Americans and Europeans Ideas of the Yellow Race during the Russo-Japanese War

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Abstract

At the turn of the 20th century, after the United States had gained influence over the Philippines and Hawaii, the United States felt it now had "duties" to look at and understand the current international conflicts in Asia. The United States at this time was still new in its thinking a new-minded nation, and with the invention of the wireless telegram and improvements to the printing press, the American press possessed the resources to satisfy the demand for foreign as well as domestic news. Newspapers and magazines reflected the rhythm and tempo of the national life, showing immediate reactions to events and illuminating opinion and propaganda with their myths and fantasies, catchwords and slogans; the papers influenced public opinion, and public opinion shaped the newspaper's content. Since they illustrated, not the past, but a sequence of present events in a series of dissolving views, they create a chronological view of current opinions.

During the years 1888 to 1905, the diplomatic relations between the Western powers and the Far East showed signs of increasing equality and interdependence between the East and West, which unsettled many Westerners. Since Westerners had limited access to knowledge about Asia, they created an image that Asia, with its vast population, would join together in making a powerful military unit, and this force would be a substantial threat to "Christian civilization." These unrealistic fears caused the West to witness an outpouring of books, articles, and editorial commentary concerning the impending danger to Western-White-Christian civilization from the growing power of the Oriental peoples. The slogan `Yellow Peril` not only expressed the Western fears of Asia initiating physical war against the US or Europe, but also fears that Asian immigrants to the United States were stealing American jobs.

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