

Membership Mtg -

Masonic Temple

Jan 21, 1946

Address by Thomas Mann

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I certainly did not want to miss a meeting dedicated to the defense of academic freedom, and since I am present, permit ^{me} to say a few short words.

I am a German who, in the year 1933, parted from his mislead country that had fallen pray to the powers of oppression and brutal force, and who found a new home in this great and free country. Whenever one speaks of freedom, the one thing I have to say from my own experience is, that this ^{great and} all-important possession is easier lost than regained. To preserve this possession should be the foremost concern of every nation that enjoys it, and I spoke out of my European experience, when ^{time and again} I warned American audiences and expressed the conviction, that only a freedom conscious of itself and ready to fight can be kept alive and that never freedom must be so compliant as to allow its deadly enemies to destroy freedom. This is exactly what happened in my unfortunate country.

The reason for the German tragedy is that the idea of freedom, though during the Weimar Republic it ^{formally had been achieved,} was actually realized, has always been only half understood there. In the land of the Reformation it was only known as religious freedom, as a protestant, speculative, moral idea, - but one did not know and appreciate the immense importance of civil liberty on which the fathers of the American Union founded their state.

That is the tremendous difference between the American and the German state of mind, a difference which again and again ^{gives} ^{comfort} ^{when} ~~inspires us with confidence~~ ~~when~~ we see, ^{that}

also in this country ^{too} the enemies of liberty ^{are} do not rest ^{idle}
but are playing their ^{seductive and} corruptive ^{and} fatal game under the ^{noxious}
mask, and ^{even under the mask and} in the name of freedom itself.

Let me ^{indicate} show you a characteristic symptom which
can be observed every time a country's freedom is threatened:
It is the strange arrogance of a number of people who give
themselves the air as though they had received an authoritative
revelation from a higher sphere as to what is ^{practicable} democratic and
what ^{unpatriotic} undemocratic, what is American and what un-American.
Such revelations were also pretended ^{in Germany} by the powers ~~in Germany~~
which drove me from my country and excommunicated me as un-
German, - a judgment which for good reasons I have never
accepted, and which ^{I believe} posterity too will not accept. But just
as those German judges erred as to what is German, such
inspired minds the world over and also in this country are
erring and giving false judgment, - calling a thing "American"
which is not at all American, and ^{calling a man} another ^{who} un-American ~~which~~
is more genuinely American than they themselves. The efforts
of this type of people are always directed against liberty, -
and which idea could be more American than this: the idea of
civil liberty, of which academic freedom is only one expression.

It is particularly the freedom granted the
intellectual youth, ~~the~~ the students and scholars, the freedom
granted a special period of life, ^{to} which ^{it} seems so very natural
and fitting that one should not begrudge it, even though
youthful liberty may sometimes deport itself with absurd

(and kicking ^{or high over the traces} like a young horse.)

exuberance, bubbling over like young wine, ~~But there is~~
~~always time in later years~~ For moderation, for wisdom, for
(there is always time later on) conservative circumspection, and I remember an ~~amusing~~ *droll* reply
I once received from several young people at a great American
university. They were the sons and daughters of rich homes,
belonging by birth to the privileged class, and they had
aroused my curiosity by expressing *heartily* ~~strongly~~ communist convic-
tions during a conversation. I asked them how this could be
reconciled with their domestic milieu and their future position,
and they replied: "That's just it! When should we be communists
if not now!"

This is a joke, but the matter has its *very* serious
aspect. Academic freedom does not only mean the right of youth
mentally to sow their wild oats, it does not only mean the
freedom to learn, but also the freedom to teach, the freedom
of research and the independence of science. Where this freedom
is chained by people who *apply to it the improper and offensive*
~~examine it as to whether it is "demo-~~
standard of "patriotic" or "unpatriotic";
~~cratic" or "undemocratic", "American" or "un-American", there~~
culture, the soul of the country itself, is in danger, and it
is time for all to whom the idea of freedom means more than
just a phrase or *perhaps even* an extenuation of reactionary tendencies to
get together and to make a front against the enemy. The
political experiences of my own life have deeply convinced me
of this necessity, and that is the reason why I welcome this
meeting and why I wanted to express to you these few words
of solidarity.

Thomas Mann
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