

**THE WESTERN
HEMISPHERE IDEA: ITS
RISE AND DECLINE**

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The Western Hemisphere Idea: Its Rise and Decline by Arthur P. Whitaker

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ARTHUR P. WHITAKER

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Preface

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THE eight essays which follow are in the main identical with the eight Commonwealth Foundation Lectures that I gave at University College, London, in January and February 1953. I have, however, made a good many changes in matters of detail, partly by way of clarification and correction and partly in order to domesticate the foreign lectures and put them in a form more suitable for publication. Among other things, I have added footnote citations and a list of the works cited. These serve the twofold purpose of acknowledging my indebtedness for direct quotations and major facts and ideas and of providing the interested reader with a few signposts to the literature of the subject.

The body of this literature is massive, for these eight essays deal with key developments in the history of an important idea over a long period of time and in a large geographical area. The period extends from the eighteenth century, when the idea took shape, to the mid-twentieth century, by which

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time it seems to have lost its hold in the United States. The area covered includes not only the United States and Latin America, where the idea has had most of its development, but also Canada, where it has received some attention, and still more Western Europe, which laid the groundwork for it and made a great, if only negative or indirect, contribution to its subsequent growth and ultimate decline.

While the reader is referred to the first essay for a definition of the Western Hemisphere idea, here at the outset he should be urged to keep constantly in mind a distinction which is vital to an understanding of all that follows. This is the distinction between the politico-geographical idea in question and the shifting and imperfect forms in which it has been given political expression, such as the Monroe Doctrine, the Drago Doctrine, the Panama Congress, and Pan Americanism.

This distinction is not only one of the fundamental terms of the present work, it is also one of its chief claims to whatever novelty it may possess. Masterly studies of the Monroe Doctrine and Pan Americanism have already been made by historians of both the Americas, such as Dexter Perkins and Joseph B. Lockey of the United States, John P. Humphrey of Canada, Alejandro M. Alvarez of Chile, Enrique Gil of Argentina, Helio Lobo of Brazil, and Jesús M. Yepes of Colombia; but these belong rather to the history of politics and diplomacy than to the history of ideas. To be sure, these two aspects of history overlap, and it is precisely the area of their overlapping that is examined in the present volume. This is what distinguishes it sharply from the talented Mexican historian Leopoldo Zea's very recent book, *América como conciencia* (1953). The latter is primarily concerned with the quest for an American philosophy and pays relatively little attention to politics, diplomacy, and economics, which bulk large in the following pages.

The reader is also invited to take note of what I have not

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tried to do. These essays make no pretense whatever to giving an account either of Latin American policies toward the United States or of the latter's policy toward Latin America. I have drawn heavily on works in this field by Samuel Flagg Bemis, J. Fred Rippy, and many other specialists in North and South America; but I have drawn from them only the materials that fit into the very different design of this book. Finally, I have not undertaken to give a complete history even of the Western Hemisphere idea. Rather, I have focused attention on what seemed to me the key stages of its checkered career and on its most interesting exponents and critics at the various stages, sketching in the intervals and the background only to the extent that seemed indispensable for continuity and perspective.

There is no more pretense to finality in the text of these essays than to exhaustiveness in the citations. To give the work this quality would require a study many times larger than this one. My purpose is much more modest. I regard these essays as nothing more than a pioneer sketch whose merit will consist mainly in whatever stimulus it may give to the discussion of the idea with which the essays deal. Even those who do not subscribe to Señor Zea's proposition that "all crises are crises of ideas" will doubtless agree that the time has come when historians ought to study more closely the development of an idea which has played an important part in the history of the Western World for the past century and a half but is now in a state of crisis.

ARTHUR P. WHITAKER

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
March 1954

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