As World War II reached its final stages, the United States turned its attention to the problems of European devastation, recognition of the Soviet Union as a super power, and the advent of the nuclear age with the atomic explosions over Japan. These critical themes saturated news coverage, while other, less dramatic, issues were relegated to secondary status. Inter-American questions fell under this latter category, and while the shift in priorities was understandable, that did not lessen Latin American complaints that the United States had abandoned hemispheric solidarity for Great Power collaboration.

This allegation found many supporters, but it was oversimplified. Two prime ingredients made the Good Neighbor possible, and they had started gradually to fade before the end of the fighting. The first was the depression, which severely inhibited international intercourse and encouraged the United States to expand its regional initiatives. The return to prosperity coupled with the American commitment to world order struck a heavy blow against hemispheric exclusiveness. The second factor was the change in the Democratic leadership. Roosevelt, Hull, Welles, Duggan, and Rockefeller—each for his own motives—worked energetically to make Pan-American solidarity a foreign policy imperative. When these personalities had their opportunity to shape diplomacy, they acted aggressively to assure that inter-American programs would be taken into consideration.

Truman faced a new set of circumstances. He not only had to solve problems brought on by the war, but he also had to assemble a staff. Once the United Nations charter was signed, the president replaced Stettinius with James Byrnes, a staunch Democrat and popular figure with Congress who knew little about foreign affairs in general and the Americas in particular. By the end of the summer, the new secretary had fired Rockefeller and selected Spruille Braden to assume his duties. Finally, in 1946, Berle left his ambassadorship in Brazil. With his departure the last character who had played a leading part in directing the regional effort left the diplomatic service.¹

The removal or retirement of those connected with Roosevelt’s Latin American policies added to the Good Neighbor’s demise, but even as early as
March 1945 Mexican historian Daniel Cosío Villegas asserted: "There are hundreds of causes that array the Latin Americans against the Yankees. In the present circumstance of the war, this dislike is hidden or curbed; but once the war is over, it will break loose like an irresponsible wave." Events like the Great Depression, the Roosevelt presidency, and the worldwide confrontation, which had united the Western Hemisphere, had disappeared.

During 1945 United States diplomats discussed the inter-American scene. Several individuals were overly optimistic about maintaining the Good Neighbor momentum. Others saw the transitional nature of the postwar era. In this critical time the United States would have to meet domestic Latin American challenges as well as external threats. The slogans and stereotypes flung at the Nazi menace started to be transferred to the Communists. To combat this potential infiltration, many experts urged social, economic, and military assistance, but they did not realize that other international concerns had pushed regional ones to inferior standing.

Braden took office in the midst of these crosscurrents. Although he had served well under the Roosevelt administration in several hemispheric assignments, he did not participate in the formulation of broad diplomatic strategy, nor was he suited temperamentally to direct the entire regional effort. Besides these limitations Braden was unfamiliar with Truman's pledge at the San Francisco meeting to convene an inter-American gathering that autumn to turn the Act of Chapultepec into a treaty. Without this background Braden chose to cancel the expected conference and in doing so reneged on a presidential promise.

While Braden's decisions contributed to hemispheric disenchantment, they were symptomatic of a larger malady. The Good Neighbor had grown as the result of a reduced global commitment, for the economic havoc created by the depression diminished interaction with European and Asian states. Just as this situation opened Latin America for a major diplomatic thrust, the postwar emphasis on globalism pushed Latin America to lesser importance.

The reasons for Pan American retrenchment were not understood; frustration and recrimination surfaced; critics alleged that the United States had deserted its hemispheric emphasis. Henry Wallace by the summer of 1948 accused Truman of financing Latin American dictators while social conditions in the region worsened. Samuel Inman, who had carefully watched the Good Neighbor's rise and fall, wrote to Secretary of State Dean Acheson in early 1949 to suggest several steps toward a hemispheric reorientation. Inman's recommendations were, in effect, a call for the return of those practices that made the Good Neighbor operational: the selection of an experienced individual to become assistant secretary of state in charge of inter-American matters, restoration of close consultation, stronger cultural programs, and increased economic aid to raise regional living standards. Acheson answered
this letter and promised action wherever necessary, but Inman was dubious. The Truman administration focused on other areas at Latin America's expense. Few publicly were willing to concede the obvious—concerns elsewhere preempted Pan Americanism.\textsuperscript{5}

By the early 1950s Welles lamented: "If President Roosevelt had lived and had been in good health during the years immediately after the end of the war we would face a very different world today."\textsuperscript{6} Within this nostalgic context was the realization that Roosevelt had died before making the transition from war to peace in his regional programs. Writers have minutely dissected his role in the victory over the Axis but have virtually ignored the far more subtle struggle to maintain hemispheric allegiance. Here the president displayed sophistication seldom demonstrated by the White House. He won public acceptance for the Good Neighbor by establishing broad guidelines, ending military intervention, and molding actions like the security zone and the no-transfer declaration to fit into his anti-Hitler crusade. While he skillfully carried out these political objectives, his economic understanding was limited. His bilateral solutions for Cuban financial difficulties in 1933 and the Mexican oil expropriation were naive. His multilateral proposals for airport beacon lights at the Montevideo conference as well as his suggestion for a marketing cartel after the collapse of France were inappropriate. This hazy conceptualization of inter-American economic affairs was the president's principal weakness, and this issue also plagued the Truman years. Yet economic miscalculations were minimized when compared to the overall achievement. Roosevelt brought Latin America to the limelight as no chief executive before him had. If any period can be labeled the golden age of Pan American cooperation, the Roosevelt presidency deserves to be so labeled.

Hull never understood the Good Neighbor's scope. His massive memoirs are a testament to his lack of comprehension, but he was writing a defense of his tenure—not history. His reconstruction of hemispheric happenings placed him the center, while in fact he normally deferred to Welles's judgment. The secretary overemphasized the importance of the reciprocal trade agreements program and neglected the complex economic measures like the Export-Import Bank and the commodity agreements that laid the basis for wartime trade. Hull discussed his Argentine antipathy but was incapable of unraveling the basic causes for these strained bilateral relations. Lastly, the secretary deliberately dismissed Welles's vital position. As a result of slanted views, Hull's reflections distorted reality. His main purpose was not leading, but mirroring the public's cautious mood, moderating overly ambitious presidential schemes, and standing before his countrymen as the diplomatic representative who reassured them of the Good Neighbor's value.\textsuperscript{7}

Welles occupied a different place within the State Department. His main attribute was finding answers to complicated questions, and he fit solutions into a broad political framework established by Roosevelt or the reciprocity
project preached by Hull. The undersecretary's deficiencies were professional as well as personal. His bisexuality was the direct cause for dismissal, but his egocentrism had a far more lasting impact. He generally did not confide in others and refused to share responsibility—only he had the answers. Because of this attitude, Welles did not even attempt to win widespread approval for the Good Neighbor within the diplomatic corps to guarantee continuity.⁸

Duggan was Welles's closest associate. He shared many similar views but had a slightly different perspective. Duggan felt that only a few foreign service officers embraced hemispheric cooperation, and that the public lacked a deep understanding. Despite these factors he took pride in laying the foundations for wider regional contacts and assisting Latin American countries in making notable advances in human rights. He hoped that the United States would recognize the desirability of continuing to aid developing American states, and he urged patience in reaching that goal. Pan Americanism, after all, was still in its infancy and needed nourishment to mature. A pessimistic note also crept into Duggan's thinking. Progressive measures needed continual reinforcement, but the United States was not willing to pay the necessary price. Because large sums to expand hemispheric programs were not being allocated, collaboration was vanishing and so was the hope for the future.⁹

Toward the end of the 1960s Rockefeller confirmed Duggan's fears. "With the present United States government structure," Rockefeller asserted, "Western Hemispheric policy can neither be soundly formulated nor effectively carried out."¹⁰ Inter-American projects were too decentralized; the State Department, for example, controlled less than half of them. The former assistant secretary wanted to establish clear national objectives for the region, create a secretary for Western Hemispheric affairs, and place a staff director inside of the executive offices to handle economic and social development. These recommendations were not enacted, but even if they had been, they would not be effective without strong presidential leadership.

Those who had shaped the Good Neighbor described many of the specific reasons for its rise and subsequent decline. Yet those experts like Welles, Duggan, and Rockefeller, who were so closely associated with the policy, ignored the fundamental causes for its success. First, the unique setting created by the depression gave the United States a chance to pursue an aggressive hemispheric program. Second, the president established the general approach and encouraged his regional assistants, who had direct access to the White House, to carry out the broad commitment. The Good Neighbor emerged as the result of the merger of both forces. Since 1945 American presidents have reached around the globe to influence world events, but in large part, they have neglected the Western Hemisphere, with tragic consequences. The lessons of the Good Neighbor have been forgotten.