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A WARTIME SACRIFICE: OUR PREJUDICES

BY ARTHUR CAPPER
United States Senator from Kansas

WITH possibly one exception, the Mexican War of 1846-48, every war that the United States has fought has been closely tied up with human rights for some group. The Revolution started because the citizens of the then American Colonies had no representation in Parliament. The War of 1812 was largely to protect shippers and sailors on the high seas. The Civil War, while based theoretically on the state rights controversy, was really the result of a long struggle over Negro slavery. The Spanish-American War aimed to free the Cubans from oppression. The United States was precipitated into World War I by the unwillingness of the German government to permit American citizens to travel the ocean "on their lawful occasions," as the traditional phrase puts it.

The present war, from the standpoint of the Germans and Japanese who started it, is for the purpose of making them the rulers of the earth and the people of every other country their slaves and vassals. The Japanese claim that their emperor is a direct descendant of the gods—"the Son of Heaven" they call him—and that they themselves are chosen by Heaven to force the Japanese religion, politics, and everything else Japanese upon the rest of the world.

Hitler and his German followers maintain that they are a pure Aryan—sometimes they call it Nordic—people and that Aryans are so superior to everybody else that they ought to be permitted to rule the world. They are ready to persecute the Jews, the Slavs—anybody that does not have their ancestry plus their ridiculous views. For every scholar knows their views are completely absurd: there is no such thing as a pure race, unmingled with any other race, and there is no evidence that the so-called Nordic or any other racial group is superior to the rest of humanity.

How the Germans and the Japanese, each nation feeling itself superior to every other nation in the world, are going to reconcile their ideas, it is hard to see. They haven't tried yet, and it isn't our problem. If they

would get to quarreling over it, we would be delighted, but we are not counting on that. We have to face the fact that the soldiers and common people of Japan and Germany believe what their leaders tell them and are ready to fight to the death to enforce their fancied superiority regardless of what inconsistencies there may be in the whole idea.

In other words, for the Japanese and the Nazis to win, would mean no protection for any minority anywhere. It would mean setting up again a ruling class, or group of ruling nations, and a slave class, or group of slave nations. It would turn back the calendar of history hundreds of years.

We Americans are committed to the other side of this battle; we are on the side of human rights and human opportunities. After the war is ended, we want a world where such rights and opportunities are the possession of every person, however humble. I am sure that is the way an overwhelming majority of Americans feel.

Are we, however, doing everything we can to make that vision come true? We have minorities in this country: Negroes, Jews, other groups. We haven't the silly Nazi notion that our minorities are responsible for war or depression or labor trouble or immorality. When we think matters over, we are bound to conclude that the people of the United States generally, whether of a minority group or not, are trying to do their best for their country. Yet we find it hard to get rid of our ingrown prejudices, our fancied superiorities.

This means that members of minority groups don't always get the treatment to which they are entitled. In most of our states, any citizen twenty-one years old, whatever his race or color, may vote—which is what the Constitution of the United States contemplates. In some states, however, a majority of the Negroes are disfranchised through devious legal regulations. True, the same regulations exclude a great many white people from voting, but that does not make the situation right. These Negroes and these poor whites are drafted to fight in the United States army. I say that if they are good enough to fight for the protection of America and democratic government, [Continued on Page 15]

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