

AMERICA ALONE

Received a call from a gentlemen recently -and it turned out to be an old timer like me. He called to say he liked my last article in the Baldwin Register. Like me he is worried about our future! Like me he served in WWII, Navy for him and Army for me. I have to admit I was tickled -to think someone read my articles other than my wife. He asked if I had read Mark Steyn's "America Alone" and I said no but will if I can find it, library or otherwise.....In many ways we are alone!

Once upon a time-though we weren't perfect-we seemed to be a relatively well-knit society made up of immigrants and their progeny. Certainly the first to come were required to support our laws and the Constitution, to learn English and be a part of the great melting pot. Former cultures were not disallowed but placed in the perspective of becoming American first. Religion was, of course, not mandatory and no one had to become a Christian but they learned that the Founding Fathers held strong beliefs found in the teaching and models of Christianity.

DeToqueville, that French visitor, found potential here and predicted: "America will be great because she is good, and if she fails to be good, she will no longer be great." He found the real strength here in our religious and political freedoms. Life was simpler, then, perhaps...those inspiring absolutes of Moses and the example of Jesus. A commitment to family, community and to God. What happened?

Even my generation could find a relationship of those past but found itself in the throes of the great depression and war. Tom Brokaw speaks of these

days as the "Greatest Generation"-one of commitment, honor and integrity, leaving an example that preserved our freedoms. By inference and subtleties I seem to suggest our generation was better than those which followed. Perhaps this is true of all generations assuming perfection among the on-going sins. Minorities may argue that we ignored, exploited and often looked down upon them.

Our 'open door' policy inscribed on the Statue of Liberty is still the way of America. Georgia Anne Geyer, a syndicated columnist, notes the erosion of basic American ideology, and a rationalization of requirements, duties and acceptance. "our national unity is undermined by a heterogenization that includes administration tests in Spanish, the failure of new citizens to put down roots beyond the economic and the loss of the profound and irrevocable citizen ritual of swearing in--citizenship by mail, etal." Her treatise, "Americans no more" examines these extra-national loyalties and dilution of our civic culture.

Geyer alludes to an interesting corollary citing Sir John Bagot Glubb's analysis and comparison of empires: "Baghdad in the 10th and 11th centuries the Seljuk Empire is first rising then fading..as Arab historians lament the deterioration in sexual mores, the use of obscene language, the influence over young people by 'pop singers'..an evil playfulness among the young overtakes and juvenilizes the entire society. A decline in morals and in stamina takes place, men become more selfish and materialistic. End of empire is followed by a dreadful period and a revival of tribalism." Glubb Pasha, idolized by the Arabs, led the Jordanian Arab Legion for years.

A touch of irony in the war of civilizations.