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ARE AMERICANS IMPERIALISTIC?

FOR the third lecture in his recent series for the W.E.A., SYDNEY GREENBIE, Special Assistant to the American Minister, and head of the U.S. Office of War Information in New Zealand, asked and answered the question "Are Americans Imperialistic?" Here is a condensation of what he said.

THE world has every reason for inquiring whether America is or is not imperialistic, Mr. Greenbie began. No nation that builds up so much power can expect to avoid being suspected and feared. And the fear of the expansion of America has concerned many people for some time. Both Japan and Germany, no less than Latin America, have made charges of imperialism against us. But oddly enough, the one nation from whom we might expect the most fear is the one with whom we have lived in the closest amity throughout our whole history. That one nation is Canada. Yet between Canada and the United States there is not in 3000 miles a single fortification.

Misreadings of History

Now the charge of imperialism against America is full of misreadings of American history. These misreadings may, in part, be laid at the doorstep of American liberalism. The citizens of a free country, where everybody talks, Americans have themselves given their critics cool handles for their red-hot poker of criticism. Here are some of these misreadings of American history:

Americans are charged with having themselves conquered territory. When Japan and Germany began crying aloud for "lebensraum" they would say, "Look what you did to the American Indians," and many sympathetic Americans, ready to condemn the injustice to the American Indian, overlooked realities. Here was a continent from Rio Grande to the North Pole occupied at no time by more than 300,000 wandering people. In that same space to-day, 133 million people enjoy comfort and a high living standard.

Occupation, Not Aggression

For 250 years the Spaniards, who had actually dispossessed some 40 to 50 million people in Mexico and Peru, laid a paper claim to the territory north of Mexico City, all the way to California. During these two and a-half centuries, the Spaniards prohibited anyone from going in to settle in that whole territory from Guadalajara to San Francisco. Not more than 5000 Spaniards had settled and, all told, not more than 10,000 Indians. When, in the early 1820's the Spaniards invited Americans to come in, in 10 years there were over 20,000 people there. The troubles that ensued between the Americans and the Spaniards resulted in the war with Mexico. Then Texas and California fell into American hands. For 10 years after that, the American Government refused to accept Texas as a State into the Union. Later Mexico was given an indemnity of some millions of dollars for this territory, which, for 200 years, they had not attempted to settle. It was entirely empty land. The whole

taking of the American continent by our people was the taking of land entirely unused by anyone. This is certainly not aggression. There is no greater claim to ownership of territory than that of use, and Americans have given comfort to a hundred-odd million people in territory which a hundred years ago was completely vacant.

Now then, how can this compare with the claims of Germany and Japan that they, too, want room? Japan has gone into China, fully and completely occupied by people for thousands of years, has killed hundreds of thousands of people, and possessed herself of their property. What Germany has done in Europe needs no comment from me here.

For the most part, even after the United States waged war for territory, she paid for it in hard cash. But most of our territory to the west we actually bought from France for 15 million dollars, though France, too, had not settled the region.

Interventions

Now let us consider for a moment two or three other items. America has several times intervened in Latin America. Neither space nor time permit me to enter into the details. There is no American of any sober judgment who supports these interventions or justifies them. Nevertheless the fact remains that they have been only interventions and not conquests. In 1912 the United States landed Marines in Mexico. To-day, America is not in Mexico, and Mexico is absolutely free and independent. Even when Mexico has confiscated lands privately owned by American citizens' and oil properties, America has not enforced her claims by armed intervention. America has intervened in Cuba, but Cuba is to-day a free and independent nation. Many Cubans have been wishing that America would annex them. I was there two years ago, and heard such expressions on every hand. America intervened in Haiti—to-day Haiti is an absolutely independent little nation. Our whole policy toward Latin America has undergone such a serious change that the Good Neighbour Policy has become the basis for all inter-American relationships.

Trade

There is, on the other hand, the other aspect of this problem—the question of trade. This question of trade is focussed on two American policies known as the Monroe Doctrine and the Open Door Policy. When Japan wanted an excuse for her conquests in China and Manchuria, she declared that all she was doing was proclaiming a Monroe Doctrine of Asia, and a great many liberally-minded people helped to substantiate that false claim. What is the

(continued on next page)