

6. "GOD . . . HAS MADE US THE MASTER ORGANIZERS OF THE WORLD"

The argument for the acquisition of the Philippines, as put forth by President McKinley, was one thing; the argument for their retention another. Although the United States had no imperialist tradition, in the sense that Britain and France had such a tradition, imperialism came naturally to a good many Americans. The arguments in favor of imperialism were a hodgepodge of considerations, commercial, military, political, and moral. All of these were blended in the speeches of Senator Beveridge of Indiana, one of the most eloquent and effective of the champions of imperialism. What is particularly interesting in this speech is the combination of shrewd practical considerations with the mystical sense of racial destiny.

MR. PRESIDENT, the times call for candor. The Philippines are ours forever, "territory belonging to the United States," as the Constitution calls them. And just beyond the Philippines are China's illimitable markets. We will not retreat from either. We will not repudiate our duty in the archipelago. We will not abandon our opportunity in the Orient. We will not renounce our part in the mission of our race, trustee, under God, of the civilization of the world. And we will move forward to our work, not howling out regrets like slaves whipped to their burdens, but with gratitude for a task worthy of our strength, and thanksgiving to Almighty God that He has marked us as His chosen people, henceforth to lead in the regeneration of the world.

This island empire is the last land left in all the oceans. If it should prove a mistake to abandon it, the blunder once made would be irretrievable. If it proves a mistake to hold it, the error can be corrected when we will. Every other progressive nation stands ready to relieve us.

But to hold it will be no mistake. Our largest trade henceforth must be with Asia. The Pacific is our ocean. More and more Europe will

manufacture the most it needs, secure from its colonies the most it consumes. Where shall we turn for consumers of our surplus? Geography answers the question. China is our natural customer. She is nearer to us than to England, Germany, or Russia, the commercial powers of the present and the future. They have moved nearer to China by securing permanent bases on her borders. The Philippines give us a base at the door of all the East.

Lines of navigation from our ports to the Orient and Australia; from the Isthmian Canal to Asia; from all Oriental ports to Australia, converge at and separate from the Philippines. They are a self-supporting, dividend-paying fleet, permanently anchored at a spot selected by the strategy of Providence, commanding the Pacific. And the Pacific is the ocean of the commerce of the future. Most future wars will be conflicts for commerce. The power that rules the Pacific, therefore, is the power that rules the world. And, with the Philippines, that power is and will forever be the American Republic. . . .

Here, then, Senators, is the situation. Two years ago there was no land in all the world which we could occupy for any purpose. Our commerce was daily turning toward the Orient, and geography and trade developments made necessary our commercial empire over the Pacific. And in that ocean we had no commercial, naval, or military base. To-day we have one of the three great ocean possessions of the globe, located at the most commanding commercial, naval, and military points in the eastern seas, within hail of India, shoulder to shoulder with China, richer in its own resources than any equal body of land on the entire globe, and peopled by a race which civilization demands shall be improved. Shall we abandon it? That man little knows the common people of the Republic, little understands the instincts of our race, who thinks we will not hold it fast and hold it forever, administering just government by simplest methods. We may trick up devices to shift our burden and lessen our opportunity; they will avail us nothing but delay. We may tangle conditions by applying academic arrangements of self-government to a crude situation; their failure will drive us to our duty in the end. . . .

But, Senators, it would be better to abandon this combined garden and Gibraltar of the Pacific, and count our blood and treasure already spent a profitable loss, than to apply any academic arrangement of self-government to these children. They are not capable of self-government. How

could they be? They are not a self-governing race. They are Orientals, Malays, instructed by Spaniards in the latter's worst estate. . . .

The Declaration of Independence does not forbid us to do our part in the regeneration of the world. If it did, the Declaration would be wrong, just as the Articles of Confederation, drafted by the very same men who signed the Declaration, was found to be wrong. The Declaration has no application to the present situation. It was written by self-governing men for self-governing men. . . .

Mr. President, this question is deeper than any question of party politics; deeper than any question of the isolated policy of our country even; deeper even than any question of constitutional power. It is elemental. It is racial. God has not been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic peoples for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle self-contemplation and self-admiration. No! He has made us the master organizers of the world to establish system where chaos reigns. He has given us the spirit of progress to overwhelm the forces of reaction throughout the earth. He has made us adepts in government that we may administer government among savage and senile peoples. Were it not for such a force as this the world would relapse into barbarism and night. And of all our race He has marked the American people as His chosen nation to finally lead in the regeneration of the world. This is the divine mission of America, and it holds for us all the profit, all the glory, all the happiness possible to man. We are trustees of the world's progress, guardians of its righteous peace. The judgment of the Master is upon us: "Ye have been faithful over a few things; I will make you ruler over many things."

What shall history say of us? Shall it say that we renounced that holy trust, left the savage to his base condition, the wilderness to the reign of waste, deserted duty, abandoned glory, forget our sordid profit even, because we feared our strength and read the charter of our powers with the doubter's eye and the quibbler's mind? Shall it say that, called by events to captain and command the proudest, ablest, purest race of history in history's noblest work, we declined that great commission? Our fathers would not have had it so. No! They founded no paralytic government, incapable of the simplest acts of administration. They planted no sluggard people, passive while the world's work calls them. They established no reactionary nation. They unfurled no retreating flag. . . .

Blind indeed is he who sees not the hand of God in events so vast, so harmonious, so benign. Reactionary indeed is the mind that perceives not that this vital people is the strongest of the saving forces of the world;

FROM: Commodore Dewey
United States Navy

TO: William McKinley
President of the United States

Mr. President:

You have asked my advice as to whether or not the United States should annex the Philippine Islands. I am amazed that any American would hesitate for one moment on this issue. There is no doubt we must have the Islands without delay for economic and strategic reasons.

Economically, the United States needs expanded world markets, raw materials, and new fields of investment -- the Philippines will not only provide us with much of these, but also a stepping stone to unlimited opportunities in the Far East. Beyond the Pacific in Japan and China are the markets of the world that can be entered and controlled only by obtaining naval bases in that area.

If we are to become a great seaboard power in the Pacific, we must stand guard against German rivalry. They have aspirations for colonies and for influence in this region. Their policies have brought us into a collision course. The incident of the Samoa Islands is suggestive of their ambitions. All over the world the German commercial and colonial push can be observed.

Strategically, the United States must have protection from possible German aggression in the Pacific. It is our preparedness and not our acquiescence that holds back Germany even now. The German navy now stands off Manila Bay. If we withdraw, they will certainly annex the Islands. Is the United States willing to see them taken by a powerful rival?

Militarily the United States needs the Philippines. If the Pacific states and our commercial interests in the Pacific are to be protected, three things are needful: first, protection of the chief harbors, by fortification and coast defense ships; secondly, naval forces, which alone will allow this nation to extend its influence outward; thirdly, it should be an inviolate resolution of our national policy that no foreign state should thenceforth acquire a coaling position within three thousand miles of San Francisco.

The Islands in question are needed to maintain our navy by allowing for coaling stations and as an outer perimeter of defense. A powerful American navy in the Pacific will induce a great increase in our commercial activity and provide an outlet to the East for our great industries.

The position of the United States, between the two Old Worlds and the great oceans has ended our self-imposed isolation. We must either expand to protect our western flanks or pay the consequences.

Address of the Reverend Josiah Strong delivered before the United States Missionary Council in Boston, 1898.

We have freed the Filipinos from the abuses of Spanish rule. We cannot leave them to drift alone on a dark aimless sea. We must save these less fortunate people from barbarism. We must patiently and with kindness teach these people to govern themselves and enjoy the blessings of Christian civilization.

This Missionary Council does not support a grab for empire, but we support a paternal arrangement of our government toward the Philippines. This will be a heroic effort to free the oppressed and teach millions of ignorant, debased human beings how to live. God has outfitted us with a task. Shall we shrink from it? It is a divine mission. Can we renounce this Holy trust? Can we leave the savage to his base condition?

There are so many real things to be done -- canals to dig, railways to be laid, cities to be built, people to be saved. To these poor backward people, primitive and pagan, who sell their children into slavery, chew narcotic plants, and sacrifice animals to their spirits, we must make whatever sacrifice it takes to lead them from the darkness of superstition and ignorance into the light of Christian love.

PLATFORM OF THE AMERICAN ANTI-IMPERIALIST LEAGUE

We hold that the policy known as imperialism is hostile to liberty and tends toward militarism, an evil from which it has been our glory to be free. We regret that it has become necessary in the land of Washington and Lincoln to reaffirm that all men, of whatever race or color, are entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. We maintain that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. We insist that the subjugation of any people is "criminal aggression" and open disloyalty to the distinctive principles of our government.

We earnestly condemn the policy of the present national administration in the Philippines. It seeks to extinguish the spirit of 1776 in those islands. We deplore the sacrifice of our soldiers and sailors, whose bravery deserves admiration even in an unjust war. We denounce the slaughter of the Filipinos as a needless horror. We protest against the extension of American sovereignty by Spanish methods.

We demand the immediate cessation of the war against liberty, begun by Spain and continued by us. We urge that Congress be promptly convened to announce to the Filipinos our purpose to concede to them the independence for which they have so long fought and which of right is theirs.

The United States have always protested against the doctrine of international law which permits the subjugation of the weak by the strong. A self-governing state cannot accept sovereignty over an unwilling people. The United States cannot act upon the ancient heresy that might makes right.

Imperialists assume that with the destruction of self-government in the Philippines by American hands, all opposition here will cease. This is a grievous error. Much as we abhor the war of "criminal aggression" in the Philippines, greatly as we regret that the blood of the Filipinos is on American hands, we more deeply resent the betrayal of American institutions at home. The real firing line is not in the suburbs of Manila. The foe is of our own household. The attempt of 1861 was to divide the country. That of 1899 is to destroy its fundamental principles and noblest ideals.

Whether the ruthless slaughter of the Filipinos shall end next month or next year is but an incident in a contest that must go on until the declaration of independence and the constitution of the United States are rescued from the hands of their betrayers. Those who dispute about standards of value while the foundation of the republic is undermined will be listened to as little as those who would wrangle about the small economies of the household while the house is on fire. The training of a great people for a century, the aspiration for liberty of a vast immigration are forces that will hurl aside those who in the delirium of conquest seek to destroy the character of our institutions.

We deny that the obligation of all citizens to support their government in times of grave national peril applies to the present situation. If an administration may with impunity ignore the issues upon which it was chosen, deliberately create a condition of war anywhere on the face of the globe, debauch the civil service for spoils to promote the adventure, organize a truth-suppressing censorship, and demand of all citizens a suspension of judgment and their unanimous support while it chooses to continue the fighting, representative government itself is imperiled.

We propose to contribute to the defeat of any person or party that stands for the forcible subjugation of any people. We shall oppose for re-election all who in the white house or in congress betray American liberty in pursuit of un-American ends. We still hope that both of our great political parties will support and defend the declaration of independence in the closing campaign of the century.

We hold with Abraham Lincoln, that "no man is good enough to govern another man without that other's consent. When the white man governs himself, that is self-government, but when he governs himself and also governs another man, that is more than self-government--that is despotism." "Our reliance is in the love of liberty which God has planted in us. Our defense is in the spirit which prizes liberty as the heritage of all men in all lands. Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves, and under a just God cannot long retain it."

We cordially invite the co-operation of all men and women who remain loyal to the declaration of independence and the constitution of the United States.

20.5 Black Americans View American Expansion

Willard Gatewood

Like whites, blacks had mixed feelings about the expansion of American influence in territories such as Cuba and the Philippines. The fact that these overseas territories were populated by dark-skinned peoples, however, tended to produce particular responses among American blacks. At first, as historian Willard Gatewood explains in the following excerpt, most blacks saw some possible benefits in expansionist activities. Within a few years, though, black opinion seemed to swing in the opposite direction.

Consider:

- 1. The changes in perception that led blacks to reverse their opinion on the issue of overseas expansion;*
- 2. Why emigration did not appeal to many American blacks in this period;*

3. *The relationship between the attitudes of blacks toward "inferior aliens" and conditions they themselves faced in the United States (see also Doc. 18.7).*

Although black Americans displayed no more consistency or unanimity of opinion regarding imperialism than other citizens, the context within which they viewed the issue was substantially different. Theirs was the perspective of a colored minority in a white-dominated society—a minority whose emergence from the "forge and fire of American slavery" had been followed by a generation of frustrated hopes and thwarted aspirations. The last decade of the nineteenth century in particular witnessed a dramatic increase in racial repression and legal discrimination. By the end of the decade, as an epidemic of negrophobia threatened to trap black citizens in a new form of slavery, a sense of mounting crisis pervaded the black community. Whether one of endorsement or opposition, Negro Americans' initial response to overseas expansion was prompted largely by their view of its effect upon the future of the race in the United States.

At one extreme were those blacks who from the outset maintained an anti-expansionist position principally on the grounds that a crusade abroad would divert attention from the racial crisis at home, thereby allowing what was left of the heritage of Reconstruction to be obliterated altogether. At the other were the champions of imperialism, a group made up primarily of black Republican officeholders, who argued that by participating in the acquisition of an empire Negroes would reap a rich and varied harvest, especially in terms of respect and recognition from the dominant element in American society. According to their rationale, contact with the colored peoples and colored cultures outside the United States would have a beneficent effect upon the racial attitudes of white citizens.

. . . Although the black citizen considered participation in the military struggle for empire a civic duty and hoped that a display of patriotism would dissipate anti-Negro prejudice, he was suspicious of the humanitarian rhetoric employed by white imperialists and persisted in the belief that charity ought to begin at home.

. . . Keenly aware of the tendency to equate criticism of the expansionist policy with disloyalty, he was hesitant, at least initially, to jeopardize his precarious position by embracing the anti-imperialist cause. As a Negro, he recognized the similarity between his predicament in the United States and that of the colored peoples in Cuba, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippines. Like them, he longed for liberty and freedom from white oppression. . . .

In the case of Cuba, Negro Americans encountered few ideological difficulties; military intervention there promised not only to relieve the

island of Spanish rule but also to assure its independence. That many of the islanders were of African descent made it easy for Negroes in the United States to identify with the cause of Cuba Libre. . . . Indeed, the role of Afro-Cubans in the struggle for freedom lent credence to [the] idea that Cuba would become another black republic in the Caribbean. . . .

By 1899, even before the Senate approved the treaty ending the war with Spain, black Americans had begun to alter their views regarding the outward thrust of the United States. . . . the war seemed to have multiplied the black citizens' grievances. In the South, where the presence of black soldiers aroused fear and resentment among whites, the reward for the Negro's demonstration of patriotism and valor was a tightening of racial lines. . . . And with the disbandment of the volunteer army after the Spanish-American War, one state after another eliminated the remaining Negro units from its militia. More ominous was the effect which the much-heralded sectional reunion accomplished by the war was likely to have upon race relations. Black spokesmen agreed that the dissipation of sectionalism actually meant northern acquiescence in the "southern solution" to the Negro Problem. . . .

Against this background of frustrated hopes, the black man's original reservations about overseas expansion reemerged in 1899 in the form of forthright opposition to the war in the Philippines. . . . the black community in general established an affinity of complexion with the Filipinos and tended to take a sympathetic view of [Emilio] Aguinaldo's resistance to American rule. . . .

The acquisition of insular possessions inhabited by darker races spawned a variety of emigration schemes, all of which promised Negro Americans an escape from their yoke of prejudice and oppression. Cuba and the Philippines, in particular, were described as places where racial distinctions were virtually nonexistent and where wealth could be acquired by any enterprising black man with a little capital and a willingness to work. Individual Negroes did emigrate to the islands, and a few prospered. But there was never the large-scale exodus advocated by emigrationists. . . . Convinced that color prejudice had accompanied the American flag to Cuba, the Philippines, and other islands, Negroes preferred to fight their battles in the familiar environment of their birth rather than to confront the same enemy among alien civilizations thousands of miles away.

By the time the United States declared the Filipino insurrection at an end, black Americans were thoroughly disenchanted with the expansionist policy and less inclined to identify with the peoples of the insular possessions. Rather than viewing the islanders as colored cousins, they came to look upon them as inferior aliens—a shift explained largely by the growing feeling that the nation was less concerned with

Honorable President McKinley:

For centuries my people have struggled to free themselves from Spanish rule. Now Spanish power in these islands has crumbled. For the first time in modern history the Filipino people dare to dream of freedom. With the help of Admiral Dewey and his forces, we have driven the Spanish from our land.

Let it always be said that the United States took up arms to aid a neighboring people struggling to be free -- that the American people delivered the Filipino people from the tyranny of Spain.

But, Mr. President, are we really to be free? Have we escaped from one master only to be chained by another? Has the ancient doctrine of imperialism returned to our land in a new form? Our friends in Europe tell us that you plan to annex the Philippine Islands. Your army occupies our capital, Manila. Your navy patrols our waters. Your forces have been increased by 20,000 men in the last week. Your Congress talks of a colonial policy for the Philippines.

Mr. President, you know we are at your mercy, we have little save the will to be free. Whether this war shall be known in history as a war for liberty or as a war of conquest; whether the principles of self government shall be strengthened or abandoned; whether we remain free or again become a conquered people depends on your decision. Mr. President, you know we will not willingly surrender our freedom. If you do not withdraw your army, there will be a war.

In closing, Mr. President, let me remind you of the words of Abraham Lincoln who freed a conquered people. "No man is good enough to govern another without that man's consent."

Emilio Aguinaldo
Commander of the Filipino Army