

# Venezuelan State Policy Towards Motilón Indians: From Isolation to First Contact

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In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Motilón Indians, who inhabited the westernmost state of Zulia in Venezuela, fiercely resisted outside encroachment. Motilones, which included several indigenous groups inhabiting the area of Perijá and the Colon District within the Maracaibo Basin, confronted a diverse group of outsiders, including oil prospectors and Capuchin missionaries. State policy towards the Motilones was contradictory and inconsistent. On the one hand, the authorities welcomed oil investment and allowed missionary efforts to proceed. Venezuelan leaders saw the government as a harbinger of civilization, bringing prosperity and other material benefits to backward indigenous peoples. In this sense, they echoed calls by oil companies and missionaries, intent upon opening up Motilón areas to increased settlement. However, though Venezuelan politicians were certainly racist and never questioned the centrality of the civilizing narrative or of reducing the Indians to settled life, political leaders expressed concern regarding abuses of indigenous peoples. In addition, the state was wary about conceding excessive autonomy to missionaries and oil companies. From a political and economic standpoint, Zulia was an important region in Venezuela, with a long history of secessionist sentiment. Venezuelan regimes, whether military or democratic, attempted to assert political control over missionary and oil company activity in Indian areas, while alerting them that the government was a player in remote jungle areas.

Though Motilones fiercely resisted outsiders in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they were no strangers to violent conflict. As early as 1691 (during the colonial period), Capuchin priests, determined to convert the Motilones, were sent by the Spanish king to Maracaibo. Within 25 years, these priests managed to establish commu-

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nities amongst the Motilones. In an echo of future 20<sup>th</sup> century developments, Capuchin efforts were supported by the sheer military force of the Spanish monarchy. In 1733, a powerful Spanish force captured 26 Motilones; it is unclear what befell the Indians. Having endured warfare and imprisonment at the hands of the Spaniards, the Motilones attacked the town of Maracaibo itself in 1765, but were met by counterattacking missionaries and colonists. In 1767, a Spanish expeditionary force was sent into Motilón territory. After a couple of months the expedition returned in triumph with 27 Motilón prisoners. Though most of them perished within a few days, one young child survived. He was placed under the care of the Maracaibo's treasurer, José Sebastián Guillén. Subsequently baptized, the child came to be known as "The Interpreter." In 1772, another expedition, led by Guillén, succeeded in forging peaceful ties with the Motilones, probably due to the assistance of "the interpreter." Following the death of Guillén, the Capuchins took over the responsibility of pacifying the Indians. From 1776 to 1792, the Capuchins founded a dozen new communities for the Motilones, settling some 1,500 Indians in the new villages. However, many Motilones remained in the jungle and would continue to vex landholders and oil prospectors throughout the Gómez era. The Capuchin strategy of relocating Indians into settled communities proved highly successful at reducing the level of hostility: battles between Motilones and whites ceased for the next 50 years. During the war of independence against Spain, however, the Capuchins came under increasing pressure. The Capuchins, who were viewed as the "King's men," were forced to leave Venezuela in 1818, Indian missions were dissolved and no new missionaries were sent out from Spain.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, writes Levine, "what little property or influence the church possessed was taken away in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by secularizing liberal regimes. Entering the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Church had few dioceses, very limited numbers of clergy, and no schools, while being subject to overwhelming state control in all areas."<sup>2</sup> It is not clear what befell the Motilones following the departure of the missionaries. However, Neglia and Olson write that after 1821, once the Capuchins were out of the picture, Motilón lands were taken over by land-hungry settlers and the Indians were forced to flee to the mountains.<sup>3</sup>

From the colonial period up to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, then, the chief enemies confronting the Motilones were the military, Capuchin priests and landowners. After 1908, although landowners continued to represent a threat, they were joined by new and powerful actors. Opening up Motilón areas to settlement was in keeping with the overall aims of the Gómez administration. A military general and native of the Andean state of Táchira, Gómez seized power in 1908 in a U.S.-backed coup. Over the next 25 years, he maintained tyrannical control over Venezuela by establishing family members, fellow *Tachirenses*, and army

officers in key political positions.<sup>4</sup> By imposing a brutal centralized regime, Gómez was able to do away with internal civil war and defeat regional warlords called *caudillos*, who had plagued Venezuelan political life since independence. Having secured internal peace, Gómez also set out to repair relations with the great powers, which had opposed Gómez's dictatorial predecessor, Cipriano Castro. Castro, who had reneged on paying foreign investors making claims against Venezuela for damages suffered in the country's civil wars, paid dearly when Great Britain, Germany, and Italy blockaded Venezuela in December, 1902.<sup>5</sup> Gómez knew that his political future hinged on paying off Venezuela's foreign debt. In an effort to appease European and American investors and thus avoid future intervention, Gómez offered attractive financial terms to foreign investors.<sup>6</sup> In 1922, with the La Rosa oil blow-out on the eastern bank of Lake Maracaibo,<sup>7</sup> foreign oil companies swarmed into the state of Zulia, eventually turning Venezuela into one of the world's foremost petroleum exporters.<sup>8</sup> Most importantly, growing oil wealth after 1922 transformed the Gómez state and allowed the government to expand its bureaucracy and military, as well as enabling it to funnel money into road building projects. Bringing isolated regions of the country under control served an economic purpose, but also a political one. In the event of rebellion or revolutions sponsored by *caudillos*, Gómez could deploy troops more rapidly along the newly-built highways. However, maintaining growing technical and military bureaucracies would prove costly. In Ellner's view, "Gómez's success in centralizing political and military structures depended on his deriving enough revenue from the oil industry to finance the expanded bureaucracy and new projects."<sup>9</sup> While the state benefited handsomely from oil development, Gómez had other motives. Family members and local henchmen installed by the dictator in Zulia state government personally benefited from oil investments, as they were able to conclude valuable land deals with the companies. Thus, far from seeking to limit oil investment in isolated areas, both Gómez and his political subordinates sought to open up the country to foreign competition, not only for political and economic reasons, but also due to opportunistic motives of their own.

Though the La Rosa blow-out represented an important watershed in the history of the oil industry in Venezuela, oil exploration had already been going on for some time. When the Colon Development Company, a subsidiary of Royal Dutch Shell, commenced oil exploration in the Colon District, the Motilón Indians were placed under ever greater pressure.<sup>10</sup> Because of the depredations of the Motilón Indians, companies had to maintain an around-the-clock armed guard around field camps and drilling machinery. In 1914, the Colon Development Company drilled its first well along the Oro River.<sup>11</sup> On one expedition, prospectors looking for oil were accompanied by a large company of 50 peons.

In seeking to penetrate Motilón Indian country, oil prospectors were aided by the Venezuelan government. As one oil pioneer put it, “we had for arms 12 Mauser military rifles from the government. Every man had either a revolver or a rifle.” If Zulia state officials had any concerns about the potential for violence, there is no indication of this. Far from seeking to halt expeditions, the authorities seem to have encouraged the companies. Needless to say, the Indians were not in a position to lobby the government. The Motilonos were illiterate, lived in isolated regions, and were divided into separate tribes. It is possible that Venezuelans were more antagonistic towards the Indians than foreigners. According to one account, when the peons “saw something which they took to be Indians [they] began to shoot. Some of the men rushed out from camp and started shooting in every direction.”<sup>12</sup> On another occasion, oil prospectors discovered a Motilón house, but the Colon Development Company was forced to make a harrowing escape in canoes along river rapids when Indians appeared. The oilmen shot back, hitting at least twelve men. One oilman commented: “I do not like the idea of destroying a whole community of men, women and children. But this would be the only thing to do unless peace is made...If oil is found up the Lora [River], peaceful relations with the Indians would be worth several hundred thousand dollars to the company.”<sup>13</sup>

Even as the Gómez authorities allowed the oil companies to proceed in Motilón areas, the regime also took steps to hasten missionary activity. According to Ewell, during the first years of his rule, Gómez relied for support not only on the United States and the economic oligarchy, but also on the Catholic Church. In contrast to the anticlerical regimes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Gómez encouraged religious education.<sup>14</sup> In addition, after 1917, anti-Communist terror gripped the church, which defended Gómez as a figure who would safeguard the established order.<sup>15</sup> Gómez gave the Capuchins the right to resume their missionary work. In 1914, a La Guaira Capuchin bishop led an expedition to the Motilón homeland, establishing peaceful contact with some Motilonos and founding mission stations.<sup>16</sup> Overall, Gómez encouraged the Church and supported missionary work to a greater extent than his predecessors. In 1923 four new bishoprics were created, and the amount of prebends increased.<sup>17</sup> Under the 1915 Law of Missions, the Federal Executive reserved the right to oversee personnel working in missions and have the last word regarding the actual location of the seat of the mission. The state also reserved the right to oversee housing construction and the founding of towns. Furthermore, the missionaries were obliged to teach Spanish. Under Article 3, the missionary government within a given district would be authorized to maintain order amongst the Indians. The missionary authorities had the authority to enforce laws and request federal intervention if the situation warranted it. Article 5 provided for the creation of Vicariates or

directorships. These vicariates would report directly to the Ministry of Interior Relations, submit annual reports and administer the mission in accordance with the approved budget provided by the Federal Executive.<sup>18</sup> According to Watters, Pedro Arcaya, the Secretary of the Interior in 1915, was an enthusiastic promoter of missionary work.<sup>19</sup> Despite this high level support, other authors point to dissension within the government *vis-à-vis* church policy. According to Oropeza, in 1915, when the Missionary Law was about to be passed, one deputy in Congress remarked that he would prefer all Indians to die rather than letting missionaries return to Venezuela. Moreover, in Congress anti-clerical forces tried to impede the restoration of missions.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the passage of the Law of Missions, the first missions were not established in Venezuela until 1922, thereafter providing spiritual and material aid to the Indians, as well as schooling and some limited protection against land-hungry colonists or other intruders. One author has written, "we may say relative protection, because it is not possible that the missions, with limited personnel and resources, exercise benevolent influence and protective vigilance in such vast territories, where communication is difficult and costly." In 1921, bylaws were added to the original Mission Law, stating that "primary instruction in Spanish will be obligatory, and in no case shall whippings be applied nor painful treatment." Under Article 15 of the new provisions, agricultural and industrial teaching was made obligatory and Indians were to be fairly rewarded for their work. Under Article 16, the vicars or directors were to make sure that the arrival of outsiders, whether for exploratory purposes, study, or commerce, would not interfere with missionary work. Interestingly enough, missionaries were assigned a vigilant role, but no mention is made of actually prohibiting outsiders from entering Indian lands.<sup>21</sup> Despite these advances, it could not be said that the missionaries were in a desirable position within Zulia, or for that matter within the country as a whole. In the 1930s, Watters noted, missionary funds were inadequate and personnel "sadly deficient, particularly in the interior." Government support for the church was meager: in 1930, the appropriation for it was only 442,568 bolívares, approximately \$90,000. Furthermore, "on account of its loss of social power, the church receives, it is believed, only slight and uncertain support through voluntary contributions from the faithful." Despite the new legislation, Gómez only admitted foreign priests with reluctance. Foreigners, according to Watters, were viewed with suspicion as they were not as obedient as native priests.<sup>22</sup>

In 1915, some Motilones living along the Apon and Negro Rivers began to establish gradual, peaceful contact with outsiders.<sup>23</sup> It is unclear whether the Capuchins considered entering into a strategic alliance with the oil companies at this early stage. G. W. Murray, President of the Colon Development

Company, wrote personally to President Gómez concerning Motilones living within the Colon district. Murray remarked: "...these Indians have always been considered completely savage and hostile." However, Murray was highly critical of local Venezuelans, who hunted the Motilones "like animals." The oil executive explained to Gómez that since oil exploration had commenced along the Oro River, the company had sought to establish peaceful contact with the Motilones in an effort to civilize them. Murray then proceeded to give an interesting and illuminating report of his men's recently completed expedition along the unexplored Tomás River in Motilón territory. During the expedition, Colon Development Company prospectors were careful to leave gifts as a sign of good faith. Murray argued that while it was necessary to take precautions and be armed at all times, it was not in Venezuela's best interest to provoke the Motilones. "I believe," remarked Murray, "that the campaign adopted by the company... will be welcome to you, as a small contribution to your high patriotic goals; and it would be desirable that we enjoy the cooperation of the local authorities in the sense that no arms shall ever be used against the indigenous population."<sup>24</sup> Here, Murray was probably alluding to local residents' attacks against the Motilón Indians which had been going on for some time.<sup>25</sup> At first glance, Murray's humanitarian appeal to the military authorities to protect Indians might seem misplaced. However, Murray was probably aware that the regime had already initiated some positive measures to protect Indians from abuses. In 1912, the Minister of Interior had ordered the Zulia State President to free all Goajira Indians from slavery.<sup>26</sup>

Following his exchange of correspondence with Gómez, Murray met with General José María García, the Zulia State President,<sup>27</sup> a Táchira general and Gómez's relative. García, who had taken advantage of family connections to become a rich businessman, and who was also Gómez's business partner, had investments both within Venezuela and abroad.<sup>28</sup> Murray also lobbied Pedro Arcaya, the Minister of the Interior. Arcaya, a prominent intellectual from the State of Falcón, served not only in the Ministry of Interior, but also as Attorney General and Venezuelan Ambassador to the United States during the 1920s and 30s. Arcaya wrote works concerning Venezuelan history and served as Gómez's personal assistant.<sup>29</sup> He believed that Venezuela's tropical environment encouraged crime, and that the only way to deal with this problem was to encourage strong central rule.<sup>30</sup> The Minister of the Interior formed part of an important group called "the doctors," prominent members of the civil elite who surrounded Gómez and who relied upon positivist notions to justify Gómez's tyranny. According to Urbaneja, the *gomecista* doctors believed that climate, geography, and unique racial and historical characteristics made Venezuelan society prone to anarchy and civil war. After a century of political disorder and traumatic civil

wars, which stood in the way of progress, the country needed to instill a durable and long-lasting peace. *Gomecismo* could overcome Venezuela's historic legacy by constructing highways, encouraging economic development, and promoting foreign immigration.<sup>31</sup>

Though the details of Murray's discussions with Arcaya and García are unclear, the oil executive remarked to Gómez that his negotiations with the two had proven productive *vis-à-vis* the Motilón issue. Both government figures came from different backgrounds, however García and Arcaya had economic and political reasons to be sympathetic to the oil executive's pleas. In the event, Murray was encouraged when the Zulia state authorities, in accordance with the desires of the Minister of Interior, agreed to form a commission which would deter any aggression committed against the Indians. It is unclear from Murray's correspondence, however, how the government proposed to halt the attacks by land colonists. If the oil company executive was aware of the logistical difficulties involved in policing such a vast jungle area, he made no mention of it. In his note to Gómez, Murray sounded an optimistic note, claiming that the situation had improved with the Motilones and that during a recent visit to a Motilón village, a Colon Development Company search party had spotted a few empty cans, pieces of wire and a hatchet. The items, stated Murray, had been taken from company fields. However, though the Indians had stolen the items, they had not assaulted oil company personnel in order to acquire them. Whether the anecdote was based on truth or not, Murray seems to have used it as a means of gaining Gómez's sympathy. The Motilones, concluded the oil manager, displayed "a rare intelligence for a native people." Once peace had been achieved and the company moved into native lands, "the result will undoubtedly be beneficial not only for the Colon District, which will be able to rely on a useful population for the development of... work, but also for Venezuela generally, because an obstacle to progress will have been removed."<sup>32</sup> What is interesting to note is that in this instance the government apparently took the side of the companies, and not that of local landowners intent upon Indian extermination. Though it was far from clear that the oil companies would be a more benign presence than landowners in Motilón areas, they were at least given a sound hearing. Gómez's policy tends to hint at the growing political and economic clout of the oil industry and his desire to maintain amicable relations.

Even as Murray and the Colon Development Company negotiated with the Venezuelan authorities, establishing an oil infrastructure continued apace. Indians had to contend not only with armed prospectors but also with growing contamination from open earth oil sumps and dwindling hunting grounds. Under legislation governing the Colon Development Company's concession area, the company had the right to do as they liked in woods found on wild and public

lands covered by the concession for its operations.<sup>33</sup> Under the Law of Water and Forests, the company formally had to apply for a permit to cut timber within an area defined in the application. The Colon Development Company obtained such a timber permit for wild lands near “La Paloma,” “El Cubo,” and “Las Cruces.” Government reports do not state how much forest was cleared by the company, however the state did not seem to be concerned with the scope of such tree cutting and permits could be renewed each year and awarded without cost.<sup>34</sup> Having secured its concession through a combination of armed force and successful legal maneuverings, the company was free to create the necessary infrastructure to begin oil development within its concession. A narrow-gauge railroad was cut through the jungle. The new railroad allowed for transportation from the river to the Cubo and Las Cruces camps.<sup>35</sup> In the Tarra field, an eight-km tramway was laid from a landing spot in the Tarra River to the camp at El Cubo near the site of the first oil well.<sup>36</sup> In order to complete construction of the tramway, a large amount of clearing was necessary, as part of the ground to be covered was swamp while other parts were extremely hilly.<sup>37</sup>

With the discovery in 1922 of huge oil deposits on the east bank of Lake Maracaibo, the number of oil prospectors in Zulia skyrocketed as Standard Oil rushed to join Royal Dutch Shell. The growing American community in Maracaibo considered the Motilones an obstacle. One English language paper, the *Tropical Sun*, remarked, “it would be convenient to suppress the Motilón Indians by attacking them with asphyxiating gas or explosive grenades.”<sup>38</sup> Although there are no documented cases of large scale artillery attacks on the Motilón Indians, Father de Armellada, a Capuchin priest who later played a pivotal role in contacting groups of Motilones, claimed that

It was said by some *sotto voce* and others even admitted publicly that in the Colombian region [of Perijá] the...national army organized raids under the slogan of: there is no other way. And it is also said...that in the same region the Motilones were bombed by airplanes. The same thing has been repeated to me by many people living within the Venezuelan region of Perijá and Colon.<sup>39</sup>

De Armellada continued: “...secret punitive expeditions” were organized against the Motilones.<sup>40</sup> Some reports suggest a fair degree of cooperation between the government and the oil companies in organizing armed expeditions. In 1922, a representative working for the Perijá Exploration Company wrote to Luis Bastidas, the Secretary General of the State of Zulia. The company official remarked: “We urgently need to send an expedition of engineers and geologists to the Aricuasisa River in the Perijá district.” Unfortunately, added the company



man, "...the fear felt amongst peons towards the Indians has made it very difficult for us to obtain peons for the expedition, unless we arm them adequately."

On previous occasions, the President of the State of Zulia, Santos Matute Gómez, had personally lent the company 20 Mausers. These guns were used for other expeditions which had headed up the Santa Ana and Perijá Rivers.<sup>41</sup> Matute Gómez, a half brother of Juan Vicente, had a reputation for cruelty<sup>42</sup> and had taken over the reins of state government in 1918.<sup>43</sup> It was unlikely that Matute Gómez would have restricted the Perijá Exploration Company in Indian country. Evidence suggests that the Zulia State President personally benefited from oil exploration. In 1922, for example, he sold the Venezuela Oil Concessions 1,000 hectares of land in North Tasajeras, in the municipality of Lagunillas. For Matute Gómez, this proved a lucrative transaction: he made 500,000 Bs on the sale. As oil companies arrived in the area, the price of land rose; in the same month Matute Gómez rented two other plots in Lagunillas for Bs 1,200 each per month.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, in the 1920s, President Gómez himself held lands in the oil zone, acquiring a substantial property of some seven million square meters in Santa Rita from a fellow general in 1918.<sup>45</sup> In 1926, one of Gómez's generals ceded part of a royalty in an oil concession to the dictator.<sup>46</sup> Perhaps the most glaring example of Gómez's conflict of interests was the bogus national oil company, *Compañía Venezolana de Petróleo* (CVP), that was set up in 1923. CVP's capital was supplied by the Ministry of Development itself, the state entity in charge of monitoring the oil industry. Concessionaires of the CVP included Gómez himself and Santos Matute Gómez.<sup>47</sup> Lieuwen has written that sales of the national reserve parcels produced large profits:

...for when producing wells came in on the concessionaires' parcels the value of the adjacent parcels was greatly enhanced. Under the law, these national reserves belonged to the national oil company... This [company] however, sold these parcels at low prices exclusively to Gómez's friends, who in turn sold them at high prices to the oil companies. In this manner the dictator and his cronies bilked the treasury of additional millions.<sup>48</sup>

Just as the Perijá Exploration Company received full support from Matute Gómez, it also got backing from local *jefes civiles*. During the Gómez era, *jefes civiles* were in charge of public order at the local level, and oversaw the organizing of the *gomecista* police. In many cases the *jefes civiles* were appointed by Gómez himself.<sup>49</sup> In Machiques, to the north of the Colon District, a geologist working with the Perijá Exploration Company spoke with the local *jefe civil*. The latter informed the oilman that the Secretary of the State of Zulia had the

legal authority to allow the expedition to bring arms into Motilón territory, in this case ten rifles and 300 bullets. The expedition would surrender the guns upon return to Machiques. "Of course," added the geologist, "the company as well as myself will act responsibly and carry out proper use of the arms."<sup>50</sup> It is not clear what the state authorities considered "proper use" of the arms or whether there was any precise criteria for engagement with the Motilones. This correspondence, then, suggests that federal and state authorities gave the oil companies wide authority to act according to their own discretion. It should also be noted, however, that the Gómez regime had a vested interest in safeguarding foreigners' lives: 20 years previously, the Great Powers had blockaded Venezuela in defense of their own citizens' interests.<sup>51</sup>

In addition to the Perijá Exploration Company, other foreign corporations also lobbied Gómez's authorities. In January, 1926, the Venezuela Gulf Company wrote personally to Zulia state authorities about the Motilón problem. The problem for Gulf, explained David Kowalski, a Gulf representative, was that the corporation was in the midst of organizing a geological expedition to the Oro River, but that the isolated region was inhabited by wild Indians. Kowalski argued that the company needed to protect itself. He explained that the planned expedition was sizable, consisting of 30 Venezuelan workers. It would be led by Samuel Riter, who had been given permission from the Ministry of the Interior to possess arms, and A.E. Gerzendanner. Gulf sought to bring four Colt .45 revolvers, two Colt .38 caliber revolvers, two Colt .32-.20 caliber revolvers, 16 S&W .38 caliber revolvers, 14 .12 caliber shot guns, five Winchester .30-.30 caliber rifles, and one Mauser .30 caliber rifle. After requesting permission to bring this veritable arsenal into Motilón territory, Kowalski explained that the weapons would not be provided to the men until the expedition arrived in Indian country. The weapons, he added, would be used only in cases of "imminent danger" and by direct order of Riter or Gerzendanner.<sup>52</sup> The government authorized Gulf's 1926 expeditions to the Perijá Cordillera.<sup>53</sup> Other companies sent similar petitions to the authorities. For example, in March, 1926, Angel Gaviño, a representative of the Lago Petroleum Corporation, wrote the state government that his company sought to organize a geological expedition to South Perijá.<sup>54</sup> The state government saw little wrong with the proposal, and promptly authorized the expedition to proceed.<sup>55</sup>

Not surprisingly, the government's policy of allowing oil companies to enter Motilón territory led to greater violence. Alexander Sloan, the U.S. Consul in Maracaibo, noted that a state of open warfare existed in Motilón territory:

During the last year the Indian attacks have increased in frequency and bitterness. On several occasions lately boat crews have

abandoned their tows, because they were attacked so fiercely and so persistently by the Motilonos [sic] that they considered it necessary to get away as speedily as possible.

Even more alarming, “attacks on trains have been made only within recent months, and in these attacks the Indians have shown a persistence that they never exhibited before.” It is unclear whether there were disagreements between American and British oil companies over the Motilón question. Had Murray continued the Colon Development Company’s attempts to peacefully contact the Motilonos after writing to President Gómez in 1915? In his report, Sloan painted a mixed picture. The company had indeed left trinkets and other items for the Indians and overall, “the policy of the companies has been one of conciliation and the men have been ordered to shoot only on direct provocation.” This policy, however, was not entirely successful. Men working for the company were scared:

...the constant danger of attack, the constant watchfulness necessary every time a party left the camp limits, has so worked on the nerves of the employees that they go armed at all times and shoot at the slightest movement in the vegetation. In the Indian country there is now a condition of warfare at all times.

Sloan then argued that the companies had only benevolent intentions in mind, but circumstances obliged them to take precautions. Even more alarming was the fact that “during the last dry season the jungle caught fire in many places. Thousands of acres around the drilling camp of the Standard of Venezuela on the Rio Lora were burned by fires which blackened the country for miles on every side.” Sloan speculated that the Indians could have interpreted the setting of these fires as deliberate and as a further attempt to flush them out of the jungle.

According to Sloan, the companies sought to limit, not to increase, military presence in Motilón areas. Such a position suggests that the companies may have shared Murray’s earlier concerns about provoking Indians through excessive use of force. Sloan added: “...the government in granting concessions guarantees that the company operating the concession will not be disturbed in the development of its property. The companies operating in the Indian country could therefore request and obtain from the government a force of soldiers to guard their camps and to aid in repulsing attacks.” However, they did not seek assistance because

...the company officials seemingly do not have much confidence in the shooting ability of the Venezuelan soldiers, nor do they

believe that they would be of much aid in guarding the camps. They do know that any soldiers sent them would have to be fed at company expense, and from past experience they have gained the impression that soldiers in a camp cause more disturbance than their aid is worth.

Thus, instead of turning to the government, the companies relied on themselves, clearing spaces around the camps and enlarging them "to such an extent that the Indians must come into the open if they desire to shoot." In addition, the companies hired more guards and installed searchlights. Unfortunately, such measures did not shield oilmen traveling along trails, nor would the new steps help protect workers traveling in boats, as evidenced by an incident in which a Standard drilling superintendent was killed on the Lora River. A Motilón arrow, noted Sloan, "penetrated his back just beneath the shoulder blade, passed through his chest and was stuck so firmly in the rib on the other side that it could be loosened only after repeated twistings and the exertion of the utmost strength the operating doctor possessed." In another incident, a peon who was clearing a trail was shot through the abdomen.<sup>56</sup> Later reports suggest that violence continued well into the 1930s.<sup>57</sup>

The idea of oil companies operating with virtual impunity in remote areas of Zulia was unnerving to the Gómez regime. When disturbing rumors reached President Gómez that the oil companies were financing a secessionist movement in Zulia, he apparently decided that a stronger man was needed for the job of State President.<sup>58</sup> Whereas Pérez Soto had pushed for discriminatory and racist restrictions on Caribbean black workers who sought work on Venezuelan oilfields,<sup>59</sup> the new state president clearly had a social conscience. Pérez Soto was a frequent critic of the oil companies, and wrote personally to Gómez concerning environmental and safety abuses. In addition, in 1926 state authorities in Zulia prohibited the kidnapping, selling, and smuggling of Indians. According to a memo drafted by the Zulia Secretary General of Government, slavery and trafficking in Indians was a true embarrassment for the state. Apparently, the excesses of the head commissary in the remote northern town of Castilletes had come to the attention of state officials. The commissary had been involved in the trafficking of Goagira Indians.<sup>60</sup> While it is unclear whether this legislation had been promoted by a specific political figure, it seems at least possible that the new enlightened policy was initiated by Pérez Soto.<sup>61</sup> In accordance with the new law dealing with Indians, the official from Castilletes was dismissed.<sup>62</sup> Despite these positive developments, the Zulia Secretary General of Government did not mention the Motilones in his note. If Pérez Soto or his subordinates in Maracaibo were specifically concerned about the Motilón question, there is no

evidence that they acted to restrict settlers. On the contrary, Pérez Soto took the side of Machiques farmers who, he argued, should have the right to arm and protect themselves from Motilón attack.<sup>63</sup> In 1932, President Gómez agreed to Pérez Soto's request.<sup>64</sup> Were Pérez Soto and Gómez aware that by arming the colonists, they were contradicting the earlier policy of 1915, lobbied for by the Colon Development Company? If the commission in charge of deterring attacks on Motilón areas ever played a significant role on the ground, there is no mention of this. In sum, the Gómez administration occasionally expressed concern for the welfare of the Indians and even passed decrees, but the regime was not interested in consistently enforcing any kind of protection for the Indians. Though Gómez was wary of the oil companies and appointed Pérez Soto to oversee their activities, he was not willing to halt their march into the jungle. Had he done so, he might have jeopardized the government's relationship to the companies, as well as the illicit gains accrued by the Gómez clan. Similarly, at different times the Gómez administration moved to restrict colonists and missionaries, but failed to act decisively to protect the Motilonos from either. Though the Gómez regime was apprehensive about powerful groups acting somewhat independently in remote areas of the country, the administration was committed to opening up these regions for settlement.

Gómez died in 1935, and Eleazar López Contreras, Gómez's Minister of War, succeeded to the presidency. On many levels, the political position of López after 1935 was delicate. On the one hand, according to one observer, the regime was "charged with an enthusiasm, born of relief at the ending of the Gómez tyranny." Venezuelans, having endured brutal *gomecista* rule, displayed an instinctive revulsion against fascism and dictatorship.<sup>65</sup> Resentment of the oil companies burst forth in January, 1936, when after the death of Gómez protests, looting and vandalism erupted. The violence hit the oil camps and represented the most serious disturbances the country had experienced in a quarter of a century.<sup>66</sup> In late 1936, this growing resentment became explosive. Following the death of Gómez, "oil workers in the Maracaibo Basin initiated a strike that shook Venezuelan society to its foundations." Demanding recognition of their unions and improvements in pay and working conditions, the workers challenged the hegemony of some of the largest oil companies in the world for an unprecedented 42 days. Exports of crude oil dropped by nearly half during the strike, and practically all exploration and drilling operations ground to a halt. Even worse from the point of view of the oil executives, Communist organizers had come to exercise a substantial degree of influence over the oil workers. Reacting with contempt, the companies refused to negotiate with any unions during the strike or to accept any of the workers' demands. For its part, the government harassed and jailed strikers. In January 1937, López decreed an end to the strike

and 20,000 workers were ordered back on the job. In a small concession, the government ordered a tiny raise in wages for the poorest paid oil workers. In January 1937, the workers interpreted the end result of their titanic effort as a failure.<sup>67</sup> Despite government repression during the 1936-37 strike, López did create a new Ministry of Labor and Communications, and under his administration a new labor law was drafted.<sup>68</sup> By 1941, the López era was drawing to an end. López chose Isafías Medina Angarita, the man who oil workers remembered for his role in putting down strikers in 1936-37, and who had earlier served as López's Minister of War.<sup>69</sup> Ironically, once in office Medina proved to be much more democratically inclined than his predecessor. During Medina's tenure in office, the government did not arrest a single political prisoner nor send a single Venezuelan into exile.<sup>70</sup> Medina formed his own government party,<sup>71</sup> but he also allowed most political parties to operate freely and legally. By the end of his term all political organizations, including the Communist party, were operating freely in the country.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, in contrast to the López administration, which had imposed press censorship in 1936,<sup>73</sup> Medina proclaimed freedom of the press.<sup>74</sup> Rómulo Betancourt united his political followers to found the nationalist Acción Democrática (AD) in September, 1941, which became the principal opposition party to the Medina government.<sup>75</sup>

With labor resentment growing in the oil zone, oil companies could ill afford to appear antagonistic towards the government. However, old guard company managers, such as the Creole Petroleum Corporation's Henry Linam, stood in the way of progress. As the British representative at the Ministry of Fuel and Power put it in 1942: "Mr. Linam...is a rough, tough, self-made American businessman, who, to borrow the phrase he would probably use himself, 'hates Roosevelt's guts,' is fanatically anti-New Deal, and is not *persona grata* either to the Venezuelan government or to the United States Ambassador at Caracas."<sup>76</sup> Linam antagonized senior figures in the Medina government such as Attorney General Manrique Pacanins,<sup>77</sup> a figure who had sought the oil companies' help in the drafting of a new oil law. "But," noted the British authorities, "instead of giving it to him, they had produced a counter-draft which was inspired solely by selfish ends...a fact which he [Pacanins] attributed primarily to the Standard Oil Company and Mr. Linam."<sup>78</sup> With the companies on the defensive, and with Creole in the midst of the furor over the Linam affair, Medina pressed his advantage. The President announced that a new petroleum law would include provisions for refining oil in Venezuela, and that Henry Linam was *persona non grata*. In a public effort to assert his nationalist oil policy, Medina made a celebrated visit to the State of Zulia. Venezuelan Communists, eager to cultivate a burgeoning alliance with the President, organized mass demonstrations in support of the regime. Medina allegedly made his Zulia tour at the behest of the

Communist-controlled oil union, the Unión Sindical Petrolera.<sup>79</sup> The Venezuelan president, eager to outflank rising AD nationalists, moved aggressively to push a new petroleum law, which was passed by Congress in March, 1943. The new law stipulated that the Venezuelan government should receive 50% of oil industry profits.<sup>80</sup> The law furthermore unified and updated previous oil legislation, the promotion of domestic refining, a broadening of government influence and powers, and the end of oil company customs exemption privileges.<sup>81</sup> In no mood for trouble, the U.S. State Department urged the companies to work together with the Medina administration.<sup>82</sup>

What is perhaps interesting to consider is that despite these momentous changes, neither López nor Medina seems to have departed substantially from the earlier Gómez policy towards the Indians. Though the oil companies were in a decidedly weaker position, the government did not move more rigorously to restrict outside encroachment on Motilón lands. In contrast to the earlier Gómez period, which had imposed press censorship, the 1940s witnessed the rise of a combative and left-leaning press. One newspaper, *¡Aquí Está!*, published by the Communist party, was quite critical of oil company abuses in Zulia. However, though the paper frequently championed oil workers, there is no indication that the publishers took a similarly romantic view of the Motilones or pressured the authorities to rethink indigenous policy. In 1945, the paper alerted its readers to a violent incident in Puerto Tarra, in which a group of Motilones assaulted some fishermen.<sup>83</sup> Throughout 1945, the Motilones continued their attacks on Puerto Tarra; in March, an oil worker was attacked. “Fortunately,” noted the newspaper, “it appears that the Motilones had bad aim this time and the potential victim merely suffered some shock.” *¡Aquí Está!* then added: “It would appear that these men of the jungle have decided to try to checkmate the inhabitants of Puerto Tarra.”<sup>84</sup> *¡Aquí Está!* apparently chose not to analyze the Motilón question in depth, making do with periodically publishing articles about Indian attacks. The Motilón had no powerful allies in the press, so it was unlikely that the Venezuelan public would grow aware of their problem during the war years or press the regime on this issue.

However, a controversial new group, the Capuchins, would soon push the Motilón question back into the spotlight. While the extent of missionary activity after 1914 is not known, it is clear that under the energetic leadership of Cesareo de Armellada, a veteran missionary, efforts were intensified to contact the Motilones. A prolific author who had written about Venezuelan Indians, de Armellada had previous missionary experience working with the Pemone Indians in the Gran Sábana region and spoke various Indian dialects.<sup>85</sup> In 1944, de Armellada helped establish a Department of Anthropology at the La Salle Society of Natural Sciences. De Armellada’s support paved the way for the emergence

of anthropology as an academic discipline in Venezuela.<sup>86</sup> De Armellada took up his work in Zulia at a particularly sensitive time: since the fall of Gómez, Catholics had been at odds with rising nationalist political forces in the country. The Venezuelan Federation of Students, known by its Spanish acronym FEV, experienced a serious split in May, 1936, when Rafael Caldera led a number of Catholic students out of a meeting which was debating secularization of the educational system and other anticlerical measures. Caldera's group, in contrast, advocated social reform but deplored Communism, atheism, and attacks on the Catholic Church. Even more controversial from the point of view of Venezuelan leftists, Caldera and his followers also supported the government of General Franco in Spain. Caldera and his supporters formed a Catholic students' group named Unión Nacional Estudiantil (UNE). Two Catholic political associations later emerged, the Acción Electoral (1938) and the Acción Nacional (1942).<sup>87</sup>

Thus, de Armellada's arrival in Zulia corresponded with a period of political ferment in the country, during which Catholics had grown more assertive as a political force. However, notes Ewell, "the Catholic political groups could hardly be considered full-fledged political actors at this point, since their program appeared to consist primarily of opposing AD or PCV [Communist] initiatives."<sup>88</sup> In 1943, the Capuchin priest launched an expedition to explore the Negro, Yasa, and Tukuko Rivers. The trip, which departed from the town of Machiques,<sup>89</sup> was comprised of a number of Capuchin missionaries, the *Jefe Civil* of Perijá, and the medical director of Machiques. The Zulia State President, Benito Roncajolo, set aside 3,500.00 bolívares for the trip. Apparently, the expedition did not succeed in penetrating deeply into Motilón territory. Indians inhabiting the Tukuku River, de Armellada observed, were peaceful and had commercial links with Motilonos living deeper in the jungle.<sup>90</sup> Clearly, Zulia state officials had an ideological investment in the Capuchin civilizing effort. Roncajolo, noting that the Tukuku Indians were suffering from severe penury and deprivation, decreed that the Indians should be baptized in accordance with Catholic rites. He further pronounced that agricultural tools should be supplied to the Indians, as well as "adornments for their women," and "toys for their children." Roncajolo also ordered that the Indians be supplied with cows, goats, sheep, horses, mules, and pigs.<sup>91</sup> According to Juan Besson, a Zulia historian, the local authorities had other motivations. The Indians stood in the way of progress and the authorities were interested in connecting an important highway linking the state of Táchira with the northern port of Maracaibo.<sup>92</sup>

What was the impact of peaceful submission on missionary efforts? In a telling admission, de Armellada confessed that the Tukukus, who, unlike Motilón tribes further away, resisted violently, had not been rewarded for their pacifism. "The Indians," he remarked, "have been displaced from their lands, located on



level terrain, which is suitable for agriculture and ranching. The Indians had been obliged to leave their lands and emigrate to the peaks of mountainous country, where they live confined.” If de Armellada was concerned, however, that a similar fate might befall the Motilones if their lands were settled, he made no mention of it. Though de Armellada criticized the government for defending the right of the Indians to their lands,<sup>93</sup> he could hardly complain about the lack of state support. In 1944, the Federal Executive concluded an agreement with the Capuchins to establish the Guajira Perijá Mission, encompassing the missionary center of Tukuku.<sup>94</sup> Under the agreement, the missionaries were made responsible for Indian housing, as well as medical and schooling facilities.<sup>95</sup> Though the Federal Executive could appoint special inspectors who would report to the Ministry of Interior concerning the state of the missions and how to improve them,<sup>96</sup> missionaries were given policing authority at the local level. Moreover, missionaries were to encourage the material prosperity of the Indians by increasing agriculture and ranching.<sup>97</sup> What is interesting about the agreement is its striking similarity to the 1915 Law of Missions passed by the Gómez state, which ceded wide autonomy to the missionaries while reserving the government’s right to intervene in mission matters.

If de Armellada was disappointed that the 1944 agreement did not go far enough in ceding government control over the missions, he would shortly face an even less promising political environment. When Medina attempted to appoint a presidential successor at the end of his term, AD protested. Young, forward-looking officers feared a possible return of López and old *gomecistas* on the right (which, they feared, would impede the advancement of their careers), as well as Medina’s communist allies on the left who had been advocating for workers in such publications as *¡Aquí Está!*. The officers, along with their AD allies, participated in a military conspiracy to remove Medina from power.<sup>98</sup> According to Cameró, AD was known as an anticlerical party with a certain communist cast. Many of its leaders were well versed in socialist ideas, which they had acquired while in university, jail, or exile. From the outset, AD opposed the “importation” of foreign clergy, who were considered ultra rightwing, retrograde and identified with Franco.<sup>99</sup> In line with its anti-Catholic bent, AD president Rómulo Betancourt launched a campaign for state control of education. Such bold moves on the part of the government sparked Catholic resentment, and gave rise to the formation of a Catholic political party, COPEI, in 1946.<sup>100</sup> The rise of AD had implications for missionary policy. Under an October, 1947 resolution passed by the Ministry of the Interior, anthropologist Miguel Acosta Saignes and others were appointed to form a commission that would study the situation of the Indian. The commission would investigate the demography, culture, and necessities of Venezuela’s indigenous peoples.<sup>101</sup>

Such political developments would oblige de Armellada to tread carefully in Zulia. In an effort to contact the Motilones and head off attacks on the Indians by armed settlers, de Armellada sought support from the oil companies in the form of over flights of Indian villages. The over flights were accompanied by a propaganda effort launched by de Armellada, who sought to present his ideological justification for the expeditions. De Armellada promoted the Motilón effort through *Tópicos Shell*, the Shell company magazine. Apparently, de Armellada had been prompted to launch his PR offensive by journalists in Maracaibo, who had displayed a pessimistic view of Capuchin over flights and the overall effectiveness of Capuchin missionary efforts.<sup>102</sup> Such critical coverage suggests a departure from earlier accounts of the Motilones in *¡Aquí Está!* It is not clear whether the Venezuelan press was sympathetic to the Motilones or simply found de Armellada's approach to the Indian problem imperious and arrogant. What is significant, however, is that some attention had been given to the Motilón problem, and the wider public was growing aware of it. De Armellada's piece in *Tópicos Shell* was noteworthy for its absence of religious argument, while emphasizing legalistic and economic justifications. De Armellada quoted the First Article of the Venezuelan Law of Missions, which stressed the importance of integrating indigenous tribes into Venezuelan national life. In addition, he claimed that he enjoyed support from state authorities. "The Motilones," added de Armellada, "do not live in fixed settlements, nor are they incorporated into our civilization." This was a dilemma, as a vast area belonging to Venezuela was unpopulated and outside the reach of settled agriculture. De Armellada then argued that savage Indian tribes did not deserve to live in an underdeveloped, ignorant and miserable condition. The Capuchins, de Armellada assured Shell readers, would respect Motilón language and customs, "as long as these are not barbarous." It would be necessary to dissuade the Motilones from their customs, not violently but through persuasion. De Armellada then addressed another argument: "Many fear," he stated, "that if the Motilones become civilized, they will become enslaved and robbed of their lands." Needless to say, de Armellada did not state who his critics were, but his defensive tone suggests that public opposition to Capuchin efforts was mounting. Anyone believing the claims of these unspecified critics, de Armellada stated categorically, was "supinely ignorant," as the Indians would be taught how to protect themselves and could count on Venezuelan law to guarantee their lands.<sup>103</sup>

Meanwhile, events were quickly unfolding, forcing de Armellada's hand. Four missionary workers stationed in Tukuku were ambushed and killed by Indians. If de Armellada did not act promptly to increase missionary efforts, farmers threatened to adopt "other means" to resolve the thorny Indian question. The farmers hoped that the priest and some of his peaceful Indian allies

could convince the Motilones to cease their attacks. Father Armellada explained the difficulty of organizing such a trip, since no one, including the neighboring Yukpa tribe, spoke Motilón. According to de Armellada, the settlers then grew frustrated and organized a raid which resulted in the deaths of several Indians and the burning of a Motilón hut. In a later book, de Armellada claimed that he had urged local authorities to become involved in an effort to enforce a peaceful truce between Motilones and farmers.<sup>104</sup>

With little apparent support from the State on the one hand, and vengeful farmers prepared for action on the other, de Armellada considered lobbying the oil companies. In the late 1940s, petroleum corporations were ready to enter into a strategic alliance with the Capuchins. Though the AD government allowed oil companies to resist workers' demands for more influence in the industry and for greater worker security and benefits, the regime imposed an exorbitant tax on company profits. Under the "50-50 principle," the companies would not be permitted to derive greater profits than the Venezuelan government. Faced with the possibility of expropriation, labor conflicts, and extreme nationalism, the oil companies, particularly the Creole Petroleum Corporation, encouraged a flexible relationship with the authorities.<sup>105</sup> Even as the companies faced a more precarious political situation, they also faced little success in achieving peaceful relations with the Indians. According to de Armellada, in the 1930s and early '40s the oil companies were able to encircle the Motilones in a tighter ring stretching over several hundred square kilometers. However, this had resulted in many deaths.<sup>106</sup> There is some evidence that the oil companies even resorted to aerial bombardment. One British diplomat noted that the Motilones hated strangers, and were "embittered" as a result of an attempt by an American company to bomb their settlements. The diplomat did not specify which company had been involved in the attacks, although it would seem at least possible that this was the Creole Petroleum Corporation, an American company which sought to open up Motilón territory to oil expansion, and which owned planes.<sup>107</sup> Traveling to Caracas, de Armellada met with Guillermo Zuloaga, head of the Creole Petroleum Corporation's geological department,<sup>108</sup> who was also an avid nature lover and ornithologist. It is not known what Zuloaga and de Armellada discussed at the meeting or if the Creole executive was aware of the bombing of Motilón areas. Ultimately, Zuloaga proved amenable to the Capuchin priest's plea for help.<sup>109</sup> In May, 1947, Creole provided de Armellada with a twin-engine flying boat. The Creole Petroleum Corporation was a powerful subsidiary of Standard Oil of New Jersey and was in a position to lend credibility and resources to the Capuchin priest.<sup>110</sup> Creole's head of public relations, Everett Bauman, recalled later that de Armellada came up with the idea of dropping bundles of gifts as well as his

own photograph from a plane. By dropping gifts to the Indians, de Armellada hoped, Motilones would later prove receptive to missionary efforts.<sup>111</sup>

With his newfound support, de Armellada organized an over flight of Motilón villages in an effort to establish peaceful relations. Accompanying de Armellada on the flight were Orangel Cruz, a representative of hacienda owners; E.E. Peake, general manager of Creole's Eastern Division; F.W. Johnson, head of Creole Eastern Division's geological department; B. Martin, geologist in charge of Creole exploration operations in the Motilón country; photographer Miguel León; Everett Bauman, of Creole's Public Relations department; and a number of others. Significantly, Elio Guijarro Luongo, a representative of the state of Zulia, was also on board.<sup>112</sup> Furthermore, according to de Armellada, the flight was funded by the oil companies and the national government. Though AD was avowedly more anti-Catholic than the Gómez dictatorship, government policy would seem to suggest continuity with earlier policies. Though the state authorities would not act to keep oil companies and missionaries out of indigenous areas, they would nevertheless seek to monitor events and maintain a presence.<sup>113</sup> Shortly after takeoff,<sup>114</sup> the May 20<sup>th</sup> expedition sighted from the air Motilón dwellings consisting of rudimentary thatched shelters. Noted *Caracas Journal*: "...the Indians were nowhere to be seen, having rushed to hide in the undergrowth, in alarm at the roar of the plane's motors." As tokens of good will, the plane dropped a number of parcels on the village containing cloth, salt, flour, hoes, needles, thread, and mirrors. The airplane was also careful to drop de Armellada's photo, "thus ensuring the missionary a gentle...welcome when he arrives accompanied by two other monks, into their [Motilón] territory."<sup>115</sup> Throughout 1947, the Capuchins continued their over flights of Motilón territory, dropping similar "bombs" of gifts and boxes.<sup>116</sup>

However, all was not well with the Capuchins. Financial support offered by the Ministry of Interior failed to materialize and the oil companies, perhaps being concerned about mounting attacks in the press and having doubts about de Armellada, also began to fall behind with their assistance. But the Capuchins persisted, later receiving support from the Ministry of Defense and local Maracaibo businessmen.<sup>117</sup> Fortunately for de Armellada, on the fifth flight, in December, 1947, Motilones no longer hid in the jungle but stepped outside their huts accompanied by their pet dogs.<sup>118</sup> Encouraged, de Armellada picked up the pace of the overhead flights, which ran weekly for the next three months. "The enthusiasm displayed by the Indians," noted de Armellada, "increased as much as ours." The Indians lost their fear, and Motilón children began to play with the parachutes attached to the boxed gifts. Observing that the Indians had responded favorably to their gifts, the Capuchins dropped pre-made clothes, large dolls, and even two goats. According to de Armellada, the Indians waved

donated Venezuelan flags in the air when missionary flights passed overhead.<sup>119</sup> Meanwhile, de Armellada made a plea in *Tópicos Shell* for more assistance. Anyone who considered himself a proper Christian had a “sacred duty” to support the effort. With the help of the Creole Petroleum Corporation, which drew up a map of Motilón areas based on aerial photographs, de Armellada was able to locate 14 Motilón huts along the Lora River and northwards.<sup>120</sup> With the aid of photography and mapping, de Armellada was able to locate 45 to 50 Motilón houses. Various families lived in each house, including numbers of individuals ranging from 20 to 50.<sup>121</sup> De Armellada’s successes paved the way for future missionary efforts in Motilón country, and by the early 1960s the Capuchins had established various missionary centers within Indian territory.<sup>122</sup> The missionary advance was accompanied by yet more intrusion by oil companies and landowners, and Motilones were displaced to nearby towns.<sup>123</sup>

In considering the plight of the Motilones, what is striking to consider is not the variation in state policy over time but its underlying similarities. Both nationalist and military leaders shared the view that Venezuela should progress economically and exploit the country’s natural resources. The Motilones, considered members of an inferior race, stood in the way of the country’s economic future and had to be turned into proper hard-working Venezuelans. Though both military and democratic regimes shared concerns about the expansion of oil company operations and missionary efforts in remote Indian country, and frequently acted to restrict or monitor their activities, they did not act decisively to defend the Motilones from outsiders. In effect, though successive governments warned missionaries and oil companies that they would have to adhere to the rule of law, in practice the authorities ceded control over remote areas. Moreover, at certain points the authorities actually encouraged or turned a blind eye to abuses by outsiders. The Motilones, lacking powerful allies in civil society or in the corridors of power, successfully resisted for long periods of time, but were eventually outflanked.

## NOTES

1. Andrés Kung, *Bruce Olson, Missionary or Colonizer?* (Chappaqua: Herald Books, 1977), 212, 213; Bruce Olson, Angelo Neglia, *Una raza bravía, Estudio socio-antropológico de los indios motilones*, (Bogotá: Librería Stella, 1974), 10.
2. Daniel Levine, “Democracy and the Church in Venezuela,” *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Feb. 1976), 3.
3. Kung, *Bruce Olson*, 212, 213; Bruce, Neglia, *Una raza bravía*, 10.
4. Edwin Lieuwen, *Venezuela* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 46.

5. Judith Ewell, *Venezuela: A Century of Change*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984), 40.
6. Ewell, *Venezuela: A Century of Change*, 57.
7. "Snuffing Out a Half-Million Dollar Blaze," *The Lamp*, August 1925, 26.
8. Ministerio de Fomento, Dirección General de Estadística, *Anuario estadístico de Venezuela, 1938* (Caracas: Lit y Tip de Especialidades, 1939) 136.
9. Steve Ellner, "Venezuelan Revisionist Political History," *LARR* 30, No. 2 (1995), 98.
10. *El Farol* (Caracas), "Historia del Petróleo," 5.
11. Luis Pacheco, "Anotaciones sobre la historia del petróleo en Venezuela," *Tópicos Shell*, April 1945, 3.
12. Ralph Arnold, George Macready, Thomas Barrington, *The First Big Oil Hunt: Venezuela, 1911-1916* (New York: Vantage Press, 1960), 276.
13. Macready, et al., *First Big Oil Hunt*, 299-302.
14. Ewell, *Venezuela: A Century of Change*, 52.
15. Emperatriz E. Arreaza Cameró, *La Iglesia: ¿Institución de dominación o liberación? (caso Venezuela) Ensayo exploratorio hacia una teoría crítica del control social* (Maracaibo: Universidad del Zulia, Instituto de Criminología, 1993) 154.
16. Kung, *Bruce Olson*, p 214, Olson, Neglia, *Una raza bravía*, 10.
17. Mary Watters, *A History of the Church in Venezuela, 1810-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1933), 218.
18. Walter Dupouy, "El indio en la legislación venezolana," Separata del No. 12 de *Tierra Firme* 1953, parte II, n.p.
19. Interestingly, as noted elsewhere Arcaya also espoused positivism and the need for Venezuela to overcome its chaotic past through rational and scientific economic development. At his insistence, the Gómez regime published a grammar of the dialect of the Guaraunos Indians in 1928. See Watters, *A History of the Church in Venezuela*, 216.
20. Hermann González Oropeza, *Iglesia y Estado en Venezuela, historia de su proceso* (Caracas: Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, 1997), 391.
21. Walter Dupouy, "El Indio en la legislación venezolana," Separata del No. 12 de *Tierra Firme* 1953, parte II, n.p.
22. Watters, *A History of the Church in Venezuela*, 217, 218, 219.
23. Miguel Schon Y, Pedro Jam L, "Los indios de Perijá," in *II Congreso de Ciencias Naturales y Afines, La región de Perijá y sus habitantes* (Caracas: Comité Ejecutivo, 1953), 26, 31, 32.
24. *Boletín del Archivo Histórico de Miraflores* (Caracas) [hereafter referred to as *BAHM*] Julio 1987-Junio 1988, año xxviii, Murray to Gómez, Caracas 5 Junio 1915, 143-145.
25. Ranches along the Negro River, which lay ten miles south of Machiques, were in a constant state of defense against the Motilonos during the initial wave of oil exploration in Zulia. As early as 1907, natives of Perijá had called upon authorities to undertake swift action against the invaders. In a note, regional authorities remarked that weapons had been supplied to local residents, implying that armed expeditions against the Indians might have occurred. See Macready, et. al., *First Big Oil Hunt*, 90, 262, 275, Rutilio Ortega, Johnny Alarcón, José Luis Monzant, et al., *Historia de Machiques de Perijá* (Maracaibo: Alcaldía y Consejo Municipal del Municipio de Machiques de Perijá, 1995), 284.

26. Ministerio de Justicia, *Fuero Indígena*, 264-5.
27. BAHM, Julio 1987-Junio 1988, Murray to Gómez, Caracas 16 Sept 1915, 146-147.
28. José Alberto Alcalde, *Juan Vicente Gómez y Eustoquio Gómez, Dos taitas chácharos, Crónica de dos primos dictadores* (Caracas: Vadell Hermanos Editores, 1997), 246.
29. Alcalde, *Juan Vicente Gómez y Eustoquio Gómez*, 220.
30. Cameró, *La Iglesia: ¿Institución de dominación o liberación?*, 155.
31. Diego Bautista Urbaneja, "El sistema político gomecista," in Manuel Caballero, Rosalba Méndez, Diego Urbaneja, et al., *Juan Vicente Gómez y su época* (Caracas: Monte yila Editores, 1988), 55, 56.
32. BAHM, Julio 1987-Junio 1988, Murray to Gómez, Caracas 16 Sept. 1915, 146-147.
33. Shell Archive [London, hereafter referred to as SA], *Tenth annual report of the CDC*, 37.
34. SA, *Tenth annual report of the CDC*, 38.
35. SA, GHC/VEN/D1/1/1-GHC/VEN/D2/1, *Eighth Annual Report of the CDC, Jan 1 1921 to Dec 31 1921*, XVII.
36. SA, *CDC, Report on the Year 1919*, 14.
37. SA, *CDC, Report on the Year 1919*, 15.
38. Renán Vega Cantor, *Obreros, colonos y motilones: una historia social de la Concesión Barco* (Bogotá: Fedepetrol, CISF, 1995), 49.
39. Cesareo de Armellada, *Los motilones, raza indómita desde el siglo XV al XX, 1499-1949* (Caracas: Tip Vargas SA, 1954), 40, 42. De Armellada did not state whether the bombing of the Venezuelan Perijá and Colon Districts was carried out by planes originating in Colombia or in Venezuela, nor did he elaborate as to who might have carried out the bombings, the Venezuelan government or the oil companies themselves.
40. De Armellada, *Los motilones, raza indómita*, 80.
41. Acervo Histórico del Estado Zulia [Maracaibo, hereafter referred to as AHZ], Tomo III, 1922, asuntos varios, Perijá Exploration Company (A Warren, illegible) to Luis I Bastidas, Secretario General del Estado Zulia, Maracaibo 16 March 1922.
42. Alcalde, *Juan Vicente Gómez y Eustoquio Gómez*, 253.
43. Pablo Emilio Fernández, *Gómez El Rehabilitador* (Caracas: J. Villegas, 1956), 337.
44. AHZ, Tomo III 1922, Registro Público, Actos registrados en la Oficina Subalterna de Registro durante el mes de mayo próximo pasado.
45. AHZ, Relación de las propiedades inmuebles del Gral. J.V. Gómez, ubicadas en jurisdicción del Estado Zulia a partir del año 1900 hasta el cuarto semestre del año 1935, Oficina Principal de Registro del Estado Zulia.
46. Crisálida Dupuy, *Propiedades del General Juan Vicente Gómez 1901-1935* (Caracas: Archivo Histórico Contraloría General de la República, 1983), 145.
47. Godofredo González, *La Revolución de Los Barrosos* (Caracas: Ediciones Centauro, 1987), 90-1.
48. Edwin Lieuwen, "Politics of Energy in Venezuela," in John D. Wirth (ed.), *Latin American Oil Companies and the Politics of Energy*, (Lincoln: University Nebraska Press, 1985), 195.
49. Lenin Bohorquez, *Pérez Soto y la rehabilitación en el Zulia 1926-1935* (Maracaibo: Magister Historia, Universidad del Zulia, Facultad de Humanidades, 1994), 86-87.

50. AHZ, Tomo III, 1922, asuntos varios, Perijá Exploration Company (A Warren, illegible) to Luis I Bastidas, Secretario General del Estado Zulia, Maracaibo, 16 March 1922.
51. Ewell, *Venezuela: A Century of Change*, 40.
52. AHZ, Tomo IV 1926, Compañías Petroleras. David B Kowalski to Presidente del Estado Zulia, 7 Jan. 1926, Maracaibo.
53. Ortega, Alarcón, Monzant, et al., *Historia de Machiques de Perijá*, 285.
54. AHZ, Tomo III 1926, Compañías Petroleras. Legal statement, Angel Gaviño, Maracaibo, 11 March 1926.
55. AHZ, Tomo III, 1926, Compañías Petroleras. Estado Zulia, Secretaría General, Sección de Política: Justicia, Maracaibo 13 Marzo 1926, legal statement, signed Secretario General de Gobierno.
56. NA, RG 59, 831.401/orig, Sloan to Sec State, June 30 1926.
57. In 1933, a government oil inspector at El Cubo wrote his superiors in Maracaibo that he needed firearms as he frequently traveled within dangerous areas within the Colon District. The inspector was concerned, as the Colon Development Company had registered five fatalities owing to Motilón attack, including four Indians and one staff member. Apparently, the situation at El Cubo continued to worsen, and a full four years later, in 1937, a subsequent oil government oil inspector in the region complained that the company had not offered him any arms to defend himself. Even worse, added the inspector, the Motilones had “reduced to ashes” an oil field along the Oro River. See Archivo Histórico Ministerio de Energía y Minas [Caracas, hereafter referred to as AHMEM], Ministerio de Fomento, Dirección de Hidrocarburos, Inspectoría Técnica de Hidrocarburos, Informes 1933-1932, José A Delgado Figueredo to Inspector Técnico, El Cubo, Sept 14 1933; Ministerio de Fomento, Inspectoría Técnica de Hidrocarburos, Correspondencia Maracaibo, informes varios 1937, Pabantuil Vílchez to Inspector Técnico de Hidrocarburos, El Cubo, 8 Agosto 1937.
58. McBeth, *Juan Vicente Gómez*, 143.
59. For example, see Ministerio de Fomento, *Memoria Estado Zulia 1927*, “Inmigración,” Segundo Trimestre 1926, 68.
60. Ministerio de Fomento, *Memoria Estado Zulia 1927* (Caracas: Editorial Sur América, 1928), “Trata de Indígenas,” Leonto Olivo to Jefe Civil Distrito Colon, Maracaibo, 8 Oct. 1926, 80.
61. National Archives, Washington DC [hereafter NA], 891.00/1299, Alexander Sloan to Secretary of State, Maracaibo, 5 June 1926.
62. Ministerio de Fomento, *Memoria Estado Zulia 1927*, “Trata de Indígenas,” Leonto Olivo to Jefe Civil Distrito Colon, Maracaibo, 8 Oct. 1926, 80. According to reports, however, slavery continued in the Colon District. A full 11 years later, the Caracas paper *El Heraldo* reported that *hacendados* in the area had kidnapped hundreds of Indians and forced them to work like animals. The paper noted that, “when anyone rebels, they stick him in a cell and give him one meal per day.” *El Heraldo*, 27 Junio 1936, 4, “Antena Nacional—La Desesperación de Nuestros Indios,” quoted in Luis Capriano Rodríguez, *Elementos para una historia del anti-comunismo en Venezuela, 1917-1937*, Tomo II, Trabajo Ascenso (Caracas: UCV, 1986), II, footnotes.



63. AHZ, documentos clasificados 1932, Indigenismo, permiso para que se armen los hacendados de Perijá, 9 Julio 1932. Vincencio Pérez Soto to Juan Vicente Gómez, Maracaibo, 9 Julio 1932.
64. AHZ, documentos clasificados 1932, Indigenismo, permiso para que se armen los hacendados de Perijá, 9 Julio 1932. Juan Vicente Gómez to Vincencio Pérez Soto, Miraflores, 11 Julio 1932.
65. Liddell Hart Center for Military Archives [London] University College London, Report by Colonel CG Vickers, V.C., on his mission to the British Communities in Certain American Countries and in Portugal, 37, 38.
66. Ewell, *Venezuela: A Century of Change*, 74.
67. Bergquist, *Labor In Latin America: Comparative Essays on Chile, Argentina, Venezuela and Colombia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), 230, 236, 240, Winfield Burggraaff, *The Venezuelan Armed Forces in Politics, 1935-1959* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1972), 38.
68. Ewell, *Venezuela: A Century of Change*, 75.
69. Steve Ellner, "The Venezuelan Left in the Era of the Popular Front, 1936-1945," *JLAS*, Vol 11, Issue 1 (May 1979), 173.
70. Burggraaff, *The Venezuelan Armed Forces in Politics*, 49.
71. Ewell, *Venezuela: A Century of Change*, 76.
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73. Ewell, *Venezuela: A Century of Change*, 81.
74. Burggraaff, *The Venezuelan Armed Forces in Politics*, 49.
75. Ewell, *Venezuela: A Century of Change*, 77.
76. Public Records Office (London) [hereafter referred to as PRO], FO 371/30743, A 9283 Starling, Ministry of Fuel and Power, to Mr Perowne, 7 October 1942.
77. PRO, FO 371/30743, Hopwood to Godber, 18 October 1942.
78. PRO, FO 371/30743, Godber to Hopwood, 19 October 1942.
79. Ellner, "The Venezuelan Left in the Era of the Popular Front," 174.
80. Ewell, *Venezuela: A Century of Change*, 77.
81. Ewell, *Venezuela: A Century of Change*, 68.
82. Ewell, *Venezuela: A Century of Change*, 77.
83. *¡Aquí Está!*, 24 Enero 1945, "Desde Motilonia, los motilones asaltan a un campesino en las inmediaciones de Puerto Tarra, mientras se dedicaba a la pesca en compañía de un jovencito", 4.
84. *¡Aquí Está!*, 28 Marzo 1945, "Información General de Motilonia, los motilones merodean por las inmediaciones de Puerto Tarra," 15.
85. *Caracas Journal*, "Creole Plane Flies to Motilones in Attempt to Make Peaceful Contact," May 30 1947, 1, 2.
86. Building on de Armellada's work, in 1947 Miguel Acosta Saignes, a Venezuelan anthropologist who had studied in Mexico, founded the Anthropology Department of the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters at the Central University of Venezuela. See Emanuele Amodio (ed.), *Historias de la antropología en Venezuela* (Maracaibo: Ediciones de la Dirección de Cultura, Universidad del Zulia, 1998), 166.
87. Ewell, *Venezuela: A Century of Change*, 91.

88. Ewell, *Venezuela: A Century of Change*, 91.
89. Schon, Jam, "Los indios de Perijá," 26, 31, 32.
90. Cesareo de Armellada, *La última expedición a la sierra de Perijá (del 26 de junio al 15 de julio de 1943), expedición organizada por el Ejecutivo del Edo Zulia durante la presidencia de Don Benito Roncajolo* (Maracaibo: Tip Jiménez, 1943), 28.
91. *Memoria Estado Zulia 1944* (Maracaibo: Oficina de Relaciones y Publicaciones, 1945), En pro de nuestros indígenas, Address of Benito Roncajolo, 12 July 1943, 179.
92. Federico Salas, Luis M Salas, *Prospecto de una importante vía de comunicación Carretera Machiques-Colon* (Caracas: Tip Vargas, 1941), 31, 35, 36.
93. De Armellada, *La última expedición*, 28.
94. Walter Dupouy, "El indio en la legislación venezolana".
95. Ministerio de Justicia, *Fuero Indígena*, 287-8.
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97. Ministerio de Justicia, *Fuero Indígena*, 289.
98. Ewell, *Venezuela: A Century of Change*, 94-5.
99. Cameró, *La Iglesia: ¿ Institución de dominación o liberación?*, 156, 157.
100. Ewell, *Venezuela: A Century of Change*, 91, 104.
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102. De Armellada, *Los motilones, raza indómita*, 81.
103. Cesareo de Armellada, "Actualidad del problema motilón," *Tópicos Shell*, Aug 1947, 17, 18.
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105. Ewell, *Venezuela: A Century of Change*, 101.
106. De Armellada, *Los motilones, raza indómita*, 42.
107. PRO, FO 924/441, LC 1196, 20 Feb 1946, "Report by Mr A. D. Francis on Visit to Maracaibo and Western Venezuela.
108. *Caracas Journal*, "Creole Plane Flies to Motilones in Attempt to Make Peaceful Contact," May 30 1947, 1, 2.
109. *Diccionario de Historia de Venezuela Vol 4* (Caracas: Fundación Polar 1997) "Guillermo Zuloaga," 355.
110. *Caracas Journal*, "Creole Plane Flies to Motilones," 1, 2.
111. Telephone interview with Everett Bauman, Tuesday July 29 2003.
112. *Caracas Journal*, "Creole Plane Flies to Motilones," May 30 1947, 1, 2.
113. De Armellada, *Los motilones, raza indómita* 80-1.
114. De Armellada, "El bombardeo pacífico," 3.
115. *Caracas Journal*, "Creole Plane Flies to Motilones," 1, 2.
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117. De Armellada, *Los motilones, raza indómita*, 81.
118. De Armellada, *Los motilones, raza indómita*, 61, 65. According to Everett Bauman, de Armellada succeeded in enlisting the support of the Venezuelan Air Force, which made 40 flights. Telephone interview with Everett Bauman, Tuesday July 29 2003.
119. De Armellada, *Los motilones, raza indómita*, 61, 65.

120. Cesareo de Armellada, "Actualidad del problema motilón," *Tópicos Shell* Jan 1948, 12, 13, 44.
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