

**The History of the Twentieth Century**  
**Episode 21**  
**“A Man, a Plan, a Canal – Panama!”**  
**Transcript**

[music: Fanfare]

Back in the 1890s, Alfred Thayer Mahan, the naval strategist, had laid down what he saw as the three prerequisites for the United States to become a great naval power: a naval base in Hawaii, a naval base in Cuba, and a canal across Central America.

In the White House, Mahan’s acolyte, Theodore Roosevelt, must have been looking over his checklist. Naval base in Hawaii? Check. Naval base in Cuba? We’re working on it. Let’s see... canal across Central America?

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

[music: Opening Theme]

Episode 21. A Man, a Plan, a Canal – Panama!

First of all, let’s get caught up on the situation in Cuba. As you may recall, back when Congress passed the declaration of war against Spain in 1898, Colorado Senator Henry Teller introduced an amendment which Congress attached to the declaration disavowing any American intention to annex or otherwise control Cuba. But after the treaty with Spain was ratified, Cuba remained under American military government for the next three and a half years. During that time, Theodore Roosevelt’s former commanding officer Leonard Wood, who you may recall was a physician, remained in Cuba. He helped work the problem of yellow fever and other tropical diseases, which were killing and incapacitating more American soldiers than the Spanish ever had, and was eventually made military governor of Cuba.

Wood organized a constitutional convention, which completed a new Cuban constitution by 1901 based on the United States constitution. That same year, the American Secretary of War, Elihu Root, drew up a set of seven conditions for Cuban independence. This list of conditions would be attached to a U.S. Army appropriations bill by Senator Orville Platt of Connecticut as part of an amendment stating that the army would only withdraw from Cuba provided that Cuba agreed to these conditions. The fledgling Cuban government grudgingly went along, and the conditions were incorporated into a treaty between Cuba and the United States, and also written into the Cuban constitution. This list of conditions has come to be known as the Platt Amendment, even though Platt wasn’t the guy who thought them up and it wasn’t his amendment that was crucial, it was the Cubans agreeing to ratify it by treaty and even incorporate it into their constitution that matters, but that’s history for you.

The conditions were: That Cuba accept and ratify the actions of the United States in invading it and seizing it from Spain; that Cuba would lease lands to the United States for naval bases; that Cuba would

not permit any other country to have naval bases in Cuba; that Cuba would cooperate with the United States in programs to further reduce yellow fever and other tropical diseases; that Cuba not go too deeply into debt (we'll come back to that one); and granting the United States the right to intervene militarily in Cuba should the Cuban government prove inadequate to fulfill its obligations.

Now, whether a country like Cuba can truly be said to be independent when its independence is conditional on granting another country the right to invade it any time its government does something that the other country doesn't like is, shall we say, debatable – and it will be debated.

And there was one more condition: That Cuba not claim the Isle of Pines. The Isle of Pines is the second-largest island in what we today call Cuba. It's actually one of the largest islands in the Caribbean, although it often gets overlooked because of its proximity to Cuba itself. It's that island just south of Cuba, near Cuba's western tip. There was a movement in the United States for the U.S. to annex the Isle of Pines, which included the island's chamber of commerce – they issued a pamphlet entitled "Isle of Pines: American or What?" And no, I am not making this up. But in the end, the United States did agree to recognize Cuban sovereignty over the island.

As I said, Cuba agreed to these terms, and formally became an independent state, the Republic of Cuba, in 1902. Its first president was Tomás Estrada Palma, a Cuban exile who was a prominent member of that Cuban expatriate community in New York City I previously mentioned, which had agitated successfully for a war with Spain back in the 1890s. He was known to many American elites, and they were comfortable with the idea of him running the Cuban government. And perhaps their comfort with him was the reason why Estrada Palma was able to negotiate the American demand for multiple naval bases on Cuba down to one naval base: Guantánamo Bay, which was leased to the United States in perpetuity.

Now, as I said in the introduction, we are now  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the way toward fulfilling Alfred Thayer Mahan's prescription for making the United States a great naval power. The only thing left is that canal.

Oddly enough, the first obstacle to an American canal across Central America was a legal one. It was the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty, negotiated between the United States and Britain back in 1850. The name comes from the two men who negotiated it: the then-U.S. Secretary of State, John Clayton, and a British diplomat, William Henry Lytton Earle Bulwer, the Baron Dalling and Bulwer to you.

Baron Dalling and Bulwer, by the way, had a younger brother. He was an English politician and author, Edward George Earle Lytton Bulwer-Lytton, the Baron Lytton. In the course of his writing career, Baron Lytton coined a number of phrases that are still familiar to us today, including "the pen is mightier than the sword". But Baron Lytton is best remembered today as the author of *Paul Clifford*, the novel that begins with that immortal line: "It was a dark and stormy night..."

But I digress. I'm supposed to be talking about a treaty here. The United States and Britain were much more wary of each other and skeptical of each other's intentions in 1850 than they would be by 1900, and the point of this treaty was essentially to bar either one from building a canal across Central America, because both powers felt that for the other one to have exclusive control of such a canal would be a security risk. You may recall that this treaty didn't in any way stop the French, who were feeling

ambitious following their successful construction of the Suez Canal, from taking a crack at building a canal across the Panama Isthmus in Colombia. Colombia? Yeah, Colombia. Bear with me here.

Anyway, the French project failed and went bankrupt, which caused a financial scandal back in Paris, which you may recall cost Georges Clemenceau his political career (for now) and which the right-wing press blamed on the Jews and the Syndicate. The French canal project was dead, but it still owned valuable assets in Colombia, something like 100 buildings and the excavation work done so far. The French were interested in recouping some of their losses by selling these assets to some other party who might be interested in completing the canal, and the United States was one of those parties.

The treaty couldn't stop the United States from thinking about a canal, and it was thinking pretty hard about it by the 1890s. Congress had created a commission to study the question in 1895, and a follow-up commission in 1897. This so-called "Walker Commission" returned its report in 1899, recommending a canal across Nicaragua in preference to the Isthmus of Panama, because Nicaragua would be cheaper, although it did offer Panama as a good second choice. The McKinley administration also opened negotiations with the British about revising that treaty. The British and the Americans ultimately agreed to a new treaty abrogating the old one, in which the United States was granted the right to build the canal, provided only that the canal would be open to all nations on an equal footing.

But do you really want to build your canal across Nicaragua? You may be wondering how that could possibly be cheaper. The answer is because the French were asking north of \$100 million for the ditch they had dug so far, plus the buildings, and the Americans figured it wasn't worth anything like that.

At this point, I have to introduce the French engineer, and veteran of the French canal project, Philippe-Jean Bunau-Varilla. Bunau-Varilla was also a major stockholder in the new French Panama Canal Company, which had been created to liquidate the assets of the old French Panama Canal Company, so he stood to make a killing. That is, assuming the Americans could be persuaded to buy out the French project. And so, Bunau-Varilla set to work lobbying the United States Congress. Whether it was by accident or by design, the Walker Commission's endorsement of the Nicaragua canal scared the investors of the new Panama Canal Company enough to persuade them to drop their price to the much more reasonable figure of 40 million.

And so the United States Congress passed legislation authorizing payment of \$40 million to take over the canal project on the Isthmus of Panama. This agreement would be contingent on the consent of Colombia, the nation that owns the territory. This was trickier than it sounds. You might think the canal is a good deal for Colombia, but it turns out that Colombia just went through a civil war in which the losing side was based in Panama, and which ended in 1902 only after the intervention of the United States Navy and the signing of a treaty aboard the American battleship *Wisconsin*. Theodore Roosevelt had sent the Navy to Panama because by golly, he wasn't going to let the internal political squabbles of the Colombians interfere with his canal project. So in early 1903, the United States and Colombia signed a treaty granting the United States the right to build the canal and providing for U.S. sovereignty over the canal zone – hooray!

But the story doesn't end there. The treaty had to be ratified by the Colombian Senate, and the Colombian Senate took one look at all the political unrest in Panama, pondered the fact that Panama was a distant and isolated province which was at that time accessible only by sea, and then tried to imagine what effect it would have on Bogotá's attempts to enforce its rule over Panama to have a foreign power like the United States with a stronger presence in Panama than the Colombian government itself would have, and said "You know, we're not sure this is going to work." So they rejected the treaty.

Oh, to have been a fly on the wall when Bunau-Varilla got that news. Here he had a deal all worked out – signed, sealed and delivered. Theodore Roosevelt had even stopped a war to help get it done. And now the Colombian Senate had mucked it all up. What did they think they were doing? Colombia would be getting a nice chunk of change out of this deal, and you know, it's not like they don't have a two-ocean navy that wouldn't also benefit from a canal.

But Philippe Bunau-Varilla was not a man to take something like this lying down. He worked out a deal with the Panamanian separatists and the United States government, and in November 1903, Panama declared independence, the new government to be initially funded by one Philippe Bunau-Varilla. A halfhearted Colombian attempt to put down the rebellion was blocked by the American gunboat *Nashville*, giving rise to the expression "gunboat diplomacy". *Nashville* blocked Colombian troop ships from moving soldiers to Panama, and that was that.

The United States and France quickly recognized the new Panamanian government, and within days, the United States had signed a treaty with the new Panamanian ambassador to the U.S., a fellow named Philippe Bunau-Varilla (hey, they had to give him something in exchange for all that money, right?). Bunau-Varilla even designed a flag for the new country, although flying a flag designed by a Frenchman was pushing it a little too far even for this government, so the Panamanians said "thanks anyway", but went ahead and designed their own.

And so, deal in hand, the Americans set to work building a canal across the Isthmus of Panama. It would be a huge undertaking and would take 10 years to finish, but Theodore Roosevelt would later point to this as his proudest accomplishment as president.

[music: Dvořák, *Symphony No. 9 in E minor*]

Back in episode 17, I described the ambush of a unit of U.S. soldiers in the Philippine island of Samar in September 1901. The news of the deaths of so many American soldiers caused an uproar in the United States, and President Roosevelt ordered the Army to pacify Samar. The general in charge of the pacification was Jacob Smith.

Born in 1840, Smith was a veteran of the Civil War, and had gotten in and out of legal trouble since then, including a prior court-martial. The crackdown on Samar was brutal. The island was blockaded, and not even food was permitted to be brought in. American soldiers swept across the island, searching for guerrillas, and it's estimated that more than 2,000 Filipinos died during this operation.

Smith was known for using tough and extreme language. He told his subordinates to kill any Filipino capable of bearing arms. One of his subordinates during this campaign was Marine Corps Major Littleton Waller, whom you may remember from the Boxer Rebellion – he was the commander of the first Marine unit to arrive in China, and here he is back in the Philippines. Anyway, Waller asked Smith how old a Filipino would have to be to be considered capable of bearing arms. To Waller’s amazement, Smith replied: 10 years old. Smith also said: “I wish you to kill and burn. The more you kill and burn, the better you will please me.”

It’s shocking to hear a U.S. Army general talk that way. It does not diminish from the shock to take note again that Smith had a reputation for extreme language. No one who heard him say these words that day seriously believed that Smith was literally ordering them to kill every Filipino they encountered aged 10 and older. But as President Roosevelt himself would say afterward: “Loose and violent talk by an officer of high rank is always likely to excite to wrongdoing those among his subordinates whose wills are weak and whose passions are strong.” So while no American killed Filipinos on sight during operations to pacify Samar, it is true that some 2,000 Filipinos were killed during these operations, and there can be no doubt that Smith’s extreme language increased the death toll.

When news of the violence in the Samar operation made it to the United States in mid-1902, anti-imperialist groups protested loudly. Meanwhile, our old friend Major Waller summarily executed a group of 11 Filipinos who had been hired as porters for his Marine unit. Waller was court-martialed when the news of the executions reached America. The newspapers called him the “Butcher of Samar”, though many in the military viewed Waller as a scapegoat, given that many other Filipino deaths went unmentioned and uninvestigated. But the fact was these executions were well-documented, and one of the ways they were well-documented was that Waller freely admitted to them.

At his court-martial, he defended himself by claiming that the porters had mutinied against his unit and that the executions were permissible under General Order 100, a Civil War-era code that permitted summary executions of civilians who aided the enemy because, you know, it was the Civil War. This was in accord with the international law of the time, although international law is going to rethink this idea as the 20th century continues because, spoiler alert, certain countries (\*ahem\* Germany \*ahem\*) are going to stretch the definition of “civilians aiding the enemy” way out of recognition and use it to justify horrible atrocities.

But as I said, by the standards of the day, Major Waller had a reasonable defense going. Now you may have expected that Waller might also want to bring up the “go out and kill every Filipino over the age of 10 you meet” order that he got from Smith, but he didn’t – not at first. I guess this is a Marine Corps thing. But when Smith appeared at Waller’s court-martial as a witness for the prosecution, and testified under oath that no, he had not given any kind of order that could possibly be interpreted as the killing of civilians, Waller had enough. His defense called multiple witnesses who testified to that “10 years and up” order. And so Waller was acquitted, and the anti-imperialists took their outrage up several notches. A famous editorial cartoon from the time shows U.S. soldiers lined up firing-squad style, about to shoot a hapless group of blindfolded adolescent Filipinos over the caption “Criminals – because they were born 10 years before we took the Philippines”, although no such incident had ever taken place.

It was then Smith's turn to be court-martialed. He was convicted and sentenced to be reprimanded, and President Roosevelt not only reprimanded him, but ordered him into retirement, a decision that seems to have pleased nobody. To the anti-imperialists, a cold-blooded killer had gotten off with a slap on the wrist. To many in the military, Smith was a scapegoat punished for doing no more than what many other soldiers were doing for the sake of pleasing civilian critics back home. It reminds me a little bit of Breaker Morant, and I expect we're going to see more of these "is he a criminal or is he a scapegoat?" military cases in the future.

William Howard Taft wasn't having a very good year, either. He'd come down with dysentery in the Philippines, and so he decided to scout out accommodations up in the mountains instead of living in Manila. In the mountains, the climate was more temperate. Taft sent his superior, U.S. Secretary of War Elihu Root, a cable about the project, also meant to reassure Root that Taft was holding up well enough despite his health issues. The cable read: "Stood trip well. Rode horseback 25 miles to 5,000 ft altitude." The secretary of war must have envisioned the 300 pound Taft climbing a mountain on horseback and couldn't resist cabling back: "How is horse?"

But Taft's health got worse. He developed a painful abscess in a very delicate part of his anatomy, which prevented him from sitting down. Surgery was only partly successful, and meanwhile his wife Nellie contracted malaria. The War Department decided they needed to come home for treatment, and Taft reluctantly complied.

He returned to the U.S. just as the anti-imperialists were in full outrage mode. The Republican Senator from Massachusetts, George Frisbie Hoar, an ardent anti-imperialist (he was one of only two Republicans in the Senate to vote against annexing the Philippines), anyway Hoar took to the floor of the Senate in May to say of the Philippines project:

*You have sacrificed nearly ten thousand American lives—the flower of our youth. You have devastated provinces. You have slain uncounted thousands of the people you desire to benefit. You have established reconcentration camps. Your generals are coming home from their harvest bringing sheaves with them, in the shape of other thousands of sick and wounded and insane to drag out miserable lives, wrecked in body and mind. You make the American flag in the eyes of a numerous people the emblem of sacrilege in Christian churches, and of the burning of human dwellings, and of the horror of the water torture. Your practical statesmanship which disdains to take George Washington and Abraham Lincoln or the soldiers of the Revolution or of the Civil War as models, has looked in some cases to Spain for your example. I believe—nay, I know—that in general our officers and soldiers are humane. But in some cases they have carried on your warfare with a mixture of American ingenuity and Castilian cruelty. Your practical statesmanship has succeeded in converting a people who three years ago were ready to kiss the hem of the garment of the American and to welcome him as a liberator, who thronged after your men when they landed on those islands with benediction and gratitude, into sullen and irreconcilable enemies, possessed of a hatred which centuries can not eradicate.*

Hoar was a member of the Senate committee on the Philippines, and he pushed for hearings on American war crimes. The hearings were held, and there were many angry words exchanged. One principal testifier was Governor Taft. Taft was frank about the problems in the Philippines, yet he spoke optimistically

about the future. He reiterated that he personally had been opposed to the annexation, but noted simply, “we are there”. He pressed his view that the only reasonable course for America to take was to prepare the Philippines for democratic self-rule, perhaps eventually as a U.S. state, perhaps in some sort of commonwealth relationship with America – as were Canada and Australia with Britain – or perhaps full independence, depending on the wishes of the Filipino people.

On the subject of the war against the guerrillas, Taft noted honestly and bluntly that: “Cruelties have been inflicted, that people have been shot when they ought not to have been.” He also acknowledged use of the so-called “water cure”, a close cousin of what we in the 21st century call “waterboarding”. But he called on Congress to pass legislation lowering tariffs on Philippine imports and to create an elected Philippine legislature as a first step toward self-government.

Both sides praised Taft and his testimony, and with his medical problems properly dealt with, he and Nellie were ready to return to the Philippines. They went by way of Rome, where Taft met with the Pope, Leo XIII, now 92 years old and pope for 23 years, although Taft noted afterward that the pontiff was “lively as a cricket”.

It was a controversial action for a representative of the U.S. government to meet with the pope. The United States did not formally recognize the pope, and at the time he was not the sovereign of any state. To treat him in an official capacity was viewed by many in America as a violation of the First Amendment. So Taft had to tread delicately. But they had important business to discuss. Catholic friars in the Philippines held large tracts of land, possession of which gave them power over thousands of ordinary Filipinos, and they had a reputation for brutal rule. Taft was in Rome to negotiate an agreement by which the U.S. government would purchase these lands. The pope greeted Taft warmly, though the negotiations proved difficult. In the end, the U.S. paid the Church \$7.5 million for these lands, which were then subdivided and sold to Filipinos.

Taft returned to the islands and was greeted like a hero. When he got off the ship in Manila, a crowd of 30,000 Filipinos were waiting to cheer him. The situation in the United States was a little more complicated. The Catholic friars were hated in the Philippines, but many American Catholics, who were overwhelmingly Democrats at this time, dismissed this as Protestant propaganda and resented the American government pressing the Church to sell these lands. Or so it seemed to Theodore Roosevelt, who was casting a worried eye on 1904, and was wondering what kind of damage this might do to his prospects of getting reelected.

“It has probably been unfortunate that we got you to stop at Rome,” Roosevelt wrote to Taft. Undiscouraged, Taft wrote back: “The visit to Rome may have been bad in the United States, but the visit has done us a great deal of good in this country.”

[music: Dvořák, *Symphony No. 9 in E minor*]

Roosevelt badly wanted to be elected president in his own right. He wanted to cast off this notion that he was an accidental president that was morally constrained to fulfill McKinley’s policies. But he had reason to worry. The day Theodore Roosevelt took the oath of office, he became one of five vice presidents in

U.S. history who had acceded to the presidency after the death of their predecessor. But do you know what else John Tyler, Millard Fillmore, Andrew Johnson, and Chester Arthur have in common? If your answer was “they all wanted to be president in their own rights, but none of them were able to get even so far as their party’s nominations”, then go to the head of the class. And once you arrive at the head of the class, you’ll find yourself sitting next to Theodore Roosevelt, who has already figured this out ahead of you. And while this may sound strange from the perspective of our time, in 1901 the lesson of history was that the Republican Party nomination was emphatically not a sure thing.

It didn’t help that Ohio Senator Mark Hanna, the brains behind McKinley’s election and the man who had opposed Roosevelt for the vice presidency in 1900, had become, in effect, the national political boss of the Republican Party. Some Republicans were already floating the idea of nominating Hanna for president in 1904.

Which brings me to the subject of coal mining. Back in episode 17, I talked about the so-called trusts, the industrial consolidations that were creating worryingly large business operations. I mentioned railroads and U.S. Steel, and the Standard Oil Company. Now let’s talk about coal.

At the beginning of the 20th century, as I mentioned back in episode 1, coal was king. Oil and electricity are beginning to become available as alternatives, but for most people, and for most industries, coal is your power source. And there was consolidation going on in the coal mining business as well. It mostly happened in the form of railroad companies buying out coal mines. Coal mines were entirely reliant on the railroads to get their product to market. Railroads used this leverage to get into the coal mining business, buying up mines, and any coal mine that wouldn’t play ball with the railroads found itself paying exorbitant and impossible freight charges.

Industrial work in America during the Gilded Age, as I have pointed out several times, was hard, long, and badly paid. But coal miners were at the absolute bottom rung. Many were recent immigrants. They spoke little English and were in the mines because foreigners with broken English couldn’t get work anywhere else. This was especially true if your accent was Polish or otherwise Eastern European.

Miners got their start as breaker boys when they were still elementary school age, not that many of them ever saw the inside of a schoolhouse. If you survived into adolescence without being killed or maimed, you became a miner’s assistant. If you survived that, then in the prime of your life, you were an actual miner, the most dangerous job of all. And if you didn’t die or lose a limb, or otherwise become incapable of working, by the time you got into your late 40s, you were too old to be a miner anymore, and you went back to being an assistant. By your 60s, you were back to being a breaker. That is, again, if you weren’t killed or maimed in the meantime – and if you still had a healthy pair of lungs and could breathe properly, which hardly anyone could by that age. And on a personal note, let me just add that among many others, I’m talking about my own grandfather.

Being a miner was no picnic even when the mines were small and locally owned. But at least in those days, the owner lived in the same town as the workers. He couldn’t miss bumping into them on the street, or running into them and their families in the shops or at church on Sunday morning. He had some idea of the conditions under which they were living.



When the railroad companies bought out the mines, the owners were now living in New York City. They had no clue how their employees were living, and no interest in finding out. What they were interested in was ratcheting wages downward, and since they controlled most of the mines, they could dictate terms. Out of these conditions grew the United Mine Workers, organized in 1890.

In May 1902, the President of the United Mine Workers, John Mitchell, called a strike against the anthracite coal mines. Anthracite coal, principally mined in Pennsylvania, burns cleaner and hotter than bituminous coal, and was the preferred coal for residential heating.

This wasn't such a big deal in May, but as the autumn of 1902 approached, no progress had been made on the strike, now going on for five months, and the northeast was beginning to run out of coal. Schools, hospitals, and other public buildings were beginning to close for lack of heat. And Theodore Roosevelt was worried. There was going to be a midterm election in November 1902, and the northeast was the base of Roosevelt's Republican Party.

In contrast to President Roosevelt, a person who was very unconcerned about the length of the strike was George Baer. George Baer was an attorney who had been placed by J.P. Morgan as President of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad. The Philadelphia and Reading Railroad owned many anthracite mines in Pennsylvania, and George Baer became the mine owners' spokesman during the strike. Baer was convinced that when the public got cold enough, the outcry that followed would break the union and force the miners back into the mines. He didn't see any reason to compromise, he didn't see any reason to negotiate, he didn't see any reason even to talk to John Mitchell or recognize the United Mine Workers' Union. Mitchell, for his part, loudly proclaimed a willingness to negotiate with anyone who would listen to him.

I mean, really, this guy Baer lived in a bubble. When he got a letter pleading with him to consider the welfare of the miners, he wrote back:

*I beg of you not to be discouraged. The rights and interests of the laboring man will be protected and cared for – not by the labor agitators, but by the Christian man to whom God in His infinite wisdom has given the control of the property interests of the country, and upon the successful Management of which so much depends.*

Baer's reply soon made it into the newspapers, and the public was outraged – but at him. It seemed America was not quite ready for the theological doctrine of divine right of CEOs. *The New York Tribune* wrote:

*It will take a load from the consciences of many earnest people to have this authoritative declaration that God, through the kindness of the coal operators, will be able to manage this strike in accordance with the dictates of infinite wisdom. But if the medium's acquaintances really are spirits acquainted with the heavenly mysteries, why oh why do they on earth talk such egregious nonsense?*

I think the kids call that a "burn".

On October 1, Roosevelt sent telegrams to the coal operators and to the UMW inviting them to Washington to discuss the situation. This was unprecedented. Until now, labor disputes were regarded as purely matters of private contract, and in no way the business of government. Now, Roosevelt was offering to mediate the strike.

When the meeting took place, Roosevelt began by explaining to the parties that he saw his role in the discussion not as an advocate for either labor or management, but for the general public. He appealed to them in the name of the public to seek a way to end the strike for the good of the country.

After Roosevelt, John Mitchell spoke. He repeated his willingness to negotiate with the mine operators, and added an offer that if negotiation failed, he would submit to binding arbitration before a panel appointed by the president, and the union would accept whatever decision that panel handed down.

Then it was Baer's turn. He denounced the strikers as criminals and murderers and fomenters of anarchy. He absolutely refused to negotiate with Mitchell. He denounced President Roosevelt for not sending troops to protect the mines from the strikers, and denounced Attorney General Philander Knox, who was also in the room, for not filing an action against the United Mine Workers under the Sherman Antitrust laws.

Well, the meeting broke down in failure, but it only took the public about two seconds to figure out which cylinder wasn't firing. Yeah, I think it's the railroad guy. With the public mood turning decisively against the mine operators, Roosevelt began to contemplate the federal government seizing control of the mines and operating them itself in the interest of public safety. When he sounded out Elihu Root, his secretary of war, on this concept, Root immediately appealed to J.P. Morgan. The threat of a federal mine seizure, and some arm-twisting by Morgan, were enough to get the mine operators into arbitration along the lines Mitchell had suggested. Speak softly and carry a big stick, if you will.

The face-saving compromise offered to the mine operators was that they would be dealing with an arbitration commission and not with the mine workers directly, which they still refused to recognize. The miners went back to work. The presidential arbitration panel duly handed down a decision that split the difference between what the UMW was asking for and what the mine operators were offering. The midterm elections went well enough for the Republicans. The Democrats gained some ground in the House of Representatives, but the Republicans still had a comfortable majority.

[music: Verdi, *Coro di zingari*]

We'll have to stop there for today, but I hope you'll join me next week on *The History of the Twentieth Century*, as we turn to Italy. We'll take a look at the process by which Italy became a united country in the 19th century. We'll look at this in some detail – it's important to understand because at the dawn of the 20th century, Italy may be one nation on paper, but its unity is still far from secure. It's one thing to call yourself a nation, it's another thing to become one. And that is the story of Italy's struggle, and Italy's struggle to become a nation will have profound consequences for the rest of the world. That's next week, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and one more thing. Right after the midterm elections, Roosevelt went on a bear hunting trip in Mississippi. There were a lot of hunters in the party, and most of them got bears, but Roosevelt didn't. Not wanting the president to be embarrassed, some in the party went out and clubbed a bear, tied it up, and presented it to Roosevelt to shoot. Roosevelt declined, regarding this as unsportsmanlike. Now, a failure on a hunting trip like this could potentially turn into a political embarrassment.

But you know, Theodore Roosevelt lived a charmed life. In his case it turned into a political triumph. A *Washington Post* cartoonist drew a cartoon of a proud and principled Theodore Roosevelt nobly refusing to shoot the helpless bear. The cartoon inspired the creation of a stuffed animal, dubbed a "Teddy bear" in Theodore Roosevelt's honor – although those in the know know that Theodore Roosevelt absolutely detested being called "Teddy". His friends and family never did so, at least not to his face, and so we will not on *The History of the Twentieth Century*, because we believe in calling people by the name they wanted to be called by.

But anyway, there was a craze for teddy bears in the decade that followed, and they remain a popular toy to this day. In 1907, the American Tin Pan Alley composer John Walter Bratton, inspired by the teddy bear craze, composed a piano piece he called "The Teddy Bears' Picnic". The Irish lyricist Jimmy Kennedy added lyrics to the piece in 1932. "The Teddy Bears' Picnic" is still familiar today, and that's the only Bratton composition you can say that about. To my ear, while it offers a kid-friendly cheerfulness on the surface, underneath that lurks just a hint of something dark and sinister. You tell me, what do you think?

[music: Bratton, "The Teddy Bears' Picnic"]