

**PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT'S
COUP
D'ETAT: THE PANAMA
AFFAIR IN A NUTSHELL**

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President Roosevelt's Coup D'etat: The Panama Affair in a Nutshell by George L. Fox

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GEORGE L. FOX

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**President Roosevelt's
Coup d'Etat**

The Panama Affair in a Nutshell

**WAS IT RIGHT?
WILL THE CANAL PAY?**

**"I would rather be right than be President."
— Henry Clay.**

**"Party is always to be subordinated to Patriotism."
— George William Curtis.**

**"The true reformer appeals to Heaven's invisible justice against Earth's visible force."
— Carlyle.**

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GEORGE L. FOX
New Haven, Conn.
1904.

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"Moribus antiquis res stat Romana virisque."
—Ennius.

Observe good faith and justice towards all nations. Cultivate peace and harmony with all. Religion and morality enjoin this conduct and can it be that good policy does not equally enjoin it? It will be worthy of a free, enlightened and at no distant period a great nation to give to mankind the magnanimous and too novel example of a people always guided by an exalted justice and benevolence.

—Washington's Farewell Address.

To the Honorable Senate of the United States:

The undersigned, citizens of the United States, residents of the city of New Haven, without distinction of party, respectfully state:

That there is a recognized body of laws which ought to govern the conduct of nations

That the law is uniform, not one for the strong and another for the weak, but the same for all.

That a belief has arisen in the minds of many in this country and abroad that in our relations with the State of Colombia we have acted with undue haste; that we have violated and are about to violate the rules of international law; and that we are adopting a line of conduct towards that country which we would not take against a stronger power.

That the fact that Colombia, owing to its comparative weakness, is powerless to resist, demands of us the more caution to avoid the suspicion that we are making an unjust use of our greater power. The mere existence of such a suspicion is injurious to our honor and self-respect.

We respectfully ask that before the final ratification of the Hay-Varilla treaty, our action in Panama be subjected to careful and deliberate investigation, to the end, not only that the republic may do no wrong, but that its good repute in the world, which is dearer than any gain of lands or trade, should suffer no loss.

Dated at New Haven, this 24th day of December, A. D. 1903.

[From an article by Prof. Theodore S. Woolsey, Professor of International Law in Yale University, in *The Green Bag*, Jan. 1904.]

AN EXPERT'S OPINION.

Let us set together briefly the conclusions drawn from the considerations which have been presented.

(1) The hasty recognition of a new State in Panama was not in accordance with the law of nations.

(2) To justify it by the Treaty of 1846 requires a new and forced construction of that instrument.

(3) To prevent Colombian's coercion of Panama is an act of war.

(4) The "man in the street's" verdict, that our smart politics served Colombia right, disregards law, sets a dangerous precedent, detracts from the national dignity, and may injure our influence and trade amongst the Latin American States.

(5) Our duty was and is to let Colombia recover Panama if she can; our policy to use her troubles to get favorable canal action from the rightful sovereign.

(6) Our recognition, if persisted in, makes of Panama a treaty-making agent, but for ourselves only.

(7) The canal treaty, negotiated and ratified by the Junta, with no constitutional authority or other authorization, is of doubtful validity and the defect will need to be subsequently cured.

"Refusing to accept the shallow and discreditable pretense that our conquest in the Philippines has gone so far as to be beyond recall or correction, we insist that a nation as well as an individual is never so magnanimous or great as when false steps are retraced and the path of honesty and virtue regained."

GROVER CLEVELAND.

[*Extracts from article by C. F. Lummis in
Out West for December, 1903.*]

IN THE LION'S DEN.

So far as the Lion's limited observation of history runs, there was never precedent nor parallel for this Cæsarian recognition of a "Republic" before it was delivered. If England had recognized the Southern Confederacy by return mail after the firing on Sumter; if we had recognized the Boer Republic even two years after it had made the world's record for incomparable resistance; if—well, without "rubbing it in" any deeper, if any civilized or savage nation had ever before recognized a rebel "government" (using that term for convenience, of a Tooley-street movement which had no government, and hasn't one yet), there would perhaps not be so much left to say, in a material age wherein Honor does mighty well if it is ever heard from at all. But no man ever knew of the like before. We did not recognize our own Texas—where more Americans were killed by the Mexicans than Colombians have killed one another in twenty years—Q-U-I-T-E so precipitately. Monroe, of the Monroe Doctrine, was the President who recognized the Spanish-American colonies, which had revolted from Spain; but he took time to do it. It was in March, 1822, that he

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recognized the republics which by then had maintained war with Spain for from six to eleven years; and had proved, as he said, Spain's inability to subject them.

The Lion doesn't know much, but it does know Panama. It and Colon are the vermiform appendix of Columbia, in morals and in patriotism. They get their living by the inter-oceanic traffic. They are the Baxter street of Central America. There is not, the Lion believes, another tawny town in all Colombia that would sell its Motherland. No other population has had any hand or voice in this Declaration-of-Independence-for-What-There-is-in-It. The alleged "Republic" of Panama has neither head nor hands nor feet. All it has is its belly. Which is its god.

If in twenty years from now American genius shall have opened and maintained the Panama canal and realized one per cent. on the investment, the Lion will be glad to pull his own teeth at the first door-knob, and beg pardon of the Prophets.

But this is straying. It is only human judgment against the Future, which no man may safely promise. But the Past is open; and in all of it, the Lion fails to find the earlier case where the world's great model of self-government said to another friendly country, about knee-high to a respective grass-hopper: "Come, make a treaty giving me half what you have, or I'll take it all." Never before has a big republic said to a little one—almost as badly misgoverned—"If you try to put down,

in any of your towns, a riot that might Do Me Good, you have me to fight." Never before has the republic "recognized" a revolt before the mother country heard of it.

The Lion loves people who do not stutter on too many precedents when there is something vital to be done. But, after all, precedents sometimes have their uses. Government has been going on for some time—at least long enough for a consensus of governments to have invented International Law—which is merely the application to peoples of the most rudimentary and undisputed equities that rule as between man and man. And this Panama business is flat in the face of both. A "World Highway" sounds good—but it is poor walking if it must be paved with the broken tablets of a nation's honor.

No man, probably, is fool enough to question the President's courage; but neither is anyone so much a fool as to imagine for an instant that if Panama had been on British territory we should have got up before breakfast to recognize the toadstool republic of over-night, and to forbid England to land troops to put down her own riots. Nor would our warships (with extra marines) have been flocking to the spot before there was any revolution, to make sure that England *didn't* land police.

If no one else on earth cares to protest against the forgetting of fair play and against our recognition of a Graft Republic, the Lion is content to be one. And if none of the entitled and habituate can put up a petition in this

behalf to whatever Gods may be, this unaccustomed beast will make some stagger to Pray that either the Man he believes in may See Better, or that the public sentiment he has led so nobly and so far may now take its turn at the nose-rope and fetch *him* where he Belongs. For he is one who Belongs on the side of Right.

[*Henry Loomis Nelson, Professor of Political Science in Williams College, in Boston Herald.*]

THE PIRATE CODE.

Which Has Been Followed in Dealing With Colombia.

The upshot of it all in this instance is that, under the old theory of the law and under the precedents, and under the treaty of 1846, Colombia had the right to expect this country to refrain from interference until the Panama rebels had established some form of government and she had had an opportunity to put down the insurrection. Mr. Roosevelt, however, has taken the ground that the interest of this country—he would probably call it the interest of humanity—demands the building of the canal at Panama; that this interest is of greater moment than any obligation which this nation owes, not primarily to Colombia, but to the cause of civilization and to the advancement of peace. It is further contended, therefore, that it is a greater, that is, a higher