

THE CARIBBEAN: GEOPOLITICS AND GEOHISTORY (*) (**).

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Pan-Caribbeanism — whether as a policy aspiration, as scientific conjecture, or as sentimental indulgence — is an increasingly familiar by-product of the Caribbean crucible of new and self-renovating nations. Any politician who pursues the goal of Caribbean federation, however, or any social scientist who generalizes about Caribbean societies is forced to recognize that hitherto the only focused and authoritative regional perspectives have been geopolitical and externally imposed. Ironically, the persons and powers who adopted them are precisely those responsible for the region's fragmentation, for its neutralization against internal schemes of integration.

This essay will pass in review some representative geopolitical views of the past. One purpose is to remind those who search for new schemes of unity what the only persuasive ones have been till now. The burden of nearly half a millennium of history does not evaporate before a few revolutionary gestures or generalizations about sibling patterns or sentimental apostrophes to *la bel'nèguese*. As we summon up the ghosts of Caribbean Past they may today appear rather more corporeal than a first hunch would suggest.

A second purpose will be to apply to the Caribbean a distinction made by an eminent French scholar between geopolitics and geohistory, and to propose that a primary task for historians at this stage of a Caribbean *prise de conscience* is to identify the enduring substrate of Caribbean regionalism which will outlast the imperialisms and strident nationalisms of the moment, or of the century.

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(**). — This paper, originally presented at the Third Caribbean Scholars' Conference, Georgetown, Guyana, April 4-9, 1966, has been revised for publication in a book of essays.

Before immersing ourselves in history we should recall that legendary, transhistorical vision of “the Caribbean” as an integral land, shaped and contoured, rather than an amorphous fringe of coast and islands about a sea swept by natural and human hurricanes. I refer to the serene pre-Columbian Isle of Antilia, appearing on Toscanelli’s map of 1474 and Behaim’s globe of 1492 as a single land mass lying southwest of the Azores, north of the larger St. Brendan, and on the route from the Canaries to Cipango. Mythical Antilia was a “thing in itself”, not the embroidered hem of two continents. Historical “Antilia” was pulverized in the name of clamorous unities quite external to it — producing, nonetheless, the raw material which may some day interact to imbue the legend with the pulse of reality.

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Two Admirals Serving Spain.

The settlement of Caribbean lands by Europeans was, as everyone knows, the result of a miscalculation. To avoid the turbulent North Atlantic, Columbus sailed south to the Canaries, then west along latitude 28°N. Toscanelli had said Antilia to be a convenient port of call en route to the fabled wealth of Cipango, and Columbus assumed that he would pass close to it. On September 19, 1492, he began searching for it, but his deep-sea lead gave no soundings at two hundred fathoms. He rejected Martín Alonso Pinzón’s suggestion to reconnoiter a bit, saying that “his object was to reach the Indies, and if he delayed, it would not have made sense” (1). In short, Columbus bypassed Antilia in searching for something else, and discovered “Antilia” by finding what he thought was something else.

In his letter from Lisbon of March 14, 1493, Columbus described the new lands in a somewhat promotional vein. The islands boasted secure harbors, handsome scenery and mountains, luxuriant trees filled with warbling nightingales, and fertile plains suited for cultivation and settlement. The natives were timid and unacquainted with weapons. Once their fears of intruders were allayed, however, they proved to be “simple and honest, and exceedingly liberal with all they have They exhibit great love towards all others in preference to themselves. Nor are they slow or stupid, but of very clear understanding” (2).

Here, then, was a peaceful, idyllic kingdom of nature. Columbus’ response to it was not wholly ungracious. In forbidding his men to

(1). — Samuel E. Morison, *Christopher Columbus, Mariner* (New York, 1956), pp. 38-39.

(2). — Christopher Columbus, *Four Voyages to the New World, Letters and Selected Documents* (New York, 1961), pp. 1-17.

trade worthless trinkets for large sums of gold he showed a moral delicacy rarely imitated by later Europeans.

Indeed by contrast to his successors the figure of Columbus takes on some of the mythological aura which invests legendary Antilia. The effect is heightened by his account of the third voyage, during which his Edenic vision of the Caribbean was transposed to an apocalyptic plane (3). When he reached the Gulf of Paria, which received waters from the Orinoco delta, he found it to resemble the setting of the Terrestrial Paradise watered by the "river of the four heads" described in *Genesis* ii. He had also observed that during his westward crossing the North Star seemed to elevate and the sun became less fierce; that the people of Trinidad were less scorched than the Africans, that they were intelligent and graceful, and that their isle was as "beautiful as the gardens of Valencia in April".

Columbus concluded that he had reached the environs of the Earthly Paradise, to be found on the summit of a "rugged mountain" from which the Orinoco tumbled. The world, therefore, was not wholly spherical:

but of the form of a pear, which is very round except where the stalk grows, at which part it is most prominent; or like a round ball, upon one part of which is a prominence like a woman's nipple, this protrusion being the highest and nearest the sky, situated under the equinoctial line, and at the eastern extremity of this sea.

In refusing to vouch that this Paradise might be accessible to man Columbus displayed a humility unshared by our contemporary merchants of Eden and pirates of *Fomento*.

The Columbian vision would be incomplete without mention of Fray Ramón Pane, the anchorite of the Order of St. Jerome, who accompanied Columbus on the second voyage and is known to history as the first Caribbean ethnographer — a kind of antediluvian Herskovits. His *Relation* catches a distorted and dream-like reflection of what the Caribbean world was to its aboriginal inhabitants — the *intra*-Caribbean vision which in our day is being so painfully reconstructed. In the summary of Edward G. Bourne, Pane's account gives us:

a cosmogony, a creation legend, an Amazon legend, a legend which offers interesting evidence that syphilis was an indigenous and ancient disease in America at the time of its discovery, a flood and ocean legend, a tobacco legend, a sun and moon

(3). — *Ibid.*, pp. 117-38.

legend, a long account of the Haitian medicine men, an account of the making of their cemís or fetishes, of the ritualistic use of tobacco, a current native prophecy of the appearance . . . of a race of clothed people and lastly a brief report of the earliest conversions to Christianity . . . and of the first native martyrs (4).

The Columbian vision of the Caribbean is extraordinarily complex. It hovers between the regional and the Europocentric, between cultural innocence and geopolitics, between repertorial detail and the mythology of two cultures. Its wonder and generosity and suggestiveness could only be attenuated by the subsequent course of history.

For the generation after the discovery, the Caribbean islands and selected coastal regions remained the main theater of Spanish activity in the New World (5). The search for a passage to India took priority over appropriation of the continental mainland. In this "Antillean phase" of the conquest the Caribbean served as a staging area where Europeans became accustomed to the climate and foods of the New World, familiarized themselves with its geography, made grievous social experiments with the Amerindians, and prepared logistic bases for mainland expeditions and settlement. It was a time of trial and error in policy formulation, when the crown wavered between a "commercial model" (establishment of fortified outposts to barter with or exact tribute from the Indians) and a "settlement model" (exemplified in Columbus's second expedition, which brought artisans and farmers, horses and sheep, grapevine cuttings and wheat seed to Española).

With the exploits of Cortés and Pizarro in the 1520s and 1530s Spain was plunged into a vast design of continental conquest and into the second policy alternative. The Antilles were drained of manpower and enterprising leadership, and the Caribbean became a great Spanish lake serving as an access route to the farflung viceroalties of the mainland.

A synoptic view of the Caribbean in this new period comes from another admiral, Pedro Menéndez de Avilés. Contrasting sharply in its precision and practicality to that of Columbus, this view rested on a prophetic geopolitical design which was to be reembodyed in

(4). — Quoted in *The Life of the Admiral Christopher Columbus by his Son Ferdinand*, trans. Benjamin Keen (New Brunswick, 1959), p. 299. Pane's *Relation* appears in *ibid.*, pp. 153-69.

(5). — This paragraph follows Manuel Giménez Fernández, *Hernán Cortés y su revolución comunera en la Nueva España* (Sevilla, 1948), pp. 8-64.

different national version down to Mahan, down to our own day, and undoubtedly beyond.

French and English incursions in the Antilles during the 1550s and 1560s made evident to the Spanish crown the need for a unified Caribbean military command to keep sea lanes clear, to coordinate sealand defenses, and thus to protect the lifelines of the new empire. This command was entrusted to Menéndez de Avilés, who was appointed *adelantado* of Florida (1565) and governor of Cuba (1567), a dual command which would today warm the cockles of any Pentagon heart. The ingredients of Menéndez, master plan were: establishment of a convoy system for Spanish commerce with the Indies, assignment of permanent cruiser squadrons to the Antilles; fortification and garrisoning of a boldly conceived network of harbors (Cartagena, Santo Domingo, Santiago, San Juan, Havana).

Menéndez shared with Drake and Nelson the strategic genius that treats all seas as one. His West Indian dispositions were only part of an over-all plan, in which the long-term remedy for the menace of Caribbean privateering was a Spanish base in the Scilly Isles — a bold and brilliant anticipation of eighteenth-century strategic ideas (6).

The fact that Spain lost no major ocean shipment until 1627 is adduced as evidence of Menéndez, military genius.

From the Antillean point of view the brilliance of the admiral's strategy was tarnished by the secondary status to which he relegated the internal needs of the islands. He refused to allow island colonists to leave for the mainland, yet did little to help them locally. His highhandedness caused governors and town councils to obstruct him whenever possible. The financial subsidy from New Spain upon which the Antilles had come to depend was allocated largely at his personal discretion.

By the 1560s the whole Caribbean theater had lapsed to a plane of secondary importance, a fact which official policy not only recognized but also helped to perpetuate. The unifying vision of Menéndez was utilitarian, highly selective, and inspired by extra-Caribbean considerations. The islands were isolated each from the other, and insular leaders were forced to deal independently with Spanish officialdom. One might therefore argue that the fragmentation of the Antilles is not exclusively a result of British, French, and Dutch conquests, that the

(6). — J. H. Parry and P. M. Sherlock, *A Short History of the West Indies* (2nd ed.; London, 1963), p. 37.

process was well under way before Spanish hegemony was seriously contested.

Like many a later admiral or bureaucrat, Menéndez was concerned less with Caribbean "development" than with diminishing the nuisance value of the region. He warned his king that a foreign power might seize Florida and lay the Antilles under threat of attack and consequent subversion. For in Santo Domingo, Cuba, and Puerto Rico:

there is a very great quantity of Negroes and mulattoes, people of bad disposition. On each island there are more than thirty of them for each Christian Under the French or English all these slaves become free, and therefore, in order to gain their freedom, the Negroes will help them usurp the land from their own lords and masters — which, with the Negroes' help, would be very easy to do (7).

Within seventy-five years of the discovery Columbus and Menéndez had adumbrated the main perspectives on the Caribbean which have guided its destiny ever since. These were:

- the Caribbean as a Garden of Eden;
- the Caribbean as a protectorate whose "natives" deserve sympathetic attention;
- the Caribbean as a trading zone to be exploited by fortified commercial enclaves;
- the Caribbean as a theater for settlement and imperial expansion;
- the Caribbean as a natural "mediterranean", a "danger zone" exposed to foreign attack and posing large strategical problems to the military mind;
- the Caribbean as a compound to be carefully prattled lest it flare up in random insurrections.

Today, four centuries later, not a single one of these viewpoints is obsolete. And not one ceases to work its mischief on the sense and reason of those who are born in the Caribbean and seek to insert themselves into the community of nations.

I repeat the suggestion that the Spanish grand design of empire rather than territorial seizures by other powers was originally responsible for the fragmentation of the Caribbean. The Spanish empire was a land empire, not an oceanic one. The Caribbean could serve only as a staging area for conquest and a zone of military defense. The region

(7). — Undated *memorial* in E. Ruidíaz y Caravia, *La Florida, su conquista y colonización por Pedro Menéndez de Avilés* (2 vols., Madrid, 1893), II: 322.

was inevitably subordinated to the viceroyalty of New Spain. Although there came to exist considerable commercial integration between Mexico and component parts of the Caribbean (8), the units were weakly interrelated and fell apart like a broken necklace when Spain's power collapsed and they were detached from New Spain.

Perhaps the most intriguing might-have-been of Caribbean history is not what would have happened had England or France taken full possession of the region — but what if Portugal had? The overseas Portuguese, it has been said, were pilots and farmers; the Spaniards, soldiers and jurists. Unlike Spain's land empire, Portugal's was a thalassic one, insular and coastal-based. It was characterized by pragmatic commercialism, by local institutional inventiveness, and by a certain organicism or interaction among the parts. It was oriented to sugar production as a source of prosperity. It developed successful resistance to Dutch designs on northeastern Brazil. Finally, the Portuguese empire reached its commercial apogee in the seventeenth century, precisely the century of Spain's decline (9). Under such auspices the Caribbean region might have received a measure of that well-nigh miraculous unity which the continental archipelago of Portuguese settlements in Brazil came to enjoy.

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Two Britons.

For the next Caribbean Design we leap two centuries to the *Candid and Impartial Considerations* of John Campbell, a Scotsman (10). By then the English, French, and Dutch were well ensconced on Caribbean territory and the sea had long since ceased to be a Spanish lake. By then also the career of sugar from the Lesser into the Greater Antilles had caused European nations, excepting Spain herself, to regard the islands as an independent source of wealth and power.

With the Antilles fully occupied, England's outlook was quite purged of the adventurousness and obstreperousness of her early sea dogs. "There is not now an island small or great, indeed scarce a rock in the *West-Indies*", Campbell admonished, "the right to as well as the

(8). — See Julio Le Riverend Brusone, "Relaciones entre Nueva España y Cuba (1518-1820)", *Revista de Historia de America*, 37-38 (1954): 45-108; Eduardo Arcila Farias, *Comercio entre Venezuela y México en los siglos XVII y XVIII* (Mexico City, 1950).

(9). — See Frédéric Mauro, *Le Portugal et l'Atlantique XVI au XVIIIe siècle, 1570-1670, étude économique* (Paris, 1960), pp. 509-13.

(10). — John Campbell, *Candid and Impartial Considerations on the Nature of the Sugar Trade; the Comparative Importance of the British and French Islands in the West-Indies* (London, 1763).

possession of which, is not clearly ascertained, and this without introducing any new powers into that part of the world, which must have been exceedingly prejudicial to our interests". There was to be no more rocking of the boat. Full occupation by the great powers had put an end "at least as human foresight reaches, to all their ambitious views, to the self-interested projects of private persons, and to the schemes of enterprising governors, which have been the principal sources of . . . disputes".

The claims of the nations were now staked out. One could expect no more dramatic power reversals or sudden land grabs yielding new El Dorados. The Caribbean region was perceived in terms of a calculus of comparative advantage. This meant, as it had for Menéndez de Avilés, a reduction to utilitarian, extra-Caribbean considerations. But the calculus had shifted from military to economic. Its purpose, as Campbell saw it, was to determine how each of the islands might become:

more or less, immediately or remotely, directly or indirectly, assisting to the interests, increasing the power, augmenting the commerce, extending the navigation, and thereby promoting the welfare of *Great Britain*; or, in other words, conducing to the industry, the independency, and the happiness, of their fellow citizens and fellow subjects, who are the inhabitants of this their MOTHER COUNTRY.

The new economic calculus was largely cleansed of random factors. There were to be no more territorial seizures; "run-away *Negroes* will not be able to shelter themselves any more in uninhabited islands"; "illicit commerce will be lessened at least, if not entirely prevented"; piracy "will never more revive, as all the ports and places to which these lawless people were wont to resort, will no longer exist". (pp. 203-06).

Freed from such worries, the rational mind could serenely contemplate the inherent advantages of an archipelagic economy. Small Caribbean islands enjoy sea breezes and purer air; their lands are more fertile and more speedily cultivated and settled; the "facility of fishing" helps the inhabitants to acquire staple foods; the ratio of coastline to land area favors maritime commerce and facilitates defense; these islands in particular, being well wooded and well watered, favor erection of water mills, which are more efficient than those driven by wind or animals. After enumerating natural resources one injects the variables. These include: cash crops which might be profitably grown, notably sugar but also cacao, coffee, tea, pepper, rhubarb, senna, and sarsaparilla; availability of Negro slaves; possibilities for

expanding Caribbean markets in North America, Africa, and the East Indies.

The calculus was of course an empty exercise if the enterprise of the mother country were deficient. Comparative inspection revealed that the production of the larger French islands, "however considerable, is not in proportion to the extent of the country".

The same thing is yet more visible, in regard to the *Spaniards*, who possess at once islands the largest and the least profitable in the *West-Indies*. The *Dutch*, on the other hand, have found means to render the smallest, and in point of soil and climate, the worst islands in the *West Indies*, by dint of skill and of industry wonderfully flourishing, exceedingly populous, and of course highly beneficial (p. 215).

In Campbell's treatise, to summarize, we discover that the Caribbean has become an independent zone of interest as a source of prosperity, that its natural resources have received sympathetic evaluation, and that previous concerns with imperial expansion and military advantage have been partly eclipsed by peaceful economic rivalry.

Campbell's outlook reflected the vigor and optimism of a commercial empire in its heyday. Once the Caribbean realm engenders disenchantment and self-doubt, however, we predictably encounter a view with no hard center to it, a view tintured by moralistic attitudinizing and a pervasive note of decadence. Froude's *The English in the West Indies* (11) is neither monumental for its research nor richly philosophic in its level of perception. As soon as it appeared its author was attacked as a Don Quixote who "did" the British West Indies, Cuba, and Haiti in 81 days on the Rocinante of a Royal Mail Steamer. He was accused of purveying factual inaccuracies, of consorting only with island elites, and of describing the black man with a mixture of political fear and paternal condescension (12).

I cannot help but confess, however, that Froude's book — for all its "Froudacity" — retains for me a certain appeal, whether in contrast to the brisk utilitarianism of Campbell or to the regressive militarism propounded by Froude's contemporary, Captain Mahan. Two aspects of Froude's presentation are particularly moving. One is his mythopeism. When he described the life of rural Negro families Froude resurrected the old Edenic view in finding that they effortlessly

(11). — James Anthony Froude, *The English in the West Indies, or, the Bow of Ulysses* (New York, 1888).

(12). — N. Darnell Davis, *Mr. Froude's Negrophobia or Don Quixote as a Cook's Tourist* (Demerara, 1888). See also J. J. Thomas, *Froudacity, West Indian Fables by James Anthony Froude* (2nd ed.; London, 1889).

gathered oranges, plantains, breadfruit, coconuts, yams, and cassava — every fruit of “Adam’s paradise” except apples!

The curse is taken off from nature, and like Adam again they are under the covenant of innocence. Morals in the technical sense they have none, but they cannot be said to sin, because they have no knowledge of a law . . . They are naked and not ashamed. They are *married* as they call it, but not *parsoned* . . . Yet they are not licentious . . . The system is strange, but it answers . . . They eat the forbidden fruit, but it brings with it no knowledge of the difference between good and evil . . . Meanwhile they are perfectly happy . . . They have no aspirations to make them restless. They have no guilt upon their consciences (pp. 49-50).

Here, then, is an Eden without apples, the nineteenth-century version of a powerful myth which received richly evocative formulation by Columbus and is today perpetuated in its crassest form by Caribbean tourist bureaus and cynical pleasure merchants in the *New York Times* travel supplement. The Edenic myth is easy to ridicule but difficult to come to terms with. Caribbean radicals make it prospective by transposing their own versions of paradise a generation into the future.

Froude’s reaction to this neo-Edenic spectacle was one of moral earnestness mingled with self-criticism and even self-doubt. Britain’s only “genuine alternatives”, he announced, were to leave her Caribbean possessions “to shape their own destinies, as we have Australia”, or else “to govern them as if they were a part of Great Britain with the same scrupulous care of the people and their interests with which we govern Bengal, Madras, and Bombay”. That the second was the proper course he was certain. Yet Britain should choose it from moral obligation rather than material advantage. She was responsible for the islands, social condition. She had filled them with slaves when prompted by interest and emancipated the slaves when prompted by conscience. It appeared to Froude that “England ought to bear the consequences of her own actions, and assume to herself the responsibilities of a state of things which she has herself created.” (pp. 356-57).

Because the “sections of men on this globe are unequally gifted”, Britons must assume the ancient Roman role as guardians of freedom and justice (p. 207). The present generation of Englishmen may be “just now in a moulting state, and . . . sick while the process is going on”. But there was no question of degeneracy (p. 15). “The problem is to create a state of things under which Englishmen of vigour and character will make their homes” among the West Indian Negroes.

Annexation to the United States would lead probably to their extermination at no very distant time. The Antilles are small, and the fate of the negroes there might be no better than the fate of the Caribs. The Americans are not a people to be trifled with; no one knows it better than the negroes. They fear them. They prefer the infinitely mild rule of England, and under such a government as we might provide if we cared to try, the whole of our islands might become like the Moravian settlement in Jamaica, and the black nature . . . might be put again in the way of regeneration (pp. 335-36) (13).

Finally, resorting to the priapic imagery which the Caribbean so abundantly suggests to observers, Froude explains to his readers that: "The bow of Ulysses is sound as ever; moths and worms have not injured either cord or horn; but it is unstrung, and the arrows which are shot from it drop feebly to the ground." (pp. 358-59).

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Two American Views.

At the very moment when Froude formulated his moralistic, even poignant appeal to Great Britain to reassume her imperial responsibilities, Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan was urging the United States, on the threshold of a New Manifest Destiny, to erect a calculus of Caribbean interest on more primitive foundations. In his article "The United States Looking Outward" (1890) (14), Mahan declared that "the United States is woefully unready, not only in fact but in purpose, to assert in the Caribbean and Central America a weight of influence proportioned to the extent of her interests". The "piercing of the Isthmus" would signify "nothing but a disaster to the United States, in the present state of her military and naval preparation".

On a map showing the flows of Atlantic shipping Mahan found it "curious to note what deserted regions, comparatively, are the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean Sea, and the adjoining countries and islands". A mere "thread" of trade linked the Caribbean to Britain, although once, during the Napoleonic wars, the region supplied one fourth of the trade of the Empire. "The significance is unmistakable: Europe has now little mercantile interest in the Caribbean Sea". Once the

(13). — In the 1890s Americans were to make similar reflections, *mutatis mutandis*, to justify their own intentions vis-à-vis Spain's.

(14). — Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Interest of America in Sea Power, Present and Future* (Boston, 1898), pp. 1-27.

canal was built, however, the isolation would terminate “and with it the indifference of foreign nations.” (15).

In “The Strategic Features of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea” (1897) (16) Mahan developed his version of the ever-intriguing analogy between the Caribbean and the Mediterranean:

Both are land-girt seas; both are links in a chain of communication between an East and a West; in both the chain is broken by an isthmus; both are of contracted extent when compared with great oceans, and, in consequence of these common features, both present in an intensified form the advantages and the limitations, political and military, which condition the influence of sea power.

Mahan took pains to distinguish between the Gulf of Mexico (with Havana as its Gibraltar) and the Caribbean (with a series of little “straits of Gibraltar” stretching nearly 400 miles). He scolded a British periodical which had accused him of including the Gulf in the Caribbean “because of his unwillingness to admit the name of any other state in connection with a body of water over which his own country claimed predominance”.

Mahan’s article elaborately analyzes the comparative strategic advantages of the Caribbean isles and straits. A central problem was to assess the relative importance of Jamaica and Cuba, which he settled “greatly and decisively in favor of Cuba”. At the same time he protested that “we are not seeking to check anything or anybody, but simply examining in the large the natural strategic features, and incidentally thereto noting the political conditions, of a maritime region in which the United States is particularly interested”. When, however, he compared the Caribbean and the Mediterranean, and when he contemplated the happenstance and uncertainty which attended the British conquest and retention of her strongholds in the latter sea, he could not help but wonder “whether incidents so widely separated in time and place, all tending towards one end — the maritime predominance of Great Britain — can be accidents, or are simply the exhibition of a Personal Will, acting through all time, with purpose deliberate and consecutive, to ends not yet discerned”.

Although in Mahan’s day the term “American Mediterranean” was purely descriptive for geographers such as Reclus — “America” referring to the hemisphere — it inevitably became a geopolitical

(15). — Mahan’s Roman prototype was more martial than Froude’s. Foreign Atlantic and Caribbean bases, he wrote, were “bidding us stand to our arms, even as Carthage bade Rome”.

(16). — *Ibid.*, pp. 269-314.

handle in the United States. Stephen Bonsal's *The American Mediterranean*, a natural sequel to Mahan, shifted the accent from politico-strategic to politico-economic. Bonsal found Europe's Caribbean possessions to be in full decadence. The Hague and Copenhagen would probably foot their West Indian bills with "the best grace imaginable" until the next general colonial readjustment. John Bull was ready to "take our Philippine troubles off our hands" if we would shoulder "his West Indian burden" (17). Certain that commercial crops such as bananas and cacao would soon rescue the Caribbean from economic stagnation, Bonsal urged his country to seize these opportunities. "Undeniably a new era is dawning in that part of the world which lies just outside our gates and which is called, with increasing frequency, the American Indies, and the American Mediterranean." (p. 399) (18).

Liberal opinion in the United States would of course not allow such rambunctious talk and the behavior which it endorsed to continue indefinitely without challenge. A generation after the muckrakers had stirred up the domestic scene, a kindred group fixed their sights on U. S. Latin American and Caribbean policy. Along with the spate of books in the 1920s which examined American intervention and exploitation in single countries, there was one, *Dollar Diplomacy* by Nearing and Freeman (19), which attempted a generalized explanation for the symptoms and causes of the new "American imperialism". Although the book had the effect of a documented and persuasive counterstatement to the expansionism of Mahan-Bonsal, its analysis did not extend to matters beyond the relatively limited purview of the American liberal conscience. The fact that *Dollar Diplomacy* is so frequently taken as being more transcendental than a rebuttal in a domestic dialogue makes it a source of more pernicious confusion than the Mahan thesis itself.

Nearing and Freeman identified a new and seemingly inevitable phase in American historical development which had become pronounced since the World War: economic or financial imperialism. The growth of this imperialism — interpreted as interaction between foreign economic investment and diplomatic policy — could be marked off in stages: (1) migration of capital without political implications; (2) migration of capital with resultant demands upon receiving countries under concessions and bankers' contracts; (3) participation of re-

(17). — Stephen Bonsal, *The American Mediterranean* (New York, 1912), pp. 10, 14.

(18). — Europeans matter-of-factly acknowledged American ambitions, as in *La Méditerranée américaine, l'expansion des États-Unis dans la Mer des Antilles* (Paris, 1927) by Jacques Crokaert, a Belgian.

(19). — Scott Nearing and Joseph Freeman, *Dollar Diplomacy, a Study in American Imperialism* (New York, 1925).

representatives of U. S. capital in internal politics of foreign countries (encouragement and subsidizing of revolutions); (4) appeal by U. S. investors for support from their government when local authorities treat them unsatisfactorily, sometimes provoking military intervention; (5) end of military occupation when U. S. control is accepted, or else; (6) completion of sequence by armed conquest (Philippines) or purchase (Virgin Islands). "The cycle is best illustrated in the relations between the United States and the Caribbean countries, since it has its freest expression where a strong country is dealing with a weak one." (pp. 17-18).

In the final paragraph of the book the authors listed the symptoms of dollar diplomacy in Latin America and the Caribbean: determination of boundaries; prevention of or assistance to filibustering as required by American financial interests; administration of customs houses; annexation of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands; establishment of financial protectorates; armed intervention; overthrow of independent governments; fomenting of revolutions; building of the Panama Canal; interference with elections; controlled use of recognition policy; acquisition of naval bases; creation of local constabularies under American officers; economic interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine to freeze out European investors; solicitation of loan business for New York banks; campaign in behalf of oil interests against nationalization of Mexican natural resources. (pp. 279-80).

So convincingly did Nearing and Freeman diagnose the dollar-diplomacy syndrome that no amount of subsequent, more exacting scholarship on the determinants and objectives of U. S. foreign policy in the early twentieth century has been able to modify the generally received connotations of the phrase. Furthermore, because the book *seems* to deal with matters of equity, because it *seems* to be a prolegomenon to an agenda of reform, almost no one of liberal persuasion would think to inquire whether its analysis *does* in fact offer a point of intellectual purchase for the lever of therapeutic change. Two observations may help to elucidate this point.

First, although the analysis was apparently prompted by moral indignation, economic imperialism is clinically perceived as an "inexorable" stage of American history. The authors seem discouraged or deflected from presenting a complementary survey of local Caribbean causes and conditions for dollar diplomacy; or from analyzing its complex effects (political and psychological, for example) in Caribbean countries; or from suggesting viable grounds for a Caribbean response. The only trait which they ascribe to Caribbean lands and peoples is massive penetrability by external forces. From the *Caribbean* viewpoint the authors are like the walrus and carpenter of Alice in Wonderland, brushing away their tears as they mix strategic calculus (Menéndez-

-Mahan) with economics (Campbell) and place them within a Darwinian framework of historical inevitability.

Second, from the *United States* viewpoint, the book offers only narrow grounds for a reformist critique. Not only do its authors persuasively identify foreign policy as the product of unrestrainable dynamism acting upon infinitely permeable overseas environments. They also smuggle two emotionally freighted implications into a seemingly clinical exposition. One is that "Wall Street" and its accomplice "Washington" are the villains of the piece. The other is that the "American people" are a generous and culturally tolerant breed of citizens who are falsely represented by their plutocrats and bureaucrats. Both hypotheses are of course erroneous. Their net effect is to inhibit sober reflection upon the conditions and choices of life of those who dwell in the Caribbean itself, and upon realistic possibilities for coexistence of the Caribbean and the Colossus.

The Nearing-Freeman thesis is a convenient stopping place for our excursion because it still retains extraordinary appeal and vitality. On the one hand American liberalism has made few explorations beyond its confines during the past forty years; on the other its key propositions have become the permanent doctrinal baggage of Caribbean and Latin American intellectuals. One might almost say that contemporary public discussion of U. S.-Caribbean relations is largely restricted to the modest spectrum of possibility which the Mahan-Bonsal and the Nearing-Freeman theses opened for consideration.

The question raised here has nothing to do with the historical accuracy of the dollar-diplomacy thesis. I merely inquire whether it serves the complex needs of national conscience in the Caribbean even as adequately as it has served the simpler ones of the liberal conscience in the United States. By now it is obvious that I incline to place "dollar diplomacy" in that family of historiographical gambits which throw the blame for Caribbean dilemmas and anxieties on the shoulders of relatively unconcerned extra-Caribbean powers (20).

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Braudel and Geohistory.

The recent past has produced various alternatives to the geopolitical perspective on the destiny of the Caribbean. These include: (1) the historico-additive strategy (inventory and collation of separate insular and regional histories); (2) scientific generalization (compara-

(20). — The *enfant terrible* of this family is the instant history written for presentation to a new Caribbean country on independence day along with its flag and anthem.

tive indexing of pan-Caribbean family patterns, interethnic relations, agricultural methods, forms of colonial rule, and the like (3), schemes for Caribbean political and economic integration; (4) the mystique of African origins. All of these orientations offer challenge and promise. Each one, however, rests upon tentative assumptions; any of them *might* come to grief on the shoals of empirical truth, political reality, or emotional resistance — to leave us with the mournful conclusion that Mahan's is after all the only Caribbean.

Those who presume the existence of a historical and internally definable Caribbean must be willing to move from the general to the specific as well as from the specific to the general. Rather than face the formidable task of sketching the lineaments of that general view, however, let us take refuge in analogy. Let us examine the point of departure and some representative generalizations of a mature scholar who has written a broad, logically conceptualized study of a sea even more complex and suffused with history than the Caribbean. I refer to Fernand Braudel's *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (21).

In the course of his research Braudel found there to be: "Nothing more clearly defined than the Mediterranean of the oceanographer or the geologist or the geographer: these are fields of study well delimited, ranked and labeled". But this is not so of the Mediterranean in history. "A hundred authoritative warnings alert us and place us on guard". Indeed, the Mediterranean "is not even a sea but, as has been said, a 'complex of seas', and what is more, of seas sprinkled with islands, stabbed by peninsulas, rimmed by branching coastlines." (I: xii-xiv).

The historian who deals with his theme integrally must recognize three levels of analysis. The first is that of "a nearly immobile history, the history of man in his relations with his environment; a history slow to drift and change, and often composed of insistent reiterations and of cycles forever recommenced". Overlying this history is another of slow rhythms, a "structural" history or — in the true sense — a *social* history of the groups and clusterings of men. It requires the study of successive economies and dominant states, societies and civilizations. It places a premium on the study of war and conflict, seen not as random clashes of private wills but as the knotting together of deep-lying forces. Finally there is the conventional history, a history of "happenings" cut to the measure not of man but of individuals. This one records the swift and nervous waves above the tidal currents. It is

(21). — I use the Spanish translation: Fernand Braudel, *El Mediterráneo y el mundo mediterráneo en la época de Felipe II*, trans. Mario Monteforte Toledo and Wenceslao Roces (2 vols., Mexico and Buenos Aires, 1953).

the most stirring history, the richest in humanity, yet also hypersensitive, untrustworthy, perilous, and fenced by the rages and dreams and illusions of those who lived it. (I: xvii-xix).

In short, the complete historian must move in the registers of geographic time, social time, and the time of persons. I enlist Braudel's assistance because I feel our image of the historical identity of the Caribbean to be vague and unsubstantial for lacking anchorage in his stratum of geographic time, that is, in a stratum which underlies the passions and foreshortened perspectives of moments or eras.

A theme which illustrates Braudel's method while suggesting rich possibilities for comparative Caribbean treatment is the role of islands in the Mediterranean (I: 126-43). These islands, he observes, are more numerous and important than generally thought. Some are even "continents in miniature", and no corner of that Sea is without its cluster of islets and rocks. The viceroys of Sicily used the phrase "clean the islands" to mean sweeping out the corsairs who infested them in search of drinking water and hideouts. All the islands, great or small, whatever their diversity, provide:

a coherent human and historical environment insofar as they are subject to the generic limitations of islands, which make them both very retarded and very advanced with respect to the general history of the sea, which always locate them brutally between those two opposed poles of archaism and novelty.

Braudel cites the example of Sardinia, "lost in the sea" and removed from such fruitful contacts as Sicily maintained with Italy and Africa. It is a mountainous and fragmented island, a prisoner of poverty forced to live by its own resources. Its history, dialects, customs, pastoral life, and archaic economy make it "a world apart". Yet a casual change of ownership or fortune gives even such an island occasional brusque contact with the outside world. The "isolation of islands" is relative; the sea separates them but also links them to its routes.

Insular life is precarious. It suffers eternal pressures from narrow resources, hunger, threats of attack. Inhabitants must often abandon exposed coastal towns and take refuge in the interior, precisely where there is greatest poverty, where there are no roads and bridges, where cattle are scrawniest. Yet the ostensibly impoverished island is vulnerable to sudden agricultural invasions that elevate it to paradoxical prosperity on world markets. Wheat swept Sicily to make it a sixteenth-century Canada or Argentina; the mastic tree came to Chios, cotton and sugar to Cyprus, the olive to Djerba. "These economies were all alien to the islands, imposed from without, foreign to them and

having often dire consequences for what the Germans call their *Volkswirtschaft*".

Islands also mix with the world through emigration. Like mountain areas they are exporters of men (and many Mediterranean isles are mountainous). The prime example is sixteenth-century Corsica, too rich in men for its resources; "there is certainly not a single Mediterranean event in which a Corsican has not been involved". Corsicans left for Genoa, Venice, Tuscany, Rome, Sardinia, Algiers, Constantinople, Seville, Valencia, and above all for the half-Corsican city of Marseilles.

Although islands stubbornly retain their identity, their historical legacy is rich and layered.

There is not one island whose physiognomy is simple, whose human stock or civilization is of one type, whose history is contained in one world. On the contrary, the successive ages of the Mediterranean remain marked on the body of all of them, like the age of trees on the layers of their trunks.

The definition of insularism must not be too narrow. The whole Mediterranean world is subdivided, discontinuous. Not all its islands are seagirt. Isolated by mountain walls, Greece and Naples turned out upon the sea. Marseilles is "the most incredible oasis of the Mediterranean world, encircled by a true desert". Lombardy, Portugal, Catalonia, Andalusia, or even Spain itself are walled off and insular; so too is Syria, a radiating center for civilization insulated between sea and desert.

Indeed the Mediterranean lands are clusters of regions isolated each from the other yet constantly reaching for and attracting each other. Hence the continual exchange among them in spite of the long intervening journeys by sea and land — an exchange facilitated by the nomadism of Mediterranean man. But the contacts they establish are like electrical discharges, violent and discontinuous. Like magnified images, the complex history of the islands lights up the history of the whole Mediterranean, enriching our understanding of why each Mediterranean province has managed to preserve so stubborn an originality, so strong a regional fragrance, amidst the most extraordinary mixture of races, religions, customs, and civilizations that the world has ever known.

As he moves to a synoptic view of the Mediterranean itself (I: 203-09), Braudel cautions us not to include under its name all that

the Sea “imbues with the aroma of its civilizations, or that its economy sets in motion”. At the same time the term should apply to the circumadjacent region which is its “sounding board”. Too frequently the European sees the Mediterranean as a European sea between his lands and Africa. He forgets that Mediterranean life has found its sharpest impetus and dominant linkages along the East-West axis.

Braudel stresses the meaning of “mediterranean” — a sea amidst, and therefore incorporating, the lands about it. Sheer maritime history may provide a unifying theme with its account of routes, commerce, lines of economic force, and break-points. But to use Mahan’s sea-power calculus as a matrix of historical explanation for the Mediterranean foreshortens the perspective, however useful its application on an oceanic or a global scale. Braudel does not propose, however, to substitute Land Power determinism (favored by historians and geographers) for Sea Power (favored by “essayists”). As the title of his book implies, he sees the two in shifting equilibrium. At times the great land powers impose their will in hegemony that Jacques Pirenne called “absolutist, patrimonial, and aristocratic”. At others an empire arises directly from the sea to produce a thalassocracy (like the Cretan, Venetian, or even English) whose spirit is more “democratic, commercial, and individualist”.

To describe his geographically anchored point of vantage Braudel looks for a more ample term than “geopolitics”, one which will signify something more than a historical schema contrived to accommodate present and future interests of the great powers. (I: 317). For his enterprise he chooses the name “geohistory”. This discipline obliges the geographer to pay more attention to time, to relinquish his near-exclusive concern with present realities, and to think out afresh those of the past. Also — a thornier proposition — it obliges the historian to concern himself with space, with “all that space sustains, engenders, develops, and obstructs”, with the formidable persistence of space and the enduring shape it imparts to history.

Neither the moral which Braudel’s study points for Caribbeanists nor the contrasts between his subject and theirs need be made more explicit here (22). It is enough to say that anyone who reads it becomes forcibly aware of how fragmentary, parochial, or thesis-ridden is most modern writing on the Caribbean, how lacking in architectonics, how pale beside the bygone chronicles of Oviedo, Du Tertre, Labat.

(22). — Werner J. Cahman sketches the beginnings of a scholarly analogy in “The Mediterranean and Caribbean Regions — a Comparison in Race and Culture Contacts”, *Social Forces* 22, 2 (1943): 209-14.

The Sea and its lands await histories written from a more generous perspective, histories which will serve as a well deserved resting place for the ghosts of Caribbean Past, as a foundation for the mushrooming research of Caribbean Present, as inspiration for the integrative schemes of Caribbean Future.