

EDITORIAL COMMENT

THE MONROE DOCTRINE AND THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

The Monroe Doctrine has long waited in vain for definition and for recognition. Under pressure of necessity certain European nations have conceded its existence, but they have never given it their approval. On the contrary, they have always studiously evaded any declarations either as to its purpose or validity.

Nor have the American people, though fervently and instinctively loyal to this fundamental tenet of foreign policy, been able to agree on a comprehensive definition of the Doctrine.

President Wilson brought into high relief the value of this policy when he characterized the great object of the war just ended as an attempt to create a Monroe Doctrine for the whole world. He also admitted the difficulty of defining this beneficent principle which has been of such value to the nations of this hemisphere as to warrant its extension to all nations. Speaking in behalf of the League of Nations at Spokane, Washington, on September 12, 1919, President Wilson stated:

I did try while I was in Paris to define the Monroe Doctrine, and get it written into the document, but I will confide to you in confidence that when I tried to define it I found that it escaped analysis; that all that you could say was that it was a principle with regard to the interference of foreign powers in the politics of the Western Hemisphere which the United States felt at liberty to apply in any circumstances where it thought it pertinent. That is not a definition. That means that the United States means to play big brother to the Western Hemisphere in any circumstances where it thinks it wise to play big brother. Therefore, inasmuch as you could not, or would not, define the Monroe Doctrine—at least I would not, because I do not know how much we may want to extend it—what more could you say than that nothing in the instrument shall impair the validity of the Monroe Doctrine?

Speaking again on the same subject at Portland, Oregon, on September 25th, President Wilson more explicitly defined the Monroe Doctrine as follows:

What is the Monroe Doctrine? The Monroe Doctrine is that no nation shall come to the Western Hemisphere and try to establish its power or interfere

with the self-government of the peoples of this hemisphere; that no power shall extend its governing and controlling influence in any form to either of the Americas.

In an earlier speech before the Pan-American Scientific Congress in Washington, January 6, 1916, President Wilson affirmed most emphatically that "The Monroe Doctrine was proclaimed by the United States on her own authority, and always will be maintained upon her own responsibility."

Mr. Root, former Secretary of State, also stated in an address before the American Society of International Law on April 14, 1914: "Since the Monroe Doctrine is based on the nation's right of self-protection, it cannot be transmuted into a joint or common declaration by American States or any number of them."

As a warning against European intervention on this hemisphere, as an assertion solely of American foreign policy, and as an intimation of the right and the obligation of intervention by the United States in the affairs of the nations south of the Rio Grande, it is not to be wondered at that the Monroe Doctrine has never been adequately defined, or explicitly recognized either by Europe or by the other American nations. As President Wilson has stated, it escapes analysis.

The wording of Article 21 of the Covenant of the League of Nations is therefore of especial interest and warrants close scrutiny:

Nothing in this Covenant shall be deemed to affect the validity of international engagements such as treaties of arbitration or regional understandings like the Monroe Doctrine, securing the maintenance of peace.

This constitutes neither a definition nor a recognition. The allusion to the Doctrine as a "regional understanding" conveys little, inasmuch as this novel term itself requires definition, particularly if it should imply such special agreements as between England and France concerning the Near East, or between Japan and other Powers concerning the Far East. Such a characterization could hardly be accepted either as clear or adequate.

Other provisions of the Covenant seem to afford the utmost liberty to any member of the League to raise any question "affecting the peace of the world." This would imply that at any moment a member of the League might insist that a given dispute in which the United States was an interested party in no way involved the Monroe Doctrine. In fact, competency to determine whether or not such a ques-

tion might affect the validity of the Doctrine would seem, under the terms of the Covenant, to lie solely with the League itself.

Furthermore, the recognized antagonism of some of the other American nations towards the Monroe Doctrine as an expression of American foreign policy would seem likely to give rise to a most embarrassing situation at any moment in the heart of the League itself.

It is also of peculiar interest to notice the phraseology of Article 21 in coupling with this statement concerning the Monroe Doctrine the other affirmation that: "Nothing shall be deemed to affect the validity of international engagements such as treaties of arbitration . . ." The reason for this strange phraseology is not apparent, unless it should advert to the fact that the United States, by various treaties of arbitration still in force, has agreed to arbitrate without reserve all questions of whatever nature, including, naturally, the Monroe Doctrine itself! This fact has been frequently emphasized by special advocates of the League as showing that the United States has already abandoned the Monroe Doctrine.

Leaving aside all questions of partizanship, whether personal or political, the proposed Senate reservation to Article 21 may be regarded as having considerable basis both in reason and in consistent practice:

The United States will not submit to arbitration or to inquiry by the assembly or by the Council of the League of Nations, provided for in said treaty of peace, any questions which in the judgment of the United States depend upon or relate to its long established policy commonly known as the Monroe Doctrine; said doctrine is to be interpreted by the United States alone and is hereby declared to be wholly outside the jurisdiction of said League of Nations and entirely unaffected by any provision contained in the said treaty of peace with Germany.

Here again is no attempt to define the Doctrine, but a warning that the United States completely reserves freedom of action either as to its interpretation or practical application. Under this reservation a member of the League will be precluded from raising any question which the United States may choose to regard as involving in any way this fundamental declaration of American foreign policy.

It is a matter of great regret that, owing to the disinclination of the United States to restrict its own freedom of action under the Doctrine, no general recognition or approval of this declaration on

the part of all the nations of this hemisphere has been possible. It should be acknowledged, of course, that every nation necessarily reserves to itself liberty of action in certain situations of a near neighborhood concern, such as confronts the United States on its Mexican frontier. The right to "abate a nuisance" must always exist where no other adequate or immediate remedy exists. But we should not confuse questions of this character with the Monroe Doctrine itself, which is much more comprehensive in scope.

Considered in its most general aspect, the Doctrine is intended to provide on this hemisphere a sanction for the fundamental rights of international law, namely, the rights of existence and of independence. The United States, of course, has always been the champion as well as the protagonist of this great idea. But there should be no inherent logical difficulty in converting this declaration of rights into a Pan-American declaration. It is not inconceivable that the other nations of this continent might be willing to give a generous recognition to the pre-eminent rôle of the United States in the vigilant assertion and defence of these basic rights of nations.

The precise *modus operandi* in every case arising under a Pan-American doctrine might readily present diplomatic complications of a delicate nature. Complications are bound to arise in any event; but the situation created by the League of Nations would seem to demand that the American nations should themselves first come to an understanding concerning their special and *regional* interests before they commit themselves to a large undertaking likely to create further friction and still greater embarrassments.

PHILIP MARSHALL BROWN.

THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS ORGANIZATION

Although primarily it is the duty and responsibility of a nation, through its official authorities, to safeguard the health and physical well-being of its own people, nevertheless there has always been an opportunity and need for voluntary agencies to supplement and contribute to the usefulness of the official agencies charged with these responsibilities in every country. Furthermore, the support of an enlightened public opinion is indispensable.