THE RISE AND FALL OF THE BLACK CARIBS

- BY -

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PREFACE

Few historians have paid any attention to the Black Caribs of St. Vincent, and those who did had good reason to be prejudiced. The first work in which the Black Caribs are extensively discussed is Sir William Young's "An Account of the Black Charaibs in the Island of St. Vincent's," first published in 1795. The monograph was compiled by Sir William Young (Jnr.) from the papers of his father and from his own limited experience of the Black Caribs. Now, Sir William Young (Snr.) was the Chairman of the Commission sent out by the British Government to survey, sub-divide and sell St. Vincent after it had been ceded to the English under the terms of the Treaty of Paris in 1763. In the course of his work Sir. William Young (Snr.) acquired two very substantial parcels of land in St. Vincent, which were subsequently inherited by Sir William Young (Jnr.). In short, the Youngs were so deeply involved in the situation that it would have been extremely difficult for them to write about it in anything but a highly subjective manner. Indeed Sir William's book is a thinly disguised attempt to rationalize the planters' attitudes.

The second work in which the Black Caribs, or rather the wars they urged against the English settlers are extensively discussed is in Charles Shepherd's "An Historical Account of the Island of St. Vincent," published in 1831. Shepherd plainly states in his introduction that he was commissioned by the planters to record their vicissitudes, and so there can be no question as to where his interest lay.

Coke, in Volume II of his "History of the West Indies," originally published in 1810, also devotes considerable attention to the Black Caribs. The good Reverend was not pleased about the reluctance of the Caribs to embrace the proselytising of his Methodist colleagues, and this is inevitably reflected in his work.

More recently, Taylor has made an anthropological study of the Black Caribs of British Honduras. Few people realize that these people are the direct descendants of the

Black Caribs of St. Vincent. It is hoped that this booklet will help to make the link clear, assure the Black Caribs that we in St. Vincent have not forgotten them and have at least striven to tell the story of their ancestors with some degree of objectivity.

INTRODUCTION

The story of the Black Caribs cannot be fully appreciated without a clear grasp of some of the geographical details of the Caribbean area, particularly the location of such places as Bequia, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, Martinique, Barbados and Honduras. The Caribbean Sea together with the Gulf of Mexico form an almost complete rectangle. On the northern, southern and western sides are North, South and Central America, respectively. The last named of course, includes, among other countries, British Honduras and Guatemala. On the eastern side, there is the chain of islands known as the West Indies stretching from North America (Florida) to South America (Venezuela). At the southernmost end of the chain, immediately adjacent to Venezuela, is Trinidad, then comes Grenada and this is followed by St. Vincent. Between Grenada and St. Vincent are a group of very small islands called the Grenadines. Most of these Grenadines, including Bequia, the northernmost, and its neighbours to the east, Balliceaux and Battawia, are part of the State of St. Vincent. Directly east of St. Vincent is Barbados, while immediately to the north is St. Lucia, and this is followed by Martinique. The prevailing winds in the area are the North-East Trades and these touch at Barbados first and then come on to St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Thus, ships drifting from Barbados almost invariably make a land fall in St. Vincent or the Grenadines. One final point about the geography of the area that it is worth bearing in mind is that it is hurricane prone, these violent storms being most prevalent between June and September. These storms have played no mean part in the history of St. Vincent.

The recorded history of course, begins with the arrival of Columbus in the West

Indies. The inhabitants that he found in these islands are believed to have come up the Chain from Venezuela, their original home being the Orinoco basin. The Europeans on their arrival found that St. Vincent contained far more Caribs than any other island. Some historians have attributed this to the Caribs' liking for St. Vincent's rugged terrain and good fishing grounds. Since other islands in the chain have these characteristics too - in fact there are others more favoured in this respect than St. Vincent - it is more likely that when the Europeans arrived, only the advance guard of the Caribs had got as far as St. Kitts, the main wave had only reached St. Vincent where they were gathering in preparation for the next move northwards. Be that as it may, the arrival of the Europeans put paid to any such plans.

The mountainous nature of the island's terrain and the large number of Caribs inhabiting it combined to make the Europeans give St. Vincent a fairly wide berth, and in the Treaty of Aix-La-Chapelle in 1748, St. Vincent was declared to be neutral. It is, however, not accurate to say, as some historians have done, that the Caribs were left unmolested. Raleigh visited the place in 1595 and subsequently spread stories about the cannibalistic nature of its inhabitants. The English monarchs were continually granting the place to one duke or another. A Frenchman, M. DuBlanc, even declared war on the Caribs and as we shall see later, the Caribs had to repel two serious efforts at settlement, one by the English and the other by the French.

Despite all this, the Caribs in St. Vincent not only survived but also prospered. They came to be regarded as the warriors who would assist their fellow Caribs in other islands in the struggles against the Europeans. It is reported that they possessed some large canoes capable of carrying up to 60 warriors. These they would launch and sail

with amazing dexterity for the islands where their assistance was needed. It is clear, too, that when the Caribs in the other islands were defeated and had to flee, it was to St. Vincent they came.

For instance, Van der Plas suggests that the Bayabous, a tribe of Caribs, were forced to flee their native Guadeloupe and settle near to a river midway on the east coast of St. Vincent, thus giving the place their name Biabou, which today is a large village about 13 miles from Kingstown, the capital of St. Vincent.

Probably the Caribs might have survived even longer had they not made the fatal mistake of inviting French priests to live among them. It appears that a French sailor had enticed two young Caribs, one of them the son of an influential chief, on to his ship and sold them as slaves in Tortuga. General Poincy ordered the boys to be returned to St. Vincent and in turn, they were sent to St. Kitts to thank him. While there, they met a French priest, Père Aubergeon, who spoke the Carib language and they invited him to come to St. Vincent and spread the gospel. Père Aubergeon arrived in St. Vincent in 1653, where he estimated the population of the Caribs to be about 10,000. Later Aubergeon was joined by another priest, Père Geuimu. It was customary for each priest to be accompanied by a lay assistant and one or two slaves. Previously it has been suggested that the headquarters of these missionaries was Barrouallie, but our researches however indicate that it was nearer to Chateaubelair.

It is clear from all accounts that the French priests made little impact on the Caribs; in their own phrase, they laboured “bien inutilissime.” The organization, or rather, lack of organization of Carib society made the propagation of the gospel extremely difficult. The Caribs were fiercely individualistic, with chiefs emerging

mainly in time of war. The difficulties, too, of reconciling the precepts of the French priests with the practices of their other countrymen who sought to take away the Carib lands and enslave them must also have made the Caribs somewhat skeptical. Matters came to a head when, in 1654, the Caribs, at an inter-island council, resolved to drive the French from the islands. One of their first acts was to massacre the French priests and their assistants in St. Vincent. In reprisal the French sent an expedition in three men-of-war to deal with the Caribs in St. Vincent. For eight days they systematically destroyed the Caribs, their villages and whatever little cultivation they had.

This was not the only disaster to befall the Caribs as on July 13, 1653, the island had been struck by a violent hurricane. Moreover, the negroes from Africa had by this time made their appearance with consequences that were to be extremely far-reaching.

The precise origin of these negroes has been difficult to determine. The available evidence, however, suggests that they may have got here in three different ways. The first group or groups were apparently captured and enslaved by the Caribs. For almost a century, before efforts were made to colonize the Lesser Antilles, usually by the French or English, the Spaniards were carrying slaves from Africa to Santo Domingo. The Caribs had a habit of luring the Spanish ships into rocks and shoals by giving incorrect directions to their crews. Once the ships had been wrecked, the Caribs would kill the crew and take over the cargo, be it gold, eau-de-vie or slaves. Later, when the French and English settled most of the Lesser Antilles, leaving St. Vincent and Dominica to the Caribs, the latter would make excursions from their two islands and carry off slaves from the French and English plantations. Several documents attest to the presence of negroes in St. Vincent at an early date. Armand de La Paix, a Dominican missionary writing in

1646 refers to them. In the British Calendar of State Papers, 1661-1662, St. Vincent is referred to as being "all Indians and some negroes from the loss of two Spanish ships." Lord Willoughby, too, described St. Vincent as covered with woods, Indians and Blacks, and Phillip Warner stated in 1676 that St. Vincent had some 3,000 negroes and no island as many Indians.

The second major source from which the negroes may have come is a Dutch ship carrying slaves from the Bight of Benin, West Africa, to Barbados. The ship foundered off the east coast of Bequia in 1675. The records do not indicate why the ship foundered, but it is reasonable to suppose that it might well have encountered the hurricane that struck Barbados in August 1675. It is significant that "Janet," a hurricane that struck Barbados in 1955, also devastated the Southern Grenadines.

Ironically enough, though the negroes would have been chained below deck and one would expect them to be unable to help themselves, they appear to have been the only survivors. They managed to reach Bequia where they were looked after by the Caribs they found living there. Subsequently they came across to St. Vincent and were absorbed into the Yellow Carib community.

The third and probably the most important source from which the negroes came was Barbados. It has already been mentioned that most of the Lesser Antilles, including Barbados, were colonized, while St. Vincent and Dominica were left to the Caribs. The slaves in Barbados did not take long to discover that a boat or even a raft drifting from Barbados would end up in St. Vincent where they could once more enjoy their freedom in the island's thickly wooded mountains. To a lesser extent, the slaves in St. Lucia, probably noting how quickly the Carib canoes covered the 28 miles between St. Vincent

and St. Lucia, also used this as an escape route. As a result, the negroes found their numbers enormously swollen by this wave of "illegal immigrants" from Barbados and St. Lucia.

By 1700 the negroes were well established. Labat, a French priest, delightful travel writer, and master-spy visited the island in 1700. His comments on the situation are not only well put in his inimitable laconic style, but they are also extremely illuminating. Below, they are quoted verbatim:

> "Our vessel was no sooner anchored than it was filled with Caribs and negroes come to see us and to ask for brandy. All these gentlemen were rocoued - that is, painted red, and wore - most of them, at any rate - a little strip of cloth over their parts. This uniform attire does not prevent the Caribs' being easily distinguished from the negroes; the latter having fine kinky hair like wool, whereas that of the Caribs is black, long, straight, and very coarse. But even were this indication lacking, as would be the case if all their heads were shaved, it would still be easy to know them by the look of their heads, by their eyes, their mouths, and their corpulence, in all of which respects the ones differ greatly from the others."

He continued:

> "This is the centre of the Carib Republic: the place where the savages are most numerous - Dominica not approaching it. Besides the savages, this island is also inhabited by a very great number of fugitive negroes, for the most part from Barbados, which, being to windward of Saint Vincent, gives the runaways every possible facility for escaping from their masters'

> plantations in boats or on piperis or rafts, and taking refuge among the savages. The Caribs formerly brought them back to their masters, when they were at peace with them, or took and sold them to the French or to the Spaniards. I don't know for what reason they have changed their method, nor what has induced them to receive these negroes amongst themselves and to regard them as belonging to one and the same nation."

It is reasonable to assume that the vast majority of 'migrants' were male. At the same time there is evidence to suggest that there was a surplus of women among the Yellow Caribs, as it was their custom to collect women as booty in war and add them to their households. In fact, the main reason why Carib men spoke one language (Carib) and the women another (Arawak) is that many of the women were captive Arawaks and their female descendants. Naturally the negroes helped themselves and this soon led to friction between the negroes and male Caribs. The latter resolved to kill the male children born to negroes, who objected vigorously. In the ensuing skirmishes, the Caribs got the worst of it and were forced to, if only temporarily, live and let live.

The children produced as a result of this union between the Carib women and the negroes have been aptly described by Raynal, as having preserved more of the colour of their fathers than of their mothers, being tall and stout in contrast to the stocky appearance of the Caribs, and speaking with a vehemence close to anger. They were to become known in history as the Black Caribs, to distinguish them from the Amerindian, or original Yellow Caribs.

THE FRENCH INTERLUDE

The population of the Black Caribs continued to grow inexorably through both natural increase and a constant flow of runaway slaves from Barbados. As a result, they tended to encroach more and more on what the Yellow Caribs considered their preserves. The latter, however, had by now learnt, to their cost, that they were no match for the Black Caribs and so sought assistance from the Governor of Martinique.

In 1700, the Governor responded by dividing the island into two sections. He drew a line called Barre de l'Isle in the vicinity of the present Colonaire, giving the western half to the Yellow Caribs and the eastern to the Black Caribs.

The arrangement appeared to suit all parties admirably without any of them realizing what the other really had in mind. The Black Caribs did not merely accept the Governor's ruling, they held it sacrosanct and were prepared to defend their territory, which subsequently became known as the Carib Country, against all comers. The arrangement appealed to them as it gave them the eastern coast, where the runaway slaves from Barbados invariably landed. They would, therefore, be in a position to welcome these additions to their number and prevent them from falling into the hands of the Yellow Caribs, who were now prepared to sell them as slaves to the French.

The Yellow Caribs, for their part, saw the French as protectors and suppliers of "eau de vie." They wanted the western coast since it would facilitate intercourse with the French in Martinique and St. Lucia. The French had, in the first place, suggested the division as they intended to settle surreptitiously among the Yellow Caribs, all the while paying lip service to the Treaty of Aix-La-Chapelle and assuring the English that the island was in fact neutral territory. The Yellow Caribs of course went out of their way to

encourage this, so that one day they could join with the French and get rid of the Black Caribs.

By 1719, the Yellow Caribs felt the time had come to put their plan into operation. The French were enthusiastic since they saw considerable advantage in the scheme for themselves. Their surreptitious settlements would then not be confined to the western sector, but could be extended over the whole island. Moreover, if they could reduce the Black Caribs to submission without killing too many of them, they would obtain an ample supply of slaves at little cost. And so, the Governor of Martinique gave the project his full support and sent Major Paulian with 400 volunteers to do battle with the Black Caribs.

Paulian's strategy was to join the Yellow Caribs who could at least serve as guides in the difficult terrain that was, and still is, St. Vincent, and rout the Black Caribs. The plan failed dismally. In the first place, the Yellow Caribs reneged on their commitment. No doubt they realized that Paulian's small and untried force would be no match for the Black Caribs, so rather than join the French, lose, and be exposed to the full vengeance of the Black Caribs, they kept out of the battle altogether.

In the second place, the Black Caribs, probably for the first time in the Caribbean but certainly not for the last, embarked upon what centuries later became known as guerilla warfare. They refused to meet the French in open combat. During the day they would be on the defensive, hiding out in the mountain fastness except to climb coconut trees and "pick off" the leaders of any expedition that ventured into their strongholds. At night they would go on

the offensive, descending in small groups from unexpected areas on any Frenchmen they could find. Major Paulian and many of his followers were killed and the remainder retreated to Martinique.

The French hushed up the whole incident, no doubt because it perhaps did not have the sanction of the metropolitan Government, but also because they did not want it known that they had been beaten by the Black Caribs, whom everyone thought were very unsophisticated. The Black Caribs, for their part, extracted war damages from the French and boasted about it. They, however, still allowed the French to settle in increasing numbers, though only in that section of the island that the Governor of Martinique had allocated to the Yellow Caribs. One Frenchman, M.Perain, Secretary to the Governor of Martinique, had the temerity to build a house, not on the lands of the Black Caribs, but on Yellow Carib lands immediately adjacent. The Black Caribs burnt the house and destroyed the plantation.

Once the French had come to accept the ascendancy of the Black Caribs as an established fact, their method of settlement enabled them to live and let live with both Yellow and Black Caribs alike. Unlike other European colonists, the French did not see themselves as amassing a large fortune in St. Vincent in the shortest possible time and retiring to the Mother Country to live happily thereafter. Rather, they considered St. Vincent as their home where they should earn a living and spend the rest of their days. Consequently, they were not interested in large sugar plantations, but preferred to practise diversified agriculture, growing indigo, cotton, tobacco and a little sugar in small holdings. These holdings extended deep into the interior and even today one can see the remains of the very small sugar factories used by the French in such remote

places as Lammies, Riguad and Nugent.

The restriction of the French settlements to the area allocated to the Yellow Caribs does not by any means imply that they had no impact on the Black Caribs. On the contrary, the French presence affected the Black Caribs directly and indirectly.

It was the custom of French settlers who came to St. Vincent to bring their slaves with them. This posed a problem for the Black Caribs since it was virtually impossible to distinguish between many of them and the slaves, particularly between the children. The Black Caribs sought to deal with the issue by ostensibly adopting more and more of the habits of the Yellow Caribs. The most significant of these was the practice of flattening the skulls of their babies or small children by compressing their heads between two pieces of board, which they tightened progressively at both ends. Labat, in discussing the effect of this habit on the Yellow Caribs, noted that their foreheads were flat and sloped backwards so much that it appeared that they could look at the sky without raising their heads.

They buried their dead, too, like the Yellow Caribs, in a round hole about four feet in diameter and six feet in depth. The body was propped up in the same position the Caribs used when squatting around a fire, the elbows, resting on the knees, and the palms supporting the cheeks. These burials usually took place under the floor of the huts in which the relatives normally lived.

Long before the arrival of the French, the Black Caribs had adopted and/or inherited the Yellow Caribs' extensive use of the cassava root in their diet. They used it as a type of bread, as a beverage and for meat preservation and seasoning. Of course, the Yellow Caribs' habit of killing their male enemies in war and carrying off

the females as additional wives was too good a practice for the Black Caribs not to adopt.

There were more direct ways in which the French settlers affected the Black Caribs. Since the French had no legal right to be here and could hardly defend themselves against the Black Caribs, they made every effort to try to be on good terms with them. Sir William Young goes as far as to say "they (the French) helped to conciliate them (the Black Caribs) by occasional hospitalities at Martinique, and they gave them presents and supplied them with arms; they sent missionaries amongst them to dazzle them with ceremonies and entertain them with festivals, and they availed themselves of the enthusiastic temper of a wild and free people, to promote a communion of interests and passions, under covert of religion."

As we shall see later, the Black Caribs definitely acquired the French taste for wine instead of rum and became quite proficient in the French language and French manners. One forever hears of them coming to "faire bien leur complements" even when they are up to mischief. Coke, who has maligned them so much, admits they were very lavish in entertaining guests and took it amiss if visitors did not partake of their hospitality, usually helpings of eggs, cassava bread and a bowl of punch. The most obvious impact of the French presence on the Black Caribs was of course the latter's adoption of French names; one finds Black Caribs with names like Pierre Gateau, Taussé, Laimont, Guerin, Anselm, Thuriau, Laline, Bruno, Chatoyer and, of course, Jean Baptiste.

A few of the Black Caribs did, like the French, establish small farms where they grew cotton, indigo and tobacco, which they traded with the French for arms,

ammunitions, tools and ornaments. The place today known as Duvallé (De Volet), or Windsor Forest, was the site of a cotton plantation owned by Duvallé, the brother and deputy of Chatoyer, paramount chief of all Black Caribs. He operated this farm with some nine slaves. Sir William Young, when he visited St. Vincent in 1791 entertained Chatoyer, Duvallé and six of their sons. He thought very highly of Duvallé, referring to him as the most enlightened of his people "who may be termed the founder of civilization among them." One hopes that his 'civilization' was not based on his ownership of slaves.

Conceivably, the Black Caribs may well have abandoned their purely fishing and hunting way of life to become yeoman farmers had it not been for circumstances that forced them to become instead perennial guerilla fighters in a desperate bid for survival.

THE ADVENT OF THE ENGLISH

It has been indicated that French settlement in St. Vincent had been a surreptitious affair. The English, however, sought to clothe their own intrusion with an aura of legality. Consequently, when discussing their role in St. Vincent, mention must inevitably be made of royal grants, treaties, agreements and the like. It appears that St. Vincent featured in at least four royal grants. Charles I granted it to the Earl of Carlisle in 1627, who made no attempt to colonize it. On Carlisle's death, Charles I granted it to Lord Willoughby, who died not long after. In 1672, St. Vincent was given to Sir John Atkins, who may or may not have been Lord Willoughby's brother. All these noblemen appeared to have taken little concrete action to capitalize on their grant. There appears to have been only two major expeditions. In 1686, Colonel Edwin Stede sent a Captain Temple to stop the French from obtaining wood and water in St. Vincent, and in 1708 a definite attempt at colonization was made, but the settlers were driven off by the Caribs with the support of the French under one Coullet. The final, and the most relevant royal grant, for our purposes, occurred in 1722, when George I gave St. Vincent and St. Lucia to the Duke of Montague.

The Duke wasted no time in trying to take possession of his islands. In the same year, he sent out a Captain Uring as his deputy Governor, with seven ships and a man-of-war as convoy. Their purpose was to establish colonies in both islands. They first tried St. Lucia, but were driven off by the French, who had settled there illegally. They then negotiated with the Governor of Martinique whence the French settlers had come to St. Lucia, and both sides agreed that St. Lucia should be evacuated. Uring then went on to Antigua but sent the man-of-war and a sloop under Captain Braithwaite to see if it

was practicable to make a settlement in St. Vincent.

On his arrival here, Braithwaite's first contact was with the Yellow Caribs, the chief of whom he found sitting with about 100 guards, some of whom had muskets, and others, bows and arrows. A Frenchman, who acted as interpreter, was also present, and after the usual courtesies had been extended, Braithwaite returned to his ship. Next day, Braithwaite was again invited ashore and on this occasion he found that the chief of the Black Caribs had arrived, with 500 men all armed with muskets.

To Braithwaite's amazement, the Chief of the Black Caribs needed no interpreter since not only he, but also some of his sub-chiefs spoke fluent French. Braithwaite entertained the leaders on board his sloop where they liberally imbibed the wine he provided, but spurned the rum. Apparently the festivities went on until spirits were high and, as is usual in such circumstances, both sides began talking what was more or less the truth, but which perhaps was better left unsaid. The English declared that the real purpose in coming to St. Vincent was to try to effect a settlement. This elicited from the Chief a reply that turns out to be the earliest policy statement we have from the Black Caribs, and goes a long way to explain what superficially appears to have been paradoxical behaviour by these people in their dealings with Europeans.

The Chief declared that it was just as well that Braithwaite had not mentioned anything about settling in St. Vincent while he had been ashore. For in that case, not even he as Chief could have saved him from the wrath of the other Black Caribs. He went on to state that a Dutch Ship had recently tried the same thing but had had to retire very quickly. Moreover, two French ships had the day before come over from St. Lucia,

bringing arms and ammunition and warning them that the British wanted to force a settlement and to enslave them. The French had also assured them of their support in any undertaking to drive out the English.

The Chief made it quite clear that although they were friendly with the French and under their protection, this was only a matter of expediency since they trusted no European and would never put themselves in a position where a European could harm them. The French, the Chief claimed, no doubt in reference to the war damages that they extracted from Paulian's ill-fated venture, had only obtained their good will by providing them with large presents. This did not mean they distrusted the French any less than other Europeans. The Chief closed by asking Braithwaite to treat his remarks as an act of friendship and to hoist anchor as soon as possible and get out of here. As soon as the Black Caribs had gone ashore, Braithwaite did just that. As a farewell salute, the English ordered a discharge of cannon, the Black Caribs answered with a fusillade of regular volleys of small shot, which in Braithwaite's opinion, was as fine a series of volleys as he had ever heard.

The English were no less reticent about Captain Braithwaite's adventure than the French had been about Major Paulian's expedition. Many of their writers have either ignored it or glossed it over so glibly that it is still widely believed that English efforts at colonizing St. Vincent only started after the Treaty of Paris in 1763. Under the terms of the Treaty, St. Vincent was ceded to the English, and as Southey aptly observes, no notice was taken of the existence of the Black Caribs. As soon as the treaty had been signed, a commission under the chairmanship of Sir William Young was sent out to survey, sub-divide and sell the land. English settlers began pouring in from North

America, Antigua and, of all places, Barbados, from which many of the Black Caribs or their ancestors had come. The attitude of these settlers was quite different from that of the French. They had no interest in St. Vincent as such, it was simply a place where they did a brief sojourn to amass wealth in the shortest possible time and return to England to enjoy it. The way to do this was to obtain a large tract of land, grow sugar cane on it with an army of slaves, and process the cane into sugar in large mills powered by wind and water and latterly by steam. This implied the end of small scale diversified farming, which the French settlers had practised. The flat and coastal lands were to be devoted to the growing of sugar cane, while the inland valleys were reserved for growing ground provisions and later, breadfruit to victual the army of slaves.

The change was not only one of the tenure system, it was also a psychological one. The English had deluded themselves into believing they had a legal right to the place. It is amusing to see Sir William Young trying to convince his readers that the mere fact that the Caribs did not cultivate all the land was sufficient to give the English a good title to it. Apparently, the Black Caribs system of tenure was a communal one. Each "family," or, more accurately, clan of Caribs had its own territory, the boundaries of a particular territory being delineated by the island's numerous rivers. Thus, one finds references being made to the Caribs of Grand Sable, of Massarica, of Rabacca, of Macaricaw, of Byera, of Coubamarou, of Yambou, of Colonaire, of Cramacrabou, of Owiawarou and of Point Espagnol. Each territory had its own chief, and a chief of chiefs appears only to emerge when the Caribs were on the warpath. The Chief of Chiefs was Joseph Chatoyer of whom we shall hear more. His consigliari, or chief adviser, was Jean Baptiste. Within his

territory a member of the clan, usually the females, could cultivate plots, which some did, but not in a systematic or contiguous manner.

Apart from the conviction that the land was theirs, the get-rich-quick attitude generated so much greed among the English that there was little question of living and let live. It was each man for himself and the devil take the hindmost. As one or two of the more far-sighted English settlers foresaw, given the rapacity of their countrymen and the determination of the Black Caribs to hold on to their island, at least their section of it, it was not possible for the Black Caribs and the English to live in St. Vincent at one and the same time. One or the other would have to be removed.

To make matters worse, the best sugar lands in St. Vincent have always been in the heart of the Carib Country, (which is) that section of the island allocated to the Black Caribs by the Governor of Martinique in 1700. This area, stretching from the Byera River to Rabacca, the whole of which was then called Grand Sable, was the most densely populated area in the Carib Country. No clearer evidence of the area's suitability for sugar is needed than to note that long after the sugar industry ceased to be a viable proposition in the rest of St. Vincent, the crop was profitably grown and processed in that area. The industry only ceased to operate in 1962, when the area was once again racked by disputes.

The incompatibility of the desires of the Black Caribs on the one hand, and those of the English settlers on the other, was not immediately obvious to all. It was not until some thirty years after the commissioners had begun to sub-divide the island that the issue was finally resolved.

The French suffered a great deal. With their slaves they numbered about 4,000 and were exporting annually some 30,000 pounds cocoa, 50,000 pounds of coffee and 13,000 pounds of cotton at this time. The English took over their farms and the French either had to repurchase them or leave the island, which many of them did. In the case of the Black Caribs, though the Treaty of Paris had made no mention of them, the English Government had specifically instructed the Commissioners "not to molest them in their possessions nor to attempt any survey of their country without previous and express orders from home." Both the commissioners and the settlers sought to get around this injunction.

The commissioners tried first to get the Caribs to become subjects of the English king, and to confine their activities to the lands they had cleared, handing over the rest to the commissioners to be sold. Chatoyer is reported to have asked Commission Chairman Young what king he was talking about. When this ruse failed, they tried to persuade the Black Caribs to evacuate St. Vincent and go and live on Bequia. Someone must have told Sir William Young that he could not, on the one hand, say that some of the ancestors of the Black Caribs - the shipwrecked Mocoes - had been forced to leave Bequia since there was not enough food there for them, and then turn around now, when the Black Caribs had become so numerous, and recommend their return to Bequia. This line of action was therefore speedily abandoned.

The commissioners then tried to deal with the Caribs through Abbé Valladores. One year after Labat's visit, around 1701, the Jesuits had closed down their missionaries in St. Vincent altogether. Contrary to what Van der Plas states, they evidently re-opened them soon afterwards, no doubt hoping that the gospel could be more successfully

preached among the French and Black Caribs than it had been among the Yellow Caribs. Valladores was one of the missionaries and the Black Caribs had appointed him as their agent to negotiate with the English. They soon discovered Valladores had been thoroughly brainwashed by the English, and their confidence in him misplaced. He was slated for assassination but fortuitously escaped. The Black Caribs considered the subversion of their own agent Valladores to be the last straw and started to take reprisals for trespass on their land by destroying houses and plantations which had sprung up on their land contrary to the instruction of the commissioners by His Majesty's Government.

The commissioners now wrote home to the English Government; to paraphrase their letter would be to do injustice to it and it is reproduced in full below:

> "The instructions we now have from your Lordships are, in our humble opinion, as proper as any that could have been devised for the purpose of settling the windward part of the country; but experience now shows us that it will be impossible, without imminent danger to the colony, to complete any settlement or arrangement with the Charaibs, let the terms proposed be ever so tender or advantageous, without a force sufficient to restrain and awe them into obedience; for which purpose it will be highly necessary to have a considerable military force on the island, before we again attempt to carry our instructions into execution, as we find their numbers greatly exceed what we formerly apprehended.
>
> "We have the greatest reason to think that suffering the Charaibs to remain in their present state, will be very dangerous, and may at some period prove fatal to the inhabitants of the country, as their situation, surrounded with wood, makes any access to them, for the purpose of executing justice, impracticable; and they will from thence be capable of committing all outrages unpunished; or harbouring the slaves of the inhabitants for this island, as well as of all the neighbouring islands; of sheltering amongst

> those, vagabonds and deserters from the French, and in case of a rupture with France, it is probable they will join in distressing the inhabitants, and in an attempt to conquer the country."

Before a reply could even be received from the Government in England, the commissioners and settlers took it upon themselves to hire an armed sloop to patrol the waters of St. Vincent, not only to prevent the Black Caribs from consorting with the French, but also to reduce the possibility of the Caribs making forays on the plantations on the coast. On August 24, 1769 the armed vessel came upon four large canoes on the channel between St. Vincent. Each canoe contained about 20 armed Caribs and, it is said, was loaded with kegs of ammunition. The commander of the sloop ordered the canoes to hove to and approach in single file. The Black Caribs ignored this and continued to advance together, whereupon a shot was fired in their midst, which was answered with a volley of musket fire. The cannon fire continued and the canoes were sunk one by one.

The Caribs, despite these reverses continued to swim with their cutlasses in their mouths determined to board the English vessel on which two men had been killed and one wounded. Whereupon the captain of the sloop, deciding discretion was the bettor of valour, broke off the encounter and sailed away. He reported hopefully that all the Caribs must have perished. We shall never know if they did, but this seems unlikely since all accounts whether written by admirers or detractors note the amazing dexterity of the Caribs in water. What can be said with certainty is that this incident shows how strongly aggrieved the Caribs must have felt and the courage they were prepared to display in any encounter with their enemies.

While the commissioners were prepared to ignore the proclamation to a certain extent, they were not willing to go as far as the settlers. The latter sought to circumvent

the commissioners by purchasing land direct from the Black Caribs. They were fully aware that, given the communal nature of their system of tenure, no single Carib could give a good title to land. They hoped, however, having got some title or other, they could convert it into a good title by having one of their contacts in high places in England intervene on their behalf. This attempt at by-passing the commissioners reduced the whole disposal of land by the commissioners to such a ridiculous farce that it is reported that three times as much land was sold as there was land in St. Vincent. One enterprising gentleman from Grenada, we are told, bought some 69,000 of the 85,000 acres that is St. Vincent.

The immediate cause of the outbreak of hostilities between the settlers and the Black Caribs was the sequel to the grant of 4,000 acres to General Monckton by the British Government. The General fought with Wolfe in Canada and had been in charge of the land forces when Rodney captured Martinique and St. Vincent in 1762. It was this expedition that had led to the cession of St. Vincent and some other islands to the British Government under the Treaty of Paris. The grant of 4,000 acres represented the General's reward for such gallant services. The land itself was situated north of the Couboumarou (Stubbs) River, and the General sold it to two speculators, Baillee and Gemmeltz who in turn sub-divided it and resold (it) to eager planters. It did not take long for these planters to discover how well suited to sugar cane the land was, mainly because of its fertility and easy topography.

The lesson was not lost on others who realized that the adjacent lands must be equally good or even better because of the easier gradients. This land was, of course, well within the Carib country, and when the settlers attempted to make incursions into it, they

were vigorously opposed by the Black Caribs. All sorts of subterfuges were tried in an effort to allay the well-founded suspicions of the Black Caribs. One example of this is the effort to convince the Black Caribs that the survey parties that frequently visited the Carib country were there expressly for tracing a road that would facilitate the movement of produce by the Black Caribs. The Caribs themselves were not so easily duped and realized that after the road would come the troops to protect the inevitable settlers. The Black Caribs, therefore, constantly harassed the surveyors and this was construed, or perhaps misconstrued, as an act of aggression against His Majesty's Government.

Two regiments were ordered from North America to join those as could be spared from the neighbouring islands to subdue the Caribs. If they could not be subdued they were to be rounded up and transported to a place where they could no longer be a threat to the extension of the plantations in the island. Major General Dalrymple, the commander of the expedition, who in the eyes of the settlers acquitted himself admirably, was not able to subdue the Caribs until February 1773, almost one year after he had been ordered to do so.

Fortunately for the Black Caribs, not all Englishmen were blinded by the quest for quick riches through sugar cultivation. There were many who thought the Black Caribs had been wronged. Bryan Edwards was of this opinion and wrote to that effect. Sir William Young was obviously very disturbed by Edwards' observation for he went out of his way to discuss it in one of the rare footnotes in his monograph on the Black Caribs. He argued thus:

> "Mr. Bryan Edwards, the elegant and able author of the History of the West Indian Islands, accurate and learned in other respects, hath been

misinformed on the subject of the treatment of the Charaibs, the Charaib war, and on many particulars relating to St. Vincent's----------, ---------- consolation is, that the history of the West Indies cannot stop at a second edition."

As far as we are aware, Edwards never did commit any other opinion to writing.

It is perhaps worthwhile recording that on the one hand, Bryan Edwards' work, probably more so than any other contemporary historian, has stood the test of time, and after almost 200 years, is widely quoted. On the other hand, it would have been very difficult for the Sir William Youngs (father and son) to have been impartial on this subject, since they derived considerable pecuniary and other benefits from their association with St. Vincent. Sir William Young (Snr.) acquired most of what is possibly the best land on the Leeward side of the island, Pembroke Estate, a property of 1,000 acres, more or less. He also owned the Villa Estate on the southern side of the island, now the centre of the tourist business. There is a legend that one day, Sir William Young was being driven in his carriage, drawn by two magnificent white horses, when he met Paramount Chief Chatoyer who expressed admiration for the beasts. Sir William, in a fit of generosity offered them to him. Chatoyer in turn looked across the strait and pointed to the island and told Sir William he was more than welcome to it if he so desired. Today we still call the island Young's Island. Sir William Young (Jnr.) inherited these properties from his father and in later years became Governor of Tobago.

The British Government, too, seems to have agreed with Edwards' view and had some misgivings about Major Dalrymple's expedition. There was a feeling that the Caribs were an honest and peaceful people whom the avarice of the settlers had driven to

fight for their freedom, and even their survival. As a result, a commission of enquiry was set up. They concluded that Dalrymple's expedition 'was founded on injustice and reflected dishonour on the national character, a violation of the natural rights of mankind and totally subversive of that it gloried to defend." As a result, orders were issued to put an end to the campaign and to offer honourable terms of peace to the Caribs. The terms of the treaty, which were printed in the St. Vincent Gazette of 1773, are set out below:

I. All hostile proceedings to cease; a firm and lasting peace and friendship to succeed.

II. The Charaibs shall acknowledge his Majesty to be the rightful sovereign of the island and domain of St. Vincent's; take an oath of fidelity to him as their King; promise absolute submission to his will, and lay down their arms.

III. They shall submit themselves to the laws and obedience of his Majesty's government, with power to the Governor to enact further regulations for the public advantage as shall be convenient. (This article only respects their transactions with his Majesty's subjects not being Indians, their intercourse and customs with each other, in the quarters allotted them not being affected by it.) And all new regulations to receive his Majesty's Governor's approbation before carried into execution.

IV. A portion of lands, hereafter mentioned, to be allotted for the residence of the Charaibs, viz. from the river Byera to Point Espagnol on the one side, and from the river Analibou to Point Espagnol on the other side, according to lines drawn by his Majesty's surveyors, from the sources of the rivers to the tops of the mountains; the rest of the lands, formerly inhabited by the Charaibs, for the future to belong entirely to His Majesty.

V. Those lands not to be alienated, either by sale, lease, or otherwise, but to persons properly authorized by His Majesty to receive them.

VI. Roads, ports, batteries, and communications to be made as his Majesty pleases.

VII. No undue intercourse with the French islands to be allowed.

VIII. Runaway slaves in the possession of the Charaibs are to be delivered up, and endeavours used to discover and apprehend the others; and an engagement in future, not to encourage, receive, or harbour any slave whatever; forfeiture of lands for harbouring; and carrying off the island a capital-crime.

IX. Persons guilty of capital crimes against the English are to be delivered up.

X. In time of danger to be aiding and assisting to His Majesty's subjects against their enemies.

XI. The three chains to remain to his Majesty.

XII. All conspiracies and plots against his Majesty, or his government to be made known to his Governor, or other civil magistrates.

XIII. Leave (if required) to be given to the Charaibs to depart this island, with their families and properties, and assistance in their transportation.

XIV. Free access to the quarters allowed to the Charaibs, to be given to persons properly empowered in pursuit of runaway slaves, and safe conduct afforded them.

XV. Deserters from His Majesty's services (if any), and runaway slaves from the French, to be delivered up, in order that they may be returned to their masters.

XVI. The chiefs of the different quarters are to render an account of the names and number of the inhabitants of their respective districts.

XVII. The chiefs, and other Charaibs, inhabitants, to attend the Governor when required for his Majesty's service.

XVIII. All possible facility, consistent with the laws of Great Britain, to be afforded to the Charaibs in the sale of their produce, and in their trade to the different British islands.

XIX. Entire liberty of fishing, as well as the coast of St. Vincent's as at the neighbouring keys, to be allowed them.

XX. In all cases, when the Charaibs conceive themselves injured by his Majesty's other subjects, or other persons, and are desirous of having reference to the laws, or to the civil magistrates, an agent, being one of his

Majesty's natural born subjects, may be employed by themselves, or if more agreeable at his Majesty's cost.

XXI. No strangers, or white persons, to be permitted to settle among the Charaibs, without permission obtained in writing from the Governor.

XXII. These articles subscribed to and observed, the Charaibs are to be pardoned, secured, and fixed in their property, according to his Majesty's directions given, and all past offences forgot.

XXIII. After the signing of this treaty, should any of the Charaibs refuse to observe the condition of it, they are to be considered and treated as enemies by both parties, and the most effectual means used to reduce them.

XXIV. The Charaibs shall take the following oath, viz.
We A.B. do swear, in the name of the immortal God, and Christ Jesus, that we will bear true allegiance to his Majesty George the Third, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, defender of the faith; and that we will pay due obedience to the laws of Great Britain, and the Island of St. Vincent's; and will well and truly observe every article of the treaty concluded between his said Majesty and the Charaibs; and we do acknowledge, that his said Majesty is rightful Lord and Sovereign of all the Island of St. Vincent's, and that the lands held by us the Charaibs, are granted through his Majesty's clemency.

On the part of his Majesty,

W. Dalrymple

On the part of the Charaibs,

Jean Baptiste	Simon
Dufonte Begot	Lalime, Senior
Boyordell	Bauamont
Dirang	Justin Bauamont

Chatoyer	Matthieu
Doucre Baramont	Jean Louis Pacquin
Lalime, Junior	Gadel Goibau
Broca	John Baptiste
Saioe	Lonen
Francois Laron	Boyudon
Saint Laron	Du Vallet
Anisette	Boucharie
Clement	Deruba Babilliard
Bigott	Canaia

What strikes one immediately about the whole treaty is how a Black Carib, more versed in the French language and institutions, could be expected to grasp the import of a document which required not only a sound knowledge of the English Language but also of English Law. Article XI mentions three chains that even today few people realize is a reference to a measurement from the shoreline delineating the area reserved for His Majesty's forces to establish forts and other military structures.

More seriously, let us look at Article XXIV. How could a Black Carib who did not believe in the Englishman's God and might never have been aware of His relationship with Jesus Christ, swear by them to an allegiance to His Majesty George II of Great Britain, both Britain and George III being nebulous entities to them? How could they be expected to heed the articles of a treaty, the language of which was alien to them and the spirit of which was contrary to all their instincts?

No one could seriously expect the terms of the treaty to endure. For one thing it formally reduced the area the Caribs considered theirs. The boundary having been shifted some ten miles from the present Stubbs to Byera. At the same time the best sugar lands, the original Grand Sable were still in the hands of the Black Caribs. Sooner or later the avarice and ill Judgment of the English settlers was bound to assert itself.

THE SECOND CARIB WAR

What Major Dalrymple's expedition and the treaty did for the Black Caribs was to give them a more realistic assessment of the forces that could be brought to bear against them. Hence they were able to evolve a more coherent strategy in trying to cope with these forces. The elements of this strategy were simple. Two conditions had to be met before they could carry out a successful onslaught on the settlers. First, the English military forces must be engaged overseas and so reduce the possibility of troops being sent to assist the settlers, as had happened in the case of Major Dalrymple. Secondly, they must get the support of the French who would provide not only arms and ammunition but also troops.

When conditions were not favourable they should make conciliatory gestures to the English, such as prosecuting the French settlers before English courts and tribunals; sending their women folk to the English Sunday Markets to sell produce; operating lighters needed to transport sugar from shore to ship, and enjoying the hospitality with which people like Sir William Young tried to bribe them. In general, be at their friendliest while waiting for the opportunity to present itself. When conditions were favourable they would, with the French, descend not only on the English but also on such Frenchmen as had English sympathies with a view to annihilating all their enemies completely.

About 1779, the Black Caribs got the opportunity to put their strategy into practice. Great Britain was engaged with three of the great powers of Europe and also in the American colonies. Moreover, the settlers in St. Vincent were at loggerheads with the

Governor Valentine Morris in one of those numerous feuds that punctuate the course of British colonial history. On this occasion, the quarrels seem to have been about the imposition of export duties, the French settlers and Carib lands. The slaves, too, were absconding in droves.

To make matters even more favourable for the Caribs, a Colonel Etherington had been sent out with some raw recruits to garrison the colony. The man is reported as having been a drummer who had been promoted to Colonel all too rapidly. He too had been infected with the get-rich-quick germ and no sooner had he arrived, than he obtained an estate well within the Carib lands on the Leeward side, probably in the area which is now called Top Hill. Apparently, he employed the usual methods to get land from the Caribs - first, he got one or more Caribs to agree to a transfer, and when the Governor who opposed it was away, Etherington persuaded the President of the Council to approve the transfer. Later, the Lords of the Treasury in the United Kingdom, no doubt at the instigation of Etherington's contacts there, ordered the Governor to confirm the title under the Great Seal. Etherington may have thought that he had outwitted the Black Caribs, but in the end, his action rebounded on him and on the settlers. It gave the Caribs a good pretext for recommencing hostilities and when they did, they and their allies found the settlers in no position to resist, since Etherington had been using the troops to develop his plantation and had completely neglected the island's defenses. One wonders if this was not what Chatoyer envisaged all along and so turned a blind eye to Etherington's action.

The Caribs began by going over to Martinique and informing the French of the dissension among the Governor, the Assembly and the Militia. They also let the French

know that the keys to Wilkie's Battery (probably the site of the present Grand View Hotel) had been lost. The Caribs themselves may well have engineered the keys' disappearance since this was to have so profound an effect on the subsequent encounters. The French were delighted with this intelligence and immediately dispatched 5 armed vessels, four of which had been captured from the English while the other was French built. On board there were over five hundred troops under M. LeChevalier du Rumaine. They left St. Lucia on the night of the 10th June but because of bad weather did not arrive off Grand Sable until the 15th. M. Percin de la Roche in the French ship was detailed to land at Grand Sable, where he and his 45 men were to join the ever-ready Caribs. They were not able to land at Grand Sable, but did so at another spot, probably Byera Beach, and immediately captured Fort Colonaire. The Caribs then began to plunder the English plantations in this area, but were restrained by the French. The French considered this pillaging a waste of valuable time, as it was their plan to continue the march to Kingstown. And there join the forces from the other ships. Three of these had sailed along the coast, two anchoring in Young Bay (Villa) while the third proceeded to Warrawarou (Great Head).

As has already been mentioned, these ships were British built having in fact been captured from the English. The settlers were convinced that they were British merchantmen coming from Antigua to take sugar to England. Their anxiety to make the first shipment of sugar for the year must also have predisposed the settlers to think this way. They went so far as to forbid the gunner at Hyde's Point (Ratho Mill Point), who thought otherwise to fire on the ships. One settler, Mr. Collins, was so imprudent as to even board one of the ships and, totally confused, was taken prisoner by the French.

Another gentleman who had strenuously resisted Governor Morris' efforts to fortify his bay, that is Great Head Bay, was seized and stripped almost naked by the invading French. The fact that his underwear seemed to be of an unusual variety added to his discomfiture.

M. Du Rumaine and his 500 troops advanced on Kingstown and decided to attack the fort there. As they began to advance they saw about 600 Caribs shouting loudly in their usual manner - M. Percin de la Roche with his army of Frenchmen, free negroes, mulattoes and Black Caribs had arrived. They had overrun the Windward side from Fort Colonaire, which had been their first conquest.

Governor Morris wanted to make a last stand at Sion Hill. He was about to fire his only cannon, when Etherington snatched the fuse away from him, thus preventing any firing. Etherington reasoned with some justification that if they did not oppose the French, the terms of capitulation would be easier as they in fact turned out to be. Under the terms of the Treaty, the Governor, officers, and soldiers were to be taken to Antigua and exchanged for French prisoners. As for the settlers, they now had to pay for the upkeep of the French troops. They complained bitterly about this, though they ought to have considered themselves lucky, for it was the French who restrained the Black Caribs from massacring them. In any case, when the island was restored to the British in 1783, the amounts paid to the French were deducted from the arrears of taxes due to the British Treasury during the French occupation. The restoration itself took place in January 1784 and was part of the Treaty of Versailles.

With the departure of the French the Black Caribs who had seized every opportunity to vent their spleen on the English, once again had to eat the humble pie and

resort to their conciliatory gestures. The English welcomed these gestures and let bygones be bygones. This is not as stupid or altruistic as may appear at first sight, as the settlers wanted to remain in St. Vincent and eventually get hold of the Grand Sable area, but by their own admission, they were mortally afraid of the Black Caribs, since the latter's excesses knew no bounds when once their anger was aroused.

The ideas that inspired the French Revolution crossed the Atlantic and were disseminated by French Agents throughout the Caribbean. Trouble commenced thus at St. Domingo in 1789 and very soon reached Martinique, where all the forces of law and order broke down. The Caribs were aware of all this but did not consider it meet to revolt just yet since they were not certain of French support. All this changed when in 1794 the arch-revolutionary Victor Hugues contrived to being about a successful uprising in Guadeloupe. He then recruited agents whom he sent to St. Vincent and other islands to work on French settlers there. Many of these were only too glad to get an opportunity to get back at the British by inciting the Black Caribs to revolt. The type of propaganda they spread among the Caribs is reported in Shepherd and is here quoted verbatim:

> "Behold your chains forged and imposed by the hands of the tyrannical English! Blush, and break those ensigns of disgrace, spurn them with becoming indignation, rise in a moment, and while we assist you from motives of the philanthropy and zeal for the happiness of all nations, fall on these despots, extirpate them from the country, and restore yourselves, your wives and children to the in. heritance of your fathers, whose spirits from the grave will lead on your ranks, inspire you with fury, and help you to be avenged."

The Caribs gleefully embraced the doctrine. But one should not take these professions of philanthropy by the French too seriously. Some, if not all of them, must have hoped that English and Caribs would destroy each other and leave the island to them. This was an exercise in which both the French and the Caribs sought to use each other.

Martinique, then being in the hands of the English, it was agreed that arms and ammunition would be sent from Guadeloupe. The plan was for the Caribs of the Leeward under Paramount Chief Chatoyer, and those of the Windward under deputy Duvallé to converge on Kingstown, join forces with their French allies and massacre all whites regardless of sex or age. They would then fan out across the country to ensure total elimination of all the English and their supporters. The deadline for the uprising was the night of the 10th of March, 1795 to coincide with similar uprisings in other islands where Hugues' agents had already laid the groundwork.

The plan went awry, and the deadline was not adhered to, probably because of poor communications and also because overriding factors caused the uprising to start in Grenada at an earlier date. This gave the President of the Council in that island an opportunity to forewarn his colleagues in the other islands. The news reached St. Vincent on March 5th, and the Governor immediately placed the troops on the alert and got the defenses of Kingstown in a state of readiness. During the course of the next few days, English settlers in Marriaqua and Massarica (South Union) areas told the Governor that they had been reliably informed that a Carib uprising was imminent. The Governor contacted Chatoyer and Duvallé, and requested their presence at a meeting of the Council fixed for the following Tuesday. This was a rather strange coincidence since it was the very day that had been fixed for the commencement of hostilities. The Caribs replied

with the now famous sentence, “It is too late, it might have been sent sooner.” The heads of other clans were also contacted and they professed complete ignorance of any form of disorder, planned or otherwise.

The Caribs realized there was no time to lose and started the uprising on Sunday March 8th with the burning of Madam La Croix’s estate at Evesham Vale. To this day, the area is called La Croix and the remains of an old sugar mill can still be seen there. The campaign was to be a long end bitter one, and impressed itself so firmly on the minds of the settlers that they commissioned an historian, Shepherd, to record it, in almost overwhelming detail, for posterity. Broadly speaking, there were three phases of this second Carib War, which is described in British Colonial history as the Brigands War, though who exactly were the brigands in the whole affair is a moot question, the answer depending to a great extent on where one’s sympathies lay. The first phase began with the burning of the La Croix estate and ended with the death of Chatoyer on the night of March 14th. During this phase, the Caribs were well organized and very much on the offensive. The second phase was more a war of attrition, with the Caribs resorting to guerilla tactics, biding out in widely separated areas and pouncing on the settlers when the opportunity arose. This phase came to an end with the arrival of General Abercrombie in June 1796, when the English went on the offensive and set out in systematic and ruthless manner to get rid of the Caribs. Here no attempt shall be made to examine the vagaries of the second phase which be followed in all its labyrinthine details in Shepherd’s “Historical Account of the Island of St. Vincent.” Attention is concentrated on the first and third phases.

The burning of Madame La Croix’s property did not go unheeded. The settlers sent out a

detachment from the militia to investigate. Later that same night they came upon some huts occupied by some Carib and French families who were in the throes of celebration and in an advanced state of intoxication. This put them at a disadvantage, and it was not until they were almost surrounded by the troops that they realized what was happening. However, most of them still managed to escape, only a handful being taken prisoner.

In the North Windward, Duvallé had not been idle for, by the next day, he had devastated the countryside, burning all sugar works, killing all the English and their sympathisers, even their cattle. His progress was made infinitely easier as a result of the fate of the first English soldiers who had been sent into the area. They were cunningly ambushed by the Caribs in the South Union area and almost wiped out. The few who managed to reach Kingstown had to use elaborate detours and avoid the main highway. The stories they told of the treatment meted out to their late colleagues were sufficient to daunt the stoutest heart. Many settlers simply fled from their plantations on the Windward coast long before Duvallé could reach them. He himself reached Dorsetshire Hill on the morning of the 12th. There he pulled down the British Flag and raised the new flag of the French Republic. No time was wasted and with what can only be described as herculean efforts, the Caribs dismantled the fort at Stubbs Bay and dragged a 12-pounder, which weighed about 3,000 pounds and a small four-pounder, all the way to Dorsetshire Hill. By the night of the 14th, they had the four-pounder mounted.

Chatoyer, in the meanwhile, was heading for Kingstown from Chateaubelair. En route, he was joined by the French settlers, some of whom subsequently said they had done so under duress. Unlike Duvallé, he did not destroy property, but reserved his fury for the settlers. His idea seems to have been to keep the properties intact so that he could operate

them after he had won the war. It is claimed that he had earmarked Keartons, as it was called then and still is, for himself. Much has been said of how Chatoyer took three Englishmen captive and on arrival at Dorsetshire single-handedly hacked them to pieces, all the while giving vent to his hatred of the English. Much has also been said of how the Caribs killed an estate manager by running him through the rollers of a cane mill. But one has to try and see all this in its proper perspective. After all, these people, at least some of them, were descendants of runaway slaves from Barbados. Now, one punishment meted out by English settlers to slaves caught attempting to run away was boiling in molasses. Chatoyer eventually joined Duvallé on Dorsetshire Hill.

The Governor with his staff and documents took refuge in the Fort at Berkshire Hill. Reinforcements arrived from Martinique, which, as was previously mentioned, had fallen to the English. A force comprising these troops, the local militia and some negroes stormed Dorsetshire Hill on the night of March 14th. A vigorous skirmish ensued, with the Caribs well on the way to carrying the day. Chatoyer, for his part, had, by this time, become fully convinced of the truth of the legend that he could not be killed by mortal means. He allowed his vanity to run away with him and he made the fatal mistake of challenging Major Leith to a duel. Leith was a trained army officer and would obviously have been proficient with the sword. Chatoyer, who had put himself at this disadvantage, was killed. For Leith, it was, however, a pyrrhic victory, as he died soon afterwards, it was said, from the exertions of the war. His mortal remains lie under the chandelier in the Anglican Cathedral in Kingstown.

No objective assessment of Chatoyer as a person or military leader has ever been made. It is difficult to do so now with the limited information available. Not only nearly

200 years have passed, but even the archaeologist would be hard put to unearth much information since two series of volcanic eruptions, one in 1812 and the other in 1902, have literally wrought havoc with even the topography of Chatoyer's home and headquarters, Morne Ronde. We do not have a clue as to his final resting place. Nevertheless, there are a few indications, which even the passage of time and natural disasters cannot obscure.

In the first place, the Caribs were a fiercely individualistic people living in clans, each clan having its own chief, and there is evidence to suggest that the chieftaincy was not an hereditary institution, but rather one is led to believe that the chief was an individual who had distinguished himself in war or in other respects, and consequently held in high regard by all others. The literature is replete with references to feuds among the Black Caribs, some of whom were only too glad to live near the English to protect themselves from their countrymen. Further, the institution of Chief of Chiefs was not known among them except in times of emergency. Yet, Chatoyer appears not only to have been the paramount military chief, but also the civilian one. For example, Sir William Young and his family whose status, if anything, was not subordinate to that of the local Governor, by his own admission went out of his way to cultivate the friendship of this man, which suggests he must have been considered the ranking civilian among the Black Caribs.

In his domestic affairs he was undoubtedly a remarkable person, as all written accounts of him are adorned by the reproduction of the famous painting showing him with his five wives. That this is the only contemporary painting of the Black Caribs suggests that the phenomenon of multiple wives in a single household must have impressed itself on the

mind of the English whose culture afforded them but a single wife.

In war he must have been an outstanding commander for his forces included not only his fellow Caribs, but also French troops. Neither they nor his fiercely individualistic countrymen would have subordinated themselves to him in war, had he not been an outstanding General.

In heat of battle, unlike Duvallé, he did not destroy property for the sake of vandalism, but sought to preserve it so that he could use it in the future. This may be construed as self-interest; nevertheless it does show much foresight.

But perhaps the most pointed indication of his generalship was what happened to his troops on his death. Most of the French immediately forsook the Carib cause and with maximum speed tried to seek refuge at Layou. Unfortunately most of them, including M, DuMont, the Secretary of the conspiracy, never made it. They were caught, hanged and committed to the tide. The Black Caribs were evidently dumbfounded at this event, the death of the invincible Chatoyer. They retreated to their villages and took some time to recover from the shock. Henceforth, the very character of the war assumed an entirely different complexion.

As already mentioned, this the second phase of the Carib War was one of guerilla type activity and fluctuating fortunes. The Caribs were evidently trying to conserve their numbers, and at the same time, decimate those of the settlers to such an extent that they could once again make an all out attack on the enemy with reasonable hope of success. This was not to be since the English, being relieved on other fronts, mainly those involving the Great Powers, were able to devote adequate numbers of their professional soldiers to the task of suppressing the uprising. Lieutenant General Sir Ralph

Abercrombie was dispatched to the Eastern Caribbean, and his arrival in June marked the beginning of the third and final phase of the war.

Abercrombie set about his task in a thoroughly professional manner. Before coming to St. Vincent he called at St. Lucia and captured that island on March 17, 1796. As far as the Black Caribs were concerned, the most crucial term in the list of conditions under which the French in that island surrendered was that all white, and free coloured, persons were to be extradited to England as prisoners of war. This meant that in a single stroke the Caribs lost their main source of arms, ammunition and additional personnel. Further, most of the non-Vincentian French fighting with the Caribs had lost their home base. This must have been a severe blow to the morale of the Black Caribs and they may have realized that the end of the road must be in sight. Nevertheless, they used their considerable wiles to postpone the inevitable for as long as possible.

Abercrombie first arrived in St. Vincent on June 3rd and after a short sojourn to Carriacou to attend to some similar business, returned on the 7th. He threw 6 columns with a total of about 4,000 men in the field against the Caribs. Their first success was at Vigie where the Caribs surrendered on June 10th. In adversity the Black Caribs did not forget their friends. They specifically requested that such French and free mulattoes as were fighting with them be included in the terms of the military surrender. The terms of surrender took some time to be negotiated and many of the Caribs used the opportunity to slip away and create as much havoc as they could in the Colonarie and Mt. William areas. Against overwhelming odds, they could not keep it up and again sent a flag of truce to the fort at Mt.Young, now called Chester Cottage.

They tried to convince the English that they had been at war, and everything that had

been done was done in the spirit of war. If they had burnt the English houses and canefields, the English had in turn burnt their canoes and destroyed their provision grounds. The war was over and both sides should revert to the status quo. The English replied that there was no room for negotiation and unconditional surrender their only hope for survival; otherwise, all their forces would be unleashed on them. The Caribs argued that they could not recall any act on their part that would justify such extreme measures and requested time for their chiefs to consult.

In the meantime, planters asked their agents in London to suggest that the Caribs be removed from St. Vincent. The memorandum submitted in England was signed by no less a person than one of the ubiquitous Youngs, Sir William Young (Jnr). The Governor-in-Council ordered the banishment of the Caribs to the Bay Islands of Honduras, whose capital is still Roatan. The Caribs, however, were not going so easily. When the answer to their request for a truce was sent, it was found that they had vanished from their normal haunts. No further military action was taken against them and once again they began to visit Kingstown to sell ground provisions and baskets.

A meeting of citizens chaired by the Governor was called to decide what effective measures could be taken against them. It was agreed that the Caribs would surrender and be taken to the Grenadine Island of Balliceaux where adequate water, food and shelter would be provided until they could be sent to Roatan. Several of the Carib chiefs were taken to Kingstown where they were officially informed of the plan and were given 4 days in which to inform their people and communicate their acquiescence. The alternative was the reopening of the war. They promised to comply, but again many of them did their disappearing act and only about 280 were embarked from Calliaqua on

July 20th for Balliceaux.

The troops were now sent to bring them in, but the Caribs would beckon the troops on and fire on them. This was not the type of humour that appealed to Abercrombie and his men, and they dealt with the Caribs in no uncertain manner. Grand Sable was literally reduced to ashes. Over 1,000 huts, many canoes including the Carib men-of-war and their enormous stores of provisions were put to the torch. The Caribs still would not give in, but resorted to hiding in the woods. This proved frustrating to the troops until they hit on the idea of destroying all provision grounds and sending two Caribs back from Balliceaux to tell those in hiding how well they were being treated in the camps at Balliceaux. These tactics had the desired effect. At last, in early October, most of the Black Caribs, some 5,080 of them including Duvallé, Chatoyer's son and many women and children, gave themselves up. They consoled themselves that they were not the first, nor would they be the last people to be defeated in war. They had fought a good fight and been beaten by a great nation. The Caribs were taken to Bequia and made to embark on the transports, which set sail for Roatan on March 11, 1797.

This was not the end of the Carib story in St. Vincent. The Yellow Caribs who numbered only a few hundred and had not been involved in the long drawn out hostilities were given a reservation at Old Sandy Bay, which, like all reservations, proved inadequate. The first Government to take any interest in these people removed them to their present home, New Sandy Bay, a much less inhospitable area. Such of the Black Caribs as did not surrender, the most elusive ones, went into the bush mainly in the Upper Massarica Valley now known as Greggs. Later they were given a reservation in this same area at the foothills of Petit Bonum. Others on the Leeward side were given an impossible

area at Morne Ronde and near the Lariki River, where only iguanas seem able to survive. The Black Caribs in the latter areas fled in terror before the 1812 eruption of the Soufriere, both Morne Ronde and Lariki lying directly in the path of mud, dust and ash coming from the volcano. Afterwards they were given lands at Rose Bank and Windsor Forest. A few migrated to Trinidad in 1812.

EPILOGUE

The Black Caribs did not remain long in Roatan. At the invitation of the Governor of Honduras, they soon crossed into that country. There, many of them got embroiled in the wars of the day, between royalist and republican forces. When the royalist forces eventually lost, some of the Caribs who had served with them were forced to flee to British Honduras, mainly to the Stann Creek and Punta Gorda areas. There, Thomas Young in his "Narrative of a Residence on the Mosquito Shore during 1839, 1840 and 1841" provided the first written account of the Black Caribs in their new homes.

Young highlighted their great facility for language, noting that many of them spoke Spanish, French, Creole and English, besides Carib. A century later, Taylor was to tell of having met a Black Carib schoolteacher who spoke Carib at home, Spanish and Mayan in the village and taught in English and Mayan at school.

Young went on to describe them as being peaceable, friendly, ingenious, industrious, extremely loud of dressing up and anxious to obtain an education. It is hardly likely that in the space of less than 50 years, the character of a people could have undergone so drastic change. No doubt the Black Caribs had always been like that, but the rapacity of the English planters in St. Vincent had brought out the worst aspects of their character. Young predicted that 50 years after he wrote, the Black Caribs would become very numerous, friendly, but jealous of their rights.

The prediction turned out to be extremely accurate. In 1949 when Douglas Taylor did his study of the Black Caribs, he found that there were some 30,000 Black Caribs living in 25 settlements in three different countries: the Republic of Honduras, British Honduras, and Guatemala. Trujillo, in the Republic of Honduras, is still considered their

'capital,' though they also predominate in the towns of Punta Gorda, Stann Creek, (British Honduras) and Livingston (Guatemala). It has also been observed that Black Caribs are to be found in Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Yucatan

They have never lost their identity, remaining unto this day, a distinct race. Inter-marriage, on the rare occasions it has taken place, has been mainly to the Miskito Indians of the Republic of Honduras who, like themselves, are descended from runaway slaves and Indians native to Central America. They continue to speak Carib, though this has never become a written language. Cassava still plays a major role in their diet and the implements used to process are much the same as the ones used by their Indian ancestors in St. Vincent.

As had been the case in St. Vincent, the Black Caribs of Central America rarely live far from the coast. If one were to speak of a Carib country today, it would be the littoral stretching from the Black River in the Republic of Honduras to Stann Creek in British Honduras. Their great skill as seamen, which so amazed even their enemies in St. Vincent, has been handed down from generation to generation. The ships that ply the coast between Honduras and Florida are manned mainly by Black Carib crews.

This is not to say they have not moved into the other fields such as mahogany logging and grapefruit canning. They are also to be found in the public service in British Honduras, particularly the teaching service. It has been estimated that some 75 per cent of the rural teachers are Black Caribs. One, having risen to the highest level in the British Honduras civil service, joined the staff of the University of the West Indies and is now with the World Bank. He and his father, who stated that his grandmother was among those banished from St. Vincent, visited this state recently to see what they would find

out about their ancestors. In recent years, many others have attended the University of the West Indies. Long before this, some of them had become priests and politicians. The charge that they are looked down on and discriminated against in British Honduras is beginning to wear a little thin. In the polyglot population of that country, the Black Caribs are playing a prominent part.

Very often comparison is made between the progress the Caribs in Central America have made as against the retardation of those in St. Vincent. What is generally not recognized is that we are talking of two different sets of people. In St. Vincent, when we speak of Caribs, we usually mean the Caribs of Sandy Bay. These are not Black Caribs at all, but the direct descendants of Indo-Caribs or Yellow Caribs as they are called. Their physical characteristics attest to this. Labat and others writing three centuries ago, observed that the Black Caribs in fact inherited more of the negro characteristics than those of the Indians. All observers in Central America have come to the same conclusion.

The few Black Caribs who escaped exile to British Honduras, as was mentioned, lived in the Greggs Mountains and were later given a reservation at the foot of these mountains. There, they merged with the descendants of the slaves and in a very short while, the difference in origin was quickly forgotten. Most Vincentians do not even know there was a Carib reservation or settlement at Greggs. However, when Taylor writes that the Black Caribs in British Honduras are outspoken and almost aggressive in interpersonal relations, no one who knows the people of Greggs in St. Vincent will for a moment deny that they are indeed the true descendants of the Black Caribs and the cousins of those in Central America.

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