

THE MONROE DOCTRINE AND THE PANAMA CANAL

THE ELEVENTH INSTALLMENT OF
"CHAPTERS OF A POSSIBLE AUTOBIOGRAPHY"

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In The Outlook of November 22 we published the first of the autobiographical chapters which Mr. Roosevelt devotes to the Presidency. We here print another, containing his interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine and his story of the Panama Canal, and in the issue of The Outlook for December 27 we shall print the final chapter, entitled "The Peace of Righteousness," which discusses the Russo-Japanese Treaty, the tour of the American naval fleet around the world, and his philosophy of war and peace. In other chapters of the Autobiography, which will be found in the volume just published by the Macmillan Company, Mr. Roosevelt describes his relation to the development of the Conservation movement, the regulation of the trusts, the great coal strike, and his policies and beliefs regarding controversies between labor and capital. The volume also contains appendices and documents which have not appeared in the serial publication in the pages of The Outlook. For these details we refer our readers to the book itself, which is valuable both as a personal narrative and as a documentary interpretation of the development of American political and social life since the Civil War. In this latter respect it deserves to be compared with Mr. Bryce's "The American Commonwealth."—THE EDITORS.

AS a legacy of the Spanish War we were left with peculiar relations to the Philippines, Cuba, and Porto Rico, and with an immensely added interest in Central America and the Caribbean Sea. As regards the Philippines my belief was that we should train them for self-government as rapidly as possible, and then leave them free to decide their own fate. I did not believe in setting the time limit within which we would give them independence, because I did not believe it wise to try to forecast how soon they would be fit for self-government; and once having made the promise I would have felt that it was imperative to keep it. Within a few months of my assuming office we had stamped out the last armed resistance in the Philippines that was not of merely sporadic character; and as soon as peace was secured we turned our energies to developing the islands in the interests of the natives. We established schools everywhere; we built roads; we administered an even-handed justice; we did everything possible to encourage agriculture and industry; and in constantly increasing measure we employed natives to do their own governing, and finally provided a legislative chamber. No higher grade of public officials ever handled the affairs of any colony than the public officials who in succession governed the Philippines.

With the possible exception of the Sudan, and not even excepting Algiers, I know of no country ruled and administered by men of the white race where that rule and that administration have been exercised so emphatically with an eye single to the welfare of the natives themselves. The English and Dutch administrators of Malaysia have done admirable work; but the profit to the Europeans in those states has always been one of the chief elements considered; whereas in the Philippines our whole attention was concentrated upon the welfare of the Filipinos themselves, if anything to the neglect of our own interests.

In Cuba, as in the Philippines and as in Porto Rico, Santo Domingo, and later in Panama, no small part of our success was due to the fact that we put in the highest grade of men as public officials. This practice was inaugurated under President McKinley. I found admirable men in office, and I continued them and appointed men like them as their successors. The way that the custom-houses in Santo Domingo were administered by Colton definitely established the success of our experiment in securing peace for that island republic; and in Porto Rico, under the administration of affairs under such officials as Hunt, Winthrop, Post, Ward, and Grahame, more substantial prog-

ress was achieved in a decade than in any previous century.

The Philippines, Cuba, and Porto Rico came within our own sphere of governmental action. In addition to this we asserted certain rights in the Western Hemisphere under the Monroe Doctrine. My endeavor was not only to assert these rights, but frankly and fully to acknowledge the duties that went with the rights.

The Monroe Doctrine lays down the rule that the Western Hemisphere is not hereafter to be treated as subject to settlement and occupation by Old World powers. It is not international law; but it is a cardinal principle of our foreign policy. There is no difficulty at the present day in maintaining this doctrine, save where the American power whose interest is threatened has shown itself in international matters both weak and delinquent. The great and prosperous civilized commonwealths, such as the Argentine, Brazil, and Chile, in the southern half of South America, have advanced so far that they no longer stand in any position of tutelage toward the United States. They occupy toward us precisely the position that Canada occupies. Their friendship is the friendship of equals for equals. My view was that as regards these nations there was no more necessity for asserting the Monroe Doctrine than there was to assert it in regard to Canada. They were competent to assert it for themselves. Of course if one of these nations, or if Canada, should be overcome by some Old World power, which then proceeded to occupy its territory, we would undoubtedly, if the American nation needed our help, give it in order to prevent such occupation from taking place. But the initiative would come from the nation itself, and the United States would merely act as a friend whose help was invoked.

The case was (and is) widely different as regards certain—not all—of the tropical states in the neighborhood of the Caribbean Sea. Where these states are stable and prosperous, they stand on a footing of absolute equality with all other communities. But some of them have been a prey to such continuous revolutionary misrule as to have grown impotent either to do their duties to outsiders or to enforce their rights against outsiders. The United States has not the slightest desire to make aggressions on any one of these states. On the contrary, it will submit to much from them without showing

resentment. If any great civilized power, Russia or Germany, for instance, had behaved toward us as Venezuela under Castro behaved, this country would have gone to war at once. We did not go to war with Venezuela merely because our people declined to be irritated by the actions of a weak opponent, and showed a forbearance which probably went beyond the limits of wisdom in refusing to take umbrage at what was done by the weak; although we would certainly have resented it had it been done by the strong. In the case of two states, however, affairs reached such a crisis that we had to act. These two states were Santo Domingo and the then owner of the Isthmus of Panama, Colombia.

The Santo Domingan case was the less important; and yet it possessed a real importance, and, moreover, is instructive because the action there taken should serve as a precedent for American action in all similar cases. During the early years of my Administration Santo Domingo was in its usual condition of chronic revolution. There was always fighting, always plundering; and the successful graspers for governmental power were always pawning ports and custom-houses, or trying to put them up as guarantees for loans. Of course the foreigners who made loans under such conditions demanded exorbitant interest, and if they were Europeans expected their Governments to stand by them. So utter was the disorder that on one occasion when Admiral Dewey landed to pay a call of ceremony on the President, he and his party were shot at by revolutionists in crossing the square, and had to return to the ships, leaving the call unpaid. There was default on the interest due to the creditors; and finally the latter insisted upon their governments intervening. Two or three of the European powers were endeavoring to arrange for concerted action, and I was finally notified that these powers intended to take and hold several of the seaports which held custom-houses.

This meant that unless I acted at once I would find foreign powers in partial possession of Santo Domingo, in which event the very individuals who in the actual event deprecated the precaution taken to prevent such action would have advocated extreme and violent measures to undo the effect of their own supineness. Nine-tenths of wisdom is to be wise in time, and at the right time; and my whole foreign policy was based on the exer-

cise of intelligent forethought and of decisive action sufficiently far in advance of any likely crisis to make it improbable that we would run into serious trouble.

Santo Domingo had fallen into such chaos that once for some weeks there were two rival governments in it, and a revolution was being carried on against each. At one period one government was at sea in a small gunboat, but still stoutly maintained that it was in possession of the island and entitled to make loans and declare peace or war. The situation had become intolerable by the time that I interfered. There was a naval commander in the waters whom I directed to prevent any fighting which might menace the custom-houses. He carried out his orders, both to his and my satisfaction, in thoroughgoing fashion. On one occasion, when an insurgent force threatened to attack a town in which Americans had interests, he notified the commanders on both sides that he would not permit any fighting in the town, but that he would appoint a certain place where they could meet and fight it out, and that the victors should have the town. They agreed to meet his wishes, the fight came off at the appointed place, and the victors, who, if I remember rightly, were the insurgents, were given the town.

It was the custom-houses that caused the trouble, for they offered the only means of raising money, and the revolutions were carried on to get possession of them. Accordingly I secured an agreement with the governmental authorities who for the moment seemed best able to speak for the country, by which these custom-houses were placed under American control. The arrangement was that we should keep order and prevent any interference with the custom-houses or the places where they stood, and should collect the revenues. Forty-five per cent of the revenue was then turned over to the Santo Domingan Government, and fifty-five per cent put in a sinking fund in New York for the benefit of the creditors. The arrangement worked in capital style. On the forty-five per cent basis the Santo Domingan Government received from us a larger sum than it had ever received before when nominally all the revenue went to it. The creditors were entirely satisfied with the arrangement, and no excuse for interference by European powers remained. Occasional disturbances occurred in the island, of course, but on the whole there ensued a degree of

peace and prosperity which the island had not known before for at least a century.

All this was done without the loss of a life, with the assent of all the parties in interest, and without subjecting the United States to any charge, while practically all of the interference, after the naval commander whom I have mentioned had taken the initial steps in preserving order, consisted in putting a first-class man trained in our insular service at the head of the Santo Domingan customs service. We secured peace, we protected the people of the islands against foreign foes, and we minimized the chance of domestic trouble. We satisfied the creditors and the foreign nations to which the creditors belonged; and our own part of the work was done with the utmost efficiency and with rigid honesty, so that not a particle of scandal was ever so much as hinted at.

The Constitution did not explicitly give me power to bring about the necessary agreement with Santo Domingo. But the Constitution did not forbid my doing what I did. I put the agreement into effect, and I continued its execution for two years before the Senate acted; and I would have continued it until the end of my term, if necessary, without any action by Congress. But it was far preferable that there should be action by Congress, so that we might be proceeding under a treaty which was the law of the land and not merely by a direction of the Chief Executive which would lapse when that particular executive left office. I therefore did my best to get the Senate to ratify what I had done. There was a good deal of difficulty about it. And the Senate adjourned without any action at all, and with a feeling of entire self-satisfaction at having left the country in the position of assuming a responsibility and then failing to fulfill it. Apparently the Senators in question felt that in some way they had upheld their dignity. All that they had really done was to shirk their duty. Somebody had to do that duty, and accordingly I did it. I went ahead and administered the proposed treaty anyhow, considering it a simple agreement on the part of the Executive which would be converted into a treaty whenever the Senate acted. After a couple of years the Senate did act, having previously made some utterly unimportant changes which I ratified and persuaded Santo Domingo to ratify. In all its history Santo Domingo has had nothing happen to it as fortunate as this treaty, and

the passing of it saved the United States from having to face serious difficulties with one or more foreign powers.

By far the most important action I took in foreign affairs during the time I was President related to the Panama Canal. Here again there was much accusation about my having acted in an "unconstitutional" manner—a position which can be upheld only if Jefferson's action in acquiring Louisiana be also treated as unconstitutional; and at different stages of the affair believers in a do-nothing policy denounced me as having "usurped authority"—which meant, that when nobody else could or would exercise efficient authority, I exercised it.

During the nearly four hundred years that had elapsed since Balboa crossed the Isthmus, there had been a good deal of talk about building an Isthmus canal, and there had been various discussions of the subject and negotiations about it in Washington for the previous half-century. So far it had all resulted merely in conversation; and the time had come when unless somebody was prepared to act with decision we would have to resign ourselves to at least half a century of further conversation. Under the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty, signed shortly after I became President, and thanks to our negotiations with the French Panama Company, the United States at last acquired a possession, so far as Europe was concerned, which warranted her in immediately undertaking the task. It remained to decide where the Canal should be, whether along the line already pioneered by the French Company in Panama, or in Nicaragua. Panama belonged to the Republic of Colombia. Nicaragua bid eagerly for the privilege of having the United States build the Canal through her territory. As long as it was doubtful which route we would decide upon, Colombia extended every promise of friendly co-operation: at the Pan-American Congress in Mexico her delegate joined in the unanimous vote which requested the United States forthwith to build the Canal; and at her eager request we negotiated the Hay-Herran Treaty with her, which gave us the right to build the Canal across Panama. A board of experts sent to the Isthmus had reported that this route was better than the Nicaragua route, and that it would be well to build the Canal over it provided we could purchase the rights of the French Company for forty million dollars; but that otherwise they would advise

taking the Nicaragua route. Ever since 1846 we had had a treaty with the power then in control of the Isthmus, the Republic of New Granada, the predecessor of the Republic of Colombia and of the present Republic of Panama, by which treaty the United States was guaranteed free and open right of way across the Isthmus of Panama by any mode of communication that might be constructed, while in return our Government guaranteed the perfect neutrality of the Isthmus with a view to the preservation of free transit.

For nearly fifty years we had asserted the right to prevent the closing of this highway of commerce. Secretary of State Cass in 1858 officially stated the American position, as follows:

"Sovereignty has its duties as well as its rights, and none of these local governments, even if administered with more regard to the just demands of other nations than they have been, would be permitted, in a spirit of Eastern isolation, to close the gates of intercourse of the great highways of the world, and justify the act by the pretension that these avenues of trade and travel belong to them and that they choose to shut them, or, what is almost equivalent, to encumber them with such unjust relations as would prevent their general use."

We had again and again been forced to intervene to protect the transit across the Isthmus, and the intervention was frequently at the request of Colombia herself. The effort to build a canal by private capital had been made under de Lesseps and had resulted in lamentable failure. Every serious proposal to build the canal in such manner had been abandoned. The United States had repeatedly announced that we would not permit it to be built or controlled by any Old World government. Colombia was utterly impotent to build it herself. Under these circumstances it had become a matter of imperative obligation that we should build it ourselves without further delay.

I took final action in 1903. During the preceding fifty-three years the Governments of New Granada and of its successor, Colombia, had been in a constant state of flux; and the State of Panama had sometimes been treated as almost independent, in a loose federal league, and sometimes as the mere property of the Government at Bogota; and there had been innumerable appeals to arms, sometimes for adequate, sometimes for inad-

equate, reasons. The following is a partial list of the disturbances on the Isthmus of Panama during the period in question, as reported to us by our consuls. It is not possible to give a complete list, and some of the reports that speak of "revolutions" must mean unsuccessful revolutions:

May 22, 1850. Outbreak; two Americans killed. War-vessel demanded to quell outbreak.

October, 1850. Revolutionary plot to bring about independence of the Isthmus.

July 22, 1851. Revolution in four southern provinces.

November 14, 1851. Outbreak at Chagres. Man-of-war requested for Chagres.

June 27, 1853. Insurrection at Bogota, and consequent disturbance on Isthmus. War-vessel demanded.

May 23, 1854. Political disturbances. War-vessel requested.

June 28, 1854. Attempted revolution.

October 24, 1854. Independence of Isthmus demanded by provincial legislature.

April, 1856. Riot, and massacre of Americans.

May 4, 1856. Riot.

May 18, 1856. Riot.

June 3, 1856. Riot.

October 2, 1856. Conflict between two native parties. United States force landed.

December 18, 1858. Attempted secession of Panama.

April, 1859. Riots.

September, 1860. Outbreak.

October 4, 1860. Landing of United States forces in consequence.

May 23, 1861. Intervention of the United States forces required by intendente.

October 2, 1861. Insurrection and civil war.

April 4, 1862. Measures to prevent rebels crossing Isthmus.

June 13, 1862. Mosquera's troops refused admittance to Panama.

March, 1865. Revolution, and United States troops landed.

August, 1865. Riots; unsuccessful attempt to invade Panama.

March, 1866. Unsuccessful revolution.

April, 1867. Attempt to overthrow Government.

August, 1867. Attempt at revolution.

July 5, 1868. Revolution; provisional government inaugurated.

August 29, 1868. Revolution; provisional government overthrown.

April, 1871. Revolution; followed apparently by counter-revolution.

April, 1873. Revolution and civil war which lasted to October, 1875.

August, 1876. Civil war which lasted until April, 1877.

July, 1878. Rebellion.

December, 1878. Revolt.

April, 1879. Revolution.

June, 1879. Revolution.

March, 1883. Riot.

May, 1883. Riot.

June, 1884. Revolutionary attempt.

December, 1884. Revolutionary attempt.

January, 1885. Revolutionary disturbances.

March, 1885. Revolution.

April, 1887. Disturbance on Panama Railroad.

November, 1887. Disturbance on line of Canal.

January, 1889. Riot.

January, 1895. Revolution which lasted until April.

March, 1895. Incendiary attempt.

October, 1899. Revolution.

February, 1900, to July, 1900. Revolution.

January, 1901. Revolution.

July, 1901. Revolutionary disturbances.

September, 1901. City of Colon taken by rebels.

March, 1902. Revolutionary disturbances.

July, 1902. Revolution.

The above is only a partial list of the revolutions, rebellions, insurrections, riots, and other outbreaks that occurred during the period in question; yet they number fifty-three for the fifty-three years, and they showed a tendency to increase, rather than decrease, in numbers and intensity. One of them lasted for nearly three years before it was quelled; another for nearly a year. In short, the experience of over half a century had shown Colombia to be utterly incapable of keeping order on the Isthmus. Only the active interference of the United States had enabled her to preserve so much as a semblance of sovereignty. Had it not been for the exercise by the United States of the police power in her interest, her connection with the Isthmus would have been sundered long before it was. In 1856, in 1860, in 1873, in 1885, in 1901, and again in 1902, sailors and marines from United States war-ships were obliged to land in order to patrol the Isthmus, to pro-

cell life and property, and to see that the transit across the Isthmus was kept open. In 1861, in 1862, in 1885, and in 1900, the Colombian Government asked that the United States Government would land troops to protect Colombian interests and maintain order on the Isthmus. The people of Panama during the preceding twenty years had three times sought to establish their independence by revolution or secession—in 1885, in 1895, and in 1899.

The peculiar relations of the United States toward the Isthmus, and the acquiescence by Colombia in acts which were quite incompatible with the theory of her having an absolute and unconditioned sovereignty on the Isthmus, are illustrated by the following three telegrams between two of our naval officers whose ships were at the Isthmus, and the Secretary of the Navy, on the occasion of the first outbreak that occurred on the Isthmus after I became President (a year before Panama became independent):

“September 12, 1902.

“*Ranger, Panama:*

“United States guarantees perfect neutrality of Isthmus and that a free transit from sea to sea be not interrupted or embarrassed. . . . Any transportation of troops which might contravene these provisions of treaty should not be sanctioned by you, nor should use of road be permitted which might convert the line of transit into theater of hostility.

“MOODY.”

“Colon, September 20, 1902.

“*Secretary Navy, Washington:*

“Everything is conceded. The United States guards and guarantees traffic and the line of transit. To-day I permitted the exchange of Colombian troops from Panama to Colon, about 1,000 men each way, the troops without arms in trains guarded by American naval force in the same manner as other passengers; arms and ammunition in separate train, guarded also by naval force in the same manner as other freight.

“MCLEAN.”

“Panama, October 3, 1902.

“*Secretary Navy, Washington, D. C.:*

“Have sent this communication to the American Consul at Panama:

“‘Inform Governor, while trains running under United States protection, I must decline transportation any combatants, ammunition, arms, which might cause interruption to traffic or convert line of transit into theater hostilities.’

CASEY.”

When the Government in nominal control of the Isthmus continually besought American interference to protect the “rights” it could not itself protect, and permitted our Government to transport Colombian troops unarmed, under protection of our own armed men, while the Colombian arms and ammunition came in a separate train, it is obvious that the Colombian “sovereignty” was of such a character as to warrant our insisting that, inasmuch as it existed only because of our protection, there should be in requital a sense of the obligations that the acceptance of this protection implied.

Meanwhile Colombia was under a dictatorship. In 1898 M. A. Sanclemente was elected President, and J. M. Maroquin Vice-President, of the Republic of Colombia. On July 31, 1900, the Vice-President, Maroquin, executed a *coup d'état* by seizing the person of the President, Sanclemente, and imprisoning him at a place a few miles out of Bogota. Maroquin thereupon declared himself possessed of the executive power because of “the absence of the President”—a delightful touch of unconscious humor. He then issued a decree that public order was disturbed, and, upon that ground, assumed to himself legislative power under another provision of the constitution; that is, having himself disturbed the public order, he alleged the disturbance as a justification for seizing absolute power. Thenceforth Maroquin, without the aid of any legislative body, ruled as a dictator, combining the supreme executive, legislative, civil, and military authorities, in the so-called Republic of Colombia. The “absence” of Sanclemente from the capital became permanent by his death in prison in the year 1902. When the people of Panama declared their independence in November, 1903, no Congress had sat in Colombia since the year 1890, except the special Congress called by Maroquin to reject the Canal treaty, and which did reject it by a unanimous vote, and adjourned without legislating on any other subject. The Constitution of 1886 had taken away from Panama the power of self-government and vested it in Colombia. The *coup d'état* of Maroquin took away from Colombia herself the power of government and vested it in an irresponsible dictator.

Consideration of the above facts ought to be enough to show any human being that we were not dealing with normal conditions on the Isthmus and in Colombia. We were dealing with the government of an irrespon-

sible alien dictator, and with a condition of affairs on the Isthmus itself which was marked by one uninterrupted series of outbreaks and revolutions. As, for the "consent of the governed" theory, that absolutely justified our action; the people on the Isthmus were the "governed;" they were governed by Colombia, without their consent, and they unanimously repudiated the Colombian government, and demanded that the United States build the Canal.

I had done everything possible, personally and through Secretary Hay, to persuade the Colombian Government to keep faith. Under the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty it was explicitly provided that the United States should build the Canal, should control, police, and protect it, and keep it open to the vessels of all nations on equal terms. We had assumed the position of guarantor of the Canal, including, of course, the building of the Canal, and of its peaceful use by all the world. The enterprise was recognized everywhere as responding to an international need. It was a mere travesty on justice to treat the government in possession of the Isthmus as having the right—which Secretary Cass forty-five years before had so emphatically repudiated—to close the gates of intercourse on one of the great highways of the world. When we submitted to Colombia the Hay-Herran Treaty, it had been settled that the time for delay, the time for permitting any government of anti-social character, or of imperfect development, to bar the work, had passed. The United States had assumed in connection with the Canal certain responsibilities not only to its own people, but to the civilized world, which imperatively demanded that there should be no further delay in beginning the work. The Hay-Herran Treaty, if it erred at all, erred in being overgenerous toward Colombia. The people of Panama were delighted with the treaty, and the President of Colombia, who embodied in his own person the entire government of Colombia, had authorized the treaty to be made. But after the treaty had been made the Colombia Government thought it had the matter in its own hands, and the further thought, equally wicked and foolish, came into the heads of the people in control at Bogota that they would seize the French Company at the end of another year and take for themselves the forty million dollars which the United States had agreed to pay the Panama Canal Company.

President Maroquin, through his Minister, had agreed to the Hay-Herran Treaty in January, 1903. He had the absolute power of an unconstitutional dictator to keep his promise or break it. He determined to break it. To furnish himself an excuse for breaking it he devised the plan of summoning a Congress especially called to reject the Canal treaty. This the Congress—a Congress of mere puppets—did, without a dissenting vote, and the puppets adjourned forthwith without legislating on any other subject. The fact that this was a mere sham, and that the President had entire power to confirm his own treaty and act on it if he desired, was shown as soon as the revolution took place, for on November 6 General Reyes, of Colombia, addressed the American Minister at Bogota on behalf of President Maroquin, saying that "if the Government of the United States would land troops and restore the Colombian sovereignty" the Colombian President would "declare martial law, and, by virtue of vested constitutional authority, when public order is disturbed, would approve by decree the ratification of the Canal treaty as signed; or, if the Government of the United States prefers, would call an extra session of the Congress—with new and friendly members—next May to approve the treaty." This, of course, is proof positive that the Colombian dictator had used his Congress as a mere shield, and a sham shield at that, and it shows how utterly useless it would have been further to trust his good faith in the matter.

When, in August, 1903, I became convinced that Colombia intended to repudiate the treaty made the preceding January, under cover of securing its rejection by the Colombian Legislature, I began carefully to consider what should be done. By my direction Secretary Hay, personally and through the Minister at Bogota, repeatedly warned Colombia that grave consequences might follow her rejection of the treaty. The possibility of ratification did not wholly pass away until the close of the session of the Colombian Congress on the last day of October. There would then be two possibilities. One was that Panama would remain quiet. In that case I was prepared to recommend to Congress that we should at once occupy the Isthmus anyhow, and proceed to dig the Canal; and I had drawn out a draft of my message to this effect. But from the information I

received, I deemed it likely that there would be a revolution in Panama as soon as the Colombian Congress adjourned without ratifying the treaty, for the entire population of Panama felt that the immediate building of the Canal was of vital concern to their well-being. Correspondents of the different newspapers on the Isthmus had sent to their respective papers widely published forecasts indicating that there would be a revolution in such event.

Moreover, on October 16, at the request of Lieutenant-General Young, Captain Humphrey and Lieutenant Murphy, two army officers who had returned from the Isthmus, saw me and told me that there would unquestionably be a revolution on the Isthmus, that the people were unanimous in their criticism of the Bogota Government and their disgust over the failure of that Government to ratify the treaty, and that the revolution would probably take place immediately after the adjournment of the Colombian Congress. They did not believe that it would be before October 20, but they were confident that it would certainly come at the end of October or immediately afterwards, when the Colombian Congress had adjourned. Accordingly I directed the Navy Department to station various ships within easy reach of the Isthmus, to be ready to act in the event of need arising.

These ships were barely in time. On November 3 the revolution occurred. Practically everybody on the Isthmus, including all the Colombian troops that were already stationed there, joined in the revolution, and there was no bloodshed. But on that same day four hundred new Colombian troops were landed at Colon. Fortunately, the gunboat Nashville, under Commander Hubbard, reached Colon almost immediately afterwards, and when the commander of the Colombian forces threatened the lives and property of the American citizens, including women and children, in Colon, Commander Hubbard landed a few score sailors and marines to protect them. By a mixture of firmness and tact he not only prevented any assault on our citizens, but persuaded the Colombian commander to re-embark his troops for Cartagena. On the Pacific side a Colombian gunboat shelled the city of Panama, with the result of killing one Chinaman—the only life lost in the whole affair.

No one connected with the American Government had any part in preparing, inciting, or encouraging the revolution; and

except for the reports of our military and naval officers, which I forwarded to Congress, no one connected with the Government had any previous knowledge concerning the proposed revolution, except such as was accessible to any person who read the newspapers and kept abreast of current questions and current affairs. By the unanimous action of its people, and without the firing of a shot, the State of Panama declared themselves an independent republic. The time for hesitation on our part had passed.

My belief then was, and the events that have occurred since have more than justified it, that from the standpoint of the United States it was imperative, not only for civil but for military reasons, that there should be the immediate establishment of easy and speedy communication by sea between the Atlantic and the Pacific. These reasons were not of convenience only, but of vital necessity, and did not admit of indefinite delay. The action of Colombia had shown, not only that the delay would be indefinite, but that she intended to confiscate the property and rights of the French Panama Canal Company. The report of the Panama Canal Committee of the Colombian Senate on October 14, 1903, on the proposed treaty with the United States, proposed that all consideration of the matter should be postponed until October 31, 1904, when the next Colombian Congress would have convened, because by that time the new Congress would be in condition to determine whether through lapse of time the French company had not forfeited its property and rights. "When that time arrives," the report significantly declared, "the Republic, without any impediment, will be able to contract, and will be in more clear, more definite, and more advantageous possession, both legally and materially." The naked meaning of this was that Colombia proposed to wait a year, and then enforce a forfeiture of the rights and property of the French Panama Company, so as to secure the forty million dollars our Government had authorized as payment to this company. If we had sat supine, this would doubtless have meant that France would have interfered to protect the company, and we should then have had on the Isthmus, not the company, but France; and the gravest international complications might have ensued. Every consideration of international morality and expediency, of duty to the Panama people, and of satisfaction of our

own National interests and honor, and based on our take immediate action. I recognized Panama forthwith on behalf of the United States, and practically all the countries of the world immediately followed suit. The State Department immediately negotiated a Canal treaty with the new Republic. One of the foremost men in securing the independence of Panama, and the treaty which authorized the United States forthwith to build the Canal, was M. Philippe Bunau-Varilla, an eminent French engineer formerly associated with De Lesseps and then living on the Isthmus; his services to civilization were notable, and deserve the fullest recognition.

From the beginning to the end our course was straightforward and in absolute accord with the highest standards of international morality. Criticism of it can come only from misinformation, or else from a sentimentality which represents both mental weakness and a moral twist. To have acted otherwise than I did would have been on my part betrayal of the interests of the United States, indifference to the interests of Panama, and recreancy to the interests of the world at large. Colombia had forfeited every claim to consideration; indeed, this is not stating the case strongly enough; she had so acted that yielding to her would have meant on our part that culpable form of weakness which stands on a level with wickedness. As for me personally, if I had hesitated to act, and had not in advance discounted the clamor of those Americans who have made a fetish of disloyalty to their country, I should have esteemed myself as deserving a place in Dante's inferno beside the faint-hearted cleric who was guilty of "*il gran rifiuto*." The facts I have given above are mere bald statements from the record. They show that from the beginning there had been acceptance of our right to insist on free transit, in whatever form was best, across the Isthmus; and that towards the end there had been a no less universal feeling that it was our duty to the world to provide this transit in the shape of a canal—the resolution of the Pan-American Congress was practically a mandate to this effect.

We gave to the people of Panama self-government, and freed them from subjection to alien oppressors. We did our best to get Colombia to let us treat her with a more than generous justice; we exercised patience to beyond the verge of proper forbearance. When we did act and recognize Panama,

Colombia at once acknowledged her own guilt by promptly offering to do what we had demanded, and what she had protested it was not in her power to do. But the offer came too late. What we would gladly have done before, it had by that time become impossible for us honorably to do; for it would have necessitated our abandoning the people of Panama, our friends, and turning them over to their and our foes, who would have wreaked vengeance on them precisely because they had shown friendship to us. Colombia was solely responsible for her own humiliation; and she had not then, and has not now, one shadow of claim upon us, moral or legal; all the wrong that was done was done by her. If, as representing the American people, I had not acted precisely as I did, I would have been an unfaithful or incompetent representative; and inaction at that crisis would have meant not only indefinite delay in building the Canal, but also practical admission on our part that we were not fit to play the part on the Isthmus which we had arrogated to ourselves. I acted on my own responsibility in the Panama matter. John Hay spoke of this action as follows: "The action of the President in the Panama matter is not only in the strictest accordance with the principles of justice and equity, and in line with all the best precedents of our public policy, but it was the only course he could have taken in compliance with our treaty rights and obligations."

After a sufficient period of wrangling, the Senate ratified the treaty with Panama, and work on the Canal was begun. The first thing that was necessary was to decide the type of canal. I summoned a board of engineering experts, foreign and native. They divided on their report. The majority of the members, including all the foreign members, approved a sea-level canal. The minority, including most of the American members, approved a lock canal. Studying these conclusions, I came to the belief that the minority was right. The two great traffic canals of the world were the Suez and the Soo. The Suez Canal is a sea-level canal, and it was the one best known to European engineers. The Soo Canal, through which an even greater volume of traffic passes every year, is a lock canal, and the American engineers were thoroughly familiar with it; whereas, in my judgment, the European engineers had failed to pay proper heed to

the lessons taught by its operation and management. Moreover, the engineers who were to do the work at Panama all favored a lock canal. I came to the conclusion that a sea-level canal would be slightly less exposed to damage in the event of war; that the running expenses, apart from the heavy cost of interest on the amount necessary to build it, would be less; and that for small ships the time of transit would be less. But I also came to the conclusion that the lock canal at the proposed level would cost only about half as much to build and would be built in half the time, with much less risk; that for large ships the transit would be quicker, and that, taking into account the interest saved, the cost of maintenance would be less. Accordingly I recommended to Congress, on February 19, 1906, that a lock canal should be built, and my recommendation was adopted. Congress insisted upon having it built by a commission of several men. I tried faithfully to get good work out of the commission, and found it quite impossible; for a many-headed commission is an extremely poor executive instrument. At last I put Colonel Goethals in as head of the commission. Then, when Congress still refused to make the commission single-headed, I solved the difficulty by an executive order of January 6, 1908, which practically accomplished the object by enlarging the powers of the chair-

man, making all the other members of the commission dependent upon him, and thereby placing the work under one-man control. Dr. Gorgas had already performed an inestimable service by caring for the sanitary conditions so thoroughly as to make the Isthmus as safe as a health resort. Colonel Goethals proved to be the man of all others to do the job. It would be impossible to overstate what he has done. It is the greatest task of any kind that any man in the world has accomplished during the years that Colonel Goethals has been at work. It is the greatest task of its own kind that has ever been performed in the world at all. Colonel Goethals has succeeded in instilling into the men under him a spirit which elsewhere has been found only in a few victorious armies. It is proper and appropriate that, like the soldiers of such armies, they should receive medals which are allotted each man who has served for a sufficient length of time. A finer body of men has never been gathered by any nation than the men who have done the work of building the Panama Canal; the conditions under which they have lived and have done their work have been better than in any similar work ever undertaken in the tropics; they have all felt an eager pride in their work; and they have made not only America but the whole world their debtors by what they have accomplished.