THE MONROE DOCTRINE AS A REGIONAL UNDERSTANDING[1]

The purpose of the present paper is not to venture upon one more discussion of that much discussed question as to the relationship between the Monroe Doctrine and the League of Nations. It is proposed rather to examine briefly certain new developments, largely economic, which have taken place in Hispanic America since 1914 and especially since 1918, which have a direct bearing upon the diplomatic and political relations between that region and the United States. If we assume that the interests of all of the American nations still demand the maintenance of the Monrovian principle—the exclusion of political aggrandizement by non-American nations—a question arises, namely: Has not the world-wide political and economic upheaval of the past few years exerted some influence upon the general situation in Hispanic America, affecting thereby the effective enforcement of the Doctrine? Among the amazing transformations wrought by the war upon the southern republics, have there been any which bear upon what might be called the inter-regional problems, the political and economic relations of the American nations, both north and south? Can a unilateral, defensive declaration, such as the Monroe Doctrine—not even a policy, but rather a changing point of view or position varying from passive disinterestedness or even negligence and non-enforcement on some occasions to outspoken threats of war on others—can such a concept be made the basis of an international engagement or a regional understanding?

One of the most significant effects of the war upon the southern republics was the change which it wrought in their relations

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with one another. I do not refer to the formation of such political or diplomatic associations as the so-called A. B. C. arbitration league of May, 1915, which has not yet been fully ratified. More significant and fundamental, though far less spectacular than this, are the prosaic commercial, economic, and social bonds which have grown up among them during the enforced cessation of many of their contacts with the outside world from 1914 to 1919. For the first time in their history they were compelled to become acquainted with one another and the effects of this are strikingly apparent to any observer who has been in a position to compare pre-war impressions with those of today. The colonial history of this area was marked by the most carefully devised administrative dependence directly upon the Castillian crown. The nineteenth century was a period of turbulent political and economic internal readjustment with considerable assistance on the economic side from Europe but with practically no inter-Hispanic American contacts save at the points of bayonets.

Then came 1914, and just as the preoccupations of Europe in its previous great cataclysm, the Napoleonic War, enabled Hispanic America to achieve her political independence, so has the recent upheaval in the old world given the southern republics their first real appreciation of their own capacity for self-development and inter-regional cooperation along economic and social lines.

It would be absurd of course to suggest that the years 1914–1918 had delivered Hispanic America from any further economic dependence upon Europe; but in view of certain significant facts to be reviewed in a moment, it would be equally ridiculous to assume that Hispanic America will continue to look to Europe, or even to the United States, for the fulfillment of all of her needs for manufactured commodities, and even for capital and fuel. The amount of evidence on this point is ample and instead of falling off after 1918, it has steadily increased. Let us take, for example, a few isolated instances in the financial field. Argentine citizens recently loaned one and a half billion lire to the Italian government; the Argentine government has advanced

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£40,000,000 to the allies and is now said to be contemplating negotiations of a similar nature with Austria and Germany. Chilean financiers have, within the past two years, assumed a prominent position in the Bolivian tin industry and have lately been active in planning the exploitation of petroleum and other mineral products in Argentina. Since 1918 detailed plans or arrangements have been made for the construction in Hispanic America of at least five international railways and six or more international cable and telegraph lines. It is unnecessary to comment upon these very material and effective expressions of the new desire for more inter-regional bonds, nor need we be reminded of the profound effect, both economic and political, that such ties will have. The noteworthy point is the fact that the majority of these enterprises are being undertaken with local capital.

Commercial changes of the same sort are noticeable on every hand, due especially to the extraordinary diversification of industries and production in the past six years. Since 1914 the trade between Argentina and Brazil has grown 500 per cent and all the latest statistics point to even further expansion. Mexican commerce with the more important South American countries, including such items as food stuffs, oil, fibers and even newsprint paper, has been more than quadrupled during the war, and the most rapid growth has come in the past two years. During 1919 and 1920 at least five inter-Hispanic American congresses were held, not with the object of exchanging those beautiful expressions of fraternal affection which too frequently befog the atmosphere of such assemblages. Quite the contrary; their subject matter in each case was prosaic and unpicturesque, but at the same time definite and constructive: dairying and pastoral agriculture, police regulations, immigration, architecture, and physical education.

These are but a few random items, but they could be duplicated many times over, even in the case of the smaller republics of the tropics. They point unmistakably to the beginnings of a new adjustment of the Hispanic American international situation. The bearing of such significant economic develop-

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ments upon political and diplomatic affairs is too obvious to require explanation. Hispanic America may still be dependent upon Europe for immigrants, capital, ingenuity and manufactures, but that dependence—especially with reference to the last three items—is decreasing relatively. The opportunities and necessities for European incursions and exploitations in Hispanic America are on the wane and the native means available within the southern republics for their individual or cooperative defense against any such intrusions which might be unwelcome are slowly but surely growing.

The effect of this rapprochement upon the Monroe Doctrine must therefore be inevitable. In fact, the prophecy made in June, 1918, by Professor G. G. Wilson seems to be nearing fulfillment: The Doctrine is evidently passing to a wider field of influence. Whereas the economic readjustment in the south is altering profoundly the relations between Hispanic America and Europe, the change has been far less dangerous to our economic interests primarily because those interests had only come to the fore during the years just before the war and their relative youth made them far more plastic, more adjustable to the new situation than were their older and now seriously embarrassed European competitors. The results of this situation are well known; for the purposes of the present discussion, the great increase in trade values is less significant than the appearance of real, permanent bonds between the two regions—material ties which make for better understanding and a lasting community of interests. It is well, in this connection, to recall that before 1914 there was not one American branch bank in Hispanic America while today there are over a hundred; that there are nearly a dozen American Chambers of Commerce in the southern republics, the oldest of them having been founded about two years ago; that important new American cable connections and the valuable services of the two great American news-gathering associations have been greatly extended in that field; and that American ships are now sufficiently numerous in southern waters to carry nearly fifty per cent of our trade there, which is five times the proportion carried in 1914.

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The Inter-American High Commission has since 1915 been unostentatiously but surely working out a definite and effective series of bonds in the shape of uniform commercial law and practice—a constructive program of the highest value.

This marked increase in inter-American contacts suggests at once the possibility, and even the probability of a restatement of the Monroe Doctrine along more friendly lines. President Wilson's efforts along this line are well known; we may recall especially the proposal to the visiting Mexican journalists on June 7, 1918, that "all American republics, including the United States, should give guarantees for the political independence and territorial integrity of all"—a phrase which, according to the President's subsequent explanation, was the origin of the idea later expressed in Article X of the League of Nations covenant. In view, however, of the disputed boundaries in many parts of Hispanic America, it is difficult to see how such a firm, unconditional territorial guarantee can be established. But the desirability of such an inter-American guarantee as applied to the sovereign independence of the various republican governments cannot be questioned; our recent experiences in Central America and the West Indies show plainly the necessity of reiterated, formal assurances on our part that we feel bound by such a guarantee.

President Brum of Uruguay outlined in April, 1920, a plan of an American League which "would consider jointly all American problems, would place all American republics on an equal footing and would defend each one of them against menaces from Europe or from any American government". This proposal for "American solidarity" has been greeted with skeptical criticism in various Hispanic American capitals as a Utopian dream which has already been dispelled by the aggressions of the United States in the Caribbean area. The suggestion of the distinguished Uruguayan probably is ahead of the times, but so far as it concerns our submission of the Monroe Doctrine to other American governments for judgment, we may recall that for several years we have already been bound by treaties with no less than fifteen of the twenty Hispanic American republics to

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"submit all disputes of every nature whatsoever", including presumably those involving the Monroe Doctrine, to joint commissions for investigation (though not for a final and a binding arbitration) during a period of one year. Former President Taft's memorandum to President Wilson dated March 21, 1919, regarding Article X of the Covenant of the League, indicated a readiness to accept the above principle and to carry it even further in the form of a definite acquiescence in the protection of the sovereignty of any American state or states by any other such state or states, a position which he believes to be "the Monroe Doctrine pure and simple".

One further evidence of the new trend of events may be noted. "The war has reduced to dust the ancient legend of the calibanism of North America", as Semprum, the distinguished Venezuelan man of letters has expressed it; we are no longer "rude and obtuse monsters whose newspapers and feet are large" as we were described by the great poet, Darío; no longer a towering menace, "swift, overwhelming, fierce and clownish" (even though our own widely circulated motion picture films seem to confirm some at least of those impressions). More than one Hispanic American publicist has observed in the words of one of them, that "the part the United States has played in this war is the noblest that has ever fallen to any people". Saenz Peña, the late president of Argentina, may have been partially right when he wrote in 1914 that "we South Americans have only unwelcome memories of our friends in the North"; he was certainly correct in stating that at that time there were more points of material contact between South America and Europe than there were between the two Americas. But as has been noted above, much, very much has happened to alter that situation during the past six years. For one thing, we have become a great creditor nation and some of the larger Hispanic American republics have also appeared as lenders of capital. In consequence of that fact a prediction made some eleven years ago by Professor A. C. Coolidge of Harvard has been fulfilled: irresponsible borrowers in the new world are finding themselves answerable to creditors nearer home and the

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Drago Doctrine defense of debtors is being examined by the American nations from a new angle, with a new understanding of the interests and point of view of the creditor.

It is certainly encouraging to have a well-known Hispanic American from one of the smaller republics declare that "absolute stability of credit is the only positive basis of national and individual prestige". Then he goes on to note that the Monroe Doctrine has become a precept of the American family whose closer economic and commercial ties help the autonomy and defensive powers of each one. And it is interesting to note that one of the recent stimuli to this new regional rapprochement is the threatening danger of incursions of radical agitators from eastern Europe which is even now presenting a very grave problem to the southern republics as well as to ourselves. The Monroe Doctrine of 1823 was aimed in part at Russian political aggressions in the new world. One of the factors which will stimulate a united American stand upon a new and broader principle as we approach the centennial of the Doctrine, may very well be the defense of America against the menace of Russian bolshevism and its attendant evils.

Nevertheless, we hear from certain sensitive and suspicious critics the condemnation that "the United States is giving the Monroe Doctrine an economic imprint . . . the Doctrine has come to express the ambitions of the United States to keep business Europe rather than political Europe out of Latin America"; that every effort on our part toward economic cooperation with the southern republics means just one more attempt to clinch our economic hegenomy over that area. And yet, when in May, 1920, American bankers refused to renew a loan of $50,000,000 to the Argentine Republic, we were denounced as insincere and unfaithful to the principles of Pan Americanism, and our prestige in Hispanic America suffered the worst blow which it has had in many years.

Our intentions should not and do not by any means contemplate any exclusive or monopolistic arrangement for economic cooperation with Hispanic America. If, for example, the Pan Spanish movement should take an economic turn—and there

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are already signs of such a tendency—our purpose should be to meet it in a spirit of frank and friendly rivalry and to let our Hispanic American friends choose between the two.

This much seems, then, to be clear: the marked strengthening of economic relations and bonds among the Hispanic American republics on the one hand and between them and the United States on the other points very definitely toward a new epoch in the history of the Monroe Doctrine in which regional understandings, primarily perhaps along economic lines but nevertheless affecting inevitably the diplomatic and political relationship, will play an important part.

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