

JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN

Views on British Expansion in the Colonial Secretary's Speeches Strikingly Pertinent to the Present Time

MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S SPEECHES. Edited by Charles W. Boyd. With an Introduction by the Right Hon. Austen Chamberlain, M. P. Two volumes. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.

IF these speeches of the late Joseph Chamberlain—the apostle of Imperial Federation and the man who, as Secretary of State for the Colonies, made that post one of the most important in the British Cabinet—had been published a year ago, it is most improbable that anyone would have noted in some of them a similarity in mode of thought between the distinguished Englishman and Treitschke, Bernhardt, and other exponents of German doctrines which have become subjects of world-wide discussion in five months.

As these doctrines are today, however, in men's minds, it is interesting to note that Mr. Chamberlain, in at least two important speeches on colonial expansion—the parliamentary term for seizure through force of territory belonging to some one else—showed a kinship in mental processes on foreign politics with certain of the Germans.

Mankind has read many times since Aug. 1 the doctrine that it is quite proper—obligatory, indeed, if manifest destiny is not to be irreligiously flouted—for cultivated Germany to impose her civilization upon less cultivated, less virile nations, through the use of howitzer and bayonet; that bloodshed for such a purpose is nobly shed; that the human race as a whole will benefit vastly from a victorious Germany; that the world is for the strong, and that it is the plain duty of a strong nation which finds its boundaries too small to extend those boundaries at the cost of weaker nations, because the benefit of the strong is, so the scheme of creation emphatically shows, the one moral good to be aimed at.

These doctrines the Germans seek to apply to other white men. Mr. Chamberlain, on behalf of the British, applied doctrines strikingly similar to dark men. He, too, held that it was a duty of high morality to have Tommy Atkins carry culture by machine gun to less civilized and weaker peoples; that blood shed in so doing was blood shed for a lofty purpose; that the extension of the British domain was a good thing for the world at large. The rights of the weak seemed to be as non-existent in Mr. Chamberlain's mind as in that of Gen. von Bernhardt.

Two of Mr. Chamberlain's speeches are particularly interesting in this connection. One of them, to which the editor has given the title "Pegging Out Claims for Posterity," was delivered in the House of Commons on March 20, 1893. The other, "The True Conception of Empire," was an address at the annual Royal Colonial Institute dinner, on March 31, 1897.

The term "Pegging Out Claims for Posterity," seems, to judge from a remark of Mr. Chamberlain, to have been first used by Lord Rosebery. The speech was made in defense of criticisms directed against the Government for its proposal to send an expedition to Uganda, into which the British had entered in 1890. Mr. Chamberlain began by replying to a Radical member, who was objecting to the expense of the expedition, and who thought money should not be spent on overseas expeditions while there were hungry beings in the slums of London. In part, Mr. Chamberlain said:

Does my honorable friend believe, if it were not for the gigantic foreign trade that has been created by this policy of expansion, that we could subsist in this country in any kind of a way? * * * Does he think that we could support in these small islands 40,000,000 of people, without the trade by which a great part of our population earns its living—a trade which has been brought to us by the action of our ancestors, who in centuries past did not shrink from making sacrifices of blood and treasure, and who were not ashamed * * * to peg out

claims for posterity? * * * We * * * are asked to give up all share in what has been called the partition of Africa. * * * I believe the people of this country have * * * determined that they will take their full share in disposing of these new lands, and in the work of civilization they have to carry out there * * * that spirit of adventure and enterprise which has rendered us, of all nations, peculiarly fitted to carry out the work of colonization. * * *

If we are not going to give up this mission * * * let us * * * be prepared for some sacrifice of life and money. * * * I hold that, both in matters of life and money, we may sacrifice both, if we see before us a prospect of good, and a satisfaction for the sacrifice we may have to make. This country has by large majorities declared its conviction that it is our duty to take our share in the work of civilization in Africa. * * * I believe in the expansion of the empire. * * * We are not at all troubled by accusations of jingoism.

* * * they [a British company] went forward in Uganda; they broke up such Government as there was in Uganda. * * * We have secured for Uganda the pax Britannica which has been so beneficial in India. * * * I maintain that the prospects of Uganda are quite equal to those of the Northwest of Canada fifty years ago. This is what Lord Rosebery means by pegging out claims for posterity. * * * We shall get from this country gum and rubber, and perhaps even wheat, and in return we shall send out large quantities of our manufactures. * * * the annexation * * * will do credit to the British name and will in the long run be both in accordance with our interest and our honor.

In the second speech, Mr. Chamberlain spoke of the general policy of England in extending her territory. He dwelt on the "mission" of England to take land from weaker peoples and give them her civilization, even though by conquest, in much the same way as the Treitschke school dwells on the "destiny" of Germany to extend her territory at the expense of nations less formidable on the Lattlefield. Mr. Chamberlain said in part:

In carrying out this work of civilization we are fulfilling what I believe to be our national mission, and we are finding scope for the exercise of those faculties and qualities which have made of us a great governing force. * * * No doubt, in the first instance, when these conquests have been made, there has been bloodshed, there has been loss of life among the native populations, loss of still more precious lives among those who have been sent out to bring these countries into some kind of disciplined order, but it must be remembered that is the condition of the mission we have to fulfill.

There are, of course, among us * * * a very small minority of men * * * who denounce as murderers those of their countrymen who have gone forth at the command of the Queen, and who have redeemed districts as large as Europe from the barbarism and the superstition in which they had been steeped for centuries. I remember a picture by Mr. Selous of a philanthropist * * * denouncing the methods by which British civilization was promoted. This philanthropist complained of the use of Maxim guns and other instruments of warfare.

* * * You cannot have omelettes without breaking eggs; you cannot destroy the practices of barbarism, of slavery, of superstition, which for centuries have desolated the interior of Africa, without the use of force; but if you will fairly contrast the gain to humanity with the price which we are bound to pay for it, I think you may well rejoice in the result of such expeditions as those which have been recently conducted with such signal success in Nyassaland, Ashanti, Benin, and Nupe—expeditions which may have, and indeed have, cost valuable lives, but as to which we may rest assured that for one life lost a hundred will be gained, and the cause of civilization and the prosperity of the people will in the long run be eminently advanced. * * * I am convinced that we shall have the strength to fulfill the mission which our history and our national character have imposed upon us.

* * * It seems to me that the tendency of the time is to throw all power into the hands of the greater empires, and the minor kingdoms—those which are non-progressive—seem to be destined to fall into a secondary and subordinate place.

The collection of speeches begins with one delivered in Birmingham on March 7, 1870, when Mr. Chamberlain was a member of the Town Council, and ends with his speech of July 9, 1906, also at Birmingham, on the occasion of his retirement from public life. A wide variety of topics is covered in the two volumes by that brilliant, versatile, forceful mind. The speeches are divided into six main groups: municipal and early speeches; radicalism and reform; speeches on Ireland; the Unionist Alliance speeches, mainly foreign and colonial; speeches delivered in South Africa; imperial union and tariff reform. To his father, as to Chatham, says Austen Chamberlain in the introduction, "speech was a form of action."