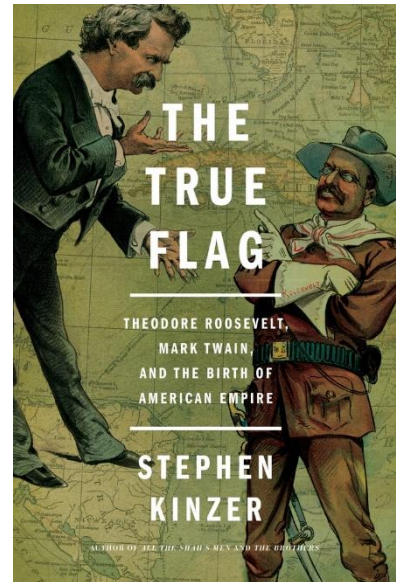


"The True Flag" by Stephen Kinzer

The Spanish-American war was fought to expand America's sphere of influence and footprint. There was a major battle between those who wanted an American Empire and those who wanted to follow the spirit of our Declaration of Independence and our Constitution, which would mean we couldn't create colonies.

The battle was fairly balanced until President McKinley was assassinated, and Teddy Roosevelt rose to the Presidency.

The parallels between our current factions battling it out are similar to the empire vs anti-empire battles. Teddy Roosevelt and his Rough Riders were more drama than a military operation. Newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst wanted to sell newspapers, so he blew everything out of proportion and sold a fictitious cause of war. As in all empires, we were "bringing civilization" to Puerto Rico, Cuba, Guam and the Philippines--and although casualties in three of the islands was minimal, the Philippines was a bloody, horrible mess. And except for Guam, there were independence movements in the other islands.



I always thought of Teddy Roosevelt as the monopoly buster, the National Park system creator and the one to bring packing houses into clean operations. He did that, but he also advocated for the US to conquer territories. The only thing logical in their argument is that we had been doing this in the continental US as we expanded sea to sea. After Teddy became President, he was bored with the empire thing and focused on other issues--he had a short attention span.

The last chapter brings us up to date on how this has worked out, pointing to the disasters--particularly in Cuba where we had been the "overseers" of all things Cuban. Of course, it was largely about how we gave political and financial power to allies of the party in power. Basically, virtually everything we've done in the name of empire has ended badly.

Those in favor of empire hired General Smedley Butler, who was brilliant in subduing our new territories. Except Butler went about saying he'd made Mexico safe American oil interests, Cuba and Puerto Rico safe for National City Bank boys to collect revenues in...and looking back, I could have given some pointers to Al Capone... Butler was promptly pulled for the tour.

Reviewed by Terry Loman, UUJEC Chair