The Phoenix Commission’s Task

A dutifully definite and important work is to be intrusted to the American members of the peace commission. This is the task of the nation that has been at war with one another, but even now, the settlement of the war, at the conference of the countries, it was a much better plan to afford the United States to be our own people. One commissioner only, Nichols, D. T. Truax, represented the United States in the arrangement of the treaty of Ghadahide Habbad of 1898, and three representatives, Mexico. Moreover, Truax was not a regularly recognized commissioner of the United States at the time, having been resigned from the State Department before the treaty was framed, but his work was accepted by the commission. Mexico was present at the feet of the United States at the time, with an American army holding its chief cities, and was forced to accept any terms which might be imposed by the victor. The terms were made easier by the fact that the victor paid a large sum of money, $15,000,000, besides assuming $23,920,000 of debts due from Mexico to American citizens, for the territory which it had already won by conquest.

In the present instance American difficulties will be far greater than they were then. Five commissioners will represent the United States in this peace commission; they will be composed of five American citizens, the representatives of whom Spain can select, and the Spanish will be wounded by the diplomacy of the other continental European powers. The commission is to meet in Paris, a crisis which, notwithstanding its cosmopolitan, Spanish influence, is disfigured from American domination. It is known that the duties of America at this convention, which will be the principal subject of discussion among the commissioners, will be exceedingly disagreeable to the great nation of Europe outside England. The American members’ whole environment will be more or less hostile, and is that of the utmost importance that the United States representatives be able of self-defense and encouragement.

The Philippine situation, however, is shaping itself favorably for the Americans. The necessity of populating in virtual control of the whole island of Luzon, which comprises the entire Philippine group. Spanish authority in the archipelago is practically dead, for the Spanish in the few other islands which have had frequent desire under foreign rule, and the Filipinos in Manila have told the Americans, that the insurgent forces will disclose if they are assessed of American or British control of the islands, but that they will resist and not surrender except Spanish rule.

This simplifies the situation. The Philippines can be given back to Spain. Spain does not want them, but she urges the United States to take them. The United States has won them, the Philippines tell her to hang on to them, she will hold them. These are the conditions which confront the American commission, and which must be received in their work with Paris. The Philippines—such as the entire Philippine archipelago—are wholly American territory.

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