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Thomas Mann's Daughter an Informer

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BONN, July 17 — The United States Government used Erika Mann, the daughter and biographer of the German writer Thomas Mann, as a willing informer on fellow refugees from Nazi Germany during World War II, then sought to deport her as a suspected Communist sympathizer during the height of the cold war, newly declassified documents show.

Alexander Stephan, a professor of German literature at the University of Florida in Gainesville, discovered Miss Mann's shifting relationship with the Government when he gained access to 10,000 pages of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's classified files through the Freedom of Information Act. He published excerpts from F.B.I. files this month in *neue deutsche literatur*, the German review.

No Enough Evidence to Deport

Dr. Stephan said that despite Miss Mann's apparently eager cooperation with the F.B.I. and despite her repeated denials of ties to Communists, the Immigration and Naturalization Service wanted to deport her in 1951. He said neither the I.N.S. nor the F.B.I. ever found enough evidence to start proceedings to do so. Miss Mann died in 1969 at the age of 63.

Dr. Stephan, who is writing a book on the F.B.I.'s surveillance of exiled German intellectuals during the war, said the bureau kept files on Thomas Mann, who had won the Nobel prize in literature in 1929; his brother, Heinrich, and Bertolt Brecht, Lion Feuchtwanger, Anna Seghers "and just about all the exiled German writers you can think of."

"They were interested in Germans because of possible infiltration by saboteurs during the war, and later because of the possible connection with Communism," Dr. Stephan said.

A Meeting in New York

The documents indicate that Miss Mann, then in her mid-30's, made contact with Solicitor General Francis Biddle in 1940, offering to help identify saboteurs among German refugees. Mr. Biddle called the F.B.I. Director, J. Edgar Hoover, who had an agent meet with her in New York City, where she lived at the Bedford Hotel on East 40th Street.

"Miss Mann thought that she could be of some value in obtaining information concerning the German refugees coming to this country," an F.B.I. document reported in 1941.

Another document from the Director's office reported, "During the war, she was frequently contacted by the New York Office on her own initiative and furnished information regarding German matters." Dr. Stephan said that the files he saw did not identify by name any of the German refugees on

Erika Mann helped the F.B.I., then had to fend off deportation.

whom she had informed, but that they made clear that she provided information to the F.B.I. for years.

"It is unclear," Dr. Stephan wrote, "why Erika Mann, of her own free will and over such a long period of time, brought information and potential collaborators to J. Edgar Hoover's F.B.I."

Whatever Miss Mann's motives, the bureau kept an increasingly wary eye on her.

After the war, she moved to California, where her father had settled. A report describing an agent's interview with her near Los Angeles in 1951, printed in full in Dr. Stephan's article, describes an interrogation not only about Miss Mann's activities but about those of her father, who had become a citizen. At one point she was questioned about whether Thomas Mann had supported Henry A. Wallace's Progressive Party campaign for the Presidency in 1948. (He had not, she told the agent.)

Miss Mann's file contained many anonymous denunciations of her as a leftist sympathizer or Communist "fellow traveler," said Dr. Stephan, who earned his Ph.D. from Princeton University. One such anonymous informer, he said, asserted that Miss Mann was "responsible for the 'leftist' writings attributed to her father and her uncle."

A Marriage to W. H. Auden

The F.B.I. files found ways to taint Miss Mann with even innocent facts. For example, she and the English writer W. H. Auden had agreed to marry in 1936 to ease Miss Mann's escape from the Nazis by making her eligible for a British passport. The F.B.I. listed "Mrs. Wistan H. Auden" as one of her many "aliases" and described the marriage as one of convenience.

But in 1951, when the British spies Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean defected to Moscow, F.B.I. agents around the country were asked to find Miss Mann to learn what she knew about the defectors from her acquaintance with Auden. They found that it was very little, Dr. Stephan said.

After her father settled in Switzerland in 1952, Miss Mann withdrew her application for United States citizenship and moved there with him. He died in 1955.