

## Lebensraum in South America

"BUZZARDS WITHOUT FEET" is the characterization which a friend gives to minds which aspire to eclecticism and fear to trace effect to any basic cause.

These birds, he explains, must forever go hungry. They fly from carrion to carrion, unable to enjoy the food which they see because their lack of feet prevents their alighting.

So with those who have fallen into the habit of worshipping the printed word because it is printed, and have lost the power of straight-thinking because of their adulation of "authorities." They must forever wander about in an intellectual vacuum because they fear principle. They read many books, examine many theories, taste a little of this doctrine, nibble a little at that, but, without any starting point to their thinking or any measuring stick by which to evaluate what they read, all their erudition leaves them hopelessly hungry. They cannot alight.



They have made a fetish of being eclectic. They refuse to think straight for fear that such thinking may necessitate rejecting theories which carry the weight of names. Also, any straight-line thinking may lead to some simple truth, some truth so logical and so in accord with observable fact that even the un-read may grasp it. Therefore, it must be wrong.

Over-simplification, then, becomes an intellectual crime. Particularly when it leads to conclusions which run contrary to loyalties; for, strange as it may seem, these theory-infested mentalities are just as subject to emotional bias as are the less bookish. The unlettered man hates or loves, and lets it go at that. But the man who delights in many, many theories finds it necessary to formulate a rationalization for his emotion. And when confronted with facts that deny the rationalization of his bias he dismisses the obvious with one compound word: over-simplification.

For instance, right now he may be committed to war. During the past twenty years articles and books, from documented fiction to carefully compiled research work, established the fact that the first World War was economic in origin and eco-

nomie in purpose. Indeed, before September, 1939, this was an accepted doctrine of even the eclectics; and many of them extended the theory of economic causality to all wars.

But now this theory of economic causality and purpose is an over-simplification. Why? There are many answers, many theories as usual. But one cannot avoid the suspicion that all these rationalizations are mere coverage for just plain emotionalism: fear, hate, loyalties—good, old-fashioned feelings which ought to be enjoyed without excuse. But because these eclectics are proud of their intellectuality they feel they would lose caste by admitting that sheer emotionalism gives their war-mindedness its direction. So, they rationalize in many ways—save from the over-simplification which a few short months ago was accepted doctrine, and which would deny validity to their theory-covered emotionalism.

But sometimes out of nowhere comes a fact which shatters the intricately concocted theory and drives home the simple truth. Last month two South American countries had a flare-up over some land. Ecuador and Peru for over a century have been quarrelling over "lebensraum," just like France and Germany over Alsace-Lorraine. There is no political theory involved, no "clash of ideologies"; just an old-fashioned grab for land. The rest of the Western Hemisphere, concerned with the land-grabbing proclivities of a mad paper-hanger, have temporarily hushed up the squabble over land in their own backyard. People might bring up the old over-simplification.

They might see that as with the Ecuadorian-Peruvian landowners, the fracas in Europe is over a rent-collecting privilege (in Europe and in the colonies) which one group is trying to hold and which another group covets. Abolish the privilege and there would be no war; so long as the privilege continues there will be something to war about. It's as simple as all that, the emotional eclectic theorists notwithstanding.

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