux countries (Belgium, Netherlands, and Luxembourg). West Germany joined the Council of Europe in 1950, and Chancellor Konrad Adenauer addressed its members on 10 December 1951 on West Germany’s European policy. The FRG also took part in the Treaty of Rome (25 March 1957), which led to the founding of the OECD (1957) and European Economic Community (1 January 1958). The FRG further joined the United Nations as an observer in 1955, whereas East Germany became an observer only in 1972. Both states became full members on 18 September 1973, and then as a unified Germany on 3 October 1990.

early as 1927, it had reached 200 items by 1941, increasing dramatically to 800 items by 1947 – two years before his trip to Germany to accept the prize. After Mann's return to the United States, a German emigré and freelance journalist, Eugene Tillinger, published a series of articles against him in far right-wing American journals such as *Plain Talk* and *The Freeman*, all of which were included in the file and appear to have bolstered the FBI's case against Mann as a dangerous "fellow traveler." As Tillinger wrote: "Disregarding innumerable requests from former inmates of Buchenwald, Mann went to Weimar and was immediately seized upon by the gigantic propaganda apparatus of the Soviets. He was acclaimed with panegyric glorification. ... Everything was done to flatter the 74-year-old novelist."<sup>33</sup> Tillinger claimed, and the FBI appeared to accept uncritically, that Mann's stance as a proponent for world peace led him directly into the hands of Communist fronts. "Nobody will deny or minimize Thomas Mann's stature as a novelist," Tillinger asserted in another article, "but his political record as signer and endorser of pro-Communist statements, and as spokesman for fellow-traveling and Communist organizations and causes is a sorry testimony to the irresponsibility of a world-famous writer, whose behavior in these troubled times is of great propaganda value to the Kremlin."<sup>34</sup> Although Mann was never called before HUAC, he tried to deflect such charges in the press, even as it became increasingly difficult to do so in an era that tolerated little dissent.

Tragically, his European visit in 1949 ultimately brought Mann closer to Europe and further from the United States. It added fuel to the fire of the anti-communists, who viewed Mann with increasing suspicion. As the FBI file on Mann grew, and as personal attacks on himself and on his family intensified, Mann decided enough was enough, and he and Katia moved permanently back to Europe in 1952, settling in Zurich, Switzerland. Yet as an unofficial diplomat during his 1949 trip, he had enjoyed the freedom of expression that official diplomats clearly did not. Who, then, could deny the value of the words he spoke on that heady day of August 1st in Weimar in 1949? "Beyond all differences regarding classes and viewpoints, the realization must stand, that certain hard-won achievements of mankind may not be allowed to disappear: freedom, rule of law, and dignity of the individual; rather, that they must be preserved ... due to a strengthened [sense of] social responsibility."<sup>35</sup> Such rhetoric, with its international call for a unity of ideals, was

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33 Tillinger (1949, 52), FBI File, TMA.

34 Tillinger (1951, 58), FBI File, TMA.

35 *Westfälische Rundschau* (Dortmund) (1949), also quoted in Martin (1999).

ultimately an appeal to *all* citizens of the world, whether they came from the west or the east.

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