

Hope In England's Debacle

FROM LONDON come "human interest" stories about the excursions of the King and Queen into bombed areas, their evident concern for the poor people made homeless.

Other stories recount the uncouth behavior of London's refugees in the country mansions opened to them by sympathetic aristocrats, and the latter's unfeigned shock at seeing English folk act so badly.

Common danger seems to be a levelling influence. It removes the social barriers which divide people in the same community into groups as strange to each other as if they lived in distant parts of the world, with different customs, traditions, and languages.

"Over the tracks," in tranquil times, is as far away as China; so much so that visiting the area of the hardly known neighbors is a travelling experience called "slumming." But let a catastrophe visit the entire community, particularly one which is impartial in its incidence, and the thin veneer of particularism is washed away in a flood of tears.

War is a man-made catastrophe. It is unnecessary. And its causes are rooted in the same soil that brings forth the stratification of human beings into those strange, antagonistic and distinct groups that stigmatize our civilization.

Royalty, heretofore unacquainted with the slums in which millions of their subjects dwell; genteel folk, surprised when some of their London neigh-

bors casually spit on the carpet, and helpless humanity blasted out of squalid homes—all are parts of the same economic environment.

That is the environment which condemns the many to live in squalor so that the few may live in splendor. Maintenance of such an environment by force of law arouses a sense of hurt, of injustice; men so inflamed, and unaware of the cause, are easy prey for the manufactured hatreds that lead to slaughter.



While history does not justify it, one cannot refrain from the hope that this forced contact between Englishmen of various strata may result in a re-examination of this environment. Maybe the sight of misery revealed in their midst may awaken the slave owners to the danger of continuing the maladjustment. Maybe a new order will arise out of this debacle, one based on the truism:

"They were even as we are."