

a table of freight rates where freight revenues are used as economic indicators, the absence of trends for the graphs, and of statistics for mean and standard deviation in the discussion of lengths of voyages.

It is to be hoped that the promise of this work will shortly find fulfillment in a more comprehensive examination of the mail service and its economic impact on the Río de la Plata area.

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Comercio colonial y guerras revolucionarias. La Decadencia económica de Cádiz a raíz de la emancipación americana. ANTONIO GARCÍA-BAQUERO GONZÁLEZ. Prologue by JOSÉ LUIS COMELLAS. Seville, Spain, 1972. Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos de Sevilla, 206. Tables. Graphs. Bibliography. Pp. xix, 254. Paper.

A notable hiatus in Spanish historiography—the absence of any detailed study of the economic conditions which encompassed the great political crises of the early nineteenth century—is partly filled by this book. Concentrating on the commercial fortunes of Cádiz between 1796 and 1824, it demonstrates the impact of international war as a depressant to imperial commerce, as a catalyst for colonial independence, and as an impulse to political change in Spain.

In the second (and documentarily substantive) half of the book, the author deploys a mass of quantitative material to portray the cumulative blows inflicted by war, political mismanagement and colonial revolt and to evoke the responses which they engendered.

Unfortunately, that description of the *coyuntura* never satisfactorily coheres with the preceding outline of *estructuras* (a lengthy examination of the physical, demographic and economic setting of Cádiz's transatlantic commerce) because it fails to relate the elements of decay to the process of decline. It is difficult, in García-Baquero's account, not to see the war as some kind of perverse historical *deus ex machina*. The listing of weaknesses in the Spanish economy is too schematic to define their relationship to the colonial trade, to foreign influence, to mercantile practice or to the entry into war. While much emphasis is placed on the Cádiz merchants as agents of economic backwardness, the mercantile community is not subjected to close scrutiny either as a group or as individuals. Avoiding any close inspection of their trading ventures, investments, marriage and career patterns, García-Baquero's condemnation of the merchants as unenterprising, aristo-

cratic imitators lacks authority, and neglects the possibility of a more dynamic relationship (suggested by the potential activities of the Cádiz *Consulado*, especially in its function as a lender to government) between Crown and mercantile oligarchy.

The superficial treatment of internal factors influencing the colonial trade of Cádiz is compounded by an almost total neglect of the external pressures which exacerbated its vulnerability before 1796. In discussing the colonial economy, the author confines himself to a single source: Humboldt's *Ensayo Político*. And though that perspicacious observer commented extensively on the balance of Spain's transoceanic trade and on the inroads forged by foreign contraband, García-Baquero does not consider the strength of these pressures or their implications for American development and *gacitano* prosperity. Proliferating complaints about contraband suggest that the establishment of regularly-frequented illicit trade routes was diminishing the role of Cádiz throughout the *comercio libre* period. Some reflection on these perceptible pre-war shifts in trade routes would have shown the gradual erosion of Cádiz's prosperity and Spain's colonial trade before their destruction by war, thus illuminating the movement into war and the genesis of American independence.

The book is recommended as a portrayal of the economic ramifications of Imperial breakdown in Spain, but it is less useful as an analysis of the complex roots of that crisis.

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El comercio y la crisis colonial. Un mito de la independencia. By SERGIO VILLALOBOS R. Santiago de Chile, 1968. Ediciones de la Universidad de Chile. Index. Appendix. Bibliography. Pp. 382. Paper.

In the very respectable generation of Chilean historians now reaching their full maturity as scholars, Sergio Villalobos R. undoubtedly holds a very high place indeed. (This has been recognized abroad; in 1971-72 he occupied the Simón Bolívar Chair for distinguished visitors at Cambridge, England.) A dozen or so years ago, Villalobos wrote an excellent and well-rounded study of the background to the creole revolution of 1810. While working on this, he tells us in the preface to the substantial monograph under review here, he realized that a much more detailed inquiry into the patterns of late-colonial economic life was necessary before any definite conclusions could be reached as to