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FOR TRUTH, JUSTICE AND LIBERTY. ⁽¹⁾

By Hon. ~~CARL SCHURZ.~~

When forty-three years ago, after five years residence in the country, I became a citizen of this republic, I took an oath to support the Constitution of the United States. I understood that oath to mean that I would remain faithful to those principles of the government which are laid down in the Declaration of Independence and form the vital spirit of the fundamental law of our democracy. I was happy to feel that my sworn duty as an American citizen was in perfect harmony with my own cherished ideals of civil liberty, right and justice, and I have endeavored to keep my oath to the best of my knowledge and ability. Determined to keep it loyally to the end of my days, I stand here now to defend those principles against an attack even more crafty and dangerous than that which in times gone by was made upon them by the power of domestic slavery, and which was beaten back by the election of Abraham Lincoln to the Presidency. I mean the attack now made by the policy of imperialism as carried on by the present Administration.

Let me say at the start that I consider the manner in which the imperialistic policy is being commended by some persons to popular approval, the ugliest confidence game ever practiced upon a free people. In my whole long life I have never known of such systematic use of distortion of history, hypocritical cant, garbling of documents and false pretence. I am here to speak a word for truth and justice; and in doing so I shall call things by their right names. You will pardon me if those names are not always of the mildest. For I must confess, when I witnessed some of the means employed to lure this great republic from the path of righteousness, high principle and glorious destiny, my old blood boiled with indignation.

The partisans of the Administration object to the word "imperialism," calling it a mere bugbear having no real existence. They pretend that in extending our sway over Porto Rico and the Philippines we merely continue that sort of territorial expansion which has been practiced by this republic from its

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in opposition to the re-election of President McKinley.

beginning. This is a mere juggle with words amounting to a downright falsification of history.

Our Expansion in the Past.

The truth is that until two years ago this republic did indeed add to its territory, but never without the intention and well founded expectation that the acquired soil would be occupied by a population of our own, or at least homogeneous with our own, and that it would in course of time be formed into regular States of this Union under our Constitution. It was therefore not mere expansion of our territorial domain to be perpetually ruled by our arbitrary will, but it was essentially an intended, and in the course of time practical extension of our constitutional system in entire accord with the fundamental principles of our democracy.

The only apparent exception to this rule was the annexation of Alaska—but that, too, only apparent, not real; for Alaska may be inhabited by a population of our own; and when the development of that territory has sufficiently progressed and its population becomes numerous enough, its claim to full constitutional statehood will, no doubt, be readily recognized.

Some imperialists pretend that the purchase of Louisiana by Jefferson and the legislation connected with it furnish a precedent fully covering the principles of Mr. McKinley's policy with regard to Porto Rico and the Philippines. This I emphatically deny. Whatever that temporary legislation may have been, is there anybody brazen enough to assert—and this is the essential, the true point—that it was the spirit and intent of Jefferson's act and of the legislation referring to it, to hold the acquired territory perpetually as a vassal dependency outside of our constitutional system subject to arbitrary rule by the President or Congress? Does anybody dare to deny that it was the understood intent and expectation that the territory of Louisiana would be filled by people substantially our own who would form out of it American States clothed with the full measure of constitutional rights? Whoever denies this or equivocates about it, only seeks to falsify history, to slander Thomas Jefferson, and to deceive the American people.

Nay, so little did the American people, until recently, mean to expand our territory without purposing correspondingly to extend our constitutional

system that, when San Domingo was offered to us, the offer was rejected by an overwhelming public opinion, mainly because it was believed that that tropical country and its present and prospective inhabitants were not fit to come under our Constitution, while they could not be permanently governed outside of it.

"Expansion," then, in the historical and truly American sense, means the extension of our constitutional system together with the extension of our territorial area. In this sense we are all expansionists, provided the expansion be honorably effected. And if in the course of events our northern neighbors, a people like our own and practiced in self-government, should express a wish to join this Union—a consummation which our present policy of imperialistic adventure is apt rather to put off than to bring on—we all would welcome them with heart and hand.

Imperialism in Its Worst Form

But when we annex to this Republic foreign territory, especially territory in the tropics which, owing to climatic conditions, can never be settled by our own or homogeneous people, with the intent and expectation that such territory shall never come into our constitutional system, but shall as to the civil, political and economic status permanently depend upon the will of our central government in which they are to have no determining share, those countries thus being vassal provinces, and their people subject populations, that is not mere expansion, in the historic American sense, but that is imperialism. And when such countries are annexed and such populations are subjected by force of arms—by what President McKinley has very properly called "criminal aggression"—it is imperialism in its worst form. Whoever calls this imperialism a mere bugbear is either grossly deceived or a gross deceiver.

Will anybody deny that this applies to our rule over our so-called dependencies? It is over and over again admitted, by the Porto Rico legislation as well as by the pronouncements of the imperialist spokesmen. It helps the imperialists nothing to say that they intend to give the subject populations as much self-government as may be good for them. For who is to decide how much self-government will be good for them? Not they themselves; not the Constitution, but our arbitrary will. We may give it and

we may take it away. This is arbitrary rule, another name for despotism. Nor does it help the imperialists to say that we shall treat our subjects benevolently. A benevolent act is an act of grace, not a recognition of right. Benevolence to others not seldom comes into conflict with benevolence to one's self, and then the result is apt to be very uncertain. However benevolent the intentions of the imperialists may be, the benevolence of their acts is so far painfully felt by its victims. Look at the Philippine Islands, which are flooded with blood and tears. Look at poor Porto Rico, where our soldiers were received with transports of joy and hope, and where, according to trustworthy reports, a large majority of the inhabitants would now in their misery thank God for delivering them from their American liberators and for returning them to the rule of Spain.

Some extra-smart people shout at us: "You talk of imperialism! Nonsense! Where is your Emperor?" Why, what intelligent person does not know that it does not require a personal monarch to make an imperial government? Rome had an imperial government in her Senate long before Caesar crossed the Rubicon. It may be the rule of a republic over another people, arbitrary and irresponsible to the governed, and it will be an imperial government in its essence, however you may disguise the fact.

Indeed, disguising the character of imperialism is cultivated as a fine art by its devotees. President McKinley himself recently furnished an example of this, bold enough to make us gasp. In the speech responding to the announcement of his nomination he said: "To the party of Lincoln has come another supreme opportunity which it has bravely met in the liberation of ten millions of the human race from the yoke of imperialism." There is poetic genius in this sentence.

The "Party of Lincoln."

The "party of Lincoln?" It was Lincoln who said: "Those arguments that are made, that the inferior race are to be treated with as much allowance as they are capable of enjoying; that as much is to be done for them as their condition will allow—what are those arguments? They are the arguments that kings have made for the enslaving of the people in all ages of the world. You will find that all the arguments of kingcraft were always of this class; they always bestrode the necks of the people—not

that they wanted to do it, but because the people were better off for being ridden. Turn it whatever way you will, whether it comes from the mouth of a king, as an excuse for enslaving the people of his country, or from the mouth of men of one race as a reason for enslaving the men of another race, it is all the same serpent." It was Lincoln who said: "Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not themselves, and under a just God cannot long retain it."

The party of Lincoln! If men advocating the arbitrary rule of one people over another on the old despot's plea that such rule is good for the subject, had come to Abraham Lincoln saying that they were his party, it would have required all his good nature to keep him from lifting up his big foot to kick them downstairs.

And what shall we say of President McKinley's assertion that his party has "bravely liberated ten millions of the human race from the yoke of imperialism"? In the face of the fact that thousands upon thousands of Filipinos have been killed in their struggle against American imperialism, and that our Porto Rican subjects are loudly groaning under the same American imperialism, to say that Mr. McKinley's party has bravely saved those people from the yoke of imperialism is truly a great feat. We may well ask when Mr. McKinley pronounced that sentence, what he may have thought of the intelligence of his countrymen.

Having thus fixed in our minds what imperialism is, let us now see what the pursuit of the imperialistic policy has already done for—or rather with us. It has at once involved us in a war of conquest, of "criminal aggression," to subjugate a people fighting for their freedom and independence. I am aware that President McKinley in his recent letter of acceptance denies that the war against the Filipinos was a war of conquest. He devotes nearly 10,000 words to the task of persuading us that it is only a war of duty and humanity, and that all that has been done, was done "not for aggrandizement, nor for pride of might, nor for trade or commerce, nor for exploitation, but for humanity and civilization." These are words of unctuous sweetness.

Now listen to this plain tale. When Spain was ready for peace, the Secretary of the Navy telegraphed to Admiral Dewey as follows: "Washington, Aug. 13, 1898: The President desires to receive