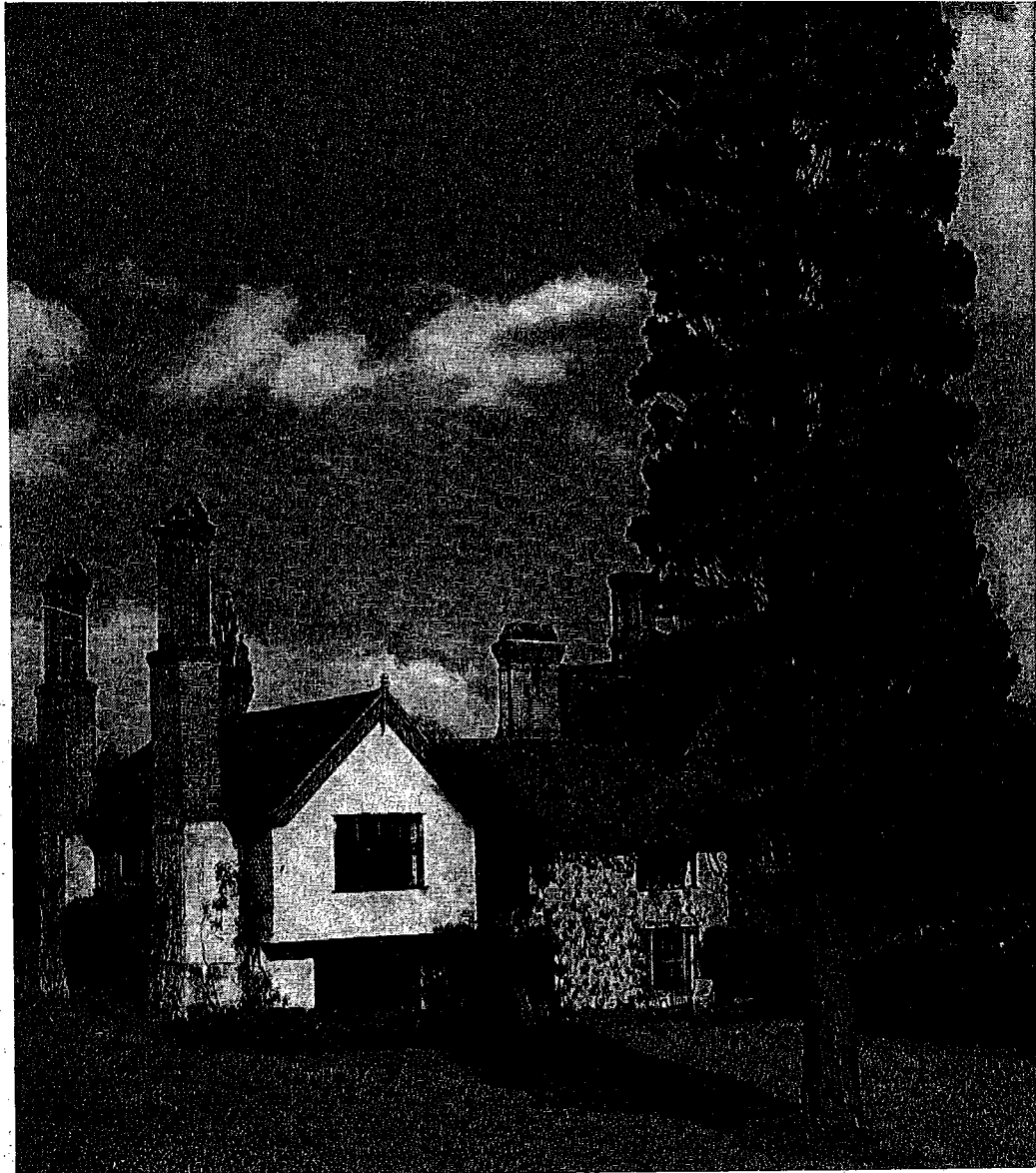


The Listener

Published every Thursday by The British Broadcasting Corporation



'Do you remember how well-kept our gardens used to be?'

Delight in Gardens. By V. Sackville-West

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Vol. XXXIII No. 845

Thursday 22 March, 1945

REGISTERED AT THE G.P.O.
AS A NEWSPAPER

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Problems on the Road to Peace

By ALISTAIR COOKE

IN the summer of 1933 visitors to the United States used to get very curious after a day or two to know what was the significance of a little blue eagle which appeared in the corners of newspapers, on shop windows and on theatre programmes; you would see flags bearing this little eagle waving outside public buildings; you would see it stamped on the caps of the men who sold hot dogs at baseball games; you would lean back in a barber's chair and see its wings outspread on a sticker over the mirror. This blue eagle was a symbol of the Roosevelt Recovery Programme which was meant to banish depression and unemployment from America, and it was a very patriotic thing to have around.

If you were given suddenly a pile of newspapers and magazines printed in the United States this week,* and you were asked to pick out the most typical news item, you might find your interest straying to another picture, to a photograph that I should guess has been printed threadbare by this time. For several days it has been a sign of pride and wonder to Americans, a symbol of the road to victory in Europe. It is a picture of a low, ugly bridge, flanked by two fat stone towers. It is (need I say?) the bridge at Remagen, the clumsy, old-fashioned, solid bridge that the advancing Americans expected to see blow into thin air, and for some miraculous reason it was not blown up. If there were any men from San Francisco in General Hodges' outfit, they must have been kidded mercilessly. Their pals (who would, by this time,

have heard a lot about the two shining exquisite bridges across the bay at San Francisco) must have told them that there has never been a more magnificent American bridge than the little monster ahead of them that ran four hundred solid yards over the Rhine and into the Promised Land, the inner ring of Germany's desperate defence. They must have felt like the men in *The Pilgrim's Progress*: they crossed over and the trumpets sounded for them on the other side. That note of dumb, exciting gratitude echoed this week in every American home that has a boy in Europe, and I know people who were called up or were asked by early morning shoppers if 'your boy was on the bridge'. In time I suppose the presence of an ancestor there will become a passport to a hundred per cent. Americanism.

Well, the first excitement is over, but the Americans at home have seen enough things happening in the columns of newsprint that flank that staring picture to feel a new uneasiness. Last summer and autumn, victory was just around the corner, and victory is the road back into prosperity, a normal family life. It meant getting back, certainly, to lots of problems, back to American problems: wages, automobiles, perhaps with magnesium wheels, a new industrial future for the Pacific Coast, more great dams to give light and power to potentially fertile valleys; there would be headaches over taxes, and the Government has given a warning that it is after the war that the really whopping threat of inflation begins. And there were to be other things. If you

* Broadcast on March 18.

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Mr. J. D. Bernal calls Goodness, Beauty and God 'the greatest of human constructions'. This amounts to saying that the Creator is made by what he creates, or that a law is invented by the person who discovers or obeys it: e.g. that Wren was built by St. Paul's Cathedral, or that a schoolboy invents the fact that 37 is a prime number. If such talk is absurd when applied to architecture or algebra, does it cease to be absurd when applied to God or morality?

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