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PROBLEM OF  
INTER-OCEANIC COMMUNICATION  
BY WAY  
OF THE AMERICAN ISTHMUS.

PROPOSED UNIQUE SOLUTION,  
1866—1888.

BY  
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SYNOPSIS OF MR. ANTHONY DE GOGORZA'S PAMPHLET OFFERED TO  
THE A. G. S., BUT NOT READY FOR PUBLICATION.

The object of this memorandum is :

1st. To vindicate in all its bearings the exactness and fairness of my survey—and to record where Nature itself has *located the "strait"* and marked the place for an inter-oceanic canal.

2d. To explain how my proposed route was reconnoitred—and next officially disregarded.

3rd. To expose the means resorted to, in 1876 and 1880, for attributing to me another and utterly impracticable route, and thereby misleading the learned societies and the public.

4th. And as a sequel thereto, the erroneous information deliberately laid in 1883 before the Senate, in answer to an official query.

In part I.—“*Magna est veritas et prævalebil*”—I attribute the failure of modern explorers : 1st., to their

having always looked for the narrowest crossing ; just as if a leader should choose the narrowest and deepest bed of a river for his troops to ford. 2d., to their having all neglected to consult in the archives of Spain the maps and reports of those who had conquered and held the country for more than three centuries.

I insist upon the fact, that I considered it my first duty to make a thorough search, and that I copied numerous charts and reports, the list of which I give, and from which I unearthed the "*secret of the strait*"—and was enabled to plan and conduct my survey with every requisite element to make it a success.

That next, in January, 1866, I entrusted the technical work to Mr. Louis Lacharme, whose fitness I had tested for many years in the wilds of South America and California ; who spoke the language of the country, knew how to make friends of the Indians, was broken to the climate and to the hardships of the forest, and was in every way, like his few picked companions, up to the task before him.

They were provided with a full set of suitable tools, from Bunten's mercury barometers, Charles's gradiometer, Throgmorton's surveyor's compass, large aneroid barometer, etc., down to sounding-lines, abundant new gold coin, and presents for the Indian Chiefs, such as never reach the hands of traders.

The survey was carried over up the *Tuyra* and *Paya* rivers to the divide, 190 feet above sea level, and down the *Cacarica* river toward the Atrato ; bearings and distances being mapped every 10 minutes, and the altitudes at each stop 1, 2 or 3 times a day.

The results were set down in a short practical report,

accompanied with a detailed map and *original field book*, and a duly acknowledged statement under oath.

I proceeded *first* to Washington, where I submitted the aforesaid papers to a group of influential members of Congress,\* who, on the report of their Engineer (Mr. Edwin Johnson of Middletown, Conn.), that the "tracing for the purpose of a canal was *superior to any hitherto presented*"; and on the advice of the chief officers of the coast survey, resolved to meet the expenses of a resurvey: and therefore obtained from the *Navy Department* the help of U. S. vessels, &c., &c. But when we were already in Panama, and the gunboat *Saco* (Commander Wilson) had gone to bring my former surveyor to join the party, the Congressmen's agent, under the Panama R. R. Co's. influence, left suddenly for New York, and thus and then wrecked the operation.

I then went to Europe, published my report and map, and submitted them to the critical remarks of the most competent men I could find—receiving in every country the same hearty approval that I had, at the start, met with in Washington.

I was even able to incorporate in Paris an "*international company*," with shares of *five thousand dollars each*, to which many an American of rank and wealth subscribed. A preparatory meeting was presided over December 20, 1869, by Gen. N. P. Banks; but the proceedings were brought to a close by the announcement of the U. S. actual official survey January 10th, 1870.

President Grant himself showed his deep interest in

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\* Sen. Sprague, Gen. Benj. Butler, Oakes Ames, Capt. Patterson for Fred. Billings, J. A. Raynor, E. Hoyt, C. K. Garrison, W. E. Dodge, J. H. Griswold, M. Ketchum.

the matter, by requesting Gen. N. P. Banks to hand him my maps and documents for the use of the U.S. expedition.

At Bogotá, in a lecture before the President of the Republic, the Archbishop, the Foreign Envoys and many other prominent persons, I affirmed the existence of a former free communication between the oceans through the valley of the Tuyra; and my conclusion, that in this direction lay the "*to be or not to be*" of a canal, was unanimously accepted.

Again, the distinguished U.S. Envoy at Paris, the late Hon. Elijah Washburn, who knew that I was an American born citizen,\* kindly backed with his commendation a letter of mine to President, Gen. Grant, praying for his protection to a *private American concern* to hold the most liberal right of way for a canal across the Darien Isthmus, that I had just obtained from the Colombian Government.

By far the most significant and flattering approval was, however, that of the International Geographical Congress held in Antwerp, in which many of the more eminent geographers, professors and scientists of *all nations* took part, either in person or by letter.

Of the Americans personally present it suffices to name the Emperor of Brazil and Mr. Francis A. Stout, the latter representing the American Geographical Society; and the names of Prof. Agassiz and Com. Maury were also on the list.

After discussion of the question: "*Which is the more favorable place for the opening of the Inter-oceanic*

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\*My father came to America in 1793, took out his letters of citizenship, Aug. 2, 1796, and married in New York. I myself, as one of the early successful miners in California, and an American, was appointed to represent the State at the Paris Exhibition.



*Canal across the American Isthmus?*" the British Adml. Ommaney, as President of the section of cosmography, navigation and commerce, brought the verdict in favor of Mr. Anthony de Gogorza's *project across the Darien*; upon which the following resolution was *unanimously* adopted: "*The congress recommends the work of the above-named savant to the consideration of the great maritime powers, and of all the learned societies*" (p. 362, 1st vol. of proceedings; and my map of survey, p. 323).

I have no pretensions to the title of "*savant.*" But I have pledged my good name to the sincerity of my survey, and under no circumstances can I permit any one, and least of all an officer of my own country on duty, to put it in jeopardy without an energetic protest and rectification.

Further, in Harper's New Monthly Magazine for Nov., 1873, under the title of the "*Secret of the Strait,*" a writer whom I do not know copies the summing up of my report, and is led to the positive conclusion (p. 812) that "*both oceans mingled their waters as late as the pliocene period.*"

Finally, Dr. Maak, geologist of the United States Expedition, fully confirms (*p. 167 of the official report*) my theory "*of a complete separation of two distinct cordilleras, between which, up to the later tertiary period, both oceans freely mingled their waters.*"

I add that a few thousand dollars and 4 or 5 days of easy work would cover a resurvey from the confluence of the Paya and the Tuyra, and across to the upper landing on the Cacarica, to prove that I have *pointed out the only right place*: and the revival of my grant would be a pure matter of form, since I never made it over

and it has never been withdrawn, either legally or administratively—neither so notified to me.

I now copy from a leading Journal: “The *Darien Canal can be cut and must be cut!* It is wanted by the American people as the unconstructed link of our coastwise transit, and the needed complement of our great ocean domestic trade; and is therefore a peculiarly American enterprise.”

If this be true—I conclude—what more? With intervening lagunes 30 feet deep, and the confluence of the Cacarica and the Atrato 12 feet above the Atlantic, just about the mean *overrise* of the Pacific's tide! and the most magnificent harbors at both termini—what more is needed to mark and *record* forever the *place* where to reopen the old channel, and to solve the *great problem*, by making the *American Strait* the natural separation of the two Americas?

Part II.—“*Scripta manent*”—refers to Com. Selfridge's reconnoissance of my route, published in New York, with map drawn for the occasion by Com. Lull; and to the all-important fact of a messenger sent over from Paya January 13th, 1871, by Com. Selfridge with dispatches for the Secretary of the Navy, and letters to the United States Consul at Panama, “announcing *his discovery* of a route for the Canal, with ground favorable on both sides of the divide”—which great news was then published all over the world.\*

On January 18th, the commander returned on board the *Guard*; but before embarking on February 7th,

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\**N. Y. Herald*, March 1st, 1871, from its *local* correspondent—published February 10th in *Bogotá*—and in San Francisco, Cal., Philadelphia, Havre, Paris, London, etc., etc.—all over the world, in fact.



in the *Nipsic*, which, by the above cited letter, he had requested the United States Consul at Panama to order *at once* to the mouth of the Atrato—he sent Master Couden to run a line of levels along the Paranchita towards the Cué (that this might be made to appear, *when needed*, as Gogorza's route), and instructed Master Sullivan to make a regular survey of the Paya route, which he had himself reconnoitred.

Next, I criticize the *official report* given to the public *only four years later*; a report which, in flat contradiction of the precedent information, states on the same date and from the same place of Paya, January 13th, that "the ground being very broken, Com. Selfridge abandons *this* route to run up the *Cué* river," and on the 18th, from on board his vessel, confirms his resolution of "adopting the Paranchita as the line of future operations *instead of the Cacarica*;" thus and then plainly *disregarding* my route by Paya with its 190 feet divide, *for his own plan*, to meet Mr. Couden on the *Cué* at an altitude of 763½ feet.

As to the survey Master Sullivan was ordered to make of the already trodden path to Paya, it appears *officially* to be a hide-and-seek arrangement between both masters; ending with the amazing statement of their "*having been unable to reach the place*—undoubtedly the lowest in the cordillera, that Com. Selfridge crossed in his way to Paya;" and the document closes with the assertion "that there remains no doubt of the inadaptability of the Darien for a Canal—except by the Napipi route (which is no part of Darien)!"

I conclude, for my part, that in spite of the inconsistency of this report, and the avowal that my route had not



been surveyed, I must do the Commander the justice to remark that he abstained at least from maliciously charging upon me the choice of the Paranchita and Cué route.

In Part III.—“*Is fecit cui prodest*”—I deal plainly with R. Adml. Ammen's communication of 1876 to the American Geographical Society, printed in 1880, in Philadelphia, in a pamphlet under the title of the *Inter-oceanic canal question*, but of which I could not obtain a copy until the present year.

I show the R. Adml.'s hastiness of language in branding as *adventurers* many honorable members of the Second International Geographical Congress, of 1875, held in Paris, who felt that Com. Selfridge's Darien survey amounted to *but little*; and the way in which he contradicts himself, when, after emphatically praising the work of the officers that he had appointed,—he denounces, in so many words, that very same “Com. Selfridge's reports on the Napipi route as of pure invention, without himself or any of his party having ever been on the ground.”\*

Next, I express myself indignant when the R. Adml. attributes to me the route by the Cué—a river not even mentioned in my memorandum nor in my maps of 1868 and 1870—and when he says, in words nothing less than offensive, that “the line run in examination of this supposed route established the fact that Lacharme and Gogorza were pretenders,” etc., etc.

How could a line planned by Selfridge, and surveyed by Couden, make a pretender of Gogorza? If called upon to explain such allegations, the R. Adml. could not

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\* Pages 55, 71 and 76.

bring forward a single honest argument in their support. Meanwhile, the credit given to his official position did hurt a legitimate undertaking; so that impartial minds may well inquire, "*What can have been his motive?*" and weigh *his responsibility* in the premises.

Again, in a virulent article inserted in the N. A. Review for February, 1880—R. Adml. Ammen says that "in April, 1866, a Mr. Gogorza sought his acquaintance."

To this I answer by the copy of a letter from a Capt. Daniel Ammen, dated Navy Yard, Washington, November 13th, 1865, seeking information which I willingly gave by return mail from Panama, December 12th, 1865.

He says further that on presentation of my pamphlet in the fall of 1876 by the Secretary of State, he pointed out by the height "given to the mouth of the river Paya, that what was asserted as a fact was a mere fallacy."

Well, the height given by me to the mouth of the Paya, in 1866, was 145 feet (as acknowledged by Com. Selfridge, p. 35 of his official report)—and the United States Engineers gave 144 feet in 1871—one foot difference on a run of six days and above 60 miles!

To the other improper and rather personal remarks, I have to say that the fallacy lies not with me, but with the Rear Admiral, who is decidedly adrift in regard to the subjects of which he means to write.

Part IV. "*Seek and ye shall find,*" May 2d, 1883. In compliance with the Senate's resolution, the Secretary of the Navy communicates the *information collected by the Bureau of Navigation* (of which R. Adml. Ammen was then Superintendent) about the problem of inter-oceanic communication by way of the American Isthmus.

This information fills an extensive book containing 249 quarto pages and numerous maps.

It begins with the discovery of America and touches many subjects, though it omits some interesting facts pointing to the strait, and distorts some others; it criticises M. de Humboldt and sings the praises of Rear Admiral Ammen; invents an upheaval theory; has some botanical description which is erroneous; and indulges also in Darwinism.

But the compiler, who is quite profuse in his references to Tehuantepec, Nicaragua, Chiriqui, Panama, etc., says, p. 70, that "*a brief reference only will be made to the project of Gogorza.*" He then describes *exactly* the line followed by my surveyor "up the Tuyra and Paya rivers, across the divide 190 feet—and down the Cacarica towards the Atrato."

The sixteen following pages and maps are devoted to a description of lines drawn from 1520 down to our days: and when my line is fairly rubbed out of the reader's mind, the compiler describes likewise exactly the "*line planned by Com. Selfridge, from the Atlantic up the Atrato and Paranchita, and from the Pacific up the Tuyra and the Cué; the parties meeting at a point of the divide above 800 feet high. The object of the survey was to prove the utter impracticability of the route.*" And then he concludes: "*The result of this survey settled the project of Gogorza.*"

Is it necessary to point out once more, how disingenuous it is to describe as mine an utterly impracticable route confessedly planned by the Rear-Admiral's chief officer? Or need it be shown how disrespectful and how inconsistent it is to affirm *in an official report* to

the U. S. Senate, that a line *via* the Paranchita and the Cué settles my project for a line *via* the Cacarica and the Paya?

Without further comment, I contend that the *U. S. Inter-oceanic Commission*, of which the Rear-Admiral was a member, was misled, as the U. S. Senate also was misled in this matter; and that the decision arrived at by the Commission is therefore *disqualified and null*. Further, if Master Sullivan could not find the much-beaten track to Paya to which he had been ordered, how did the report from there, March 19th, reach London "of an elevation of divide not over 150 feet, and hopes to find a lower point in the dividing ridge"?

It is my hope that a man will be found in the United States Senate who, for the honor of the country, will call for an inquiry, by which many other strange things, indeed, may be revealed.

*"Seek and ye shall find."*

ANTHONY DE GOGORZA.

