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THEODORE ROOSEVELT AND HIS INFLUENCE
UPON THE BUILDING OF THE PANAMA CANAL

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The story of the Panama Canal is filled with its heroes and villains, and the untiring efforts of many who were ultimately to realize their dreams of an interoceanic canal. The main theme of this thesis is Theodore Roosevelt's influence upon different personalities and interests who tried to fulfill their dreams and plans.

History tells of how the canal allowed the United States to maintain a two-ocean navy. This, coupled with the increase in Far Eastern trade brought about by the construction of the canal, serves to justify the time and energy spent upon its building by energetic and farsighted men.

It is shown that Roosevelt, as President of the United States prior to the construction of the canal, used methods that at times seemed to be less than ethical. Nevertheless, rather than proving that the President was guilty of inciting an insurrection in the Isthmus, the material presented shows that the opposite is true. Still, it is surmised that he greeted the revolution with delight, for he could then accomplish what he had set out to do: construct the great Isthmian Canal. Though his actions at times greatly heartened the revolutionists in Panama, at no time did the President directly aid them, nor did he ever promise to help their cause.

Some of Theodore Roosevelt's personal principles and doctrines are presented. Without knowing them and understanding his dominating personality, one cannot completely understand his course of action. The political and military force that Roosevelt exerted upon Colombia, Panama and the canal project may, in many ways, be attributed directly to his personality. The reader will see that Theodore Roosevelt was the sort of man who first decided what was right and then did it. He proudly carried out a policy which he firmly believed was for the benefit of the United States. Even those who criticize him must admit that in that sense he was faithful to his oath of office.

A brief background to the canal situation is included, with the past histories of Panama and Colombia and the relationship of the United States to both of these countries. There are several characters discussed in detail, notably Philippe Bunau-Varilla, who played a prominent role in the construction of the canal.

In order to fully justify my conclusions, I have outlined the course of events in the canal zone acquisition, referring to specific dates and quoting pertinent speeches, messages, and documents.

As in all great international incidents, the actions of the parties involved are open to comment and criticism. However, it may be said that Theodore Roosevelt's foresight and vigorous action provided for the world a great ocean-connecting waterway.