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FOREIGN RELATIONS BETWEEN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN STATES, 1930-1944



Organized by country, this collection covers a wide range of viewpoints on political, social, and economic issues. It sheds light on the foreign relations interactions between Central American and South American countries. In the Caribbean, Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic are represented. This collection includes cables, memoranda, correspondence, reports and analyzes, and treaties.

Date Range: 1930-1944

Content: 105,704 images

Source Library: U.S. National Archives

Detailed Description:

Originally microfilmed as *Records of the Department of State relating to Political Relations*, this collection provides unique perspectives for the study of Latin American and Caribbean international relations. The collection affords a country-by-country analyses utilizing the State Department's decimal system to organize the voluminous correspondence and reporting on a variety of diverse topics, events, and people. In addition, it provides detail on the evolution of Latin American foreign policies, significance of inter-American cooperation in time of war, and the rise of totalitarian regimes.

This collection consists of materials pertaining to political relations of states, including diplomatic and consular representation and bilateral treaties, conventions, and agreements for the following countries/regions: Argentine Republic, Bolivia, Brazil, Central America, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela, and the West Indian Republics.

Documents in this collection span the period 1930 through 1944, focusing heavily on various events, people, and political movements, including: the rise of Fascism and Falangism; the effects of the worldwide depression; Mexican oil and nationalization; Central America and the "banana republics;" and FDR's Good Neighbor Policy.

Fascism and Falangism

The rise of Fascism and Falangism in Latin American countries during the 1930s was due in large part to the success of the Franco revolution in Spain and Italian fascist propaganda. In particular, Getúlio Vargas of Brazil was a staunch supporter of the fascist movement and imitated the Italian government's Fascist program. The trend toward these political movements was due in large part to an increase in authoritarianism, nationalism, conservatism, and to a lesser extent a rise in a politicized Catholicism, which rulers like Vargas played on through propaganda.

Worldwide Depression

The Great Depression caused considerable monetary difficulties for Latin American and Caribbean governments. There was not only a problem in finding sufficient foreign exchange to finance external commerce and particularly to pay for imports, but there were also increasing difficulties in servicing the foreign debt. Taxes on exports and tariff duties on foreign imports had long been a significant revenue item for Latin American governments. Declining trade meant a corresponding fall in revenue. The combination of severe balance-of-payments difficulties, budget deficits, and the dwindling gold reserves led the majority of Latin American governments to suspend or default on payments to foreign bondholders during the depression years.

Chaco War

The Chaco War (1932-1935) was fought between Bolivia and Paraguay over control of the northern part of the Gran Chaco region (the Chaco Boreal) of South America, which was incorrectly thought to be rich in oil. It was the bloodiest international conflict fought in the Americas during the 20th Century.

Mexican Oil and Nationalization

In 1938 President Lázaro Cárdenas nationalized the petroleum industry, giving the Mexican government a monopoly in the exploration, production, refining, and distribution of oil and natural gas, and in the manufacture and sale of basic petrochemicals. Although Cárdenas offered compensation, United States oil companies pressured the United States government to embargo all imports from Mexico in order to discourage similar nationalizations in other countries. The boycott was in effect briefly, but the United States government soon pressured the oil companies to come to terms with Mexico as a result of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy and United States security needs arising from World War II. In 1943 Mexico and the oil companies reached a final settlement under which the companies received US\$24 million (a fraction of the book value of the expropriated facilities) as compensation. Nevertheless, the oil nationalization deprived Mexico of foreign capital and expertise for some twenty years.

Central America and the American businessman

This collection provides unique opportunities for the study of Central American perceptions of American "economic imperialist" activities. The collection highlights the development of

national politics, integration into the world economy, effects of foreign investment and political control exercised by various American businesses, in several Central American countries.

Good Neighbor Policy

Americanism in the region, which was beginning to manifest itself in the form of ultra-nationalist and protectionist measures by Latin American governments. With the gathering war clouds in Europe and Asia, President Roosevelt instituted a dramatic shift in American relations with Latin America. No longer would armed intervention be used to support American foreign policy goals, businesses, and/or to prop-up pro-American governments. The Good Neighbor Policy was more or less intended to garner Latin American support for a global American policy. Giving up unpopular military intervention, the United States shifted to other methods to maintain its influence in Latin America: Pan-Americanism, support for strong local leaders, the training of national guards, economic and cultural penetration, Export-Import Bank loans, financial supervision, and political subversion. The Good Neighbor Policy meant that the United States would keep its eye on Latin America in a more peaceful tone.

This collection includes Class 700 (matters pertaining to political relations of states, including diplomatic and consular representation and bilateral treaties, conventions, and agreements) materials for the following countries/regions: Argentine Republic, Bolivia, Brazil, Central America, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela, and the West Indian Republics. Colonial possessions in South America and the Caribbean are not included in this publication, but in the records of the home country.

State Department Decimal Filing System

From 1910 to 1963 the State Department used a decimal filing system to organize its Central Files-its correspondence and reporting repository-in which documents were assembled and arranged according to their subject, with each subject having a specific decimal code.

In 1930 and 1944, the State Department modified the decimal system without changing the basic structure. The complexity of the world and the increasing involvement of the United States in international affairs had combined to make the original 1910 filing system, inadequate to meet the Department's growing needs.

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The decimal system from 1910 to 1944 consisted of ten primary classifications numbered 0 through 8, each covering a broad subject area:

Class 000. General and miscellaneous matters, including such subjects as records of the Department, publications, tours and visits, and the diplomatic pouch service.

Class 100. Matters pertaining to the administration of the U.S. Government, including its Foreign Service.

Class 200. Matters pertaining to the negotiation, application, and interpretation of extradition treaties and to individual extradition cases.

Class 300. Matters pertaining to the protection of U.S. private and national interests.

Class 400. Matters pertaining to the negotiation, application, and interpretation of treaties on claims and to individual claims cases.

Class 500. Matters of common interest to the governments or the people of several countries, such as international congresses and conferences, multilateral treaties, and the League of Nations.

Class 600. Matters pertaining to commerce, customs administration, and trade agreements.

Class 700. Matters pertaining to political relations of states, including diplomatic and consular representation and bilateral treaties, conventions, and agreements.

Class 800. Matters relating to the internal affairs of states, such as heads of governments, departments of governments, legislation, public welfare, finance, currency, commerce, transportation, mining, and forestry.

Publisher's Note: This collection comprises, in its entirety, the Scholarly Resources microfilm collection entitled *Records of the Department of State Relating to Political Relations between Latin America and the Caribbean States, 1930-1944.*