

it into the open is happily resolved. It takes no profound knowledge of history to recognize that two World Wars might have been headed off had the aggressor nations known definitely and well in advance that a quarrel with England meant also a quarrel with the United States. Even if the wars were inevitable, it is obvious that our victory could have come sooner and been more decisive if there had been no uncertainty about America's rôle and no costly delays. Surely Russia, which has an agreement with Britain, which has proposed one to Czechoslovakia, and which, in fact, pioneered in the technique of dual agreements within larger groupings, cannot reasonably object to an Anglo-American alliance.

—E. L.

WHERE IS THE CLERGY?

ONE of the minor phenomena of World War II, in this country, is the comparative quiet of the clergy. In the last war they split the heavens with their denunciations of the Hun. The verbal onslaughts of such divines as the Rev. Dr. Newell Dwight Hillis and the Rev. Dr. S. Parkes Cadman will be recalled by Americans in their late thirties or over, but there were other mighty wielders of the theological sword: the Rev. Dr. Charles

Aubrey Eaton, the Rev. Dr. Howard Ganster, the Rev. Dr. Henry van Dyke, the Rev. Dr. Charles Parkhurst, and, of course, the Rev. Billy Sunday. Most of them are now in the heaven they yearned for, and almost none have appeared to take their places. Bishop William T. Manning, to be sure, was one of the first to see the full meaning of Hitlerism, as were a number of other ministers — but they have been very few in number and strangely reserved in their public utterances.

One wonders why. Certainly the spiritual issues involved in the present world struggle are far more obvious and numerous than in the last one, and from all reports the soldiers and sailors are now more anxious for the guidance and counsel of chaplains, who seem to be slow in joining the services.

—C. A.

NEGROES WITHOUT SELF-PITY

I MAY be wrong, but it seems to me that what happened at a Negro meeting in Florida the other day is important — important not only for Negroes and not only for Florida. I think that it strikes a new, wholesome note in the black man's relation to his native America.

It was a meeting of the State-

wide Negro Defense Committee. C. D. Rogers, President of the Central Life Insurance Company of Tampa, got up and said: "I will answer that question of whether we will be allowed to take part in civic, state and national affairs. The answer is — yes!" Then he explained why and how he had come to take part in the affairs of his city.

"The truth is," he said, "that I am not always asked. Certainly in the beginning I was not. As a citizen, I saw no reason why I should wait for an invitation to interest myself in things that concerned me just as much as they did other residents of Tampa. I went and I asked what I could do. Knowing that I was interested and willing to do my part, the authorities began to notify me ahead of proposed meetings, and invited me to participate. I see no point in hanging back, and then complaining that I have been excluded from civic affairs.

"I know that citizenship implies duties as well as privileges. It is time that we Negroes learn that you can't get something for nothing. Negroes, merely by being Negroes, are not exempted from the natural laws of existence. If we expect to be treated as citizens, and considered in community affairs,

we must come forward as citizens and shoulder our part of the load. The only citizens who count are those who give time, effort and money to the support and growth of the community. *Share the burden where you live!*"

And then J. Leonard Lewis, attorney for the Afro-American Life Insurance, had something to say. First he pointed to the growing tension between the races throughout the country. Then he, too, broke tradition. The upper-class Negro, he said, must take the responsibility for the Negro part in these disturbances.

"It is not enough," he said, "for us to sit by and say 'We didn't do it. Those irresponsible, uneducated Negroes bring on all this trouble.' We must not only do nothing to whip up the passions among them, we must go much further. We must abandon our attitude of aloofness to the less educated. We must get in touch with them *and head off these incidents before they happen.*"

"How can we do that? There is always some man among them who has great prestige with them. He can do what we cannot do, because he is of them and understands them. If he says fight, they fight. If he says, 'Now put away that gun and be quiet,' they are quiet. We must confer with these people, and

cooperate with them to prevent these awful outbreaks that can do no one any good and everybody some harm. Let us give up our attitude of isolation from the less fortunate among us, and do what we can for peace and good-will between the races."

Not anything world-shaking in such speeches, you will say. Yet something profound has happened, of which these speeches are symptoms and proofs. Look back over your shoulder for a minute. Count the years. If you take in the twenty-odd years of intense Abolitionist speaking and writing that preceded the Civil War, the four war years, the Reconstruction period and recent Negro rights agitations, you have at least a hundred years of indoctrination of the Negro that he is an object of pity. Becoming articulate, this was in him and he said it. "We were brought here against our will. We were held as slaves for two hundred

and forty-six years. We are in no way responsible for anything. We are dependents. We are due something from the labor of our ancestors. Look upon us with pity and give!" The whole expression was one of self-pity without a sense of belonging to America and what went on here.

Put that against the statements of Rogers and Lewis, and you get the drama of the meeting. The audience agreed and applauded. Tradition was tossed overboard without a sigh. Dr. J. R. E. Lee, president of Florida A and M College for Negroes, got up and elaborated upon the statements: "*Go forward with the nation. We are citizens and have our duties as such.*" Nobody mentioned slavery, Reconstruction, nor any such matter. It was a new and strange kind of Negro meeting — without tears of self-pity. It was a sign and symbol of something in the offing.

ZORA NEALE HURSTON

The eager and often inconsiderate appeals of reformers and revolutionists are indispensable to counterbalance the inertness and fossilism making so large a part of human institutions.

— WALT WHITMAN: *Democratic Vistas*.



► *We can be proud of these
American characteristics.*

WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE ARE WE?

BY ROBERT P. TRISTRAM COFFIN

BEFORE we start rearranging the rest of the world after this war, we had better find out what kind of people we are ourselves. Nations and families often do not know what they are like until some outsider, say an aunt, comes along and tells them.

I had a New England aunt whose chief business in life was telling our family our strong points and our weak points, especially our weak. She came twice a year and straightened us all out, with herb remedies and moral precepts. Some of our worst features, we discovered from Aunt Emma, were minor habits that gave a wrong impression of us to the outside world.

Minor peculiarities and odd ways of doing things can exasperate one's neighbors more than major sins. It has always been so among nations, since history began. The old Akkadians mortally estranged the people

of Ur by wearing beards. The people of Ur ate fat meat, and the Akkadians hated them for that habit and did their best to exterminate them. Underneath these superficial differences these nations had many sterling traits in common. And if they had been able to see these, they would have built up a civilization that would have defied the Chaldeans and Babylonians for centuries. But they could not see their common humanity for the whiskers and fat meat. So they fought each other and perished. And the Babylonians and Chaldeans — who wore whiskers and ate fat meat also, by the way — came and possessed their lands.

It is good to have a chance to see ourselves through other nations' eyes. For maybe we Americans have some ways of doing things that conceal our good points from our neighbors across the water. If

ROBERT P. TRISTRAM COFFIN *was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1936, and is the author of some two dozen books of verse, essays and fiction. He has been Pierce professor of English at Bowdoin College since 1934, and he has also lectured and read his poems at other academic institutions, including Columbia, Wellesley, Colby, Tufts, Hamilton, Boston, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Indiana and Wisconsin.*