who asked The Listener if a great nation produced "Pistol Packin' Momma" was looking at a very small section of that nation.

"I am not here to whitewash America. I have neither the capacity nor the desire for that job. But I do ask New Zealanders to realise that 140 million people can't be compressed into a generalisation of one sentence. It is with our music as it is with our films, our books, and our graphic arts: we sink to the depths occasionally, but we also rise occasionally to the heights. If your correspondent had followed your own programmes, he could have heard from America the best music in the world, played by some of the best instrumental combinations in the world, and it would have been as accurateand of course as inaccurate - to judge America by these as by the things of which he complained. Still, I don't object to his complaint. I am an American, and Americans believe in free speech, and in free thought."

This seemed like the opportunity to ask if the word American really meant something new. Was there already an American nation, or was the process of Americanisation still incomplete?

"It is a fair question, but not easy to answer. We are a nation right enough - you would not doubt that if you lived among us, studied our newspapers, or served beside us on the field of battle. But I am not going to say that there are no undigested lumps. If a family emigrates from Italy say, it naturally joins up with an Italian group in the United States. If this is a large group, it will retain its own language, its own food and customs, perhaps its own newspapers. But don't forget that although there is freedom in America, the children will have to attend American schools and learn the American language, and soon all members of the group will have to be able to speak English, or they will not be able to participate in the economic and cultural life of America. It usually takes about one generation to escape from racial isolation, but the process is inevitable. You can't remain stationary in a side pool when 140 million people are sweeping past you. They catch you up and carry you along whether you like it or not, and you soon do like it. There are Germans in America who are still Germans, Japanese who are still Japanese; but we all become Americans in the end - most of us, I am afraid, rather self-conscious Americans."

The Colour Problem

"Even your negroes?"

"Even our negroes. But I am glad you asked that question. We have a colour problem, and it is big and ugly. But you are wrong if you suppose that we are doing nothing about it. I can't go into details now, though I hope to be able to say something later, but I ask New Zealanders not to believe that the negro problem is intractable. It is very delicate and very difficult, but we are going to solve it. We are solving it, and in the meantime I hope no New Zealander will think, if he reads of race riots in one of our cities, that we are rioting all the time."

I risked one more question. Would the fighting men of America be a prob-lem when fighting ceased? What was the mood of the men themselves, and what was the feeling at home?

(continued on next page)



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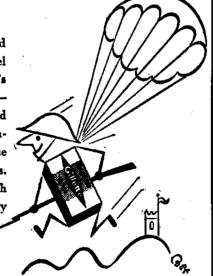
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