

IMPERIALISM

In this study, which takes only a short distance view of American policy, having a range of - shall we say - ten years, it will not be necessary to devote much space to the possibility of imperialism. If one were taking, like Signor Mussolini, a long range view, extending even into the twenty-first century, it would be very tempting to indulge in speculation upon this theme. It may very well be that within the course of the next generation or two, the consciousness of a giant's strength may tempt the American people to use it like a giant, and that the temptation offered by the weakness of their neighbours to the North and South may prove as irresistible to them as such a temptation has proved to every powerful people of the past. But for the present there is no prospect of a national rush along this pathway. The only proposal for expansion that is under discussion for the moment is the preposterous proposal to ask France and England to pay their War debts with West Indian Islands. Even the muddy-minded millions who read the newspapers of William Randolph Hearst have not been thrilled by the prospect of further complicating our race problem by adding another million to the population of Afro-America, and deepening the difficulties of the depression by imposing upon the United States treasury the financing of lands which ever since the emancipation of the slaves have been more of a liability than an asset to the empires which possess them.

The Roosevelt administration indeed, has been blazing a trail in the diametrically opposite direction to that in which the path of imperialism leads. The passage of the bill for Philippine independence, the refusal to intervene in Cuba under the license of the Platt Amendment, the withdrawal of the marines from the Caribbean States are irrefutable proofs of this tendency. "The United States," President Roosevelt has said, "does not want to annex Canada, or any part thereof; it does not want to annex Mexico, or any part thereof; it does not want to annex Cuba, or any part thereof". This statement accurately represents the views of the minority of the American people which gives any thought, at the present moment, to the problem of foreign policy. There is of course great danger latent in the fact that the majority does not think of such questions at all, that a conversion of the national emotion from peaceful to militant comes, as 1914 proved, with amazing rapidity, and in the fact that hatred is the most contagious of popular emotions and the easiest to arouse. Therefore the great renunciation spoken in the name of the American people by Woodrow Wilson at Bobile in October, 1913, "I want to take this occasion to say that the United States will never again seek one additional foot of territory by conquest," cannot be regarded as binding either in fact or morally, upon future generations. No man has authority to say to his country, "Thus far shalt thou go and no farther."