



Dictatorship Fails

DICTATORSHIP, rather than democracy, has characterized civilized man's attitude toward nature during many ages in the past. Instead of trying to find out what direction natural forces and processes were taking, and democratically cooperating as intelligent organisms should, we have all too often taken the attitude of the conqueror. We have decided just what we wanted to do, and imposed our imperious will. And nature has done what the conquered often do—by quiet but determined and remorseless sabotage destroyed the works we have wrought in our pride.

Thus, when Europeans came to eastern North America they found forests in possession of the land. They wanted fields of grain and tobacco and cotton, and pastures for their herds and flocks. So they cut and burned the forests wholesale, just to get rid of them. They plowed and planted and possessed the land according to their will.

Retribution was not long in coming. On the stony hills of the North and the clay hills of the South alike, erosion set in, and even in Colonial times such intelligent farmers as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were trying to find means to renew the fading fertility of their acres and to stop the fast-advancing gullies.

After the Revolution, people poured over the mountains into the new lands of the West, there to repeat the same mistakes their fathers had made on the seaboard. East of the Mississippi they swept away the forests, west of it they plowed up the prairies and plains; everywhere they drained swamps and shallow lakes to get at the rich muck land on their bottoms.

Much of the land thus gained was good. The prairie area in particular, from central Illinois to central Nebraska,

has become the great granary of the nation. But by no means all of these swift conquests brought the wealth that men sought in making them. Thinner forest soils disappeared, after yielding only a moderate living to the first generation of farmers and starving out their descendants. Drained lands were often underlain by masses of peat, which took fire and literally burned the fields away. During the last decade, large parts of the latest land conquests, the areas of

the Great Plains broken and planted to wheat during the boom times of the first World War, rose up in dust storms and are gone with the wind.

The moral, ecologists point out, is that man should study the ways of nature, and profit by marching with them instead of against them. But only in the last few years have their fellow citizens shown any signs at all of heeding this sound counsel.

Science News Letter, October 26, 1940

RESOURCES

U. S. Need Not Depend On Southeast Asia's Goods

THE UNITED STATES can shake off its dependence on Southeast Asia's vitally important raw materials, and can develop New World sources and substitutes, sturdily declares Dr. Stephen B. Jones, University of Hawaii geographer.

"The cost of a day's fighting spent on research and subsidies would probably solve most of our raw-material-deficiency problems," Dr. Jones states. (*Geographical Review*, October and April)

"Unnecessarily alarming" is Dr. Jones' verdict on the views of Prof. Robert B. Hall of the University of Michigan, who regards the Far East as the one part of the world on which the United States is hazardingly dependent.

Prof. Hall in the same journal recently sounded the warning: "Only on the lands west of the Pacific, and especially on Southeastern Asia, is our dependence so vital and complete that our very existence as a great industrial power, and perhaps even as an independent state, is threat-

ened if the sources should be cut off."

From Southeastern Asia, the United States gets most, if not all, of five "first priority" materials — that is materials which we import almost entirely and for which no adequate substitutes have been found. Specifically, Southeastern Asia supplies 100% of the United States' manila fiber, 99% of its quinine, 98% of its rubber, 98% of its silk, and 93% of its tin. We are also dependent on the area for some other strategic materials, though to a less serious extent.

That three of the five outstandingly important imports are of vegetable origin, is pointed out by Dr. Jones, who says that two—quinine and rubber—come from plants native to tropical America, and the third could probably be acclimatized.

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