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HIST 530 *British Caribbean and Colonial America*

Week 3 Discussion: Peer Response

Context: After reading the Abbe Raynal's *History of the Two Indies (Book 14)*, the class discussed his commentary regarding the mainland colonies and the Caribbean, specifically Jamaica, and the potential for rebellion. It was suggested by a peer that what Raynal described indicated a sense of foreshadowing and predictions regarding the coming of the war for Independence. The following is my response to that post:

My thoughts about Raynal's powers of prediction would be that it may be less miraculous than we might guess. The original was published in 1770, and tension had been building in the colonies for some time in the wake of the French and Indian War. We're also not too far off from the outbreak of violence later that year in Boston and the Revolution's beginning in Massachusetts. There were some in the English parliament that supported some of the American claims regarding taxation and greater autonomy.

Raynal's assessment may have been more about "wishful thinking" than a prediction, perhaps. Being influenced by the Enlightenment and as a frequent critique of colonialism, in general, might betray a future in which he saw an end to the practice and one more aligned to those enlightened ideals about "consent of the governed" et al.

But I did notice one other thing. This edition is from 1784 and there are several references to dates that are well beyond the initial publication in 1770. In book 14, pgs. 87 and 88, there are references to 1771, June 1774 and mentions that in 1775 "St. George was reduced to ashes by dreadful fires." Still further, it describes trade revenues in 1776 at "74,400,457 livres" in book 3 (it's in the book 16 file though?), page 533. I don't know much about how book publishing works and how new editions are updated, but perhaps this is less about foreshadowing and more about reflection after-the-fact?

It is also possible that I may sound like a crazy person and have missed some obvious fact somewhere.