

**Wiesław Dobrzycki. *System międzyamerykański [The Inter-American System]*. Warszawa: Scholar, 2002, 550 pages. ISBN 83-88495-85-2.**

*For too long, Canadians have seen this hemisphere as our house; it is now time to make it our home.* (Joe Clark, Washington, 1989)

Not many people, especially in Europe, are aware that the idea of regional integration was born in the Americas, and that the Organization of American States (OAS) is the oldest regional institution in the United Nations system. Wiesław Dobrzycki's *Inter-American System* makes us aware that such an idea is over sixty years older in the Americas than in Europe. The lack of knowledge about this among Polish people was the main reason for the author to write his book. For me the book is particularly important because Dobrzycki has focused on the principles that link states in the Western hemisphere: their common identity and shared values, formed during the process of historical development.

*The Inter-American System* brings also some new concepts for scholars interested in Canadian Studies. It shows the process of changing attitudes toward an idea of institutionalizing the pan-American movement that finally led Canada to join the OAS in January 1990, thus becoming a full member of the most important regional organization in the Western hemisphere. Today the OAS consists of 35 members and 50 observers, and its main goals are strengthening regional peace and security, promoting democracy, and encouraging economic and social development.

The book consists of four main parts. The first two trace the origins of pan-Americanism, starting from Simon Bolivar and James Monroe and going on to concentrate on the rise of the inter-American system, which is defined by Dobrzycki as *a historically shaped institutional structure, organized around the Organization of American States and the common ground of cooperation to solve the main problems of the Western hemisphere*. The third part deals with the problems of that system: the development of democracy and the concept of human rights in Latin America, peace and safety issues, drugs smuggling and environment protection.

For people interested in Canadian Studies the last part of the book is especially important. Dobrzycki carefully analyzes the relationship of Canada to the inter-American system and the relations between Canada and the United States, to which the author pays special attention, distinguishing it as a separate subsystem. Dobrzycki familiarizes readers with the huge progress that took place in over two hundred years of mutual relations. This distinctive Canadian-American subsystem is characterized by unprecedented peaceful relations (especially after 1871). The myth of the longest undefended border in the world still exists in both countries. But from an overall inter-American perspective it is important to note how both countries have managed their conflicts. Appointing joint commissions, arbitration and peaceful dispute-solving are still the main tools used by the North American neighbours, dating back to the Rush-Bagot Treaty of 1817, which is frequently cited as the diplomatic origin of the concept of a friendly

international border, to the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 which established the International Joint Commission, the oldest of all Canadian-American intergovernmental organizations.

These experiences of bilateral relations were transferred to partners from Latin America and the Caribbean, bringing about many positive patterns for the Western hemisphere. Despite the fact that for 100 years Canada was not formally a full member of the pan-American movement and the inter-American system, its policy has shaped the regional system.

From Canada's point of view, the history of the inter-American system has at least three periods. The first one started with the establishment of the International Union of American Republics (IUAR) in 1890 and ended when Canada emerged as a sovereign state with the Westminster Statute of 1931, which gave formal recognition to the autonomy of the dominions of the British Empire and established the British Commonwealth of Nations. In this stage Canada was not allowed to become a part of this organization because the main opponent to this, the United States, recognized its northern neighbour as a "British agent" that did not conduct its own foreign policy. Secondly, the IUAR was an anti-colonial organization whose nature was stressed in its name; it was union of republics, a form of government that was very important symbolically for the young Latin American states.

The second period started after WWII, when Canada tried to act as an "interpreter and mediator", and additionally wanted to operate on a global scale. It rejected the possibility of participating in the regional organization. At that time Canada feared becoming a kind of "stalking horse" in the relationship between the USA and the Latin American states in the Cold War world. Canada saw the OAS as a tool in the hands of the USA to be used for fighting Communism in the region. The Canadian stance on the origins of Communism was also different. In regard to this point, Canada agreed with the Latin American states, not with the USA. The difference of views existed until the end of the Cold War. Besides, it seems to be important that this stage was also the time when Canada in general discovered the second continent in the Western hemisphere.

The third and the last period started with the beginning of Brian Mulroney's term in office and has lasted until the present. One of Mulroney's main priorities was to restore good relations with Canada's southern neighbour. In addition to committing itself to closer relations with the USA, Canada also wanted to have an area for political and economic manoeuvre. It was decided that America south of the Rio Grande would be the best place for this. The search for a more active Canadian presence in the Americas also brought renewed interest in inter-American institutions. The Canadian decision was also influenced by integration trends all over the world. The most advanced model – in Europe – was viewed as a threat in the future. The FTA and subsequent participation in NAFTA was the only logical continuation of a policy that saw closer integration with the Western hemisphere. The planned Free Trade Area of the Americas – a free trade zone from Alaska to the Land of Fire – could be a strong counterweight to the United Europe. It seems that in this way Canada has sealed her fate as a member of the Americas.

As I have suggested, *The Inter-American System* is an indispensable book for Polish readers. It has only a few minor imprecise statements. For example on page 277 the author suggests that at the end of the eighteenth century Canada was inhabited by a majority of British Loyalists. The truth is that in 1784 more than 110,000 people lived in the former French colonies and the total number of British Loyalists reached a maximum of 40,000. A similarly imprecise statement can be found on page 303, which suggests that there is still a Department of External Affairs in Canada. In fact, in 1995 its name was changed to the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

Wiesław Dobrzycki has brought a new approach to changing relations in the Americas after the Cold War, something that has been missing in other publications. What makes this book even more valuable are the 44 source texts at the end of the book, which are very useful for studying international relations in the western hemisphere. For Canadianists interested in politics, the book is a must.

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