

FRANCISCO JAVIER CISNEROS:  
A PIONEER IN TRANSPORTATION AND ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT IN LATIN AMERICA, 1857-1898 \*

THE multifaceted character of economic growth in Latin America has several distinctive qualities. Research is now uncovering some basic features of different stages and areas in industrialization. In Latin America, where personalism assumes a more significant role than in the system oriented Anglo-America, the lives of individuals can be quite decisive in the functioning of society. Francisco Javier Cisneros played several highly meaningful roles, all of which are important not only for the legacy left by his agitated, dynamic and dramatic life, but also because his experiences illustrate a not uncommon pattern of economic development in Latin America.

The objective of this paper is to analyze Cisneros' career within the context of transportation and economic development in Latin America. Cisneros, a railroad builder in Cuba, Peru and Colombia, made his greatest contribution to the transportation and economic growth in the latter-named nation.<sup>1</sup> The former two countries became the training grounds for his future career in Colombia. This biography outlines the contributions an enlightened Latin American elite can make toward the economic betterment of its lands. Since technological and industrial contributions require a high degree of preparation and financial resources, future similar studies will probably encompass members of the upper echelons of society, for they are among the few able to attend the best institutions of learning and/or to travel abroad. Their affluence enables them to establish connections of the economic, social, and political character required by their undertakings.

A study of Cisneros' life discloses not only how he became the executive in charge of projects designed to promote Latin American

\* The author of this article is indebted to a grant from the Organization of American States (OAS). The author also wishes to thank Professors J. León Helguera of Vanderbilt University, Frank Safford of Northwestern University, Alberto Lee López and Horacio Rodríguez Plata of the Academia Colombiana de Historia for their cooperation and comments. However, the author bears full responsibility for the text and views expressed.

<sup>1</sup> A general but superficial study of Colombian transportation problems during the late nineteenth century underlines the role of Cisneros. See: J. Fred Rippy, "Dawn of the Railway Era in Colombia," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, XXII, No. 4 (November, 1943), pp. 650-663.

transportation and economic growth, but also the mechanics of how the projects and programs occurred. The unraveling of these mechanics in itself is just as significant and unexplored as is the life of the man.

Cisneros' career is further significant because it traces the struggles of an era in Latin America. He was an incarnation of our southern neighbors quest to bring progress and modernization to their homelands. The railroad, the steamboat, immigration, the exploitation of the West was occurring in the United States—Anglo-America was quickly becoming the industrial wonder of the world. In the past, Latin America had patterned many of her political institutions *a la americana*. Why not imitate the colossus of the north in the development of transportation? Latin Americans had seen the colonization of the West and assumed that the railroad had been the cause of the West's prosperity and development. However, railroads in America were only lubricants of economic growth instead of a *causa generis*.

Cisneros' concern for the industrialization of Latin America is highly analogous to the efforts and aspirations of present-day Latin American leaders. The obstacles to the development of this region constitute a problem which has been faced by its leaders perennially. The frustrations of failure and incomplete accomplishments have grown to be almost a tradition, which sometimes is manifested in the spirit of tolerance that many Latin Americans have for the unfulfilled promises of their leaders. Cisneros' enthusiasm for railroads was perhaps overemphatic in its expectations for economic growth, but his outlook was common to many of his Latin American contemporaries.

Cisneros valued very highly the significance of foreign investments in the economic development of Latin America. But like most leaders of the underdeveloped world he was suspicious of the imperialistic implications of such investments. Cisneros demanded of foreign capitalists restraint and understanding. In a report read by the Cuban entrepreneur before the American Society of Civil Engineers and which was directed to American capitalists, he stated, "What was once acquired by force now must be obtained by the use of reason. Constant mutual understanding as well as reciprocity of concessions are the only means to strengthen relations [between the United States and Latin American]." <sup>2</sup>

Finally but not without importance is the similarity of Cisneros' career

<sup>2</sup> Francisco J. Cisneros, "Canal de Panama," *La Industria* (Bogotá), June 28, 1884, p. 127.

to the present role of exiled Cubans. The island's long history of political persecution has constantly created a brain-drain, affecting her economy. Members of the Cuban middle and upper classes have periodically gone to other Latin American nations in search of business ventures and employment. Their present economic activities throughout the continent are now visible because of the magnification of the exile problem. The fact that Cubans have significantly participated in enterprises outside their homeland should not be surprising. Historically the Cubans have been linked with Spanish America from the beginning of the Hispanic colonization of the mainland; first in a westward direction as an intermediary base between Spain and America and later as a refuge center for Peninsulares fleeing from the emancipated Spanish colonies. Cuba's proximity as well as traditional economic vinculum with the United States have promoted a greater dissemination of the American ability to produce among the islanders than among the rest of our southern neighbors. It is natural that Cubans become some kind of intermediaries in the transmission of American technology to the land south of Rio Grande. The continuous intermingling of Cubans and Anglo-Americans will have to be the subject of further consideration in the economic evolution of the Americas.

On December 28, 1836, Francisco Javier Cisneros was born to Carmen Correa de Cisneros and Hilario Cisneros y Saco, in Santiago, Cuba. The Cisneros were a distinguished and an aristocratic family in eastern Cuba. The father, Hilario Cisneros y Saco, was a lawyer with an island-wide reputation founded on his staunch honesty and humanitarian principles. He was also a man of wide reading interests and possessed one of the best private libraries of his time in Cuba.<sup>3</sup>

From the beginning Francisco Javier was given the best education available to the aristocracy of eastern Cuba. He was sent to undertake his initial studies at the Seminario de San Basilio, a famous national institution in Santiago.<sup>4</sup> In 1847, the Cisneros family moved to Havana, because the father, Hilario, was appointed a judge on the Audiencia of the island's capital.<sup>5</sup> This occurrence was perhaps the most

<sup>3</sup> Fermín Peraza Sarausa, *Diccionario Biográfico Cubano*, 13 Vols., IX (Gainesville, Florida: Biblioteca del Bibliotecario, 1965), p. 126. See also: Rafael M. Merchán, "Francisco Javier Cisneros," *Repertorio Colombiano*, Bogotá, XVIII, No. 3 (July, 1898), 227-228.

<sup>4</sup> Juan N. Remos y Rubio, *Historia de La Literatura Cubana* (La Habana: Cárdenas y Compañía, 1945), pp. 48-50.

<sup>5</sup> Peraza Sarausa, *Diccionario Biográfico Cubano*, IX, p. 126.

significant chapter of Francisco's early life, for in 1848, he began his studies at El Colegio del Salvador, a school directed by José de La Luz y Caballero.<sup>6</sup> He was one of the most prominent intellectuals of nineteenth-century Cuba. Luz y Caballero was called by the Spaniards with some justification "the father of the Cuban Revolution." "Don Pepe," as he was known, was a teacher of men who would become future Cuban revolutionaries. Many of the patriot leaders who fought for Cuban independence have stated that it was his teachings which made them militant and persistent in the struggle against Spain. El Colegio del Salvador was not a center for political propaganda against Spain. Luz y Caballero did not teach outright sedition. His critics and enemies have stated that he never incited his students to revolt: yet, they said, "he prepared his pupils to conspire and to be garroted!"<sup>7</sup>

The environment in which Cisneros grew up offers a very logical explanation of his future life and career. By the time he graduated from El Colegio del Salvador, he had grown to be a bright, self-reliant young man. He had become aware of the political status given to Cuba by Spain. To him, the solution was independence, which would bring an end to the subservience of his beloved island. This conviction remained strong within him until the end of his life. In a typical Latin fashion he later remarked:

A determined enemy of the Spanish colonial regime I have always been...and the independence of the island was my passion from the earliest days of my life.<sup>8</sup>

Having completed his secondary education, Cisneros entered the University of Havana in 1852. There he majored in civil engineering and railroad construction. Cisneros was a brilliant student, and by the age of twenty, he was graduated as civil engineer with high honors in 1856.<sup>9</sup> Wishing to further his knowledge in railroad building, in the same year he went to New York where he attended Troy Polytechnic Institute for approximately a year.<sup>10</sup> It seems that Cisneros obtained a

<sup>6</sup> Joaquín Ospina, *Diccionario Biográfico y Bibliográfico de Colombia*, 3 Vols., I (Bogotá: Editorial Cromos, 1927-1939), p. 554.

<sup>7</sup> Willis Fletcher Johnson, *The History of Cuba*, 5 Vols., III (New York: B. F. Buck and Company, Inc., 1920), p. 332.

<sup>8</sup> Alfonso Javier Gómez, "Cisneros," *Repertorio Histórico*, Medellín, Numeros 5-8 (Junio, 1914), 129.

<sup>9</sup> Theodore A. Leisen, "Francisco Javier Cisneros, M. Am. Soc. C. E." in *A La Memoria de Francisco Javier Cisneros 1836 a 1898*, ed. by Merchán (Bogotá: Imprenta de "La Luz," 1900), p. 128.

<sup>10</sup> Merchán (ed.), *A La Memoria de Francisco Javier Cisneros 1836 a 1898*, pp. 2-196.

second degree, or at least revalidated his degree received at the University of Havana, at this United States institution. Most of the accounts of Cisneros' life affirm that he did receive a second degree at Troy Polytechnic Institute. However, authorities at the institution have been unable to locate the records of Cisneros' attendance.<sup>11</sup>

Upon his return to Cuba in 1857, Cisneros was hired by the Eastern Cuba Railway Company, a British corporation, to work in the province of Pinar del Río in western Cuba. Cisneros' work was such a success that in 1858 he was transferred to the province of Santa Clara, where he became one of the chief engineers engaged to build the eighty-five kilometer railway line from the port of Sagüa La Grande to Villa Clara, the capital of the province. Cisneros' next assignment was in late 1858, in the province of Matanzas. There he became the chief engineer in the construction of the thirty-kilometer rail line from Cardenas to Sabanilla.<sup>12</sup> In 1859, Cisneros was given the task of building the eight-kilometer railway line from the port of Casilda to the city of Trinidad, both of which were points on the southeastern coast of the province of Santa Clara.

In 1862, Cisneros became the chief engineer of the Caibairien Railroad Company. This corporation was building a railroad network stretching over 120 kilometers in central Cuba. By the time Cisneros left his position with this company in November of 1868 for involvement in the Ten Years' War (1868-1878), he and his assistants had managed to build over two-thirds of the Caibairien railroad. This network has been given direct credit for the population growth of the cities of Santo Espíritu and Villa Clara. In 1867, the villas of Santo Espíritu and Villa Clara were granted the title of cities. The latter then became Santa Clara. Although Santa Clara did not have the advantage of being a sea port, she became a mercantile center for the interior towns of central Cuba because of the rail lines built by Cisneros.<sup>13</sup> In 1862, Cisneros was also appointed administrator of the major Ferrocarril del Oeste which extended 177 kilometers and connected the city of Pinar del Rio with Havana.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Letter from John Dunlap to the writer, Registrar at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, New York, November 6, 1968.

<sup>12</sup> Leisen, "Francisco Javier Cisneros, M. Am. Soc. C. E.," p. 128; see also "Railways: Matanzas and Sabanilla," *London Times*, December 1, 1875, 6.

<sup>13</sup> Francisco J. Cisneros, *Relación Documentada de Cinco Expediciones* (Nueva York: Imprenta de Hallet y Breen, 1870), pp. 4-5; see also "Havana: Cuban Railroads," *New York Times*, August 18, 1867, 5; and "Railways: Bay of Havannah and Matanzas," *London Times*, November 26, 1866, 3.

<sup>14</sup> Cisneros, *Relación Documentada de Cinco Expediciones*, p. 4; see also Albert J.

It was in these administrative positions that Cisneros acquired a real mastery in the field of management, an asset which was to be of the greatest value to him when he undertook the building and administration of the Colombian railroads. Cisneros, despite his already high administrative position, personally inspected the most minute railway construction projects and searched for new methods of improving the efficiency of the Cuban railways. He felt that the railways of the island should be built not only for private profits, but also for their social value. Cisneros favored the construction of narrow-gauge railways<sup>15</sup> in Cuba because he thought that such railroad systems would be more economical to operate and would provide greater profits. The abundance of profits in turn would enable the railroad companies to provide cheaper services to the public.

The narrow-gauge railroads cost less, produce more, and satisfy local, as well as general needs; to them belongs the future because they establish harmony between the public interests that until recently were considered opposed.<sup>16</sup>

Hoping to further his concept, he read a research paper on the narrow-gauge railway systems to the Society of Civil Engineers of Havana.<sup>17</sup>

Through the newspapers *El Siglo* and *El País*, Cisneros energetically advocated coordinated development of railway lines throughout the island instead of building short and unconnected lines. He thought that the railroads would best serve the economic growth of the nation if they were consolidated.<sup>18</sup>

Cisneros' experience in building Cuban railroads is of utmost consequence, for the island became the second nation in the Americas to adopt the railroad. The Cuban railways began with native capital and engineers, and were jointstock corporations.<sup>19</sup> It is true that British

Norton, *Norton's Complete Handbook of Havana and Cuba* (Chicago: Rand, McNally and Co., 1900), p. 232.

<sup>15</sup> The narrow-gauge railways are those which have the rail set from three feet to three feet four inches apart.

<sup>16</sup> Cisneros, *Ferro-carriles de Vía Estrecha* (Neuva York: Imprenta de Hallet y Breen, 1872), p. 60.

<sup>17</sup> *Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada*, 70 Vols., XIII (Barcelona: Hijos de Espasa, 1933- ), p. 485.

<sup>18</sup> Cisneros, *La Verdad Histórica sobre Sucesos de Cuba* (Nueva York: Imprenta de M. M. Zarzamendi, 1871), pp. 67-68.

<sup>19</sup> Antonio Miguel Alcovey y Beltrán, *Historia de la Villa de Sagüa La Grande y su Jurisdicción* (Sagüa La Grande, Cuba: Imprentas Unidas "La Historia" y "El Correo

and American capital participated in the railway development of Cuba, but such investments occurred only after the railways were well underway and had proven to be useful as well as profitable. Cisneros' understanding of the Cuban transportation experience was to become a guiding light in his future career in South America. On one occasion he remarked:

In Havana a group of patrons built Cuba's first railway (from Havana to Guines) and later transferred it to a respectable syndicate. This is the genesis of the Cuban railroads; all of them except one, were built by companies organized within the island. . . . If it had not been for the obstacles I have encountered, I would have introduced in Colombia the railroad systems of Cuba and the United States, which until now [1894] have proven to be more logical than the railroad systems of Central and South America; these have left the financial disasters of which we are aware.<sup>20</sup>

By 1868, Cisneros' success was a *fait accompli*. Not only was he a famous railroad builder and businessman; he had something of a reputation as an intellectual, and was a capable writer. Cisneros had amassed a considerable fortune and frequented the highest social circles of Havana. He had married Magdalena Morrillo, a lady of most distinguished Cuban lineage.<sup>21</sup> But unlike other eastern Cuban gentry, in 1868 Cisneros decided to risk his position to join the revolutionary underground, which was dedicated to the cause of Cuban independence. The Cuban reformist leaders, recognizing Cisneros' abilities, made him editor of *El País*, a newspaper which had been very ably edited by Francisco de Frías y Jacott, the Count of Pozos Dulces. Because of pressure from the royal authorities, the Court was forced to delegate his editorial duties to Cisneros. Cisneros did, indeed, live up to the expectations of his fellow-reformists. In *El País* he advocated the cause of gradualistic change in Cuba's favor.<sup>22</sup> However, Cisneros' advocacy of gradual reforms had not changed his conviction that complete independence was the goal to be achieved. To him his role as editor was only the means to the end. "I was not in

Español," 1905), pp. 117-119, 123-128. See also: Francisco J. Ponte y Domínguez, *Matanzas: Biografía de una Provincia* (La Habana: Academia de Historia de Cuba, 1959), pp. 10-114; Ximeno, *Los Ferrocarriles de Cuba* (La Habana: Rambla, Bouza y Cía., 1912), pp. 3-300.

<sup>20</sup> Cisneros, "El Ferrocarril de Antioquia (Continuación)," *Diario Oficial* (Bogotá), June 22, 1894, 595.

<sup>21</sup> Merchán, "Francisco Javier Cisneros," 229.

<sup>22</sup> Cuba: The Havana Press, *New York Times*, November 22, 1868, 5; see also "Affairs in Cuba: Suppression of Newspapers," *New York Times*, January 1, 1869, 5.

favor of reforms, because I did not have faith in the Spanish government." <sup>23</sup>

When the royal authorities discovered Cisneros' connection with the revolutionary movement, he was forced to flee to the United States in December of 1868. There he placed himself at the service of the Cuban Revolutionary Junta, and for the next three years Cisneros led armed expeditions to Cuba and fought in the revolutionary armies on the island.<sup>24</sup> Four of the seven expeditions he led to Cuba were successful. His services to the revolutionary cause earned him the rank of general, but because of his role in the expeditions he was thrice condemned in absentia to the death penalty by the Spanish authorities.<sup>25</sup>

By late 1871, Cisneros had decided to end his role as leader of naval expeditions against Cuba. There are no specific reasons for his departure from the Cuban revolution, but undoubtedly his already controversial role must have been a very significant motive. Another factor may have been his pragmatic and realistic approach to the revolution. He, more than anybody else, was capable of assessing the state of the revolt. By 1871, the Grant administration under the influence of Secretary of State, Hamilton Fish (1869-1877), had decided not to intervene in favor of the Cuban revolutionaries. The Cuban revolutionists themselves became fragmented, each little group fighting the other. At first Cisneros intended to continue his fight for

<sup>23</sup> Cisneros, *La Verdad Histórica sobre Sucesos de Cuba*, p. 6.

<sup>24</sup> Cisneros (ed.), *Relación Documentada de Cinco Expediciones*, p. 6; see also: Gabriel Giraldo Jaramillo, *Colombia y Cuba 1853-1953* (Bogotá: Minerva, 1953), pp. 81-83. In 1871, Cisneros served temporarily as ambassador of the Cuban Revolutionary Junta in Peru. See: Eladio Aguilera Rojas, *Francisco V. Aguilera y la Revolución de Cuba de 1868*, 2 Vols., I (La Habana: Librería e Imprenta La Moderna Poesía, 1909), pp. 143-149.

<sup>25</sup> Santos Pérez Triana, "Recuerdos de F. J. Cisneros," in *Francisco Javier Cisneros: Homenaje del Gobierno . . .*, ed. by Luis I. Andrade (Bogotá, 1948), pp. 43-58; see also Cisneros (ed.), *Relación Documentada de Cinco Expediciones*; See also Cisneros, *La Verdad Histórica sobre Sucesos de Cuba* (Neuva York, 1871); see also Johnson, *The History of Cuba*, III, pp. 155-288; see also the following *New York Times* articles: "The Steamer *Anna*," January 10, 1870, 5; "The Later Particulars; the Crew and the Passengers; Further Action of the Authorities," January 6, 1870, 5; "Telegrams: Capture of the *Upton* Expedition by the Spaniards," April 6, 1870, 1; "Cuban Affairs: Trial of the Cuban Government," January 4, 1870, 1; "Cuban Affairs: Further Facts about the *Upton*," January 17, 1870, 2; "West Indies: Cuba," January 24, 1870, 1; "Cuba: . . . Landing of Fillibusters," May 25, 1869, 1; "Cuba," January 5, 1869, 1; "Cuban Affairs: War News," March 26, 1871, 1; "Cuba," March 26, 1869, 5; "Cuban Affairs: The Central Department," July 21, 1871, 2; "Affairs in Cuba," April 24, 1869, 1; "Cuban Affairs: Confiscation," April 26, 1869, 5; "The Cisneros Claim," December 8, 1873, 1; "The Fillibustering Spirit" (Editorial), March 29, 1869, 4.



Cuban independence as a writer.<sup>26</sup> However, largely because of lack of economic resources, the effort was abandoned.

Cisneros's participation in the Ten Years' War had brought him poverty. Whatever property he had not invested in the revolution had been confiscated by the Spanish authorities.<sup>27</sup> He also had to support his wife, then living with him in New York. He decided to return to his engineering profession. His immediate intention was to go to Peru and work in the railroad construction of that nation. In the 1870's, Peru was undertaking a massive railroad development program and a number of American engineers were making fortunes as railroad builders.<sup>28</sup> Cisneros also wanted a piece of the pie.

In 1871, the Peruvian government opened bids for the building of the 338-kilometer-long Cuzco-Juliaca Railroad across the Andes of southern Peru. On the basis of a study made by the American engineer, John L. Thorndike, Cisneros was able to submit the lowest bid, which was ten percent lower than his closest competitor, the ubiquitous Henry Meiggs. However, the Peruvian government cancelled his chances because he had failed to present proof of sufficient financial backing.<sup>29</sup> It is very likely that even if Cisneros had managed to gather the sufficient financial backing for the undertaking of the Cuzco-Juliaca Railroad, Meiggs may have still been awarded the contract. Professor Watt Stewart, the biographer of Meiggs, states that the Peruvian government was predisposed to favor Meiggs over his competitors. In dealing with the Cuzco-Juliaca Railroad, Stewart says,

It is worth noting that Meiggs enjoyed a decided advantage over his competitors in having the reputation of 'a go-ahead Yankee'.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> [Merchán], *La Honra de España por un Cubano*; see also *Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada*, Vol. XIII.

<sup>27</sup> The writer has been unable to determine the extent of Cisneros' property confiscated by the Spanish authorities. However most of his property was in real estate and principally in Havana. In April of 1869, Cisneros and some other revolutionary leaders were promised the return of their property by Governor-General Domingo Dulce if they withdrew from the revolution. Cisneros rejected the offer. See "Cuban Affairs," *New York Times*, April 24, 1869, 1; "Cuban Affairs: Confiscation," *New York Times*, April 26, 1869, 5; and *Datos Oficiales Referentes a los Bienes Mandados Embargar en la Isla de Cuba* (La Habana: Inprenta del Gobierno y Capitanía General, 1870), pp. 109, 175, 179.

<sup>28</sup> Jorge Basadre, *Historia de la República del Perú*, 10 Vols. IV (Lima: Ediciones Historia, 1961), pp. 1713-1729.

<sup>29</sup> *Los Ferrocarriles del Perú: Colección de Leyes, Decretos, Contratos*, 3 Vols., I-III (Lima: Imprenta del Estado, 1871), pp. 80-81, 230-231, 258-259.

<sup>30</sup> Watt Stewart, *Henry Meiggs: Yankee Pizarro* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1946), p. 95

Cisneros always kept Peru in mind, but he decided to practice his profession in New York. There he organized an engineering corporation in 1872 with his friend and fellow Cuban, Aniceto García Menocal.<sup>31</sup> At the time when the Cisneros-Menocal company was created García Menocal was hoping to get the contract as chief engineer of a project that would open the inter-oceanic canal through the Republic of Nicaragua. Cisneros' choice next to going to Peru was to participate in the opening of the canal. However, hopes for this project were fruitless, partly due to indecision in the matter on the part of the United States government.<sup>32</sup>

During his stay in New York, Cisneros had a chance to increase his contacts with other railroads builders, engineers, financiers and manufacturers of equipment for the construction of railroads.<sup>33</sup> He was also engaged in a great deal of research on new techniques in railway building. Cisneros had a chance to read extensively and to formulate future plans. He also had the opportunity to analyze the economic problems of Latin America and to develop solutions that would speed economic development.

One of the topics of Cisneros' research was narrow-gauge railroads. Because of his conviction that narrow-gauge railways were to be the railroad of the future, he became involved in an academic debate with a noted American engineer, Silas Seymour, who had written a book opposing the decision of the Texas-Pacific Railroad Company to build a transcontinental railway to the Pacific on the principles of the narrow-gauge system.<sup>34</sup> Cisneros felt that if the transcontinental railroad was built as a narrow-gauge system it would be finished much more quickly and at far less expense. He also advocated the construction of narrow-gauge railways throughout the American West in order to bring a faster economic development and colonization of that area.<sup>35</sup>

Cisneros' research and observations did not go unnoticed; in 1872 he was invited by the New York Society of Practical Engineers, of which

<sup>31</sup> Cisneros, *Ferro-carriles de Vía Estrecha*, p. 139.

<sup>32</sup> Evidently the Cisneros-Menocal enterprise was not very successful, for only one year after the company was founded, Cisneros left for Peru, almost broke, and Menocal continued working on the Nicaragua Canal project. See Miles F. Du Val, Jr., *Cádiz to Cathy* (New York: Greenwood Publishers, 1968), pp. 67, 77-85, 105.

<sup>33</sup> Cisneros, *Ferro-carriles de Vía Estrecha*, pp. 140-149.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3: see also Julius Grodinsky, *Transcontinental, 1869-1893: A Study of Business Men* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1962), pp. 20-26, 53-59, 172-174, 421-422.

<sup>35</sup> Cisneros, *Ferro-carriles de Vía Estrecha*, pp. 17-60.

he was a member, to read his essay, "The Narrow-Gauge Railways." He read the essay twice, in June and again in July, before the Society. Cisneros' work was so well received that the American Society of Civil Engineers also invited him to read his essay. "The Narrow-Gauge Railways" was published in England soon after he first presented it.<sup>36</sup>

The Cuban's concern with the lack of transportation in Latin America caused him to publish his work in Spanish in the form of a book. The essay "The Narrow-Gauge Railways" was expanded and modified to meet Latin American needs. The Spanish version was an attempt by Cisneros to fulfill the crying need for such a work in that language.

I feel that my work 'The Narrow-Gauge Railways' may be of immediate utility to the Hispanic-American nations...for as it is well known, there is very little published on the subject in our language.<sup>37</sup>

In it he urges the promotion of narrow-gauge railways in Latin America as the most advantageous way of achieving the economic integration of that area.

The South American people are tired of sterile struggles; they now hasten to recuperate the lost time and they have fixed their eyes on fast communications as the most effective factor of progress. But they will not achieve their goals without large economic expenditures, and some of them could not even think of building them if they are not able to build them at the cheapest possible price. Commerce is a great agent of civilization, but commerce cannot be developed without lowering transportation costs....In my judgement, the narrow-gauge railroad fits all the needs and requirements of the nations to whom I dedicate these lines....<sup>38</sup>

Throughout his essay, he was especially concerned with the economic integration of the Andean Republics, particularly of Peru. Quite perceptively he indicated that the only way to insure Peru's economic growth was by linking the coastal region to the mountainous core of the country. Thus, Cisneros was one of the first modern advocates of geographical integration as the means to achieve a balanced economic growth in Peru.

Cisneros felt that the rapid economic development of Latin America was "the most active element of peace" in the area and that it could be brought about most effectively through the development of means

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

of communication and transportation.<sup>39</sup> Cisneros was also expressly critical of the Ecuadorian government's support of highway construction on the assumption that the nation could not afford a railway system. Cisneros considered it a "most lamentable mistake" since he asserted that a narrow-gauge railway could be built in Ecuador at a lower price than a highway. Thus, he warned the other Latin American nations not to fall into the same mistake the Ecuadorians had.<sup>40</sup>

Cisneros also published an essay in English specifically dealing with the Peruvian railroads in 1872. He urged the continuation of the ambitious railroad-building program undertaken by Peru in the previous decade. He considered Peru a nation very rich in natural resources and capable of becoming the economic wonder of Latin America. Cisneros felt that railroad lines should be constructed to connect Peru with Bolivia in order to escalate the economic development of the latter nation and make her great variety of minerals available to other Latin American countries and to the rest of the world. He also advocated connecting the interior railroad lines of Peru with the Atlantic coast, and he thought that the task would be relatively simple "by prolonging the Lima and Oroya Railroad to. . . .the Pachitea and Ucayali Rivers [both located in the eastern part of the Amazon basin]. From these rivers to the Amazon, navigation is very easy."<sup>41</sup> Cisneros' rather optimistic view has proven quite workable in the twentieth century by the construction of the Marginal Highway through the eastern slopes of the Andes by the ex-Peruvian President Fernando Belaúnde Terry (1963-1968).<sup>42</sup>

In February of 1872, Cisneros applied for United States citizenship, which was granted to him in April of 1874. Why did Cisneros change his nationality after so much effort to obtain the independence of his beloved island? Cisneros himself justified his decision to become an American citizen in these terms:

Ever since I was an adolescent, it has been my ideal to live in the United States as a member of that free and magnanimous society. . . .I

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>41</sup> Cisneros, "Railroads in Peru," *Van Nostrand's Magazine*, VI (February, 1872), 589-590.

<sup>42</sup> Fernando Belaúnde Terry, "The Marginal Highway of the Jungle," *Latin America '67: The Annual Review of Latin American Business and Development* (New York: Vision Incorporated, 1967), pp. 67-73; see also "Peru's President I. R. F. Man-of-the-Year," *World Highways*, XVIII (August, 1967), 1-3; and Charles J. Stokes, "The Economic Impact of the Carretera Marginal de la Selva," *Traffic Quarterly*, XX (April, 1966), 203-226.

have become an American citizen because there is no longer Cuban nationality.<sup>43</sup>

It is also probable that a self-awareness of his economic and professional situation caused the pragmatic Cuban to change his nationality. At the time when Cisneros decided to become a United States citizen, his more immediate concern was how to make a living. The death of his brother, Eduardo, in May of 1871, had left his widow Carmen Elózegui de Cisneros and his two infant daughters, Emma and María, penniless and under the care of Cisneros.<sup>44</sup> The situation demanded economic viability. If he expected to be successful professionally in the United States, to be a citizen was almost a necessity. If he intended going to Latin America to build railroads, American citizenship would be considerably better than being a Cuban exile with three death sentences hanging over his head. Cisneros' respect for and loyalty to his adopted country is unquestionable. He was a Cuban in spirit until his death. Although he was primarily concerned with economic ventures after he left the Cuban revolution, he continued his support of the revolutionary movement there under the protection of a United States passport.<sup>45</sup>

With his American naturalization in process in early 1873, Cisneros left his wife in New York and went to Peru in search of fortune, as did so many other engineers and railroad builders. In Peru, Meiggs hired him to work as an engineer in the construction of the Oroya-Cerro de Pasco Railroad.<sup>46</sup> This was a narrow-gauge railway. Doubtless, Cisneros' considerable enthusiasm for this type of construction was a deciding factor in Meiggs' allowing him to take part.<sup>47</sup>

In spite of Cisneros' chance to work in the development of the narrow-gauge railway with some of the world's most famous engineers, he was not completely happy with his stay in Peru. Prior to going there, he had been an ardent admirer of the railroad program of that country and of Meiggs' efforts to construct railroads there. After his stay in that Andean nation, he developed reservations concerning his previous

<sup>43</sup> Gómez, "Cisneros," p. 129.

<sup>44</sup> "The Cisneros Claim." Because of Eduardo's participation in the Ten Years' War, the Spanish government confiscated his property in Cuba which amounted to nineteen thousand United States dollars.

<sup>45</sup> Hernán Horna, "La Variedad de las Actividades de Francisco Javier Cisneros," *Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades* (Bogotá), LVII, Nos. 666-668 (April-June, 1970), pp. 205-206. See also: "El Señor Cisneros," *El Heraldo* (Bogotá), July 14, 1895, 929.

<sup>46</sup> Leisen, "Francisco Javier Cisneros, M. Am. Soc. C. E.," pp. 130-131.

<sup>47</sup> The writer has been unable to determine the extent of Cisneros' participation in the construction of the Oroya-Cerro de Pasco Railroad.

feelings. Cisneros felt that there had been a great deal of corruption in the management of that nation's public revenues.

The Cuban engineer also thought that the railroad builders in that country were overcharging the government for their services; "In Peru the government used to pay four times for what one [railroad] was worth." <sup>48</sup> Furthermore, Cisneros' displeasure may be understood upon realization of the fact that he was not given a real opportunity to embark upon a major project of his own. Thus, when he was invited by the Colombian state of Antioquia in October of 1873 to construct the Antioquia Railway, he was ready for a major undertaking which he could direct personally.

In February, 1874, Cisneros acquired a contract to build a 201-kilometer narrow-gauge railroad from the left bank of the Magdalena River to Antioquia's capital, Medellín.<sup>49</sup> Four years after his first Colombian contract, Cisneros assumed the responsibility of building the 138-kilometer Cauca Railroad which was to link the Cauca Valley with the Pacific Ocean.<sup>50</sup> In 1881, Cisneros signed an agreement with the national government whereby he committed himself to build the forty-six kilometer Dorada Railway. The purpose of this railway was to connect the upper and lower Magdalena River and, thus, avoid the painful, time-consuming, and expensive crossing of the river over the rapids in that zone.<sup>51</sup> When Cisneros rescinded the first two enterprises mentioned above in 1855, he had built forty-seven kilometers of railroad in Antioquia<sup>52</sup> and twenty-seven kilometers in Cauca.<sup>53</sup> By 1889, when

<sup>48</sup> "Carta del Ingeniero Francisco Javier Cisneros," *Documentos Facsimilares de La Vida Colombiana* (Bogotá: Seguros Colombia S.A. y el Banco de la Construcción y Desarrollo, 1966), p. 29; see also Cisneros, "El Por Que de Este Periódico," *La Industria* (Bogotá), February 15, 1883, 1.

<sup>49</sup> Cisneros, *Ferrocarril de Antioquia: Memoria sobre la Construcción de Puerto Berrío a Barbosa* (New York: Imprenta y Librería de N. Ponce de León, 1880), pp. 82-115, 151-160. The original Antioquia Railroad contract provided only for the construction of a railroad from the Magdalena River to Barbosa, fifty-one kilometers northeast of Medellín. It was later amended, thus, obligating Cisneros to extend the rail line to Medellín.

<sup>50</sup> Cisneros, *Contract between Colombia and Francisco J. Cisneros, for the Construction of a Railway between Buenaventura and the River Cauca* (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1878), pp. 2-31.

<sup>51</sup> Cisneros (ed.), *Leyes y Contratos Relativos a las Empresas de Obras Públicas* (Bogotá: Imprenta de "La Luz," 1882), pp. 142-176.

<sup>52</sup> *Documentos Relativos al Ferrocarril de Antioquia: 1882-1890* (Medellín: Imprenta Oficial, 1890), pp. 23-25.

<sup>53</sup> Alfredo Ortega Díaz, *Ferrocarriles Colombianos*, 2 Vols., II (Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional, 1923), p. 465.

Cisneros transferred the Dorada project to a British firm, he had managed to build half of the railway, which totalled twenty-three kilometers.<sup>54</sup>

In spite of the shortness of the rail lines built by the Cuban empresario, he had been able to succeed where everybody else had failed. Great quantities of money and effort had been spent, but in all cases not a single rail was laid until Cisneros took charge. He had also built the most difficult segments of the three railroads.

Although the Antioquia Railroad did not become the leading means of freight transportation from Antioquia to the Magdalena River until 1902,<sup>55</sup> a gradual growth in the use of railroad facilities had occurred during the preceding period.<sup>56</sup>

The impact of the forty-seven-kilometer railroad must also be considered in terms of the roadway development that ensued in its immediate surroundings. Documents in the Antioquia Railroad's archives indicate that Cisneros' engineers engaged in the construction and repair of roads connecting the adjacent towns and villages to the railroad.<sup>57</sup> Cisneros' role in the construction of the Antioquia railway did not end with his departure; with very few exceptions the railway was terminated according to the blue prints and studies left by Cisneros.<sup>58</sup>

The twenty-seven kilometers of railroad built by the Cuban empresario in Cauca represents the first physical manifestation of Cauca's dreams and aspirations to have an overland route to the Pacific Ocean.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>54</sup> "Baratura en los Transportes," *La Industria* (Bogotá), September 20, 1884, 617.

<sup>55</sup> James J. Parsons, *Antioqueño Colonization in Western Colombia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), pp. 166-167.

<sup>56</sup> Letter from F. F. Whittekin to United States Vice-Consul L. M. Whelpley, Puerto Berrio, December 14, 1889, in Consular Despatches-Barranquilla, 6 Vols., IV; see also Alejandro López, *Antioquia: Monografía Estadística de este Departamento Colombiano* (Medellín: Imprenta Oficial, 1915), pp. 23-39.

<sup>57</sup> Document No. 1460 plus Appendix in Contabilidad: Balances, Cuentas y Comprobantes: 1879, CCCXI, Part II (Archivo del Ferrocarril de Antioquia, Medellín).

<sup>58</sup> The most consequential deviation from Cisneros' blueprints was the construction of the four-kilometer tunnel of La Quiebra, sixty kilometers east of Medellín. The original blueprints provided for building the railroad across the Central cordillera at a maximum gradient of six degrees. See López, "El Paso de La Quiebra," *El Montañés* (Medellín), II, No. 19 y 20 (June-July, 1899), 294-306; and "La Perforación del Tunel de La Quiebra," *El Correo* (Medellín), August 19, 1961, 11.

<sup>59</sup> Cauca's struggle to build a route to the Pacific has been the subject of an extensive and well documented study. See: James H. Neal, "The Pacific Age Comes to Colombia: The Construction of the Cali-Buenaventura Route, 1854-1882" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1971).

When the first twenty kilometers of rail were inaugurated in July, 1882, linking Buenaventura, on the Pacific, with Córdoba, it was the first time in Cauca's history that it had been connected by an overland route with the ocean. By 1883, this short rail line had already reduced transportation costs to one-half of what it had cost through the previous route. According to a statistical study made by some commercial houses of Cali in June, 1884, it was calculated that the Córdoba-Buenaventura segment was saving Cauca an annual average of 174,510 pesos.<sup>60</sup> An estimate by Cisneros appraised the savings at 201,218 pesos annually.<sup>61</sup>

As short as the Dorada Railway was, it was the only effective means of linking the upper and lower Magdalena. The twenty-three kilometers of rail line had managed to by-pass the most treacherous river rapids. When the railroad had reached twenty-three kilometers in length, transportation costs had been reduced by 345 thousand pesos annually.<sup>62</sup> By 1884, freight costs for one packet (125 to 140 kilos) through the Dorada railroad had been reduced from 2.40 pesos in the time prior to the construction of the railroad to forty-five cents.<sup>63</sup>

While still engaged in the building of the Antioquia, Cauca and Dorada Railways, Cisneros was requested by the national government in June, 1881, to build the Girardot Railway, which was to connect the Magdalena River with the savannah of Bogotá. When Cisneros withdrew from this project in 1888, he had completed thirty-seven kilometers of railway, and, although it was not built through very rugged terrain, traffic through Girardot's river port tripled because of the railroad.<sup>64</sup>

The nine-mile Barranquilla Railway which connected the seaport of Salgar on the Atlantic Ocean with Barranquilla had been completed by a German syndicate in 1870. Although it had been efficient in the beginning, by the late 1870's it was becoming obsolete, making it necessary to extend the rail line and build a larger dock. In 1884,

<sup>60</sup> According to Professor Paul William McGreevey the value of the Colombian peso during the nineteenth century was about the same as that of the United States dollar. See: Paul William McGreevey, "The Economic Development of Colombia" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1965), Appendix, Table II-A.

<sup>61</sup> "Ferrocarriles," *La Industria* (Bogotá), June 19, 1884, 514; see also "Ferrocarril del Cauca," *El Conservador* (Bogotá), September 21, 1882, 625.

<sup>62</sup> "Baratura en los Transportes," *La Industria* (Bogotá), September 20, 1884, 617.

<sup>63</sup> "Asuntos Económicos," *La Industria* (Bogotá), September 29, 1884, 628.

<sup>64</sup> "Navegación," *La Industria* (Bogotá), January 25, 1884, 341.



Cisneros bought the Barranquilla Railway and assumed responsibility for extending it and building a new dock.<sup>65</sup> By June, 1887, the railroad extension was completed to Puerto Belillo, increasing its total length to fifteen miles. Six years later the iron dock, now known as Puerto Colombia, was completed. The new pier became the third deepest in the world.<sup>66</sup> Assessing the importance of the new facility, Professor Theodore Nichols remarks:

To compare the Puerto Colombia mole to the former system of transfers from ship to barge to pier to train is to compare the automobile to the oxcart.<sup>67</sup>

It is almost impossible to exaggerate the impact of the Barranquilla railroad and dock on the economy of the state and even the nation. By the close of the nineteenth century virtually all of Colombia's foreign trade was transported by this railway. In 1898, the American consul at Barranquilla stated: "In great measure this railroad was, and still is, the mainstay of the commerce of this nation."<sup>68</sup> The Barranquillan historian, Miguel Goenaga, asserted that the Barranquilla Railroad was the agent of progress which transformed Barranquilla from a village to a modern city.<sup>69</sup>

Cisneros' enterprises were not limited to the building of railroads. By 1890, he had terminated the streetcar system of the city of Barranquilla. The streetcar was not only a new means of transportation; but it became a model of efficiency under the empresario's management.<sup>70</sup> In 1878, a contract was concluded between him and the national government whereby Cisneros agreed to undertake the transportation of mail between the major ports of the lower and upper Magdalena for a five-year period starting in 1880. Cisneros committed himself to the canalization of the upper Magdalena and to the intro-

<sup>65</sup> "El Ferrocarril de Bolívar," *El Conservador* (Bogotá), August, 14, 1884, 1942; see also: Letters from Luis G. Rivas to Francisco J. Cisneros in Borrador B. de la Familia Raimundo Rivas, pp. 1-50. This invaluable source of information is privately owned by the descendants of Luis G. Rivas of Bogotá, Colombia; Documents 76-77, 907-922, in *Ferrocarril de Bolívar*, 5 Vols., II (Archivo Nacional, Biblioteca Nacional, Bogotá).

<sup>66</sup> "Finis Coronat Opus," *The Shipping List* (Barranquilla), June 30, 1893, 4.

<sup>67</sup> Theodore Nichols, "The Caribbean Gateway to Colombia: Cartagena, Santa Marta, and Barranquilla, and their Connections with the Interior, 1820-1940" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1951), p. 164.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>69</sup> Miguel Goenaga, *Lecturas Locales: Apuntes sobre Otro Extranjero Ilustre que Amó a Barranquilla* (Barranquilla: Tipografía Goenaga, 1940), p. 47.

<sup>70</sup> Goenaga, *Lecturas Locales: Crónicas de la Vieja Barranquilla, Impresiones y Recuerdos* (Barranquilla: Imprenta Departmental, 1953), pp. 5-6.

duction of steamboat navigation in this section of the river.<sup>71</sup> By 1884, the mail delivery by the Cisneros Company was considered one of the best in the nation.<sup>72</sup> In the same year steamboat navigation in the upper Magdalena had become a reality.<sup>73</sup> In 1884, it was estimated that, because of the steamboat service provided by Cisneros, traffic had doubled and even tripled in the major upper Magdalena ports. The state of Tolima alone was saving about eighty-thousand pesos in reduced transportation costs.<sup>74</sup>

One of Cisneros' biggest enterprises in Colombia was his domination of the Magdalena River traffic in the late nineteenth century. His role in Colombia's main transportation artery was a progressive development which originated as a result of his participation in other entrepreneurial ventures. Cisneros' appearance in the steamboat service on the Magdalena began with his efforts to lower transportation costs of materials and supplies for the Antioquia railroad.<sup>75</sup> With this objective, in 1877, he created the Cisneros y Compañía, which started operating with three steamers.<sup>76</sup> With these steamers and others, the Cisneros y Compañía not only supplied all the needs of the Antioquia railroad through the Magdalena but also provided service to the public from the Atlantic coast to Honda and for the first time established regular steamboat service in the lower Cauca River.<sup>77</sup>

By 1882, Cisneros' river company had become his most profitable venture in Colombia.<sup>78</sup> The success of the Cisneros y Compañía was also observed by her progressive absorption of the companies operating in the Magdalena. In 1883, Cisneros y Compañía and the United Navigation Company (an American corporation) became the two

<sup>71</sup> Cisneros, *Leyes y Contratos Relativos a las Empresas de Obras Públicas*, pp. 201-247.

<sup>72</sup> "Correo del Atlántico," *La Industria* (Bogotá), May 24, 1884, p. 478.

<sup>73</sup> Letter from William E. Curtis to United States Consul Thomas Dawson, Caracas, January 18, 1885, in *Consular Despaches-Barranquilla*, 6 Vols., II; see also "Navegación," *La Industria* (Bogotá), January 25, 1884, p. 341.

<sup>74</sup> "Asuntos Económicos," *La Industria* (Bogotá), September 29, 1884, p. 628.

<sup>75</sup> Cisneros, *El Ferrocarril de Antioquia y el Informe del Honorable Diputado Señor Pascual Uribe R.* (Bogotá: Editorial A. Alcazar, 1881), p. 15. See also: Cisneros, "El Por Qué de este Periódico," *La Industria* (Bogotá), February 15, 1883, p. 1.

<sup>76</sup> Salvador Camacho Roldán, "La Navegación por Vapor," *Colombia Ilustrada* (Bogotá), August 15, 1890, pp. 229-235.

<sup>77</sup> "Navegación del Bajo Cauca," *La Industria* (Bogotá), November 27, 1884, pp. 681-682.

<sup>78</sup> Letter from Francisco J. Cisneros to Carlos Sáenz, Barranquilla, September 12, 1882, in *Colección Miscelánea de Cisneros* (Academia Colombiana de Historia, Bogotá).

largest competitors.<sup>79</sup> The contest between these two rivals was a fight for survival in which the Cuban entrepreneur was able to emerge victorious by organizing the *Compañía Colombiana de Transportes* from the resources of the Cisneros y Compañía, the *Compañía Alemana*, and the *Compañía Internacional* in 1886. Six years later, the stiff monopolization of river traffic by the newly organized corporation forced the United Navigation Company to sell out to the former.

The purchase of the United Navigation Company by the *Compañía Colombiana de Transportes* was due mostly to efforts of Cisneros and to a loan of 250,000 pesos made by the merchants of Barranquilla which was handled through New York banking houses.<sup>80</sup> Thus the *Compañía Colombiana de Transportes* virtually monopolized river traffic by owning all but three of the nineteen steamers cruising on the Magdalena.<sup>81</sup>

Cisneros' business ventures in Colombia presented many facets. Although he was better known for his pioneering efforts in developing Colombia's transportation facilities, he was also involved in other ventures of equal or greater consequence. His conception that transportation facilities were a means and not an end in the quest for progress led him to participate in the development of other enterprises. One of the activities of greatest concern to the empresario was the colonization of Colombia's untapped land resources. A close analysis of all his railroad contracts shows provisions that promoted and facilitated the inflow of immigrants into the lands to be crossed by prospective railways. Settlement and exploitation of the natural resources of the virgin lands was of upmost importance to him.

As a result of the contract to build the Antioquia railroad, Cisneros received one hundred thousand hectares of government lands (*tierras baldías*) along the railroad's right-of-way. In April, 1878, Cisneros bought one hundred thousand more hectares of land from the state for

<sup>79</sup> *Estadística de la Navegación Fluvial: Informe del Inspector del Ramo en 1883* (Barranquilla: Imprenta de Los Andes, 1884), pp. 1-34.

<sup>80</sup> Letter from Francisco J. Cisneros to Carlos Sáenz, Puerto Berrío, January 10, 1885; Letter from Francisco J. Cisneros to Carlos Sáenz, Bogotá, February 24, 1886; Letter from Francisco J. Cisneros to Carlos Sáenz, Honda, July 9, 1886, in *Colección Miscelánea de Cisneros*. See also: "Telegramas," *La Industria* (Bogotá), June 28, 1884, p. 529; "La Compañía Colombiana de Transportes," *El Heraldo* (Bogotá), January 27, 1895 (Supplement, p. 1).

<sup>81</sup> Rippy, *Latin America and the Industrial Age* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1944), p. 54.

twenty-five thousand pesos, which he paid in government bonds. Four months later he and his Antioquian partners, Francisco Villa and Jorge Bravo, formed the La Sociedad Agrícola y de Inmigración (The Agricultural and Immigration Society) which adopted as its objective the exploitation of the two hundred thousand hectares of government lands acquired by Cisneros and his partners.

The Society's specific purposes were: to promote foreign, as well as native, immigration into its lands; to foment the development of agriculture and industry; to work in conjunction with the railroads' interests so as to complement them; and to foment the exploitation of mines within the Society's lands.<sup>82</sup> The Society started with a cash capital of one hundred thousand pesos of which amount Cisneros had contributed one-third.

Immediately after the Society was founded, long-range efforts and plans for colonization were made. Six months after its creation, foreign immigrants mostly Italians, were brought to settle. Small colonies were opened along the prospective railway trajectory in places known as La Cruz, San Antonio, Cuero Curo, La Virginia, and La Malena. Since there were not enough foreign immigrants to come and settle in these colonies, native Colombians were brought from inside and outside Antioquia. The task of the Italians then became that of instructing the native settlers. Most of the Society's emphasis was placed upon the opening of grasslands for cattle raising. However, the cultivation of sugar cane was also promoted, and by 1879, the existence of three sugar plantations was reported.<sup>83</sup>

Right after the Society was established, Cisneros' partner and representative, Juan de S. Martínez, organized a mining company which became the leading concern in the exploitation of minerals within the Society's lands. A number of private individuals, as well as companies, were also allowed to explore and exploit mines in those lands.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>82</sup> *Compilación de los Principales Documentos sobre la Sociedad Agrícola y de Inmigración* (Medellín: Imprenta Oficial, 1921), pp. 33-34.

<sup>83</sup> Cisneros, "Memoria al Secretario de Estado," in *Ferrocarril de Antioquia: 1879-1889*, 2 Vols., MMCMXXXI (Archivo Histórico de la Biblioteca Pública Piloto, Medellín, Colombia), pp. 14-15, 29. See also: Letter from Francisco J. Cisneros to Salvador Camacho Roldán, New York, November 28, 1878, in *El Archivo Camacho Roldán* (Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá); Miguel Bretos, "El Archivo Camacho Roldán," *Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades* (Bogotá), LVII, Nos. 666-668 (April-June, 1970), pp. 311-315.

<sup>84</sup> *Minas de Antioquia: Catálogo de Minas que se Han Titulado en 161 Años desde 1739 hasta 1900* (Medellín: Imprenta Oficial, 1906), pp. 125-127, 254.

However, the further development of the colonization program was shattered by Cisneros' inability to bring American and European immigrants into Antioquia and by his failure to persuade the Antioquian government to allow the coming of Chinese settlers.<sup>85</sup> Another damaging blow to the Society resulted from the loaning of one hundred thousand pesos of its cash capital to the state for the continuation of the Antioquia Railroad in 1879. This loan was repaid to Cisneros' partners after he had already withdrawn from the railroad contract and from the Society twenty years later.<sup>86</sup>

By the rescission of the Antioquia railroad contract, Cisneros ceded his claim in the Society to the state. The empresario's departure virtually ended the organized efforts of the Society to fulfill its goals of colonization. Nevertheless, by 1890, the land value and the structures within its territory were estimated at five million pesos.<sup>87</sup>

Cisneros' conviction that the Cauca Valley possessed immense natural resources led him to make plans to develop its lands.<sup>88</sup> In Cauca the Cuban empresario intended to develop mines, industry, and agriculture. At one time he held claim to 2,200,000 hectares of public lands in that state, and though he was able to hold titles to only two hundred thousand hectares, he promoted plans for the colonization of government lands in the rest of the Cauca Valley.

On February 27, 1882, Cisneros, in collaboration with his friend John L. Thorndike, an American engineer whom he had met while working in Peru and the New York businessman, Hector J. Kingman, created the La Sociedad Agrícola (The Agricultural Company). This institution was to exploit ten thousand hectares of public lands along the railroad's right-of-way. It was to bring foreign immigrants and develop agriculture, mining, and industry. This company started with

<sup>85</sup> At first Cisneros was opposed to the use of Chinese labor in Antioquia but when he could not recruit a sufficient number of Europeans he wanted to bring Coolies from California. See: *Diario de Cisneros, 1875-1877, Primera Parte* (Jardín-Museo Zoológico de Santa Fe, Medellín).

<sup>86</sup> *Compilación de los Principales Documentos sobre la Sociedad Agrícola y de Inmigración*, p. 233.

<sup>87</sup> *Documentos Relativos al Ferrocarril de Antioquia: 1882-1890*, p. 68.

<sup>88</sup> Cisneros, *Ferrocarril del Cauca: Report on the Project to Construct a Railway from the Bay of Buenaventura upon the Pacific Ocean and the River Cauca* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1878), pp. 66-75, 78-92; see also Letter from Francisco J. Cisneros to El Secretario de Hacienda y Fomento, Medellín, August 29, 1879, in *Ferrocarril de Antioquia: 1879-1889*, 2 Vols., MMCMXXXIX (Archivo Histórico de la Biblioteca Pública Piloto, Medellín).

a cash capital of fifty thousand pesos;<sup>89</sup> however, its efforts to bring immigrants did not materialize. When Cisneros' contract to build the railroad was rescinded, the national government acquired his claims to the Society and in 1891 dissolved it.<sup>90</sup>

As in Antioquia and Cauca, Cisneros hoped that immigration would also occur in Cundinamarca's savannahs as a result of the construction of the Girardot Railroad. Unlike his procedure in his two previous experiences, he did not create an agricultural society to settle the unpopulated regions of Cundinamarca. He hoped that immigration would occur naturally from all parts of the republic without organized promotion.<sup>91</sup> While in charge of the Barranquilla Railway, Cisneros became committed to the agricultural development of the state of Bolívar. His major concern was the irrigation of some arid coastal lands of Bolívar. For this purpose he brought technicians and equipment from the United States. Cisneros also fostered the large-scale cultivation of bananas in Bolívar.<sup>92</sup> In 1882, the Cuban-American empresario also acquired ten thousand hectares of land in the state of Panama for colonization and agricultural development.<sup>93</sup>

While Cisneros was in Colombia, he was the owner and editor of *La Industria*, a scientific newspaper. This weekly publication was unique in that its editions were published not only in the capital city of Bogotá, but also in Barranquilla. Through *La Industria*, Cisneros explained the value of his economic endeavors and the need for the industrialization of the nation to the Colombians. He also kept his hosts informed about contemporary scientific and economic developments in Europe and the United States. By means of his journal and numerous other publications, letters and personal contacts, Cisneros urged the government and Colombians to exploit the vast natural

<sup>89</sup> Cisneros, *Leyes y Contratos Relativos a las Empresas de Obras Públicas*, pp. 250-253.

<sup>90</sup> José María Cordovez Moure, *Reminiscencias de Santa Fe de Bogotá*, edited by Elisa Mujía (Madrid: Imprenta Aguilar, 1962), pp. 1520-1521.

<sup>91</sup> United States Vice-Consul L. M. Whelpley to Assistant Secretary of State Alvey A. Adee, November 19, 1889, Report No. 76, Consular Despatches-Barranquilla, 6 Vols., IV.

<sup>92</sup> Goenaga, *Lecturas Locales: Apuntes sobre Cisneros* (Barranquilla: Tipografía Goenaga, 1939), pp. 10-11. See also: "Junta Agrícola de Barranquilla," *El Heraldó* (Bogotá), August 30, 1894, p. 621.

<sup>93</sup> Cisneros, *Leyes y Contratos Relativos a las Empresas de Obras Públicas*, pp. 273-275. Unfortunately this project was not followed up because the Colombian government did not make effective the land grant.

resources of their nation. The Cuban-American empresario outlined in specific detail how to initiate certain industrial projects.<sup>94</sup>

Perhaps one of the most unique features of Cisneros' Colombian enterprises is the manner in which they were financed. He succeeded where others had failed partly due to his ability to finance the projects assigned to him. Cisneros had to perform not only as an imaginative engineer, but as a financial wizard as well. From the beginning of his stay in Colombia he opted for the policy of enlisting the support of Latin American and Colombian capital for his enterprises. The Antioquia Railroad was started with three-hundred thousand dollars contributed mostly by Cubans then exiled in the United States and Europe.<sup>95</sup> The use of Latin American capital by Cisneros became a pattern in all of his Colombian enterprises.<sup>96</sup> In fact, the Dorada Railroad, the construction of the Puerto Colombia iron dock, and the extension of the Barranquilla Railway were almost entirely financed, in a disguised form, by Cisneros' own funds and those of his Latin American partners.<sup>97</sup> Among the Latin American investors in Cisneros' projects were a number of individuals, as well as Colombian corporations. The latter were institutions which, in order to have the protection of the United States, England, and France, were chartered in those nations but were owned by Colombians. Among these financing firms were the José Camacho Roldán y Compañía and the Muñoz y Espiriella

<sup>94</sup> The complete collection of this newspaper may be found at the Luis-Angel Arango Library in Bogotá, Colombia.

<sup>95</sup> "Parte No Oficial: Ferrocarril de Antioquia," *Boletín Oficial* (Medellín), November 2, 1874, p. 890; see also Lucio Restrepo, "El Ferrocarril de Antioquia," *La Industria* December 31, 1883, p. 316.

<sup>96</sup> Cisneros, *A Propósito de una Sentencia* (Bogotá: Tipografía de "La Luz," 1898), pp. 3-45; see also Goenaga, *Lecturas Locales: Apuntes sobre Cisneros*, pp. 46-47; "Contrato," *Registro Oficial* (Medellín). May 13, 1884; "Ferrocarril de Girardot: Organización de una Compañía Nacional," *La Industria* (Bogotá), April 12, 1883, 73-74; *Memoria que el Encargado de la Secretaría de Fomento Dirige al Presidente de los Estados Unidos de Colombia* (Bogotá: Imprenta Torres Amaya e Hijo, 1883), p. 19. Letter from Francisco J. Cisneros to Carlos Sáenz, Honda, November 27, 1884, in *Colección Miscelánea de Cisneros*.

<sup>97</sup> Cisneros, *A Propósito de una Sentencia*, pp. 7-25; see also: Letter from Francisco J. Cisneros to Ribón, Castro y Compañía, London, August 27, 1883; Letter from Francisco J. Cisneros to Diego de Castro, Barranquilla, February 8, 1884; Letter from Francisco J. Cisneros to Salvador Camacho Roldán, Bogotá, June 26, 1884; Letter from Francisco J. Cisneros to Salvador Camacho Roldán, Bogotá, August 11, 1884; Letter from Diego de Castro to Salvador Camacho Roldán, Bogotá, June 27, 1884, in *El Archivo Camacho Roldán*. The Barranquilla Railway and Pier Company Limited, Serial No. 26163, Vol. F, 1889-1899 (Companies Registration Office, London, England); Letter from G. Jenner to Foreign Office, Bogotá, December 22, 1892, in *Foreign Office*, 55-357, pp. 74-75 (Public Record Office, London, England).

chartered in New York; the Diego de Castro y Compañía, the Vengohechea and Company, and Ferguson-Noguera and Company, chartered in Paris; the José Ribón and Company, and the Pérez Triana y Compañía, chartered in London.<sup>98</sup>

Another feature of Cisneros' business was the use of the joint-stock method of financing. All of his financial ventures were joint stock corporations in which the public and his employees were allowed to participate.<sup>99</sup> While in Colombia, Cisneros also encouraged Colombians to make wide use of the joint-stock system in order to promote the economic development of their nation.<sup>100</sup> Such a policy becomes especially significant when one realizes that prior to 1870, joint-stock corporations were virtually unknown in Colombia.<sup>101</sup>

Cisneros felt that Latin Americans were capable of accepting a major role in financing and directing the economic development of their lands. Not only did Cisneros obtain American engineers and technicians for Colombia; he engaged a great number of Cuban engineers, technicians, businessmen,<sup>102</sup> and even intellectuals like Rafael M. Merchán. In Colombia, Cisneros associated with and entered into economic ventures in collaboration with the most outspoken advocates of economic development.

<sup>98</sup> "Contrato," *Registro Oficial* (Medellín), May 13, 1884, 4977; see also "Ferrocarril de Girardot," *La Industria* (Bogotá), November 6, 1883, 274; Empresa de Navegación," *La Industria* (Bogotá), October 18, 1883, 257; "Informes Anuales," *La Industrial* (Bogotá), March 7, 1884, 389; "El Señor Diego de Castro," *La Industria* (Bogotá), May 3, 1884, 449; "Ferrocarril del Cauca," *La Industria* (Bogotá), December 17, 1883, 297; and Letter from Francisco J. Cisneros to Carlos Sáenz, Honda, November 27, 1884, in Colección Miscelánea de Cisneros.

<sup>99</sup> Contabilidad: Balances, Cuentas y Comprobantes: 1874-1876, CCVI (Archivo del Ferrocarril de Antioquia, Medellín), pp. 2-30; see also United States Consul Thomas Davis to Assistant Secretary of State John Davis, July 29, 1884, Report No. 103, Consular Despatches-Barranquilla, 6 Vols., I.

<sup>100</sup> Goenaga, *Lecturas Locales: Apuntes sobre Cisneros*, pp. 11, 46-47.

<sup>101</sup> Salvador Camacho Roldán, *Escritos Varios*, 3 Vols., I. (Bogotá Librería Colombiana, 1892), p. 176.

<sup>102</sup> Contabilidad: Balances, Cuentas y Comprobantes: 1874-1876, CCCVI (Archivo del Ferrocarril de Antioquia, Medellín), pp. 2-30; see also: Letter from Francisco J. Cisneros to Carlos Sáenz, Girardot, Colombia, August 25, 1882; Letter from Francisco J. Cisneros to Carlos Sáenz, Puerto Berrio, Colombia, April 23, 1884; Letter from Francisco J. Cisneros to Carlos Sáenz, Honda, Colombia, February 18, 1885, in Colección Miscelánea de Cisneros; United States Consul Bendix Koppel to the Assistant Secretary of State, July 14, 1880, Report No. 32, Consular Despatches-Bogotá, 4 Vols., I; Letter from Francisco J. Cisneros to Salvador Camacho Roldán; Horna "Francisco Javier Cisneros: A Pioneer in Transportation and Economic Development in Colombia," (Unpublished



But Cisneros also felt that to accelerate the economic development of Colombia, it was necessary to have the advantages of foreign investments. Thus, he advocated concessions and other incentives for foreign capitalists. This particular belief almost became an obsession with Cisneros. In his innumerable reports and letters to the government and to his influential Colombian friends, Cisneros constantly made this point. He stated that the basic reason for publishing his writings in English was to make foreign investors aware of the innumerable possibilities for investment in Latin America. When Cisneros made his many visits to the United States and Europe, he talked with private investors, businessmen, civic organizations, academic institutions, and members of the press in an effort to promote investments in Colombia.<sup>108</sup>

Cisneros consistently stated that it was essential to Latin America's economic development to have the collaboration of foreign capital and that, in order to attract those investments, native capital must also be invested. To him native investments were to serve as a token of good faith, which, coupled with political stability, would promote the orderly industrialization of Latin America. In the final analysis, security was the overriding factor for the Colombians and Latin Americans who invested in Cisneros' projects. The Latin capital invested through Cisneros was protected by either his influence and prestige or by the intrinsic protection that Latin American companies would gain by being chartered in the United States, England, or France.

The history of the contributions of native capital to the industrialization of Latin America remains yet to be written. The reconstruction of how it occurred will undoubtedly be a difficult task, for Latin investments, in order to obtain protection against internal political and economic disorders, had to pretend to be otherwise. Recent economists are prompt to say that, although Latin America needs the collaboration of foreign capital for its industrialization, its development would be healthier if native capitalists, instead of depositing their money in Swiss and American banks, would invest it in their own countries. If what happened in Colombia is an indication of a greater

Ph. D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1970), pp. 89, 94, 96-97, 190, 207, 232, 234, 268-269.

<sup>108</sup> Cisneros, *Ferrocarril de Antioquia: Memoria sobre la Construcción de Puerto Berrío a Barbosa* (Nueva York: Imprenta de Hallet y Breen, 1872), pp. 2-6; see also Cisneros, "Canal de Panamá," *La Industria* (Bogotá), July 12, 1883, 169; Letter from William E. Curtis to United States Consul Thomas Dawson, Caracas, January 18, 1885, in *Consular Despatches-Barranquilla*, 6 Vols., II.

experience, it is quite possible to deduce that Latin capitalists are already investing in their homelands in some disguised form. If such were the case, the reform movement of structural and institution entities in Latin America could be proved to be more critically necessary. Cisneros' success in Colombia is a strong endorsement of the thesis that joint cooperation of native and foreign capital is the most effective method of industrializing Latin America.

In Colombia everyone of Cisneros' enterprises was followed by praise and criticism. But in every case Cisneros was able to survive; he never left anything unanswered. Perhaps the most redeeming proof of his honesty was his ability to answer his accusers specifically and intelligently. Undoubtedly his educational, social and political background prepared him to cope with intrigues, envy and competition. He combined the best of Yankee ingenuity, the ruthlessness of a Vanderbilt or a Carnegie, and the finesse of a Spanish nobleman. A man without these assets would have met nothing but utter failure. From the beginning of his stay in Colombia, Cisneros was careful to cultivate the friendship of individuals who would serve the cause of his projects. The Colombian historian, Miguel Aguilera, perceptively remarks:

Cisneros seemed to be more of a diplomatic negotiator than a contractor to draw places closer together with railroad cars. And it is exactly that wisdom and knack for handling men from whom he gained much of the acceptance and good will, which opened many of the doors of our society for him.<sup>104</sup>

An analysis of his work in Colombia has many features analogous to modern imperialism: in order to make his projects a reality, Cisneros not only had to face technological difficulties, but also had to fight institutional, political and socio-economic barriers. Quite often he was used as a scapegoat or as a means to criticize the government or sponsors of his projects. The empresario, very well aware of these intrigues, wrote in 1878 to the Secretary of the Treasury and Public Improvements regarding the opposition to the Cauca Railway:

The impatience that different social elements of the nation experience, knowing the true state of present public improvements in the territory of the Republic, is a very powerful stimulant for all the gossip which has circulated within and outside the state [Cauca] against the Cauca railroad by the enemies of the actual national government, who have suddenly converted themselves into enemies of this project, when only

<sup>104</sup> Miguel Aguilera, "Las Huellas de Cisneros en Antioquia," *El Colombiano Literario* (Medellín), August 8, 1965, 1.

yesterday they called it a redeeming undertaking, and publicly, as well as privately, defended it.<sup>105</sup>

This statement could be generalized and applied with a high degree of accuracy to the reaction to his other ventures.

In present times, it is more or less customary to brand American and European capitalists as imperialists and ruthless exploiters of Latin America. But if such one-sided supposition pretends to defend more accurately the cause of justice, it should be remembered that Latin Americans themselves have been victims of identical characterizations. Cisneros, whose enterprises were more directed to the economic mobilization of Colombia than to the mere search for profits, was continuously portrayed by his critics as an unscrupulous foreigner. His Latin charm and profound knowledge of the native culture and traditions were not enough to immunize him against detractors.

Cisneros achieved wealth in Colombia; like many Americans in the late nineteenth century, to a great extent he rose "from rags to riches." Up to the time when Cisneros arrived in Colombia, he had been a failure economically because he had played a secondary role in situations where he might have gained executive experience in his profession since leaving Cuba. In fact, he was almost penniless. Cisneros did do a great many things for Colombia, but at the same time Colombia made Cisneros. There he gained wealth, fame, and prestige.<sup>106</sup> But his swift ascension of the economic ladder had awakened envy among his enemies, who as early as 1888 had vowed to make him a pauper.<sup>107</sup>

Politics and financial instability were the major deterrents in the progress of Cisneros' enterprises. He could have directed the republic to a greater degree of success, but in each case he was thwarted by overwhelming circumstances which were beyond his control. In an effort to survive, the Cuban empresario publicly pretended to remain neutral in the different political struggles. In 1882, he stated:

....Never before or even now have I intervened in the political affairs of this nation [Colombia], and I do not ever plan to do so, no matter what my sympathies may be. My mission in this nation is

<sup>105</sup> *Memoria del Secretario de Hacienda y Fomento Dirigida al Presidente de la Unión para el Congreso de 1879* (Bogotá: Imprenta a Cargo de H. Andrade, 1879), p. 183.

<sup>106</sup> By 1886, Cisneros was already one of the richest and most influential men in Colombia. See United States Consul Victor Vifquain to Assistant Secretary of State James Porter, December 15, 1886, Report No. 27, Consular Despatches-Barranquilla, 6 Vols., III.

<sup>107</sup> Cisneros, *A Propósito de una Sentencia*, pp. 38-39.

to dedicate my energies to its material development and to be aloof from politics....<sup>108</sup>

Unofficially, Cisneros sided with the Conservatives and their movement, "The Regeneration." He received protection and contracts from them. In 1884, in a personal letter to Carlos Sáenz he stated:

Confidentially, I am going to inform you that our good friend, Ricardo Núñez does not wish to be defeated in the election for deputy to the assembly of Cundinamarca... You very well know how useful it would be for the Girardot project if don Ricardo could be a member of the assembly, for in his presence there he could serve to exert his influence directly on the President in favor of the Girardot railway.... Although I am and I must be devoid of anything related to politics, I cannot refrain myself this time from getting interested in this affair. Of course, whatever I tell you must remain within the intimacy of our friendship. My friend [Dámaso] Zapata will write you in more detail about this matter....<sup>109</sup>

Nationalist leaders from underdeveloped nations are willing to concede that they do not oppose foreign entrepreneurs who concentrate only upon the management of their business ventures. However, because of the inter-relationship which exists between economics and politics, it is almost unavoidable for foreign businessmen to get involved in the internal political affairs of a nation. It is natural for entrepreneurs like Cisneros to try to obtain the best possible concessions from the group in power, and no matter how many checks and balances are adopted, this problem will continue to be a major source of friction.

One could perhaps say that Cisneros was an imperialist, but if that is the case, he was an imperialist with a constructive philosophy. Like many of his Latin American contemporaries he was a romantic materialist—a man who was genuinely concerned with the economic growth of Colombia and Latin America. Each one of his projects was intended to advance the cause of progress and the economic independence of Latin America. With justice the Colombian publicist and statesman, Anibal Galindo, remarked after Cisneros' death: "He taught us the alphabet of progress."<sup>110</sup> When Cisneros came to Colombia the only railways in existence were the Panama Railway and the very small Bolívar Railway. The Cuban-American promoter was

<sup>108</sup> Letter from Francisco J. Cisneros to Eustaquio Palacios, Buenaventura, November 15, 1882, in *La Industria* (Bogotá), May 31, 1884, 491.

<sup>109</sup> Letter from Francisco J. Cisneros to Carlos Sáenz, Bogotá, August 22, 1884, in *Colección Miscelánea de Cisneros*.

<sup>110</sup> Letter from Anibal Galindo to Rafael M. Merchán, Bogotá, July 9, 1898, in *A la Memoria de Francisco Javier Cisneros 1836 a 1898*, edited by Merchán, p. 24.

called upon to do a job at which everyone else had failed. He had to contend with swamps, disease, the lack of a labor force, and with the continuous civil wars that plagued Colombia in the nineteenth century and damaged Colombia's credit throughout the world, compounding Cisneros' difficulties. He faced the task of building the railways, but finding the Colombians unprepared for the type of project he proposed, he himself often had to instruct workers in the techniques of railway construction, and at the same time provide adequate supervision for them. He wrote numerous manuals and pamphlets on railroad construction and management, which were later used by the Colombian government and Colombian railway companies as guidelines for continuing the railroad development of the nation. When Cisneros left Colombia, men whom he had influenced remained. Men like Carlos Sáenz, Dámaso Zapata, Luis Lleras, Vicente Lafurie, Modesto Garcés, Manuel Casablanca, and Clímaco Villa, who had worked under his leadership and command, continued railway construction and the administration of other transportation facilities in Colombia.

Although Cisneros did not complete most of his projects, he was the designer of the transportation system that until the 1930's carried coffee, the nation's chief export, outside the domestic market.<sup>111</sup> Coffee is now Colombia's biggest foreign exchange earner and Cisneros' blue-prints could not be anything less than a major lubricant in the development of the most vital pillar of the national economy.

It is almost impossible to exaggerate the vitality and zeal of the Cuban empresario-revolutionary. The doors of progress that he opened wherever he lived his dynamic life have bequeathed an enduring legacy. Regardless of the degree of immediate success which Cisneros found in Colombia, his entrepreneurial career was more than an economic experiment—it was the genesis of modern transportation, progress and industrialization in Colombia. An Anglo-American view of the contributions of Latin Americans to their own progress will seem to reveal a history of successes and failures with a strong inclination for the latter. However, within the context of Latin American indigenous growth the failures have strong matching successes.

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<sup>111</sup> Cisneros, *Report and Documents on the Bolívar Railway* (London: Edward and Jones, 1887), p. 22. See also: D. S. Bernhart, "Colombian Transport and the Reforms of 1931: An Evaluation," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, XXXVIII (February, 1958), pp. 1-24.