

England vs. Spain in America, 1739-1748: the Spanish Side of the Hill

J. C. M. Ogelsby

Volume 5, Number 1, 1970

Winnipeg 1970

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/030729ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/030729ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

The Canadian Historical Association/La Société historique du Canada

ISSN

0068-8878 (print)

1712-9109 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Ogelsby, J. C. M. (1970). England vs. Spain in America, 1739-1748: the Spanish Side of the Hill. *Historical Papers / Communications historiques*, 5(1), 147–157. <https://doi.org/10.7202/030729ar>

All rights reserved © The Canadian Historical Association/La Société historique du Canada, 1970

This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

ENGLAND VS. SPAIN IN AMERICA, 1739-1748 : THE SPANISH SIDE OF THE HILL

J. C. M. OGELSBY

University of Western Ontario

One of the legacies of what I like to call the Sir Francis Drake syndrome (where the English are clean-cut, honest, and brave, while the Spaniards are brutal, Catholic, and dirty) is that our histories tend to avoid looking at the Spanish side of the hill. The struggle between England and Spain in America, 1739-1748, is no exception to the rule. On the one hand we have the contemporary English accounts predominantly written in justification of their effort and/or to excuse the failure of the several attacks on the Spaniards; on the other we have succeeding historians (e.g. Beatson, Clowes, Richmond, Pares) relying on these contemporary accounts and assiduously avoiding the Spanish interpretation (with the single exception of Duro's classic history).¹ Only Richard Pares seems to have thought the Spanish side worthy of study, but, as he wrote, "[his] courage failed before the vast archives of Spain."² Yet the War of Jenkins' Ear was a war between England and Spain "fought expressly for West Indian ends . . ."³ Therefore, it would seem worthwhile to see if the standard accounts were correct in their assessments or whether propaganda had triumphed over objectivity in analyzing the sometimes vicious struggle that took place in America during those years.

The origins of the war are too well-known to merit discussion here; in short, they centred on trade, British activity in the Gulf of Honduras, in Georgia, and free navigation in the Caribbean. The British government, urged on by the Tory Opposition and a clamouring public, began serious operations against Spanish America in

¹ Robert Beatson, *Naval and Military Memoirs of Great Britain from 1727 to 1783* (8 vols., London, 1804); William Laird Clowes, *The Royal Navy, A History* (7 vols., Boston, 1898); Herbert William Richmond, *The Navy in the War of 1739-1748* (3 vols., Cambridge, 1920); Richard Pares, *War and Trade in the West Indies, 1739-1763* (Oxford, 1936); Cesáreo Fernandez Duro, *Armada española desde la union de los reinos de Castilla y de León* (9 vols., Madrid, 1895-1903).

² Pares, *ibid.*, ix.

³ J. H. Parry and P. M. Sherlock, *A Short History of the West Indies* (London, 1960), 106; John Tate Lanning, in his *The Diplomatic History of Georgia, A Study of the Epoch of Jenkins' Ear* (Chapel Hill, 1936) wrote of the war: "Its place as the nucleus of colonial wars, as an experiment in Britanic imperial affairs, and as the zenith of the Anglo-Spanish struggle for control of that unremittingly important economic center, the Caribbean Sea, is not yet generally recognized" (174).

October, 1739, and Spain reluctantly bowed to the inevitable and began preparations to defend herself. She was too late to save Portobelo, the sleepy isthmian harbour which served as the transfer-point for goods and treasure to and from Spain's Pacific coast colonies. Vernon captured and neutralized that port in early December, 1739, an action uncritically hailed by the British populace as a major achievement. He had taken a town which had been totally unprepared for war. When Vernon arrived, the port's main defence had but six sixteenth-century cannon, 40 militiamen, and no gunners. However, a Spanish frigate and a packetboat in the harbour supplied gunners and additional defenders for a grand total of one hundred and fifty men and boys. Hardly a great feat of arms for a squadron of 370 guns and over one thousand men.⁴

Vernon's subsequent reconnaissance in force before Cartagena and his capture of the Spanish port at the mouth of the river Chagres (site of the Panama Canal) greatly disturbed Admiral Blas de Lezo, the commander in charge of the defence of the Spanish Main. But Lezo could do little with his four ships-of-the-line and several auxiliary vessels. His main duty was to defend Cartagena, the leading city on the coast, and entrepôt for trade into the interior of Colombia and Peru. Reinforcements from Spain, two ships-of-the-line, and six hundred troops arrived in Cartagena after Vernon's appearance, but report of their presence was enough to have the British admiral return to Jamaica.⁵

The Spanish situation in America continued to be unsatisfactory throughout most of 1740. Madrid knew of the English government's decision to send a great expedition to the Caribbean but, as things stood, the Governor of Panama lacked supplies, as did Havana, where three ships-of-the-line lay unfinished in its dockyards for want of arms and materiel.⁶ Cartagena faced a food shortage brought on by the war, for Jamaican traders, the city's chief suppliers, no longer came there.⁷ In order to bolster its forces in America, the Spanish

⁴ Lt. Juan Francisco Carganta to Blas de Lezo, December 8, 1739, Archivo General de Indias (hereafter cited as A.G.I.), Panama, 356; James F. King, "Admiral Vernon at Portobelo: 1739," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, XXIII (May, 1943), 259-260. For the most recent British version, see Cyril Hughes Hartmann, *The Angry Admiral, The Later Career of Edward Vernon, Admiral of the White* (London, 1953), 16-35.

⁵ Lezo to Somodevilla, March 28, 1740, Archivo General de Simancas (hereafter cited as A.G.S.), Marina, 396; Lt. Ugarte's *diario*, A.G.S., Marina, 396; Vernon to Wager, April 25, 1740, in B. McL. Ranft, *The Vernon Papers* (London, 1957), 91-92.

⁶ Governor of Panama to King of Spain, February 12, 1740, Library of Congress, Vernon-Wager MSS; Montalvo to Lezo, July 29, 1740, A.G.S., Marina, 396.

⁷ Lezo to Somodevilla, September 28, 1739, A.G.S., Marina, 396.

government saw that it would have to do a great deal more; to that end it began preparing squadrons for the Caribbean and the Pacific.

The squadron destined for the Caribbean consisted of twelve ships-of-the-line, and three smaller vessels. It carried almost two thousand troops with enough arms, munitions, and other supplies to maintain them. Rodriguez de Torres, its commander, had orders to remain on the defensive and his duties were to frustrate English attempts against Spanish territory and to protect the treasure ships. The smaller Pacific squadron was to protect that area from the rumoured Anson expedition to the South Seas.⁸

Torres' squadron arrived at Cartagena in October, 1740. The news of its sailing, as well as the obvious French support for the Spanish government, had forced the English to cancel their expedition's July departure and to strengthen its naval escort. The expedition did not sail for the Caribbean until October. Its arrival at Port Royal, Jamaica, in January, 1741, ensured English superiority over both the Spanish defenders and their French allies in the area. With the withdrawal of the major portion of the French squadron in that same month, the English commanders, after discussing several alternatives, decided to seize Cartagena.⁹

The English failure before the walls of Cartagena was, to say the least, very disappointing to the leaders of the expedition and to their government. Naval supporters blamed the army leadership and vice versa. What is apparent from a study of the expedition is that the English leaders, particularly in the navy, assumed that Cartagena, so easily sacked by Drake (1585) and de Pointis (1697), was still an easy mark. They did not seem to consider the fact that the Spaniards might have strengthened its defences or that they might defend it.

The situation in Cartagena was certainly not unfavourable to the English. Sebastian de Eslava, the recently arrived Viceroy of the Kingdom of New Granada, took charge of the military defence and was distressed at the lack of men and supplies. He and Admiral de Lezo had had to provide Torres' squadron with valuable resources in order that it could sail for Havana, the city they believed to be the English objective. There remained to Cartagena's leaders a

⁸ Felipe V to Torres, July 10, 1740, A.G.S., Marina, 396; Gomez to Somodevilla, October 8, 1740, A.G.S., Marina, 397; Felipe V to Somodevilla, August 7, 1740, A.G.S., Marina, 397.

⁹ J. C. M. Ogelsby, "Spain's Havana Squadron and the Preservation of the Balance of Power in the Caribbean, 1739-1748," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, XLIX (August, 1969), 475-479. For the most recent study of the attack on Cartagena from both sides of the hill, see Charles E. Mowell, "The Defense of Cartagena," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, XLII (November, 1962), 479-501.

combined force of about three thousand, including sailors, the militia and Indian bowmen.¹⁰

The British arrived off Cartagena in March, 1741, but they did not press the attack. After much manoeuvring and shelling, the British put ashore their army only to find that the Spaniards showed no eagerness to withdraw from the harbour-mouth. In fact, the Spaniards were so reluctant to withdraw that they recovered a battery seized and destroyed by an English landing party and put it back in action. Vernon, angered by the effectiveness of the Spanish gunners, had the battery successfully attacked for a second time. He made much of these two successful sallies and used them as examples of how little the Spaniards wished to stand against a vigorous attack. He urged General Wentworth, the British Commander, to get on with his assault. It perhaps escaped his notice that five hundred men ought to have been able to take a battery manned by less than one hundred defenders. This was but one incident showing Vernon's contempt for the Spaniards which is so evident in his writing; it is this contempt that often sways twentieth-century interpreters. The General may have been slow, but the Spaniards were not prepared to leave the harbour-mouth. That the army, as Vernon had warned, could lose more men by disease, was a justifiable criticism, for Wentworth seems to have had little imagination. Vernon in this instance, I believe, had too much.¹¹

The Spanish leaders, after sixteen days of holding the entrance, decided to withdraw to their second line on the edge of the city. Here the situation was not too favourable, but during the previous year engineers had been able to strengthen the major fort guarding the city. It was prepared to withstand an assault but not a siege, and fortunately the English decided to storm it rather than prolong their stay before the walls.¹² It was the successful defence of this fort that proved the undoing of the British and ended their expedition. Too little account has been given to the delaying action of the Spaniards who knew they had time on their side. In the end it was not only the initial slowness of the British advance, which allowed the climate and fever to take its toll, but the successful system established by the Spanish commanders that led to the victory.

¹⁰ Eslava to Villarias, March 31, 1741, A.G.I., Santa Fe, 572; Sebastian de Eslava with Pedro de Mur, "Diario de Todo lo Ocurrido en la Expugnacion de los Fuertes de Boca Chica y Sitio de la Ciudad de Cartagena de las Indias en 1741," *Tres Tratados de America (Siglo XVIII)* (Madrid, 1894), 196.

¹¹ Vernon, Ogle, and Lestock to Wentworth (Draft), March 25, 1741, in *Vernon Papers*, 202.

¹² Colonel Desnaux's description of San Felipe de Barajas, May 3, 1741, A.G.I., Santa Fe, 572.

Cartagena was a blow to English pride, the victory medals having already been struck. The English leaders, in London and in the Caribbean, were under pressure to succeed. Therefore they proposed to seize the Eastern end of Cuba and its capital Santiago. Such a success, they believed, would please those in England who wanted to "Take & Hold" Spanish territory, would free the Windward Passage from Spanish *guarda-costas*, and would secure the Jamaican north coast. On July 12, 1741, a seriously depleted English force sailed for Guantanamo Bay, the staging point for the conquest of Santiago. It returned to Jamaica, even more depleted, the following December. What had happened during the interval had been a revival of the inter-service rivalry that plagued eighteenth-century combined operations. The Admiral thought that the General had only to march his troops the 42 odd miles of what he believed to be "all Camina [sic] Real" (Royal Highway).¹³ The General, on the other hand, feared to hazard his forces because of the rough terrain and the narrowness of the route.

The Spanish Governor at Santiago, Francisco Cagigal, meanwhile, had settled down to wait. He knew that Santiago, which Pezuela described as being "16 mountainous and tortuous leagues" from Guantanamo, was relatively secure from attack by sea, and that he had the forces to defend the city. He even received additional reinforcements from Cartagena. His men at Guantanamo had orders to harass the enemy troops and to impede any advance.¹⁴

General Wentworth, provided with all manner of differing reports on the route to Santiago, went forward eighteen miles and returned certain that a march on Santiago would be the ruin of the army.

In the end the expedition failed because it was ill-conceived. Perhaps Vernon was justified in writing Newcastle that neither Caesar nor Marlborough would have worried about the military maxims that General Wentworth followed, but there is justification, based on Spanish reports, that Wentworth's assessment had validity. The Spaniards knew that the heat and fatigue caused by the climate would make the English advance difficult. And they would have been harassed continually by guerrillas. The Spaniards had orders to "lose Ground Inch by Inch . . .," and they could have done this without much danger of exposing themselves to British fire.¹⁵ Wentworth was also reasonable in fearing that his troops would be

¹³ Vernon to Wager, August 2, 1741, Public Record Office (hereafter cited as P.R.O.), State Papers, 42/90.

¹⁴ Jacobo de la Pezuela, *Historia de la Isla de Cuba* (3 vols., Madrid, 1868-1878), II, 384; Cagigal to Council of the Indies, September 15, 1741, A.G.O., Santo Domingo, 364; Cagigal to Guerrero, August 2 and August 15, 1741, P.R.O., State Papers, 42/90.

¹⁵ Spanish order of August 30, 1741, P.R.O., State Papers, 42/90.

cut off from their supplies, and that the supply route would have been exposed to continual harassment.

The failure of the Cuban campaign meant yet another project. What was it to be? Admiral Vernon was the most forceful personality in the English expedition and he only reluctantly acceded to Jamaican Governor Edward Trelawney's favourite project, the seizure of Panama. Wentworth was interested, but it took over a month to convince Vernon. When the expedition did sail in March, 1742, Vernon, completely disregarding the campaign plan, sailed into Portobelo before the English could secure the Portobelo-Panama highway. As a result, Portobelo's garrison escaped toward Panama and alerted its governor of the English arrival. Almost immediately the army leaders lost interest, and on April 10 they officially told Vernon they wanted to return to Jamaica. They were helped in their decision by intelligence that Panama had been reinforced from Peru. The expedition returned to Jamaica.¹⁶

Vernon's defenders have continued to absolve him of blame because they have not believed Wentworth's assessment. The Spanish documents clearly demonstrate the wisdom of Wentworth's decision — Panama was not, as Admiral Richmond wrote, "a weakly defended place by land, its garrison . . . small, and even two thousand men . . . [would have had] a good chance of success against it." The reinforcements from Peru alone were fourteen hundred strong!¹⁷

The two leaders, however, were not yet free to return to England. Their government wanted a success, and in the end the great enterprise so auspiciously begun settled on the occupation of Ruatan, an obscure but pleasant island in the Bay of Honduras. Its acquisition they believed "... to be greatly advantageous to His Majesty's Crown and Kingdoms . . ." They were, perhaps, over-optimistic.¹⁸

The English government had not yet learned its lesson concerning operations against the Spaniards. St. Augustine, Cartagena, Santiago, Panama, were major failures. Portobelo and Anson's hit-and-run attacks on the Pacific coast ports were successes but hardly of comparable magnitude.¹⁹ But the government still believed it could penetrate Spanish territory and, even while Vernon and Wentworth were returning home, the Government was planning a "secret" expedition. Its target was the Caracas coast, where it hoped to free

¹⁶ J. C. M. Ogelsby, "The British and Panama — 1742," *Caribbean Studies*, III (July, 1963), 71-79.

¹⁷ Richmond, *Navy*, I, 132; Eslava to Campillo, May 16, 1742, A.G.I., Panama, 356.

¹⁸ Council of War, October 16, 1742, *Vernon Papers*, 281-282.

¹⁹ Richard Walter (ed.), *A Voyage Round the World in the Years MDCCXL, I, II, III, IV, by George Anson* (London, 1748).

the residents from Spanish oppression and to open the region to British trade. The English leaders knew that the coast's inhabitants were unhappy with the control exercised by the *Real Compañía Guipuzcoana*. Better known as the Caracas Company, the Guipuzcoana Company had a monopoly of trade along the coast and also was responsible for the defence of the area. It had been too successful, for it had cut down illicit trade and sold its own products at a high price.²⁰

The success of the expedition apparently depended upon its secrecy and there has been some confusion since 1743 as to whether it was secret.²¹ The Spanish documents show that the Governor of Caracas was aware of the impending attack and he and the Caracas Company officials were prepared for it. Moreover, when the expedition arrived off the coast it obligingly gave an early view to look-outs posted to watch for it. When the English sailed into La Guaira they were met by stiff resistance and had to retreat to Curaçao. The Spanish defenders believed, and rightly as it turned out, that La Guaira could not be taken from the sea. The English then tried Puerto Cabello and again met defeat at the hands of its defenders.²²

The failure on the Caracas coast illustrates once again how much the English government underestimated the Spanish strength. The size of the force, ten ships — the largest only 70 guns — would have had to be favoured by the gods to have succeeded in such an enterprise.

The failure of the Caracas expedition ended English attempts to seize Spanish territory. The government contemplated other expeditions, but none came to fruition. The Marquis de Larnage, Governor of Saint Domingue, displayed insight when he wrote Torres at Havana that the British would try no more expeditions after the defeats on the Caracas coast, because "Now it is Europe which represents the theatre of war . . ." ²³

²⁰ The best modern study is Roland D. Hussey, *The Caracas Company, 1728-1784, A Study in the History of Spanish Monopolistic Trade* (Cambridge, Mass., 1934). See also D. Joseph de Yturriaga, *Real Compañía Guipuzcoana de Caracas . . .* (Madrid, 1768).

²¹ Pares, *War and Trade*, 97n.

²² On the defence of La Guaira, see *Gaceta de Madrid*, July 9, 1743, 227; Account of the defence of La Guaira, March 2 to 6, 1743, A.G.I., Caracas, 68; Zuloaga's diary, A.G.I., Santo Domingo, 1207; Guipuzcoana Company report, May 20, 1743, A.G.I., Caracas, 927; [Anon.], *Relacion de la Gloriosa Y Singular Victoria . . . 2 de Marzo 1743* (Caracas, 1858). On the defence of Puerto Cabello, see *Gaceta de Madrid*, July 16, 1743, 234 and August 6, 1743, 259; Lt. Villaguana's diary in A.G.I., Santo Domingo, 1207; Account of the defence in A.G.I., Caracas 68; Zuloaga to Eslava, May 14, 1743, A.G.I., Santa Fe, 572.

²³ Larnage to Torres, September 9, 1743, A.G.S., Marina, 399.

The shift in theatres allowed the Spanish government to concentrate on its other interests in America: the convoy of the wealth of Mexico to Spain and the prevention of illicit trade. The British authorities have missed the three successful voyages of Spain's Havana squadron, whose ships carried the treasure to Spain in 1741, 1744, and 1747. The squadrons, when not convoying the treasure, remained in or near Havana and few of its ships went west to Veracruz or east to Española or Puerto Rico. Its ships usually patrolled the Cuban coast against illicit traders and enemy privateers. More importantly, the squadron's presence worried the British leaders in Jamaica, whose greatest fear was a joint Franco-Spanish attack on that island.²⁴ This never occurred, but the thought kept the English off-balance until the French and English agreed to a peace. When news of the agreement reached the Caribbean, it permitted the English commander of the Jamaica squadron, Rear-Admiral Charles Knowles, to concentrate against the Spaniards.

Knowles was an aggressive commander, interested in increasing his personal wealth through actions against the enemy. This, of course, was not untypical of naval officers in the eighteenth century. War meant potential prize money and a leader's share in any successful venture was large. Knowles needed prize money and his attack on the Havana squadron in October, 1748, was part of his plan to seize Veracruz, the Spanish "treasure port."²⁵ He defeated the Spaniards, but shortly after the battle learned to his sorrow that Spain and England had agreed to cessation of arms. His triumph was a hollow victory.

One of the centres of controversy at the beginning of the war had concerned freedom of navigation and expansion of trade in America. The British wanted to increase their illicit trade with the Spanish colonies, while the Spanish Crown had ordered its governors in America to prevent it. The war, of course, permitted increased activities on the part of nationals on both sides. War and trade were very compatible in the mid-eighteenth century. The governments concerned had the right to issue licenses, or letters of marque, to enterprising entrepreneurs permitting them to commit acts of aggression against their enemies. These acts could include the seizure of ships, towns, or individuals. Any funds accruing from a success were split among the successful captors. It was evidently an attractive occupation, because there were as many as one hundred and thirteen licensed privateers in the British North American colonies, and between 1742 and 1745 the Governors of Havana and Santiago issued more than fifty letters of marque.²⁶

²⁴ Davers to Admiralty, August 5, 1745, P.R.O., Admiralty, 1/233.

²⁵ Knowles to Admiralty, April 6, 1748, P.R.O., Admiralty, 1/234.

²⁶ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, January 29, 1745; reports illustrating this can

In the early days of the war, English and Anglo-American privateers commanded the waters off Eastern Cuba. Later, they also raided Puerto Rico, the coast of Central America, and Venezuela. The Spaniards, on the other hand, were not inactive. Captains like Juan de Cañas, Pedro de Garaicoechea, and Vincente Lopez became renowned (or infamous, depending on one's viewpoint) for their successes. Cañas, who roamed the south coast of Cuba and around Jamaica, had several notable victories.²⁷ Garaicoechea was probably the most daring of the Spanish privateers in America. His activities have led later Spanish historians to use superlatives whenever they mentioned him (e.g. Pezuela, the nineteenth-century historian of Cuba called him "illustrious" and Duro wrote of Spanish privateers, "distinguished among them was . . . Garaycoechea, by the valour and importance of the seizures he made . . .").²⁸ Garaicoechea began his career in 1740 with four seizures off the coast of his native Guipuzcoa. Then he sailed to Havana and from that port there were few places he did not sail from the waters off Bermuda to the Caracas coast. During a ten-week period in 1747, for example, he seized sixteen prizes between Bermuda and the Virginia Capes.²⁹

Vincente Lopez became notorious along the Jamaican coast for he did "great Mischief to the trade" in 1745 and early 1746.³⁰ Captured during one of his forays, the Commander-in-Chief of the Jamaica squadron sent Lopez to England. Lopez, however, was included in an exchange of prisoners and returned to the fray in 1747. In the summer of 1748 he took twenty-six prizes off the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays.³¹

For all the reports of activities that fill colonial newspapers and correspondence it would not appear that privateering provided any major advantage to either side. The successes generally offset the losses. However, it would appear that the British privateers could detract from their nation's efforts by enticing seamen away from the navy and by buying up all the best ships. Spain, on the other hand, was better served by her privateers in America, if only because she had no great ambitions there and was concerned only with the defence

be found in the letters of Guemes to Felipe V or Enseñada in A.G.I., Santo Domingo 2167; Cagigal to Felipe V or Enseñada, A.G.I., Santo Domingo, 2167 or 2170.

²⁷ Guemes to Enseñada, November 13, 1745, A.G.I., Santo Domingo, 2168; *Gaceta de Madrid*, January 25, 1746, 30-31; Cagigal to Enseñada, February 23, 1748, A.G.I., Santo Domingo, 2170.

²⁸ Pezuela, *Cuba*, II, 391; Duro, *Armada*, VI, 282.

²⁹ *Gaceta de Madrid*, May 17, 1740, and January 28, 1744; Garaicoechea to Guemes, October 31, 1745, A.G.I., Santo Domingo, 387; Reggio to Enseñada, July 20, 1747, A.G.I., Santo Domingo, 2170.

³⁰ Davers to Admiralty, April 10, 1746, P.R.O., Admiralty, 1/233.

³¹ Cagigal to Enseñada, October 16, 1747, and August 12, 1748, A.G.I., Santo Domingo, 2170.

of her colonies. As a result, Spain depended a great deal more on her privateers to harass British shipping and thus keep the British naval forces fully occupied. There is evidence enough to show that they did their duty.³²

The decade of war in America finished in 1748. At its end it appears that some of the original reasons for the war had been forgotten. The Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, while including England's agreement to withdraw from the Bay of Honduras and Spain's acknowledgement to extend the *asiento*, did not even mention two of the major causes: the right of free navigation, and compensation to English traders for *guarda-costa* depredations. While England had been angry at Spain in 1739, by 1746 she was less bellicose and more interested in wooing Spain from France.³³

England had wanted war in 1739 and she had begun it. A vociferous number of her citizens, not satisfied with the destruction of privateer bases and Spanish shipping, had been able to push the government into doing something grandiose. Admiral Richmond is, I believe, correct when he suggests that the blame for failure of the grandiose projects ought to be sought in the Inner Committee of the Privy Council, for it is its members who surrendered to public opinion and launched the expedition.³⁴ That the English naval and military commanders could not coordinate was to be expected in a system which provided for divided responsibilities (the Spanish had this problem too).³⁵ And it is apparent that neither the political nor military leaders considered that the Spaniards might be capable of forestalling their ambitions.

The irony of the struggle is that prior to the war English traders were quite successful in the illicit trade. If the reports of the South Sea Company factors at Cartagena and Admiral de Lezo are considered, there existed the possibility of even greater success. For de Lezo, more and more, had depended upon supplies from Jamaica and when these had been stopped he was in difficult straits. The factors, sorely upset at English policy, had seen the success of British trade in the area. They reported the farmers around Cartagena had

³² Richard Pares, *Colonial Blockade and Neutral Rights, 1739-1763* (London, 1938), 33; Numerous accounts in A.G.I., Santo Domingo, 364, 1098, 2167-70; 2513. Beatson, *Memoirs*, 299, 350, illustrates that prizes seized during any one year were usually offset by losses. However, his figures are probably not very accurate: In 1745, by Spaniards (59), from Spaniards (54); in 1746, by (78), from (88); in 1747, by (89), from (55); in 1748, by (106), from (37).

³³ Lanning, *Diplomatic History*, 230; Charles O. Paullin (ed.), *European Treaties Bearing on the History of the United States and its Dependencies*, IV (Washington, 1917), 48, 68-85.

³⁴ Admiral Sir H. W. Richmond, "Correspondence" *History*, XX (June, 1935), 48.

³⁵ Nowell, "Defence of Cartagena," 489.

ceased planting wheat because British flour sold so much more cheaply on the local market. They had vigorously complained to Vernon that prohibition of Jamaican trade with Cartagena had encouraged the Spaniards to return to their old ways and thus stifled English trade advantages along the coast.³⁶

In summary, I think an assessment of the struggle, based on Spanish archival material, provides a better perspective for examining the English assumptions about the war, both then and now. The Spanish archives reveal that Spain was not prepared for war but willing to take measures to defend her colonies in America. Her men fought well, and for the most part successfully, when the chips were down. That they were aided, in part, by English errors and indecision, should not detract from their victories.

The archives also reveal that, contrary to the traditional view, Britannia did not completely rule the waves. Not only did Spaniards carry the treasure to Spain three times during the war, but Spain's Havana squadron served a useful role in keeping the British at Jamaica off-balance. Moreover, the Commander-in-Chief, Jamaica Station, had to keep his squadron dispersed in order to protect Anglo-American shipping from Spanish privateers and cruisers.³⁷

The traditional English bias in favour of the Royal Navy has also preserved certain myths about English leadership in America. Admiral Vernon has received his share of kudos and generally been absolved of blame in the failures. He has escaped the disapprobation and obscurity which has been the lot of General Wentworth.³⁸ For what it is worth, the material in the Spanish archives suggests that General Wentworth has deserved better, even if only to show that the Spanish defenders of Cartagena were not as weak as suspected, the route to Santiago not so easy, and that he was right about Panama.

While the illustrations presented in this paper are not altogether earth-shaking, I do believe that they provide us with a more balanced insight into that struggle in America. Moreover, a study of this nature shows again how myths and prejudices can be accepted as truth for all too long. If we, as historians, are to achieve some success at objectivity we cannot let linguistic or cultural barriers stand in our way in our search for truth. We cannot, in other words, avoid looking at both sides of the hill.

³⁶ Messrs. Ord and Gray to Vernon, November 20, 1739, P.R.O. State Papers, 42/85.

³⁷ The most recent traditional view in this regard is J. H. Parry, *The Spanish Seaborne Empire* (London, 1966), 299.

³⁸ E.g. Vernon is in the Dictionary of National Biography while Wentworth receives no mention.