



Humberto Garcia Muniz, Betsaida Velez Natal. *Bibliografía militar del caribe*. Rio Piedras: Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1992. 177 pp.

Reviewed by Hans Vogel (Leiden University)  
Published on H-LatAm (June, 1996)

## War and Peace in the Caribbean since 1945

This is the first bibliography of its kind ever to be published. Though the title would seem to indicate a comprehensive coverage of the subject, in reality the bibliography is quite limited in scope, time, and geography. The Caribbean as defined here comprises the French and Netherlands Antilles, Aruba, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, the Cayman Islands, Cuba, the English-speaking Caribbean, French Guyana, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Surinam, Trinidad and Tobago, as well as the Virgin Islands. The term "military" is defined quite loosely, since it also includes strategy, geopolitics, and public security (police matters). The time period covered begins in 1945, but references to earlier periods are sometimes arbitrarily included. Themes that one would have expected to find, but that are not covered, include:

- 1) military interventions by the United States
- 2) border disputes
- 3) the Cuban Wars of the nineteenth century
- 4) the Cuban revolutionary war in the twentieth century

The exclusion of these topics is warranted, so the editors write, because they have recently been covered by special bibliographies (pp. 12-13). The editors may have been right, since a true "Military Bibliography of the Caribbean" would deal with strictly military matters only, and would begin in 1492. Such a bibliography would also include some of the fringe areas of the Caribbean, such as northern Venezuela and perhaps YucatAn. Thus one would not merely encounter references to the work of Alan Kuethe, however valuable these are, but also to that of Juan de Austria, Antonio-Gerardo SuaArez, Juan Marchena FernAndez, Carmen GÓmez,

and so on. Such a bibliography, therefore, would take a lot of time and effort to make, and it would be a much thicker volume than the present one.

Yet within its own rather narrow limits, this bibliography still seems fairly useful and extensive. The volume is divided into geographical chapters, each in its turn subdivided into convenient subheadings. The main chapters are: Caribbean general; English-speaking Caribbean; French Caribbean; Hispanic Caribbean; and Dutch Caribbean. At the end, there is an author index and a subject index.

Obviously, this bibliography could not be complete, since no bibliography can. The editors proudly announce that they have included items in many languages, including Russian, but I wonder how thorough their search for Russian-language materials has been. Surely, to give just one example, there must have been published a lot more relevant titles (both monographs and articles) on Cuban-Russian military relations than the few that have been included here.

However, more serious flaws cling to this volume. For one thing, a bibliography, especially a small one like this, should be free of typographical errors and other inaccuracies. In the small section on the Dutch Caribbean, to give an example (pp. 144-151), I counted a number of them, including faulty translations. One supposes the editors' Dutch consultants might have saved them from these minor, but disturbing, flaws. Certainly these could have been avoided by investing a mere fifteen minutes or so. For instance, on p. 149, the article by Hugo Fernan-

des Mendes "Militair en samenleving in Suriname" ought to be translated as "EjErcito y sociedad en Surinam," instead of "Lo militar y la convivencia en Surinam." Similarly, *Troepenmacht in Suriname* (p. 149) was the official name of the Dutch garrison in Surinam prior to 1975. Usually known by its acronym TRIS, it cannot therefore be translated as "las fuerzas militares en Surinam," because that phrase does not convey the colonial meaning of the Dutch expression. Instead, a better translation might have been "La guarniciOn holandesa en Surinam." Users might further be puzzled to find as places of publication "s Gravenhage" and "The Hague," both of which are known in Spanish as "La Haya," which would have been the correct term for a Spanish-language bibliography.

One is, of course, aware of the difficulties involved in

making a bibliography, which one would naturally strive to make as accurate and reliable as possible. However, the flaws and errors in the Dutch Caribbean section make me somewhat uneasy. If the same standards were used in compiling the rest of the bibliography, I am afraid this volume should be consulted with a bit of caution. Certainly, double-checking would be advisable.

For whom would this bibliography be useful? First, it should have a place in specialized libraries and on the shelves of Caribbeanists working on the twentieth century. The volume is less interesting for military historians, in spite of the title, but will certainly be of interest to political scientists and historians of the Cold War. In short, the many limitations the editors have set themselves will give this bibliography a circumscribed place among a modest number of users.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-latam>

**Citation:** Hans Vogel. Review of Muniz, Humberto Garcia; Natal, Betsaida Velez, *Bibliografia militar del caribe*. H-LatAm, H-Net Reviews. June, 1996.

**URL:** <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=498>

Copyright © 1996 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the Reviews editorial staff at [hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu](mailto:hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu).