

Welles Says State Department Imperils Hemisphere Defense

Deplores Lengthy Conflict With Military Agencies
Over Standardization of Fighting Equipment,
and Sees Danger to Nation's Security

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By Sumner Welles

Former Under Secretary of State

The Inter-American Defense Board celebrated its fifth anniversary a few days ago. It was created by the second conference of the American Ministers for Foreign Affairs which met in Rio de Janeiro immediately after Pearl Harbor. It was established, at a moment of extreme danger to all of the New World, in order to co-ordinate hemisphere defense strategy and to facilitate reciprocal military assistance among the American countries. It has accomplished much of practical value. It has grown in stature as a result of the vision and capacity of the high military and naval officers whom the American republics have selected to represent them on the board.

It is, however, notorious that the long-range plans of this board have been persistently blocked during the last two years by the State Department. It is a tragic anomaly that at the very moment when the safety of the United States is more than ever dependent upon hemispheric security the State Department should be interposing new and still greater obstacles. If this opposition is not overruled by higher authority the Inter-American Defense Board will become useless and the whole concept of an inter-American hemispheric defense system, functioning under the authority of the United Nations, might just as well be scrapped.

Any effective system of hemispheric security must be founded upon two essential prerequisites.

The first of these is the conclusion of an inter-American defense treaty such as that proposed at the Chapultepec Conference.

Legislation Is Urged

The second essential is the adoption of legislation in Washington which will make it possible for this government to help the other American countries to obtain military and naval equipment in the United States and to provide training for the military and naval personnel of the other American republics when this is requested. Through the enactment of such legislation the defense establishments of all of the American republics would be standardized within a relatively short period, and the task of the United States in guarding the New World against all future danger of foreign aggression would be greatly facilitated.

At a moment of grave crisis in world affairs, when the United States is compelled to assist weaker nations in the Near East to resist Soviet domination, it would seem to be only common sense for this government to help all the countries within its own neighborhood to co-ordinate their means of defense so as to make it possible for them to co-operate efficiently with this country in defending the Western Hemisphere. Yet the Department of State persists in stubbornly opposing the realization of the two measures which are imperative if practical measures for the defense of the Americas are to be carried out.

The Inter-American Defense Conference which was scheduled to meet at Rio de Janeiro almost two years ago has been repeatedly put off at the behest of the Department of State on the ground that in the department's unilateral opinion the Argentine government has not complied satisfactorily with its commitments to clean up Nazi activities within Argentina.

The record shows, however, that the Argentine government has already complied with its obligations with respect to former Axis schools, institutions and property. With the promulgation of a decree of expulsion against fifty-two former Axis agents, thirteen of whom have already been deported

and the remainder of whom are being actively prosecuted or sought, the Argentine government has in this regard carried out its obligations even more fully than many of the other American republics. In view of these indisputable facts, the refusal of the State Department to agree to the convocation of the Inter-American Defense Conference is being interpreted throughout the Americas as solely due to its opposition to any inter-American defense treaty.

Three weeks ago the State Department officially registered its vehement opposition to the plan of the Inter-American Defense Board, which is backed by our War and Navy Departments, through which military equipment would be made available by the United States to the other American republics over a period of years in order to standardize Western Hemisphere armaments.

It bases its opposition upon the assertion that, since the economies of most of the other American republics could not stand the expense involved in purchasing United States armaments, the result would tend to promote "totalitarianism" and that, consequently, the program envisaged in such a bill as H. R. 6326 should be permanently abandoned.

Would Call on Europe

If the American republics were today living in a peaceful and prosperous world, within which the United Nations was able to carry out all of its responsibilities, such arguments might merit consideration. But the present state of world affairs affords no reason for such ostrich-like complacency. A majority of the other American republics are determined to increase and modernize their military and naval armaments. Should they be denied technical assistance and training here, they will secure European help, as they have in the past. Should they be unable to obtain the equipment they

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and definite
and thus prepare
the Rio confer-
active renewal of
activities.

During his stay in Washington and New York, Messersmith also gave a lot of attention to economic relations between the United

States and Argentina, informing those interested on the favorable outlook for commerce, and favoring the employment by Argentina of North American technicians as a normal phase of international relations; he also informed U.S. business men of the latest developments in Argentine economic activities. Contrary to what was expected before his arrival, Messersmith's activities here have been more "diplomatic" than "political."

A SILENT BRADEN

He did not propose relations between the United States and Argentina along the lines laid down by many Republican Senators, and furthermore did not demand "an explanation" of his personal differences with Braden. Braden for his part, throughout Messersmith's visit, maintained complete silence.

The net result is that Braden's future as Assistant Secretary of State does not depend on the Argentine problem. On the other hand, if anything does happen, it would be a matter of departmental re-organization under the new Secretary of State, and the general opinion among observers is that Braden will continue at his post.

Nevertheless, as no personal

"explanation" resulted here, it is believed unlikely that Truman and Marshall will have recourse to drastic personal action with political implications. Such a step would probably renew discussions in the Senate. Although it is evident that the Moscow conference will demand Marshall's attention for several weeks, a triumph at that conference would make it possible to give more attention later to continental relations by attendance at the Rio de Janeiro conference, and preparations for the Ninth Panamerican Conference at Bogotá at the end of the year. In this way 1947 may turn out to be an historic year in the reorganization and reinforcement of the inter-American system in accordance with the world programme of the United Nations. — (U.P.).

(Messersmith's Favourable
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