Roosevelt Corollary Essay, Research Paper

The Roosevelt Corollary was a good natured if misguided document. When

President Roosevelt intervened in the Dominican republic his intentions were

noble. He was just following the American public’s sentiments of the time.

The Roosevelt Corollary this was Theodore Roosevelt’s “amendment” to the

Monroe Doctrine. In 1904, the government of the Dominican Republic was

bankrupt, and Roosevelt feared that foreign nations, especially Germany, might

intervene forcibly to collect their debts. To keep other powers out, Roosevelt

issued his corollary: “Chronic wrongdoing … may in America, as elsewhere,

ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation,” he announced in his

annual message to Congress in December 1904, “and in the Western Hemisphere

the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United

States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to

the exercise of an

international police power.” Roosevelt tied his policy to the Monroe Doctrine to

win public acceptance.

The Dominicans then “asked” American help. The United States took over

customs collections and used the money to pay Santo Domingo’s foreign

debts. Roosevelt and later presidents cited the corollary to justify intervention

in the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Nicaragua, Mexico, and Haiti. In 1934,

however, Franklin D. Roosevelt renounced interventionism and established

his Good Neighbor policy.

Roosevelt went into Santo Domingo in 1904, and he needed public

justification. Not just a justification. Roosevelt sincerely believed that what he was

doing was right and that it was American historic precedent. But what he says in

that message to Congress is that the United States has the duty to exercise

international police power, and that belief becomes law in Roosevelt Corollary to

Monroe Doctrine. The Monroe Doctrine of 1823 said, as President Monroe issued

it in that year, that Europeans should stay out of Latin America, “that the Americas were essentially an American preserve”. People should stay out of Latin American affairs. But What Roosevelt says in 1904 and 1905 is to say, the United States should get into Latin American affairs. He turns the Monroe Doctrine on its head and says the Europeans should stay out, but the United States has the right, under the doctrine, to go in order exercise police power to keep the Europeans out. It’s a noble twist on the Monroe Doctrine, and becomes important because over the next 20 years the United States will move into Latin America a dozen times with military force. What Roosevelt does here, by redefining the Monroe Doctrine, turns out to be very historic and it leads the United States into a period of confrontation with peoples in the Caribbean and Central America. Also into a period of American imperialism in the region.

As you can see the Roosevelt Corollary was done with noble intentions, but it only brought about the antithesis of democracy in Central America. The

domination of a sovereign land by a foreign power.