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PAN-AMERICANISM AND IMPERIALISM

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Pan-Americanism and imperialism appear to be mutually exclusive. Whether they are so in effect is a matter of definition. Neither term in current usage conveys a precise meaning. Pan-Americanism fails because it has not yet emerged into a distinct and easily recognizable form, and imperialism because it has evolved in the course of history through a variety of forms from which a doubtful choice must be made. In the one case the problem is to decide what meaning, and in the other, which meaning. The "what" is the more difficult to determine, since new concepts such as Pan-Americanism acquire meaning with time and circumstance. It is not strange, therefore, that the attempts at formal definition have thus far proved unsatisfactory. Not even the genus to which Pan-Americanism belongs has been agreed upon. One author calls it an advocacy, another an idea, another a sentiment, and still others an aspiration, a tendency, or a doctrine. Obviously it does not fall indifferently into all these categories. If it is a sentiment merely, it is less than a doctrine; if it is a doctrine it is more than a tendency; and to call it a tendency is not the same as to say it is an aspiration or an idea. Moreover, none of these classifications when considered separately seems to fit the case.

The concept, it may be, is not susceptible of exact classification. One other suggestion, however, is worthy of consideration. Twenty-odd years ago, Secretary of State Robert Lansing called Pan-Americanism a policy—an international policy of the Americas. Implicit in this view is the assumption of an agency of continental scope capable of formulating and promoting the policy. The assumption may have been of doubtful validity at the time Lansing made his statement, but today that objection does not hold. The international American conferences, however ineffective their early efforts may have been, now undoubtedly formulate policy. They do more. They create the machinery for carrying the policy into effect.

If, then, the existence of a Pan-American policy be admitted, does it follow that the concept policy is the genus of which we are in search? Apparently not, for the policy of the Americas is an effect back of which lies Pan-Americanism as the cause. That is, Pan-Americanism is anterior to, and more inclusive than, any definitely charted course, or declared principles, or established organs for common action. It is a force productive of policy, not policy itself. The only way to understand the nature of this intangible force is to observe its concrete manifestations in policy. It will be convenient, therefore, to employ the term policy as if it were in very essence the genus of Pan-Americanism.

What is this policy of the Americas? It is a course of action adopted by the independent states of the New World with a view to the establishment of continental unity on the basis of certain recognized principles which may be stated briefly as follows: the independence and equality of the American nations; community of political ideals;¹ non-intervention; the settlement of inter-American disputes by amicable means; no conquest; and coöperation to achieve the common aim. These principles are deeply rooted in continental thought. Leading statesmen of both Americas have repeatedly asserted them, and the international conferences have confirmed them by numerous declaratory acts. International in scope, the policy rests on national foundations; that is, it rests on the individual policies of the states comprising the Pan-American group. Thus it is the individual policy of each to promote the general policy of all.

The principles of the policy express, it is true, the ideals and not the invariable practices of the American nations. If the ideals and the practices are too much at variance, Pan-Americanism may become a mockery. This is particularly true if the practice of the United States, the most powerful of the nations concerned, is inconsistent with the ideal. It is essential, therefore, to inquire whether this greatest of the American nations does in fact respect the independence and equality of its neighbors, whether it refrains from intervention in their affairs, whether it is disposed to settle its disputes with them without recourse to force, whether it abstains from conquest at their expense, and whether it genuinely coöperates with them to achieve common aims. In short, it is essential to know whether the United States, while professing respect for the individuality and well-being of its neighbors, in reality seeks to dominate them for its own selfish ends—whether it pursues the course of Pan-Americanism or that of imperialism.

The real course is one of imperialism, say some observers. Precisely what these observers mean is not clear, for they do not define imperialism. What does the term signify? Its meaning must be sought in empire. Without empire, actual or intended, there can be no imperialism. If the empire already exists there must be measures for maintaining it; if it does not yet exist there must be measures for creating it. The measures for maintaining or for creating empire constitute policy—the policy of imperialism. Thus two policies appear: the policy of Pan-Americanism and the policy of imperialism. The one is expressly intended to create and maintain a community of equal, coöoperating nations; and the other is intended, presumably, to create and maintain an empire. The two policies, the two courses of action, lead in different directions. In which of these directions does the United States move? It cannot move in both at one and the same time. It cannot serve two masters.

¹ Whatever the appearance to the contrary, the peoples of the New World are attached to the democratic ideal. Governments come and go, but the ideal remains as the unifying principle.

If the policy of the United States is to create or maintain an empire, what is the nature of this empire? What is the nature of empires in general? History furnishes many examples. They fall into two classes: first, states with vast accretions of heterogeneous outlying areas; and second, more compact states whose chief ruler happens to bear the title of emperor. Of this second class the New World provides some examples in the empires of Desalines and Christophe in Haiti, of the Pedros in Brazil, and of Iturbide and Maximilian in Mexico. Possessing no dependent territories, these empires, so-called, were in no external respect different from the other American states that existed contemporaneously with them. The very title of emperor by its historical associations has acquired a connotation of excessive and arbitrary power. Hence the use of the term imperialism as an antonym of democratic or constitutional government. For example, the departure from strictly constitutional procedure in the United States during and immediately after the Civil War has sometimes been characterized as imperialism. The fashion of the day is to describe this phenomenon as dictatorship. The imperialism with which we are concerned is not of this sort. It seems to derive from the empires of the expansive type.

Empires of this description have flourished in every age of recorded history. Those that exist today are vaster and more powerful than any that have gone before. Of all modern empires the Roman is the prototype. Its essential characteristics were three: first, the central Roman state exercising the *imperium*; second, the outlying conquered territories—Spain, Gaul, Britain, Asia Minor, etc.; and third, control over these areas through the agency of Roman governors and Roman armies. It is worth noting that the early expansion of Rome by the progressive conquest of neighboring peoples until the greater part of Italy was united under one central authority did not constitute empire. This was the process of creating a national state, if we may use the modern terminology. It should be observed also that the larger Roman conquests were of peoples, and not of thinly settled or vacant lands. Nor did the Romans migrate to any considerable extent into the conquered outlying areas. That process, if it is controlled by the parent state, is colonization and not imperialism. Respect for the great historical example from which the very term empire is derived requires that these facts be remembered.

The empires of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—if the interesting examples of the Middle Ages may be passed over—were of a somewhat different type. They are usually described as colonial. Yet, in two important respects they follow exactly the Roman pattern. First, the parent states achieved the requisite unity and strength to exercise the *imperium*; and secondly, they acquired, as did Rome, distant territorial possessions. In respect to the most notable of the characteristics of the Roman Empire—the control over alien peoples—the resemblance in most cases was not striking. Portugal, for example, devoted itself primarily to trade and colonization. It did not rule over teeming millions in the Far East nor in Africa. In those quar-

ters it was content to dominate small areas about the trading stations to which its vessels resorted for their precious cargoes; and in Brazil it directed its activities not to the government of native races but to the establishment of its own people and its own culture in a new environment. England and The Netherlands followed much the same procedure. In the Orient they entered into competition with the Portuguese for commercial supremacy, and elsewhere they preferred trade and colonization to the conquest and rule of native races. Both, however, were to establish in the course of time empires of the Roman type.

France established in the seventeenth century an empire much like those of England and The Netherlands. Spain alone approximated the Roman model. Though it was not indifferent to trade and colonization, it made veritable conquests. Mexico, Guatemala, New Granada, Peru, and the Philippines were as truly the provinces of Spain as Gaul or Spain itself ever were of Rome. Nor is the similarity confined to conquest and control. It extends to the common survival of the conquered peoples and to the lasting impress left upon them by the dominant Powers. Obviously imperialism of this sort is different from the movements that resulted in the transference of peoples and institutions to a Massachusetts, a Virginia, a Quebec, a Buenos Aires, or a Cape Colony. Yet the Roman element in the overseas activities of Portugal and The Netherlands and of England and France was sufficient to justify the use of the term "empire" to describe the composite structure erected by each in its sphere of action.

The empires created in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries suffered a great decline in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In their place new and more powerful empires have risen. The most recent, officially declared less than two years ago, is not only like the Roman, it is Roman. Rome today is the seat of the *imperium* as it was in the time of the Caesars, and the recent conquests have followed with remarkable fidelity the pattern set by the ancient predecessor. About the meaning of imperialism deduced from this example there can be no doubt. And so it is with most of the other existing empires. The Netherlands, building on the foundations laid in the seventeenth century, succeeded in the nineteenth in bringing the Dutch East Indies under its complete domination. It is an empire in the Roman sense. France, with its millions of subjects spread over enormous areas in Africa and Asia, is likewise a true empire. Belgium is another example. The population of its African domain is greater than that of Belgium itself and the area is nearly eighty times as great. Nor is this disparity exceptional. It is a characteristic of all present-day empires as it was of the Roman model.

The British Empire cannot be characterized with like simplicity. From its exceedingly complex structure no precise notion of British imperialism can be drawn. The relation of the United Kingdom to the different parts varies as the parts themselves vary. To the self-governing Dominions the relation is one thing; to India it is another; to the other Asiatic possessions it

is another; to the Caribbean colonies it is another; and to the African dependencies it is still another. In respect to the first of these relationships, imperialism does not apply. An essential element is lacking. There is no subordination between the United Kingdom and the self-governing Dominions. This group of states is, as it has happily chosen to call itself, a commonwealth of nations. We must search elsewhere for British imperialism. It exists in divers forms in the relation of the United Kingdom to the vast aggregate of dependent states and territories. In India, it appears to be developing in the direction of less and less subordination; in the West Indies, it remains of the seventeenth century colonial type; and, in Africa, where native races are subject to British rule, it is more nearly of the Roman pattern.

We may now inquire into the nature of the alleged imperialism of the United States. Some writers maintain that it dates back even to the first English settlement on American shores. Since imperialism is a policy, it could hardly have existed before a nation capable of formulating and directing the policy came into existence. Was the United States from the beginning of its independent existence an empire? It had, to be sure, territory lying beyond the bounds of the constituent members of the Union, but that territory was wholly unlike the outlying areas of true empires, since it was marked from the beginning for admission into the Union on a basis of equality. Nor did the presence of a relatively small Indian population give it the character of an imperial domain. Many of these Indians, it may be admitted, were unwilling subjects of the United States. To reason from that to empire leads to confusion. On this basis every national state becomes an empire, for all national states in the course of their development have been compelled to incorporate to greater or less degree recalcitrant elements of the population. We must conclude, therefore, that the United States in the early years of its independence was not, under any proper definition of the term, an empire.

Even so, perhaps the policy of the United States was from the beginning to create an empire. Witness the additions of territory at the earliest opportunity. Did not the annexation of Louisiana and the Floridas make of this nation an empire? Not if our definition of empire is valid. Louisiana and the Floridas possessed at the time they were purchased a sparse population, a goodly portion of which was already American. These areas were contiguous and they were more intimately related to the United States than imperial provinces ever are related to the dominant Power. Given the territorial form of government and then erected into states, the new acquisitions were in the end fully incorporated into the Union. That was a process of national growth, a process of expansion, not of imperialism. So it was with the subsequent annexations. Nowhere was there any considerable alien population. Texas, with a population predominantly American, took its equal station among the older states; California was admitted with little delay; and the rest of the ceded territory was marked for ultimate statehood.

To inject the question of ethics serves only to confuse the issue. Let it be

admitted that the conduct of the United States in respect to some or all of the annexations was not above reproach. Does it follow that the reprobated acts were imperialistic? Wrong may be done in the interest of national growth as well as in the interest of imperial growth. It does not conduce to clear thinking to make imperialism do duty as an opprobrious epithet. Imperialism is a question of fact and not of ethics; and likewise expansion is a question of fact and not of ethics. Here the purpose is not to assess right and wrong, but to determine whether the United States is, or ever has been, an empire. Certainly it had not become an empire as the result of these vast acquisitions. Nor did the United States pursue its policy of expansion with a view to the creation of an empire at some future time. It had the choice between nationalism and imperialism. It is well known that at the close of the Mexican War there was some sentiment, in the United States and in Mexico as well, for the annexation of the whole of Mexico.² If that idea had been carried into effect the United States would have been converted at once into an empire, for it would have had under its rule several millions of alien people. All of the conditions of empire would have been fulfilled. The choice, and it seems to have been a deliberate choice, was against the creation of such an empire.

The dozen years immediately following the Mexican War were characterized by the strange obsession known as "Manifest Destiny." Yet the exuberance of that period resulted in no further expansion. Nor did the terrible years of civil war permit of any additions to the national domain. The experience of the conflict demonstrated, however, the desirability of naval outposts, particularly in the North Pacific and in the West Indies. To meet the need in the Pacific, Secretary of State Seward revived an earlier scheme for the annexation of Alaska. Successful in achieving his purpose in that quarter, he turned his attention to the Caribbean, where an opportunity seemed to offer in an apparent desire on the part of the Dominican Republic for annexation to the United States. The negotiations which Seward initiated to effect this end were continued in the administration of President Grant. Though the President himself lent the proposal the weight of his fame and the prestige of his high office, he could not induce the Senate to give its approval. The Senate may have been moved in some degree by partisan rancor. It was moved more powerfully no doubt by its belief that the Dominican Government's proffered annexation did not represent the real desires of the Dominican people, toward whom the duty of the United States, as Charles Sumner phrased it, was as plain as the Ten Commandments.³ Sumner and his colleagues in the Senate feared, moreover, that one annexation would lead to another; that, in effect, the Dominican annexation would be the first step in the creation of an empire. Like objections did not hold in

² For an interesting discussion of this subject, see an article by E. G. Bourne in the Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1899, pp. 155-169.

³ See speech delivered in the Senate on Dec. 21, 1870, Complete Works, XVIII, 292.

respect to Alaska. The obligations of "good neighborhood"—again in Sumner's phrase—did not apply to that trackless waste.

To some minds the Spanish-American War in its objects and results provides indisputable evidence of American imperialism. It provides in fact the most convincing proof to the contrary. The United States had in 1898 a magnificent opportunity to lay the foundations of an empire, if it had so desired. Spain's possessions in the New World and in the Far East fell into the hands of the armed forces of the United States without difficulty. A considerable body of opinion, both lay and official, desired to have the government embark frankly upon an imperialistic career; but the idea did not prevail. From the beginning the Congress committed itself as far as Cuba was concerned by declaring that the people of that island "are, and of right ought to be, free and independent." It was expected by some observers abroad and perhaps by the imperialists at home that a way would be found to evade the obligation implicit in that declaration. The imposition of the Platt Amendment as a condition precedent to the withdrawal of the American troops may have left the impression that the evasion had been accomplished. Cuba, despite the restrictions, took its place in the family circle of nations, where the subordinate parts of an empire are not welcome. Moreover, the Platt Amendment, proving to be a constant source of friction, has been abrogated;⁴ and if anything more needs to be done to prove that the United States really desires that Cuba shall be in the fullest sense free and independent, that too, no doubt, will be done.

The Philippines present an analogous case. No declaration of policy, it is true, accompanied our seizure of those islands, but when such a declaration was finally made, in the Jones Act of 1916, it was couched in these terms: ". . . It is, as it has always been, the purpose of the people of the United States to withdraw their sovereignty over the Philippine Islands and to recognize their independence as soon as a stable government can be established therein."⁵ That declaration of purpose is now in the process of fulfillment under another act of Congress passed in 1934. Ten years after the date of this act the sovereignty of the United States over the Philippines will come to an end. Whatever may have been the aims of some of our statesmen or the hopes of some of our people, the sum total of our relations with those distant islands denies rather than affirms imperialism.

Puerto Rico, like the Philippines, was ceded to the United States at the close of the Spanish American War; unlike the Philippines, it has never been given the promise of independence. Though its area is not great, its population is more than a million and a half. Here, then, on a small scale, are the apparent conditions of empire; that is, an outlying territory inhabited, indeed saturated, by a population whose language, culture, and institutions are different

⁴ By a treaty signed at Washington, May 29, 1934. See this JOURNAL, Supp., Vol. 28 (1934), p. 97.

⁵ Statutes at Large of the United States, XLVIII, 456.

from those of the dominant country. Yet in area and population Puerto Rico is insignificant compared with the United States. If a swallow does not make a summer, neither does one small island make an empire. Alaska and the Hawaiian Islands cannot be added to it to swell its amount, for they are Americanized areas already seeking admission as states. If the other American islands in the Caribbean and the Pacific be added there still is no empire in the proper sense of the word. These lesser islands are not even way stations to empire. They are outposts of national defense. Puerto Rico is different. If it is unhappy under its present relation to the United States, that relation will in the course of time be changed to one satisfactory to the Puerto Ricans. A people who deeply believe, as the people of the United States believe, that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed will see to that.

The asserters of imperialism contend, however, that the empire of the United States is not confined to definitely annexed areas. It embraces vastly more, they say. They enumerate: the Dominican Republic with such and such an area, so much population, so much trade; Haiti with such and such an area, so much population, so much trade; Nicaragua with such and such an area, so much population, so much trade; and so on the Caribbean round. These, they assert, are within the imperial domain. Add them to all the other dependencies, big and little, from Alaska to Wake Island, and from Liberia to Samoa. The result will be a very respectable empire. So it would be if the areas involved were really under the imperial sway of the United States. Alaska and some of the others that figure in the addition, clearly are not imperial territories. Furthermore, the Caribbean republics, the enumerators themselves admit, are not genuine dependencies: they are only "virtual" or "nominal" dependencies. To this, then, the empire of the United States is reduced: one or two real dependencies, little ones at that, and an indeterminate number of virtual dependencies.

It remains to inquire why certain of the Caribbean republics are designated by some observers as parts of an empire of the United States. The explanation can be expressed in a single word: intervention. Not that these observers are content to characterize the interference by using a word so clearly defined in public law; not that they are willing to withhold judgment as to its results; not that they accept any official declaration as to its ultimate purpose. They assume the object to be empire and point to the armed forces as the proof of empire. Withdrawal makes no difference. If the Marines are brought home today they will be sent back tomorrow. Empire, like Time, marches on. With it march the ghostly auxiliaries "virtual" protectorate and "nominal" dependency. It is all very confusing.

For this state of affairs the Government of the United States must take its share of the blame. The repeated interventions have aroused doubts on the one hand and fears on the other. That is not strange in a world where like proceedings have usually marked the course of empire. It is not strange that observers at home and abroad should fail to discern beneath the surface

a purpose as different from empire as day is from night—a purpose of assisting the weak to assume their proper station in the concert of the New World, and not a purpose of merging their sovereignty in that of the United States. Whatever the purpose, the performance has been bad. The interventions have been productive of more harm than good. Moreover, they have contravened the Pan-American rule and the historic policy of the United States as well. Of all this, the Government and people of the United States seem now to be well convinced. If interference in the internal affairs of our neighbors is not yet entirely at an end, it is undoubtedly in the process of coming to an end.

The accusers have, however, another leg to stand on. It is economic imperialism. Here also is encountered extreme indefiniteness of meaning. How does this new imperialism differ from the historic kind? A close analysis may well leave one in doubt. According to some authorities the three essential elements are present: that is, the dominant state, the outlying areas, and control by the dominant state. The only difference appears to be in the underlying motives, or in the process of acquiring or exercising dominion. These are only differences in detail, the end being annexation as in the old imperialism. According to another view, the concept is more conveniently vague. The *imperium* is a capitalistic combination of vast connections and international reach; the outlying areas embrace the whole field of trade and investment; and the control is a manifestation of power as sinister, as mysterious, and as relentless as the source from which it emanates. This fanciful view of economic imperialism need not detain us. It is enough to say that it is set forth as an attack not primarily on imperialism but on capitalism. The purpose of this paper is not to discuss Pan-Americanism in relation to capitalism. Its purpose is to discuss Pan-Americanism in relation to imperialism, and to that subject it must be confined.

Despite difficulties and doubts, the search for the economic imperialism of the United States must be pursued. Like political imperialism, this kind of imperialism can only be understood in relation to empire. If there is an economic empire of the United States it must exist somewhere; it must have bounds; it must be open to view; and it must be subject to control, else it is no empire. The asserters of economic imperialism should be able to throw light on this point. If they be asked to do so, however, they are likely to revert first of all to the Marines and to virtual or nominal dependencies. If it be maintained that this is the old and not the new, the rejoinder is economic motive: bankers, loans, concessions and the like. If it is objected that whatever the motive, the empire described is still political, and if evidence of economic empire pure and simple be demanded, the reply is likely to be more or less as follows: "Behold the billions of dollars of loans to the Hispanic-American countries, the oil interests in Mexico, the copper interests in Chile and Peru, the sugar interests in Cuba, the banana industry in Central America, banks in numberless cities, and trade to correspond."

Despite this formidable array, the asserters of economic imperialism do

not contend that the whole Hispanic area is the economic province of the United States. They will readily admit some exceptions and if they are pressed they will admit more. These admissions leave the bounds of the empire very uncertain. This is disconcerting. It is impossible to detect the symbols of possession in a domain whose limits are unknown; and it is equally impossible to distinguish the agencies of control. Whoever insists on being shown some part of this economic province where the symbols of possession and the agencies of control are clearly in evidence will be taken back to the Caribbean; again the political empire. If, in despair of finding the marks of purely economic imperialism in the outlying area, one turns to the United States in search of the central directing authority, the result will be the same. The international combination, which will be suggested as the directing force, is unconvincing. Neither Wall Street nor any other national economic agency seems to gather into its hands the threads of supreme economic control. The national government fails to meet the requirements. Despite innuendo, it does not, it seems, exercise the *imperium* in the interest of the varied and conflicting economic forces. If it does pretend to that function, it fails miserably. The economic province over which it is thought to have control sprawls in disorder, buying and selling freely, paying and defaulting at will, taxing without fear, and performing every other economic act without the slightest regard for its supposititious master.

To contend that the United States is free from imperialism is not to contend that it is free from the evils often associated with imperialism. The evils exist without empire and doubtless empire can exist with few of the evils. The use of imperialism, especially where none exists, as a catch-all for everything hateful, leads to muddled thinking. In international relations, as in every other relation of life, terms ought to be employed as far as may be with scientific accuracy. If, for example, wrongs arise from intervention, intervention and not imperialism should be made to bear the blame. If absentee ownership is at the bottom of some economic ill, to talk of economic imperialism will not set matters right. If American capitalists employ unethical means to achieve their ends, it will do no good to stigmatize imperialism. If the strength of the United States overrides the just cause of a weaker state, the false cry of imperialism will bring no redress. So in numberless instances the mind is diverted from the real to an imaginary ill. Cure, if that is the object, would be more likely to follow correct diagnosis.

Unfortunately to alarm the victim is quite as often the purpose. Across the Atlantic certain interests look with concern on the steady trend toward New World unity. They seem to see in American solidarity an obstacle to the attainment of their peculiar aims—aims which look to the reaping of a material advantage, to the accomplishment of a national ambition, to the imposition of a political system, or to the inculcation of a social philosophy. These non-American interests know that a contented, unfrightened, stable, unified America is not likely to look to them for social panaceas, for economic

security, or for political protection. Hence their cry of imperialism. Hence their constant warnings to the weaker countries of this hemisphere against the dangers that surround them; hence their repeated assertions that the real aim of the United States is empire; hence the fiction, endlessly iterated, that Pan-Americanism is a mask of imperialism.

These alarms are not taken too seriously, either in the United States or in the other countries concerned. Foreign influences, it is well understood, will not determine the fate of Pan-Americanism. The New World states themselves will determine that. They will decide whether mistrust, or self-aggrandizement, or petty jealousies shall stand in the way. They will decide—indeed they have decided—that there shall exist on this continent a union of equal, freely coöperating nations. Consequently they are not deterred by the arguments of those who attempt to prove that the ideal has neither been realized nor can be realized. They know that the differences in language, culture, and racial characteristics, which are sometimes urged as obstacles, are not incompatible with international unity. They know that Pan-Americanism imposes no economic or other restraint on the free exercise of national sovereignty. They know that the fears, suspicions and hatreds that are supposed to actuate some of the states in their relations with some of the other states do not obscure the larger aims. They know that in Pan-Americanism lie the hopes of a continent.

That Pan-Americanism was the choice of the United States rather than imperialism is a fact of great moment to the independent states of this hemisphere, and it may prove ultimately to be of vast significance to the world at large. If imperialism had been the choice, the map of the continent would have taken on a different appearance. The republics within the reach of the United States would have been absorbed, while those at a distance would have been driven to seek safety in foreign alliances. America would have become the meeting place of empires. Its vital principle would have become the balance of power and not a concert of nations; its frontiers would have been fortified; its vast area would have been overrun by alien armies; and its peace would have been disturbed by wars of alien origin. Happily the peoples of this continent do not confront any such situation. Secure under their separate flags, they are free to demonstrate to the world that nations can live together as good neighbors.