

**MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT  
OF THE REPUBLIC ON  
OPENING THE ARGENTINE  
CONGRESS IN MAY, 1903**

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Message of the President of the Republic on Opening the Argentine Congress in May, 1903 by  
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**JULIO A. ROCA**

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OF THE  
**Argentine Congress**  
IN  
MAY 1903



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**Gentlemen, Senators and Deputies:**

Congress, this year, opens its Sessions finding the Republic, free from fears or misunderstandings of interior or exterior complications or dangers; considered by other nations growing and vigorously developing midst a prosperous and flourishing situation. The crisis has been as painful as it has been prolonged, but we have known how to suffer and overcome bad times and disasters by force of perseverance and solidity, acquiring thereby knowledge and experience which we should utilize in the future.

An era of real and positive progress has commenced. The country is full of confidence in its own strength and devotes itself energetically to reproductive labor. Capital is returning on a considerable scale, and with satisfaction we see Argentine credit in the European markets completely reestablished, which is the most powerful agent of our wealth and civilization.

The abundant crops, with which we have been favored and which evoke the recollections of biblical blessings, have stimulated in all spheres the spirit of enterprise, which will acquire fresh impulse in view of the prospects of a more beneficent and fruitful year. Industrial, com-

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mercial and financial life is regaining its former vigour. Imports show more movement; exports reach proportions hitherto unknown; the revenue is increasing and there is a marked reaction in all businesses.

Our relations with other Sovereign States have been cordially extended and from the extremity of the globe, representatives of nations belonging to different races and institutions have arrived, bringing us their friendly and sympathetic wishes; a recognition and expression towards a period of concord and human unity.

You are aware, that in spite of our boundary dispute with Chile being submitted to the arbitration of His Britannic Majesty's Government, rivalries and reciprocal mistrust continued between the two nations, embittered, by inevitable incidents, pertaining to such long litigation and so extended a frontier. In a really critical moment, the two Governments spoke out, conscious of their duties and responsibilities and rising superior to all mistrust and rivalry, arrived at the celebration of the compacts of May, which included general arbitration, equalization of the fleets and the designation of the same arbitrator to fix on the spot the divisional line which the definitive award might prescribe.

These compacts which received, after enlightened debate, the sanction of the Hon. Congress and which moreover were unanimously consecrated by opinion constitute a great example and lesson, applauded by the whole world; these compacts prepared the ground and ended by predisposing the two nations to receive with respectful adherence the award of His Britannic Majesty, which put an end to the arduous controversy, of more than half a century. The two nations have suddenly seen disappear without loss of dignity the great dangers to which the old dispute exposed them with its suite of agitations and conti-

nuous anxieties. They have imbued themselves with the meaning of that great act to which they had beforehand submitted, understanding that they should place themselves above all observation that might weaken superior authority and the transcendency of that award wherein results the spirit of equity and justice which the Arbitrator has obeyed.

I have now here to state the debt of gratitude we have contracted towards His Britannic Majesty who with such good will accepted the occasion of rendering this eminent service to the two nations, which thanks to him, henceforward, recognize the same line of demarcation.

When the moment arrived to carry into effect the mission with which the Arbitrator was provisionally invested by one of the said compacts, he proceeded about it with exceptional celerity, as if to compensate for so much tension and prolonged expectancy in the past. The Commissioners charged with the material demarcation of the frontier have already returned after concluding their work. The land marks nailed to the Cordillera, not only signalize the limits of the two sister nations, but will be at the same time the indestructible monument testifying hereafter how, in this part of America, the most noble aspirations and ideals of the right of peoples have been realized.

The results of this policy commence to be felt. The two nations have drawn near to each other and this movement has sufficed to dispel unjust forewarnings and to base our future relations on reciprocal esteem and respect.

Commerce restrained and languishing in both countries is returning to its accustomed channels, and on all sides the arts of civilization and peace are reviving.

The Argentine Republic has once more shown in the compacts of May and their loyal execution the elevation



and traditional disinterestedness of her international policy.

America has recently felt emotion by the motive of intervention carried out by some European nations in Venezuela. Among the causes invoked figure the arrears in the service of the debt contracted by that nation in order to execute public works. This made it to be supposed that when foreign citizens or subjects contract loans of public nature the State to which they belong is also a part of those operations although the lenders may not have reckoned on that intervention and might have well calculated the circumstances of each country in order to fix the conditions of the operation. Private contract would thus become converted into an obligation between States.

It appeared to me that in this case a dangerous doctrine would be established in front of which I should not remain indifferent. It is already public, the Note in which this Government expressed to that of the United States its opinions respecting the action developing in the Carribean Sea.

It was limited to pointing out the dangers which, for the nations of this Continent, the doctrine contains, by virtue of which Loans of a public nature, contracted with foreign citizens or subjects, taking into account the conditions of each country and imposing by arrangement with them clauses more or less onerous, and interest rates more or less high, can be converted at a given moment, without bad faith intervening, into a cause for international offence, which authorises the employment of force, the occupation of American territory and the subordination and tutelage of local governments, if not their total disappearance, by means of financial interventions. The comments advanced on learning the terms and aim of that communication were not at first favorable, but as soon as they

became known, opinion reacted both in Europe and America, it being found justifiable and moreover recognized that under such circumstances, we were bound to assume that attitude.

The Argentine Note, in reality resumes itself into enouncing elemental principles which comprise the indisputable right of these nationalities to grow and develop under the protection of international law. The doctrine does not exclude any of the obligations imposed on civilized nations by peoples rights, neither does it recognize priorities, nor attenuating responsibilities therefore. Limiting itself to affirm the sovereignty of the people it expresses at same time the commotions and alarms which would arise among them through any act of colonization or conquest in a region of this Continent.

The Reply of the United States Government agrees fundamentally with these declarations and recommends international arbitration in the settlement of questions arising from national obligations.

Though that Government has given no decision in respect of compulsory collection of the public debt, and neither was it solicited in any form, yet it is evidently satisfactory that the Argentine Note produced effect; authorized and eloquent voices having been raised in support of our same doctrine, even in the English Parliament.

In short it has been understood that the Republic did not go in search of protection or alliances, but limited herself to plainly and fully express ideas motivated by the European intervention in a section of this Continent, which has more than once been convoked to hear the opinion of its States and consequently to establish the basis of a common right.

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In internal Government, the Republic progresses within the orbit of fundamental institutions, without anything extraordinary having occurred to alter the relations, daily more consolidated, between the National and Provincial Governments and of the latter among themselves. Founded as they are on the base of a reciprocal liberty of action, within the limits of our federal system, the general rule of the most prudent criterion is, doubtless, not to modify them, except in cases provided by the Constitution for powers and forms it has created and in all of these with a clear application of principles already well defined in our experience of a half century.

The intervention, of the National Government in the Province of Buenos Aires in February and March last and its abstention, in the request addressed by the ex Governor of La Rioja, excluded from office by the local legislature, events which took place almost at the same time, have been solved by the Executive using its own attributions subject to constitutional principles and forms that govern each case and in presence of the circumstances of the moment, which in a great measure decide the action of political powers.

With respect to the National territories, where activity possesses a vast and fertile field of action, their economic growth is visible and their prosperity beyond doubt, owing to great natural wealth and the improved facilities of access and communication they offer through the progress of the country and the efforts of the Government.

The Executive has again studied the position and necessities of the Territories in general and in particular, and persists in believing, as necessary, the revision of the organic law of 1884. That reform was already proposed to Your Honorable Chambers by the Executive in the Message and project of the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 1900 in which I have