

Early Anti-Imperialism

By LEONARD P. LIGGIO

The anti-imperialist American youth of today are, without realizing it, following in a great tradition of modern anti-imperialism inaugurated during the burgeoning of US imperialism at the time of the Spanish-American War. This applies not only to the opposition as a whole, but even to such tactics as agitating among US troops against the war effort. This heritage applies also to what the statist ideologues of National Review have perceptively called the "anarchist impulse", which they discern at the root of American youth's support of Negroes or Vietnamese oppressed or assaulted by the US State-apparatus. For Conservatives, out of their irreconcilable conflict with libertarians, recognize that isolationism and anti-imperialism in foreign policy is but the other side of the coin of "anarchism" in domestic affairs.

The United States initiated its aggression against Spain on April 20, 1898. The immediate object: to restore stability in Cuba for the benefit of US owners of plantations, mines and other vestiges of feudalism, and to prevent the success of the Cuban revolutionary movement. But the major focus of US aggression had already become the Far East, where the U. S. Asian Squadron, conveniently located at Hong Kong to dominate the South China Sea, made haste to occupy Manila Bay on May 2--considerably before the annexation of Hawaii (July 7) or the occupation of Santiago, Cuba (July 17). In the Far East, the US quickly replaced Spain as the imperialist oppressor of the Philippines national liberation movement. American libertarians had no hesitation then in giving every aid and support to those fighting against the US aggressors, and in urging Americans to disassociate themselves actively from the criminality of the US government. In the absolute forefront of the

anti-imperialist confrontation with the US State-apparatus was the dean of American laissez-faire liberals, the businessman-advocate of free trade and hard money, Edward Atkinson, who founded the American anti-imperialist movement.

The Philippine situation led to the most sensational episode in the history of the movement, the seizure of the Atkinson pamphlets. . .

Long the ardent champion of a score of reforms, Atkinson began writing, publishing, and distributing violent anti-imperialist pamphlets in the fall of 1898. This, of course, was no more than was being done by a dozen other enthusiasts in the movement. In the spring of 1899, however, he wrote to the secretary of war, enclosing his three principal pamphlets, and declaring his intention of sending them to American soldiers in the Philippines. . .

The government acted at once. On May 2, 1899, Postmaster-General Charles Emory Smith ordered the San Francisco postmaster to remove all Atkinson pamphlets from the Manila mails. A number of the offending documents were intercepted the following day. This action aroused great interest throughout the United States. The anti-imperialists rushed to Atkinson's defense, the Springfield Republican finding in the seizure "the mailed hand of the rule of blood and iron being gradually disclosed. . . which," it added, "will next fall heavily upon freedom of speech within the old borders of the United States". The postmaster general defended his order in sharp words, and was supported by most of the imperialist press.¹

Edward Atkinson, along with William Graham Sumner, was the most widely known American exponent of pure liberalism. Atkinson (1827-1905) came to maturity in the most significant period of American intellectual history, the pre-Civil War Jacksonian era. Carl Schurz, radical German refugee from the 1848 Revolution, declared of America in the 1850s:

Every glance into the political life of America strength-

1. Fred Harvey Harrington, "The Anti-Imperialist Movement in the United States", Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXII (1935), in Frank Freidel and Norman Pollack, eds. Builders of American Institutions, (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1963), p. 365.

ens my convictions that the aim of a revolution can be nothing less than to make room for the will of the people - in other words, to break every authority which has its organization in the life of the state, and, as far as is possible, to overturn the barriers to individual liberty. . . Here in America you can see every day how slightly a people needs to be governed. In fact, the thing that is not named in Europe without a shudder, anarchy, exists here in full bloom.²

An abundance of authors, of whom Thoreau, Emerson, and Parker were foremost, provided the intellectual analysis for the instinctive and popular no-government philosophy of the Jacksonian era. Opposing all work within State-oriented institutions, they stood outside of them, and called for their total abolition on the basis of absolute moral principles. They not only called for it, they actively worked at it by giving support to the internal revolutionary activists of whom John Brown is justly the most famous. Thoreau, Emerson, and Parker became fully radical when they collected funds to purchase arms, "Beecher's bibles", to overthrow the slave system maintained by the US government.

The grounds for this new resistance to society as order and discipline might be narrower than Emerson would have liked, but rebellion against a pro-slavery government could be a first step in making radical individualism something more than just a literary fancy or a prerogative of isolated genius. Perhaps the time was approaching when every individual would realize that he had no further need of laws and governments. Following the lead of Thoreau, who had first made transcendentalism the basis for defying law in his doctrine of civil disobedience, Emerson passed from a theoretical anti-institutionalism to something approaching straight-out anarchism.³

Unfortunately, slave insurrectionism was side-tracked by the US power structure into governmental aggression and aggrandizement in the Civil War, which ended with the Negroes still defrauded of their rights and the property which they had created during generations of enslaved labor. However, the tradition of this radicalism remained a strong undercurrent in nineteenth century America.

2. George M. Fredrickson, The Inner Civil War (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 8.

3. Ibid., p. 39.

Edward Atkinson gained his theoretical self-education during this period. He was strongly and totally influenced by the writings of Frederic Bastiat, whose economic writings correcting the errors of Ricardo and Malthus had become important from 1850 on. Atkinson was an Abolitionist in the Garrison tradition, placing moral and political principles above traditional forms and mechanisms. His attitude toward the continued growth of government support of slavery was indicated in February, 1850: "I say damn compromise, if compromise - damn union."⁴ However, he did not limit himself to declamations. Atkinson immediately joined Theodore Parker's Boston Vigilance Committee, which liberated Negroes from federal authorities seeking to restore them to slavery. And, as befitted the most successful New England textile manufacturer, Atkinson was the treasurer of the committee that equipped John Brown's guerrillas in Kansas with weapons and ammunition. During the Civil War Atkinson was the secretary of the Educational Commission, which sought to bridge the failure of the government to leave to the Negroes the confiscated plantations by raising voluntary contributions to gain the properties for the Negroes. Throughout the post-Civil War period Atkinson was convinced that there was an intimate relation between the betrayal of Negro civil and property rights under Reconstruction, and the system of pillage of the general public by government privileges, subsidies, tariffs, and inflation. He fought to end the privileges of tariffs, government-protected banking, and currency. In 1867 he stated: "Capitalists, speculators, and middlemen are stealing the share of annual product which under natural law belongs to labor, by the use of false money (greenbacks)"; while in 1891 he noted: "For the purpose of passing a Force Bill the Republicans have admitted into the Senate the Senators from the so-called 'rotten borough states' (western states);. . . They have sold out the Republicans on the Force Bill for the purpose of gaining a benefit to the silver mines."⁵ However, when the exploitation of the general public by speculators and contractors through inflation, privileges and subsidies, and of the Negroes by denial of civil and property rights, was escalated to a higher stage of imperialism, Edward Atkinson was prepared to escalate his opposition to government, despite his advanced age of seventy years and his social position as the leader of industrial fire insurance.

4. Harold Francis Williamson, Edward Atkinson: The Biography of an American Liberal, 1827-1905 (Boston: Old Corner Book Store, Inc., 1934), p. 4.

5. Ibid., pp. 83, 157.

Senator William Borah, perhaps the premier American anti-imperialist, well summarized the contradictions between imperialism and liberty during his own crusade against the imperialist Versailles Treaty and League of Nations:

You can not yoke a government whose fundamental maxim is that of liberty to a government whose first law is that of force and hope to preserve the former. These things are in eternal war, and one must ultimately destroy the other. You may still keep for a time the outward form, you may still delude yourself, as others have done in the past, with appearances and symbols, but when you shall have committed this Republic to a scheme of world control based upon force. . . you will have soon destroyed the atmosphere of freedom, of confidence in the self-governing capacity of the masses, in which alone a democracy may thrive. . . And what shall it profit us as a Nation if we shall go forth to the dominion of the earth and share with others the glory of world control and lose that fine sense of confidence in the people, the soul of democracy?⁶

In that same speech Borah singled out the US government's protection of the feudal concessions controlled by US interests in Venezuela in 1895, as the origin of the Imperialism that has dominated American foreign policy ever since. The revival of the Monroe Doctrine in 1895 after decades of disuse signalled the beginning of the aggressions that US imperialism would undertake.⁷ Atkinson was galvanized into action by the monstrosity of reviving the Monroe Doctrine; for the implicit militarism, especially naval construction, would introduce through the backdoor the subsidies, privileges, government contracts to business and the currency in-

6. Freidel and Pollack, *op. cit.*, p. 423.

7. It has often been suggested that the outward thrust of US imperialism coincided with the closing of the internal American frontier. Few have noted, what nineteenth century anti-imperialists well knew, that there was not any noteworthy rise in US blood-thirstiness; for the blood-thirst formerly expended in the slaughter of the native Indian tribes now found insufficient release in the growing lynching of Negroes, and was turned toward the black and brown peoples of the Caribbean and the Far East. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that racism stands at the root of US imperialism, militarism, and the conscription system.

flation which libertarians had been combatting for years. Charles Eliot Norton, the Harvard professor, said of our policy in Venezuela: "I fear that America is beginning a long course of error and wrong and is likely to become more and more a power for disturbance and barbarism", while to E. L. Godkin he wrote of the rise of "a barbaric spirit of arrogance and unreasonable self-assertion."⁸ Godkin, editor of The Nation and the New York Evening Post, was an intransigent defender of laissez-faire liberalism, sound money, Negro rights, and anti-militarism, as were such of his associates as Carl Schurz, Oswald Garrison Villard and Edward Atkinson. It was to Godkin's Post that Atkinson wrote his first anti-imperialist blast (January 8, 1896), in which he offered the best practical means of distinguishing between true supporters of peace and proponents of war:

A question has arisen as to whether Jingoism is a chronic disease affecting any great number of persons or only a superficial eruption or eczema developed by the itching for notoriety of a few persons who occupy but do not fill high positions, irritating but not dangerous. A conclusion could be easily reached upon these two phases of the question by drawing up a petition to the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States somewhat in the following form:

"It is requested that an act may be passed to the effect that any citizen of the United States who proposes to force this country into a war with Great Britain or with any other country on a dispute about boundaries or any other similar issue, shall be immediately conscripted or entered upon the army roll for service from the beginning to the end of any such war when it shall occur. It is suggested that Senators of the United States shall be assigned to the position of general officers in this addition to the army upon the ground that their military capacity must certainly be equal to their political intelligence. . . It is next suggested that Representatives in Congress shall be assigned to the command of brigades upon the ground that their capacity to lead military bodies had been proved by their capacity to mislead civil organizations. It is suggested that all other persons such as the heads of police departments and the like shall be ranked in the

8. Barbara W. Tuchman, "The First Anti-Imperialists," The Nation, 100th Anniversary Issue, p. 79.

subordinate offices or as privates according to the relative energy which they may have exhibited in the development of the Jingo policy."

Of course, men who in high public position have held that patriotism should not be made subordinate to dollars and cents, and who have expressed such an earnest desire to assert and defend the honor of the country at any cost, would most enthusiastically vote for this enactment and would immediately enroll themselves for active service in the field.

If the Jingo spirit is deeply seated, the army thus recruited would be ample for the defense of the country; while on the other hand, if it is a merely superficial or skin disease of a slightly contagious kind, that fact would be proved by the lack of enrollment of gentlemen in the higher positions which would leave the Jingo army short of officers even if the number of privates should be sufficient to make two or three regiments out of our seventy million people. . . . The place for the most effective service would be upon the disputed territory in South America lying between Guiana and Venezuela. A (Henry Cabot) Lodge might be found in some vast wilderness of the Orinoco, from which source the center of direction could be given to the Jingo army. Effective work would be found for young men of previous experience in the police departments of northern cities (Theodore Roosevelt) in the Provost Marshal department of the Jingo army. A place could also be found in the Courts Martial of the Jingo army for the Judges who fear that without an occasional war the young men of the North will be enervated and will become too much imbued with that Christian spirit which we have become so accustomed to consider as one making for peace, order and human welfare. . . . This proposal for the immediate enrollment of the Jingo army will at once develop the sincerity of purpose of the advocates of aggression and violence by their enlistment. An indirect but great benefit would then ensue by the removal of these persons from the high positions in which they have proved their incapacity to deal with questions of peace, order and industry and to give them the opportunity to exert and prove their military prowess.⁹

Note has been taken of the swiftness with which US imperialism switched from the point of origin of the

9. Williamson, op. cit., pp. 215-16.

Spanish-American war in the Caribbean to the area of its real interest, the Far East. The presidential message calling for the war stated:

In the name of humanity, in the name of civilization, in behalf of endangered American interests which give us the right and duty to speak and to act, the war in Cuba must stop,

and maintained the theme that US interest was limited to preserving peace and ending the mutual slaughter between the government and the rebels through the salutary intervention of US troops. An indication of the direction of US intent was the recognition of Cuban independence and the repudiation of the republican government in whose name and under whose social program the Cuban guerrillas had been fighting.¹⁰ Although Cubans struggled and rebelled to regain a true independence without the humiliation of US interventions and US naval bases, it was only in 1959 that a beginning was made - and more than a beginning - to repay US imperialism for its crimes; but one portion of Cuban territory, Cuban independence, and Cuban honor remains unredeemed -- at Guantanamo Bay.

The establishment of US imperialism in the strategically crucial and raw materials-rich region of Southeast Asia surrounding the South China Sea reflected the increasing role of US imperialism in the exploitation of China. While the US supported Japan against Russia in the exploitation of north China, the US desired to act directly in competition with France and Britain in south China. From Hong Kong Britain dominated much of south China through privileges and concessions. Similarly, France's domination of Vietnam derived originally from the desire to have an area from which to threaten and exploit China, as in Britain's position at Hong Kong. When south Vietnam proved unsatisfactory for such a role against China, France asserted a "protectorate" over the Vietnamese government in the north. It then defeated a Chinese army which came to the aid of the Vietnamese, and from Vietnam the French extended their imperialism into south China bordering Vietnam and the Gulf of Tonkin. By conquering Manila the US hoped to use it to the same advantage as a base for exploitation of Southeast Asia and south China. (It has been suggested that the development of Philippine nationalism seeking the end of the US "protectorate",

10. Julius W. Pratt, A History of United States Foreign Policy (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1955), pp. 374-81.

and the establishment of real Philippine independence, threatens the use of US strategic bases aimed at China located near Manila at Clark Field and Subic Bay. The result is the large-scale US troop and construction commitment at the strategic bases aimed at China on the coast of south Vietnam.)

The US domination of Manila, culminating in the surrender of the major forts at Corregidor and Cavite (May 2, 1898) "marks a turning point in the history of American territorial expansion. It marks as well the beginning of a protest movement of proportions, a movement led by a strangely assorted group of citizens who fought expansion tooth and nail, and, in the face of overwhelming odds, urged renunciation of the spoils of war".¹¹ The real meaning of the event was foreseen by such outstanding liberals as the President of Stanford University, David Starr Jordan, who told a San Francisco rally that same day that for the US to embark upon a policy of imperialism "our democracy must necessarily depart from its best principles and traditions. . . The basal principles of the Republic, a cooperative association in which 'all just government is derived from the consent of the governed.'"

The US seizure of Manila short-circuited the social revolution which had been developing in the Philippines. After years of executing rebelling intellectuals and priests, Spanish rule was challenged by a popular national liberation movement led by Emilio Aguinaldo. Upon US seizure of Manila Bay, the rebels proclaimed, on June 12, 1898, the independence of the Philippines under a provisional government with Aguinaldo as president, a proclamation later ratified by a constituent assembly. Three days after the declaration of Philippine independence a meeting to protest US imperialism and US aggression was held at Faneuil Hall in Boston. A Saratoga Conference on foreign policy in August, 1898, however, became an instrument of the government when the anti-imperialists yielded on principles to gain a broad coalition.

In America the outbreak of a war to be carried to the enemy and posing no danger to the homeland, did not silence but galvanized the war's opponents. Suddenly they became an entity with a name: the Anti-Imperialists. Professor Norton, now over 70, brought upon himself torrents of abuse and threats of violence to his house and person by urging his

11. Freidel & Pollack, *op. cit.*, p. 359.

students not to enlist in a war in which "we jettison all that was most precious of our national cargo." Although an Irish politician of Boston proposed to send a lynching party for him and the press called him a "traitor". . . (a) a meeting of the Congregational Church in Cambridge he spoke of how bitter it was that now, at the end of a century which had seen the greatest advance in knowledge and the hope of peace, America should be turning against her ideals and "plunging into an unrighteous war".¹²

The Bostonians, Gamaliel Bradford and Moorfield Storey, past president of the American Bar Association, founded the Committee of Correspondence to pursue the revolutionary purposes of thwarting US imperialism. Finally, to harness the leadership and popular support of the anti-imperialists, a large membership organization was formed. The Anti-Imperialist League was founded in the office of Edward Atkinson, and important league branches were founded in New York, Chicago and San Francisco.

The quest for power, money and glory abroad, the League maintained, would distract from reform at home and bring in its train a strong central government destructive of traditional states' rights and local liberties. Americans had enough to do to solve the problems of municipal corruption, war between capital and labor, disordered currency, unjust taxation, the use of public office for spoils, the rights of the colored people in the South and of the Indians in the West, before taking alien peoples under their rule. . . The Anti-Imperialists did not sweep up with them the Populists and followers of William Jennings Bryan and those soon to be known as Progressives. While these groups opposed standing armies, big navies and foreign entanglements and were in theory anti-imperialist, anti-militarist and anti-European, they were simultaneously imbued with a fever to fight Spain as a cruel European tyrant stamping out liberty at America's doorstep.¹³

The core of the Anti-Imperialist League was the Liberal Republicans or Mugwumps who supported sound money and free trade against the conservative Republicans' policies of inflation and protection of business. Carl Schurz, Charles Francis Adams, Edward Atkinson, Gamaliel Bradford, Moorfield Storey, E. L. God-

12. Tuchman, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.

kin, and Oswald Garrison Villard stood for the gold standard and free trade, peace and laissez-faire, good, but very little, government if at all. Their pre-Civil War no-government traditions were indicated by the inclusion of the "remnant of the old abolition groups, represented by the son of Garrison, the son of Emerson, the son of James Birney". Also identified with them were reformers and pacifists such as Jane Addams, George C. Mercer, who defended Indian rights, and Ernest Crosby, Charles B. Spahr and Edward Osgood Brown, all supporters of the single tax. The few businessmen, headed by Andrew Carnegie and Atkinson, provided the financing, while even fewer labor leaders were involved. But, intellectuals played a crucial role, whether as popular writers of fiction like Mark Twain or of social thought like Atkinson or college presidents and professors like David Starr Jordan of Stanford, William Graham Sumner of Yale, or Charles Eliot Norton and William James of Harvard.¹⁴

Richard Clark Sterne, "The Nation and its Century", in The Nation's 100th Anniversary Issue, notes how the crisis of US imperialism imposed a unity upon what had up to then appeared to be competing political philosophies, such as laissez-faire and Henry George's single tax concept.

But in The Nation of January 2, 1896, George is highly praised for organizing an anti-war demonstration at Cooper Union. The New York Tribune, The Nation angrily remarked, had given "mendacious reports" of the meeting magnifying the number of hecklers, but the occasion had been a success. George had made a "powerful and effective speech in the interest of peace and common sense."¹⁵

The paradox of the economically laissez-faire Nation joining hands with economic "radicals", because both the magazine and the radicals were opposed to colonialism, was illustrated on other occasions around the turn of the century. For example, in

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14. The similarity between the present criminal aggression of the US government in Vietnam and that in the Philippines has led to the republication of the statements of leading opponents of the US government, such as Mark Twain's "To the person sitting in darkness", Viet-Report (January, 1966), pp. 25-29, and William James' support of the Philippine guerrillas against the US marines, The Progressive (January, 1966), p. 9.
 15. The Nation, op. cit., p. 252.

1896 The Nation noted that the Socialists in Germany had been directing their attacks more and more upon militarism, "which they characterize as the systematic fleecing of the workingman in the interest of a soldier class". The magazine observed:

They are about right. . . it is hardly too much to say that international socialism is at present about the most promising influence that is making for the disarmament of Europe.

It cannot be stressed too strongly that the journal which thus praises "international socialism" was anti-Marxist and laissez-faire. During the muck-racking years at the beginning of the twentieth century, the journal was to remain a most cautious critic, and always from a nineteenth century Liberal standpoint, of the "trusts". But. . . The Nation of that era was a friend of the anti-militaristic Socialists.¹⁶

The Spanish-American war ended effectively within six months of its beginning and was concluded within the year by the Treaty of Paris (December, 1898). Andrew Carnegie assumed the leadership of the lobby of the Anti-Imperialist League to defeat the treaty in the Senate. William Jennings Bryan, who had supported the imperialist war as did so many so-called progres-

16. Ibid., p. 260. However, the founders of the Nation considered, and used radical terms to describe, their laissez-faire principles as radical. "Olmsted tagged himself a "socialist democrat" and Godkin called himself a "radical", and they believed any government beyond the intimacy of the town meeting to be a tyranny." Robert Fridlington, "Frederick Law Olmsted: Launching The Nation", Nation (January 3, 1966), p. 12. A founder of the Nation, William Lloyd Garrison, his son, Wendell Phillips Garrison, and his grandson, Oswald Garrison Villard, both editors, were often considered anarchists. Villard sought confrontations with state power as much as Garrison did. "I suspect that one of his greatest disappointments was his discovery that the suspension of The Nation in September, 1918, was not in response to his article blasting the Justice Department for its violation of civil liberties, but for Albert Jay Nock's article characterizing Samuel Gompers as the administration's lackey, traveling in an "atmosphere of sheer bagmanism"." Michael Wreszin, "Oswald Garrison Villard, The Pacifist Rough Rider", Nation (June 21, 1965), p. 671.

sives, lobbied for the passage of treaty ratification so that "peace" could be made, the imperialist issues easily disposed of, and the political situation cleared for another presidential campaign centering on domestic issues. Despite Bryan, the anti-imperialists almost defeated the treaty. But, it was ratified in early February, 1899 by a single vote, with several Democratic and Populist senators voting for it on Bryan's recommendation. A resolution for Philippine independence was missed only by the tie-breaking vote of the Vice-President at the very moment that the Philippine national government of President Aguinaldo, realizing the totality of the American betrayal, attempted to resist the US occupation.

If The Nation was deeply depressed by our Cuban adventure, it was profoundly ashamed - along with Mark Twain and William James - of our treatment of the Filipinos. . . The United States cooperated with the Filipino patriot leader, Aguinaldo, in taking the islands from the Spaniards, and then American forces took the Philippines from the Filipinos. The official argument used to defend this procedure that the mass of the natives desired American rule - was refuted by The Nation:

Whenever a small force of Americans undertakes an expedition, the woods and hills become alive with enemies.

Not bands of Filipino "robbers", The Nation continued, were using terrorist tactics; rather,

The American troops have done the terrorizing. Their conduct in some actions has been so ferocious, and their revenge in so many cases so terrible, as to make them dreaded and hated. The natives submit to the Americans because they are afraid of them. . .

30,000 Filipinos, the magazine estimated, had been killed by our forces.¹⁷

The Philippine resistance to the US aggression led to a complete identification with the cause of national liberation and opposition to the US government and its army by the anti-imperialists. The guerilla war against US imperialism led to a rapid growth of the anti-imperialist movement. By May, 1899 the original organization had thirty thousand members.

17. The Nation, op. cit., p. 256.

With the outbreak of the Philippine insurrection, in February, 1899, events in the islands came to play a much greater part in the productions of the anti-imperialists. . . . Particularly useful to the anti-imperialists were the reports of outrage committed by American troops during the insurrection - instances of the burning of crops and villages, disregard of the rules of civilized warfare, of the "water cure", and orders to "take no prisoners". Ironically enough, these were the sort of stories that had aroused the American nation against the Spaniards in Cuba. The anti-imperialists were quick to note this, and claim that it furnished a concrete example of the inevitable consequences of denying a people the fundamental right of self-government.¹⁸

Edward Atkinson assumed the forefront of the anti-imperialist publicity campaign.

In addition to being a vice-president of the Anti-Imperialist League, and contributing material for use by that organization, Mr. Atkinson printed and distributed his own series of pamphlets. . . . By some he was branded a traitor to his country, others praised his efforts as being highly patriotic and made substantial monetary contributions for the continuation of his work. Some of his former associates in the tariff and silver fights turned against him, while on the other hand, some of his strongest opponents found common ground with him on this issue.

In April, 1899, Mr. Atkinson conceived the idea of sending some of his pamphlets to some of the officers and soldiers stationed in the Philippines. He outlined his purpose (to the Secretary of the Treasury) on April 22. "In this morning's paper a correspondent of the Boston Herald states that the Departments are going to "expose" the Anti-Imperialist League and others who have as alleged stirred up discontent among the troops in Manila. I do not think the Executive Committee of the Anti-Imperialist League has yet taken any active measures to inform the troops of the facts and conditions there. The suggestion is, however, a valuable one and I have sent to Washington today to get specific addresses of officers and soldiers to the number of five or six hundred so that I may send them my pamphlets, giving them assurance of sympathy. I shall place the same lists

18. Harrington, in Freidel and Pollack, op. cit., pp. 364-65.

in charge of the Executive Committee of the League to keep up the supply". Naturally, no such list of names was forthcoming.

Washington, May 2 (news dispatch). The Postmaster-General has directed the postmaster at San Francisco to take out of the mails for Manila three pamphlets issued by Edward Atkinson, of Boston, vice-president of the Anti-Imperialist League. This order does not apply to circulation of the pamphlets by mail in this country, but bars their dispatch from this country to the Philippines, discontent, and even mutiny, among the soldiers being stated by the department to be the design of these publications. The three pamphlets are specifically described, and in no circumstances are they to be forwarded by mail to the Philippines!⁹

The New England Anti-Imperialist League became skittish over Atkinson's exercise of freedom of speech between American citizens in disregard of the slavery of the US uniform. As a result he turned from the East Coast to the Mid-West as the focus of his pamphlet work and the Chicago Anti-Imperialist League became the major distributor of Atkinson's assaults upon the US government. Of the May 2 seizure and denial of free speech by the government post office, Atkinson drew on his forty years of acquaintance with Cabinet members and other high government officials in declaring:

I think the members of the Cabinet have graduated from an asylum for the imbecile and feeble-minded. They have evidently found out their blunder because the Administration papers suddenly ceased their attacks on me all on the same day, and I miss the free advertisement. I am now trying to stir them up again to provoke another attack.²⁰

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19. Williamson, *op. cit.*, pp. 227-29. Atkinson's pamphlets included: "The Cost of a National Crime" (1898), 34 pp.; "The Hell of War and its Penalties" (1898), 23 pp.; and "Criminal Aggression; by Whom Committed?" (1899), 13 pp.
 20. *Ibid.*, pp. 229, 293-95. The New England Anti-Imperialist League again became the center of Atkinson's publication in 1902, especially his pamphlets on the cost of warfare of which five were issued until his death in 1905 soon after his participation in the 1905 International Peace Congress in Boston. *Ibid.*, p. 236.

On June 3, 1899, Atkinson began the publication of The Anti-Imperialist (of which six numbers were issued through October 1, 1900) and by September he was declaring his latest pamphlet "my strongest bid yet for a limited residence in Fort Warren". The distribution of about 135,000 copies of Atkinson's anti-imperialism pamphlets did not in the end result in Atkinson's imprisonment. But the fact that he and others had absolutely no respect for the processes of a government which had embarked upon an imperialist course created the conditions for a strong anti-imperialist and isolationist attitude among the American people, an attitude sufficient to blossom forth in crises two-thirds of a century later.

The American Anti-Imperialist League was founded as a protest against militarism and heavy taxes at home and aggression abroad; it held imperialism to be evil because of its denial of liberty and self-determination equally at home and abroad. The American Anti-Imperialist League held that if there was such a thing as treason, then it consisted of the support of imperialist actions of the US government and not opposition to them; it held that it was the US government that had introduced a civil war in American life, not those who opposed the betrayal of the fundamental ideals of the American people.

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. . .

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. . . 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

Republic is undermined will be listened to as little as those who would wrangle about the small economies of the household while the household 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 cordially invite the cooperation of all men and women who remain loyal to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States.²¹

Louis Hartz has noted that an imperialist war, since it lacks any military danger to the imperialist country, permits freedom from hysteria and oppression that accompany a general war. An imperialist war may thus contain the conditions out of which a disinterested, uncompromising opposition can rally popular support. Imperialist wars, in contrast to general wars, are not fought against nations who share descendants with America, and therefore there is no clear-cut "fifth column" of Filipinos, Malays, Thais or Vietnamese, or Dominicans or Congolese for that matter, against whom a popularly supported witch-hunt can be directed. Thus, lacking the strong but compromised base of an ethno-centered and political opposition, anti-imperialist opposition can be generally American and moral. The shift in world politics changing US conflicts from inter-European to non-European creates totally new problems for the US government and important new opportunities for American anti-imperialists. Notwithstanding the imperialist messianism of racism, state-interest and chauvinism, imperialist wars fail to permit the ideological propaganda amidst the fears manufactured in a general war. Imperialist wars eliminate ideological debate between conflicting states, and open the most basic internal ideological debate, as Hans Morgenthau has perceptively noted.²² As Hartz describes it:

McKinley was involved in no ideological war unless it was a war within the United States. The Filipinos posed no threat to the American way of life, Agui-

21. Louis L. Snyder, ed., The Imperialism Reader (Princeton, N. J.: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1962), pp. 391-93.
22. Louis Hartz, The Liberal Tradition in America (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1955), p. 288. Hans J. Morgenthau, "Where Consensus Breaks Down", New Republic (January 22, 1966), pp. 16-18.

naldo had no agents in Washington or San Francisco, and the current of moral passion, such as it was, came entirely from the American side. . . . The Anti-Imperialist League, far from going underground, had branches openly in all parts of the country, enlisting the allegiance of many of the most prominent men in the country. . . . And when the Secretary of War tried to stop Edward Atkinson from sending anti-imperialist propaganda to the soldiers who were actually fighting in the Philippines, a howl of protest went up which forced a withdrawal of the action and discredited the McKinley Administration. Atkinson, an outraged editorial writer said, was being victimized by a "rule of blood and iron".²³

Thus, as the case of Atkinson and the Anti-Imperialist League demonstrates, imperialist war provides a particularly fertile ground for a radical and widespread movement of opposition at home. A prolonged imperialist war, especially one leading to a defeat or stalemate for the imperialist power, is the most dangerous threat to its stability and its very continued existence.

A significant discussion of the role of the early Anti-Imperialists was held at the annual meeting April, 1962, of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association, and published in Studies on the Left (Vol. III, No. 1, 1962). Under the title "The Anti-Imperialists and Twentieth Century American Foreign Policy," the major paper was presented by John W. Rollins, and comments made by Harold Baron and Thomas J. McCormick.

Rollins properly noted that "the Great Debate over American imperialism that began in the 1890's has never ended." His major thesis holds that American liberal corporatists have attempted to reconcile the imperialism of US foreign policy--the negation of true liberalism--with the claims and rhetoric of liberalism. Hence, they have sought to portray imperialism not as the basic element of US history in the twentieth century but as a mere passing interlude. Thus, while they were dismissed as futile and irrelevant, the Anti-Imperialists emerged, in a sense, as the ideological victors. For imperialist liberal corporatism has been forced to speak as though anti-imperialist principles have formed the basis for American policies. Rollins, however, unfortunately leaps from the use of the Anti-Imperialist viewpoint as a mask for imperialism, to the conclusion that twentieth century imperialism really is the Anti-Imperialism of 1898-1900.

²³. Hartz, op. cit., pp. 288, 292.

Baron perceptively pointed out that Rollins' error was caused by a confusion between the expansion of international trade without any support from government, with an expansion of territory or trade resting on government aid. As Baron declares: "all definitions of imperialism include as a central point the use of the power of the state. . . To him (Hobson) imperialism was the antithesis of free trade because it brought forth a neomercantilist policy on the part of the state in order to gain preferred positions in world markets. . . the doctrine of comparative advantage in international trade theory can hardly be classed as expansionism. The free trade concept of developing international trade had nothing in common with the neo-mercantilist governmental policy that prevailed in the United States."²⁴ Baron also recalled Lenin's comment in his Imperialism that the Anti-Imperialists in America were the "last of the Mohicans of bourgeois democracy," the last to resist the process by which monopoly and imperialism replaced the system of capitalist free competition.

McCormick also stressed the great differences between the current coercive system and the views of the laissez-faire Anti-Imperialists: "it would be fruitless to analyze the domestic scene in the twentieth century by equating 'corporatism' with laissez-faire. . . The primary role played by the State in contemporary expansionism, plus the accepted use of force--moral, economic, and military---to promote that expansion, make twentieth century American diplomacy a far different animal than the 'dead horse' of laissez-faire anti-imperialism."²⁵

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24. Hans Baron, in Studies on the Left (Vol. III. No. 1, 1962), pp. 25-26.
25. Thomas J. McCormick, in ibid., p. 33.