GUNBOATS, CORRUPTION, AND CLAIMS: Foreign Intervention in Venezuela, 1899–1908

Brian S. McBeth

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To John Alfred, an indomitable spirit.

Contents

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Abbreviations

AHM	Archivo Histórico de Miraflores
AHMSGPRCP	Archivo Histórico de Miraflores, Secretaría General de la Presidencia, Correspondencia Presidencial
AMLR	Archivo de Manuel Landaeta Rosales
Asphalt Trust	The Asphalt Company of America, which subsequently became The General Asphalt Company
Asphalt Company	The General Asphalt Company
BAHM	Boletín del Archivo Histórico de Miraflores
BATT	Biblioteca de Autores y Temas Tachirenses
Bs.	bolivars
CAB	Cabinet Office
CO	Colonial Office
DDCS	Diario de Debate de la Cámara de Senado
DS	Department of State
FO	Foreign Office
FCC	French Cable Company
HAHR	Hispanic American Historical Review
HMSO	His Majesty's Stationery Office
MinRelExt	Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
MinRelInt	Ministerio de Relaciones Interiores
NY&B	New York & Bermudez Company

PP	Parliamentary Papers
SAJ	The South American Journal
UCV	Universidad Central deVenezuela
Warner-Quinlan	Warner-Quinlan Asphalt Company

Introduction

Four different Tachirense dictators ruled Venezuela from 1899 to 1945. These dictators traced their political birth to the invasion of the country by a small band of rebel exiles led by Cipriano Castro on May 23, 1899. Táchira at the time was a political and cultural backwater that appeared to have more in common with neighboring Colombia than with the rest of the country. Nevertheless, through a combination of luck and the exceptional political ability of one dictator in particular, Venezuela was ruled by these men from the mountains for almost half a century.

A series of internal and external political crises characterized Castro's government from 1899 to 1908. Any of these crises seemed capable of toppling him. The first major external crisis was with Colombia in 1901. Castro had a vision, inspired no doubt by Simón Bolívar, to work with other countries to form a grand Liberal alliance against the Conservatives. As part of this strategy, Castro backed General Rafael Uribe Uribe's bid to secure the Colombian presidency in 1901, supplying him with arms and forcing the sister republic to break off diplomatic relations with Venezuela. In December 1901, after confronting a number of minor internal political crises, Castro then faced the biggest threat to his regime. Castro's erstwhile friends, most of them Liberal *caudillos* who had been instrumental in getting him to the presidency in 1899, combined under the leadership of Manuel Antonio Matos to start the Revolución Libertadora. At one stage Matos controlled most of the country with the exception of Caracas, the capital city, and the Andean states. To compound the government's troubles in the middle of this revolution, Great Britain, Germany, and later Italy in-

stituted a "peaceful blockade" of Venezuela in December 1902 to get the government to honor the claims that various foreign nationals had pursued over a number of years. At the outset of the Libertadora revolution, Juan Vicente Gómez, the vice president and Castro's closest supporter and *compadre*, was named head of the expeditionary force that was assembled to crush the rebels. It was during this rebellion that Gómez showed his true military capacity, which saved the regime from the rebel forces. After several skirmishes and combats he was seriously wounded in the thigh during a battle in Carúpano on May 6, 1902, against Nicolás Rolando. After his recovery Gómez was appointed acting president; from July 5, 1902 to March 20, 1903 he dealt with the "peaceful blockade" and was instrumental in bringing much needed reinforcements of arms and ammunition to the besieged government troops of Castro at La Victoria, who eventually defeated the Matos army in central Venezuela. Gómez finally pacified the country on July 21, 1903, when he defeated the last bastion of rebels in Ciudad Bolívar under Nicolás Rolando. Gómez returned in triumph as a national hero to La Guaira on August 3 of that same year. From then on Gómez's military skill would go unquestioned, acknowledged by friend and foe alike, as the regime's ablest military man after Castro. Gómez's popularity soared for the first time since his arrival in Caracas and would stand him in good stead in the coming years. Although Gómez had dealt with the foreign trading houses in his native Táchira, it was in Caracas that he came into greater contact with foreigners and the representatives of foreign powers, especially during the "peaceful blockade." This was important because the Castro regime steadily alienated a number of foreign powers, leaving Gómez to pick up the pieces after he came to power in December 1908.

Castro's regime also had an immensely stifling effect on the economy of the country as Castro and his cronies awarded themselves all sorts of monopolies to line their pockets. This was also associated with Castro's policy of antagonizing foreign capital, which led eventually to the rupture of diplomatic relations between Venezuela and the United States, France, and the Netherlands. Many of the problems with the foreign powers were self-inflicted, brought on by Castro's greed and the government's need for funds. A number of foreign powers, especially the United States, France, and the Netherlands, placed a great deal of pressure on Castro to get him to be more conciliatory toward their nationals and their assets. Once this failed, the foreign powers were left with the choice of either taking the issue into their own hands or abandoning the fate of their nationals to Castro.

A great deal has been written about the Castro government and, in particular, the "peaceful blockade."[1] However, what is new in this book is our contention that the extreme behavior of certain foreign powers during the period in question was provoked by the actions and avarice of Castro, whose posturing has been wrongly interpreted as a sign of fervent nation-

alism. During this period the United States seriously considered intervening in the country, while the Netherlands' seizure of Venezuelan gunboats precipitated the political crisis that ultimately brought Gómez to power. The behavior of Castro is a painful but salutary reminder that it is often extremely difficult to bring to justice a ruler who does not play by recognized rules or who chooses to change the rules, especially if that country is large and difficult to subdue militarily.

This book looks at how Castro, an obscure politician from the backwater state of Táchira, reached power in 1899. It then examines the nature of the foreign claims on the country and the intervention that took place because of the ill-treatment of foreign capital and nationals. It looks in detail at the foreign companies that got into trouble with Castro because their contracts were subject to contradictory interpretation, while backing a revolutionary uprising that failed to achieve power. The reaction of the Venezuelan government, which at times was driven by corruption on the part of Castro, is detailed with special reference to the "peaceful blockade" and a number of other claims. Finally, the consequences for both parties are examined. The international repercussions of the Castro administration should not be underestimated. U.S. foreign policy, for example, was modified as a result of the "peaceful blockade" while the French and Dutch governments realized the limit of their power to influence events in far-flung places such as South America. The consequences for Castro were monumental as he lost the biggest prize of all. The political crisis that developed in Venezuela as a direct result of the foreign claims led to both the rupture of relations with the Netherlands, France, and the United States and the threat of intervention because of the appalling treatment of their nationals. The crisis culminated in the December 19, 1908, *coup d'etat* that brought Gómez to power. From then until his death in 1924, Castro remained an exile, mostly in Puerto Rico, forever dreaming of toppling his erstwhile friend. Meanwhile, Gómez ruled the country until his death on December 17, 1935.

NOTE

1. See for example: Velásquez, Ramón J., *La Caida del Liberalismo Amarillo. Tiempo y Drama de Antonio Paredes*, Caracas, Ediciones Venezuela, 1960; Sullivan, William M., "The Rise of Despotism in Venezuela: Cipriano Castro, 1899–1908," PhD. diss., The University of New Mexico, 1974; Herwig, Holger H., *Germany's Vision of Empire in Venezuela, 1871–1914*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1986; Hood, Miriam, *Diplomacia con Cañones, 1895–1905*, Caracas, Ediciones de la Presidencia, 1975; Picón Salas, Mariano, *Los Días de Cipriano Castro*, Caracas, Ediciones Garrido, 1953; Alarico Gómez, Carlos, *La Amarga Experiencia (El Bloqueo de 1902)*, Caracas, Ministerio de Educación, 1983; Brandt, Carlos, *Bajo la Tiranía de Cipriano Castro. Su Desgraciada Actitud durante el Bombardeo*

y el Bloqueo de 1902, Caracas, Editorial Elite, 1952; Gallegos Ortiz, Rafael, *La Historia Política de Venezuela, de Cipriano Castro a Pérez Jiménez*, Caracas, Imp. Universitaria, 1960; Gilmore, Robert, *Caudillism and Militarism in Venezuela, 1810–1910*, Athens, Ohio State University Press, 1964; Fenton, P. F., "Diplomatic Relations of the United States and Venezuela, 1880–1915," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 8:3 (August 1928) 330–57; and Platt, D. C. M., "The Allied Coercion of Venezuela 1902–03: A Reassessment," *Inter-American Economic Affairs* 15:4 (1962).

1

Táchira Comes of Age

At the end of the Wars of Independence from Spain, Táchira was administered from neighboring Mérida, only becoming a fully independent state under the 1864 constitution. A few years later this was reversed by the 1881 constitution, which grouped together the three Andean states of Táchira, Trujillo, and Mérida into one large state, the "Gran Estado de los Andes," with the old states becoming *secciones* or dependencies.

The mainstay of the Tachirense economy was coffee, which was first grown in 1798 but only assumed importance in the economic structure of the region and the country during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The reason for its slow development was the state's chronic small labor pool. The growing of coffee is labor intensive because the beans have to be handpicked at harvest time. Other regions of the country, such as the central and eastern states, did not have a surplus population to transfer to the coffee-growing region of the Andes. However, the Wars of Independence and the Federal Wars of the 1860s had the demographic effect of shifting the population away from the *Llanos* (plains) to the mountainous regions of the Andes. At the same time many Colombians also arrived, bringing with them their commercial acumen and expertise as well as their ability for hard work, skills that would be put to good use in developing the coffee industry. The state's population between 1880 and 1890 grew by 21.8 percent from 83,521 to 101,709. The bulk of this increase occurred in the western coffee zones of San Cristóbal and Rubio. The size of the boom, however, should be kept in perspective. Táchira's coffee production between 1883 and 1898 accounted for only 18 percent of the national total,

producing 33,090 tons during the period in question, while the rest of Venezuela yielded 188,719 tons.[1]

The development of coffee production in the Andes was associated with small-scale farms that were owned mainly by families. The mountainous conditions of the region were not suitable for the development of a *latifundio* type of plantation, and extensive landowning was confined to the district of Rubio in western Táchira. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, coffee became the most important commercial crop in the region, and the economic boom it fostered gave rise to the development of a nascent capitalist class that was willing to take risks and develop the region economically.

The German trading houses that had been active in the region since the 1860s also grew in commercial importance with the coffee boom. They acted as commercial banks, advancing credit to the coffee producers and using the following year's crop as collateral. At the same time they supplied the region with imported merchandise. The role that the foreign traders played at this time should not, however, be overemphasised. The local moneylenders of Táchira were far more important and competed directly with the German trading houses. The municipal records of San Cristóbal and Rubio that Muñoz examined indicate that in those cities the "majority of the moneylenders were Venezuelans and that the German firms were responsible for only a small number of the total registered loans."[2] Castro, of urban middle-class background, educated in Pamplona, Colombia, and the country's first Tachirense president, took a clerical job in the German trading firm of Van Diesel & Co. in San Cristóbal.[3] His brother, Celestino, was engaged during the same period in "small scale commercial and financial activities,"[4] lending money at a monthly interest rate of 2.5 percent. Many of the German trading houses, such as Van Diesel & Co., had their headquarters in Venezuela. They had relative autonomy from Germany, and their expanding network of rural stores served to increase demand for coffee and hence production as the Tachirense merchants often purchased coffee and stockpiled it until they could ship it to the German warehouses in the large cities. However, toward the end of the 1880s the German trading houses began to assume a more dominant position, undertaking a systematic campaign to "exploit the coffee boom and expand operations throughout the Andes."[5]

A NASCENT MIDDLE CLASS

As a consequence of the coffee boom in the 1880s and 1890s, rural wages in Táchira were the highest in the country. The economic prosperity that the coffee boom brought to the region contributed toward the formation of a nascent middle class among a "sizeable segment of the urban residents of the coffee zone."[6] Táchira's coffee income allowed it to import

many goods from abroad, mainly from Colombia. A U.S. diplomat described the trade in manufactured articles from Santander, Colombia, as intense. At the same time the region's prosperity also attracted many Colombian teachers, who generally settled in the western coffee zone and began to raise the educational standards of the state, producing a generation of well-educated youths at the end of the nineteenth century. These youths experienced keen dissatisfaction at job prospects and believed that they were the vanguard of a better future, not only for the region but for the country as a whole.

Táchira's geographical isolation made it extremely difficult for the central government in Caracas to destroy the autonomy of the state's dispersed communities. A direct result of this regional isolation was an inefficient local government and an inadequate infrastructure, both of which constrained the state's economic development. There was no direct link with Caracas, so the quickest journey to the capital entailed first going to Colombia, then travelling to Maracaibo, taking a boat to Curacao, and then going to Puerto Cabello or La Guaira. The Young Turks of the state wanted to foster a better transportation system to facilitate and expand trading and commercial ties with the rest of the country.

Despite the regional isolation of Táchira and the close links it had with Colombia, the commercial and political interests of its citizens were firmly rooted in Maracaibo and Caracas. The Tachirense nationalists wanted greater participation in the central government. Such a wish was achieved with Castro in 1899, ending forty-five years later with the October 18, 1945, coup that toppled the government of Medina Angarita. Of the Andean rulers, Gómez, who toppled his *compadre* Castro in 1908, ruled the country the longest, remaining in power for twenty-seven years.

CASTRO AND GÓMEZ: THE EARLY YEARS

Juan Vicente Gómez was born on July 24, 1857, in the hacienda El Recreo in La Mulera, near Rubio in Táchira. Cipriano Castro was born fifteen months later on October 12, 1858, in La Ovejera de las Lomas Altas, near Capacho. Gómez came from a relatively well-off rural family that owned a coffee farm; he went to a primary school run by Ramón Navarro while his sisters were taught at home by Braulia Santander. Pedro Cornelio,[7] Gómez's father, proposed that Gómez study medicine at Bogotá or Caracas. In contrast, Castro did not have a rounded education, with a contemporary observer suggesting that to speak to him about art was like "casting pearls before swine."[8]

Gómez grew up during Táchira's coffee boom of the 1880s, which together with the relative geographical isolation produced a nascent middle class that was willing to take risks and develop the region economically. This appalled the neighboring *merideños*, who could not fathom "the prag-

matic and unabashed capitalistic spirit of San Cristóbal."[9] Gómez's intelligence and capacity for hard work made him stand out "above the general level of the small landowners of the region,"[10] while "there were no other families with greater power than the Gomezes, the Castros and the Bellos"[11] in Cúcuta, San Antonio, or Lobatera.

With Gómez's business activities and farm prospering he began to assume regional importance. This led him to join Colonel Evaristo Jaimes in 1886 to protest against the excessive abuse of power that local *jefes civiles* had perpetrated with the connivance of General Espíritu Santo Morales, president of the Andes. Castro received his first political lesson in June 1886 when he joined Pepe Rojas Fernández's local rebellion against Espíritu Santo Morales. The rebel forces of Evaristo Jaimes gathered at Los Capachos, where they were met by General Morales, who on June 23, 1886, ordered an attack against the city. Although Jaimes was killed during the fight, the government army was forced to retreat, with Castro giving chase. Later Castro was ambushed but escaped, managing to attend the funeral of Jaimes the following day, where he met Gómez for the first time, striking a lasting friendship and introducing to him Pepe Rojas Fernández and Camilo Merchán.

Morales led two thousand men on a renewed attack on Capacho, but Castro defeated him again. On June 29 at Boquerón the government troops were completely routed. The rebel movement triumphed in Táchira, with Castro entering San Cristóbal in a victorious procession on July 5, the country's independence day. The two most distinguished military commanders in the rebel campaign were Castro and Pepe Rojas Fernández. The government feared that the rebellion would get out of hand, so they appointed the latter as governor of the Federal Territory of Amazonas. However, he was murdered before he could take his appointment.[12]

In the ensuing years a series of reforms were instituted in Táchira, bringing the region more closely into the national political arena. In 1888, Castro joined Carlos Rangel Garbiras, the newly appointed president of Los Andes, as leader of the Sección Táchira, but differences between them soon developed because they represented antagonistic forces in the region. Rangel Garbiras was perceived as a defender of the interests of the rich and powerful groups of Táchira, whereas Castro's power base lay in the rural areas among the small farmers of the state.[13] These differences would eventually drive them apart. In 1890 Castro, who was now a regional power in his own right, was appointed commander of the government's army in Táchira. A year later he became a deputy at the National Congress, representing Táchira and supporting President Andueza Palacio.

CASTRO WIDENS HIS HORIZONS

The political problems that bedevilled Venezuela during the last twenty years of the nineteenth century were due, to a large extent, to the power

struggle between Antonio Guzmán Blanco and Joaquín Crespo. The former assumed power after a bloody battle in 1870 when the conservatives, who had ruled since the end of the Federal Wars in 1863, were defeated. The method of government of the Liberal party, which ruled until 1888, was for each president to be surrounded by "his personal group exploiting, according to circumstances, local political reactions and conceding to a greater or lesser extent power to local people."[14] Guzmán Blanco wanted above all to mould his "backward and savage country in the image of prosperous societies he had come to know across the seas. He admired both Yankee industriousness and the culture of the Second Empire in France."[15] In 1873 Venezuela's first Military Code was enacted. The code replaced Spanish titles, commands, and formations with American and Prussian models. Another code issued in 1881 modernized the army even further. This code set the army at 3,000 soldiers, 253 generals, and 97 colonels. It also sharply increased salaries. A year later a navy academy was created, and in 1890 the first army academy was established.

In 1884 Guzmán Blanco, known as *El Ilustre Americano*, appointed Joaquín Crespo as his successor. During Crespo's presidency the economy declined, and because of his incompetence Guzmán Blanco rapidly returned from Europe. Crespo handed over power to Guzmán Blanco in 1886. However, Crespo kept a "ring of iron"[16] because he was able to appoint the judiciary, the state presidents, and the legislators of the different states for the next four years, whereas the presidential period would last only two years. In addition, Crespo had selected and appointed the congressmen for the next two periods, naming his friends who would secure his reelection. This caused a major rupture in Guzmán Blanco-Crespo relations, with the former departing for Europe and leaving Hermógenes López in charge. At the same time Crespo also retired to Europe.

Guzmán Blanco's intention was to appoint biennial presidents from Europe. In 1888 various candidates came forward, although the idea was for the Liberal Party convention to elect the president. Crespo was one of the candidates, but Guzmán Blanco was determined to continue his domination of the political life of the country and proposed that Juan Pablo Rojas Paúl be designated president. Rojas Paúl turned out to be a popular choice and a good administrator, and he was followed by Andueza Palacio, who tried to extend his period to four years "judging that this would be sufficient time to raise the federalist flag from the autonomy of the state departments."[17] The strongman of the regime was Sebastián Casañas, "the Iron Chancellor" as he was known, who got the municipalities and state congresses to approve the increase in tenure from two years to four. The National Congress, in turn, needed to sanction such a move to reelect Andueza Palacio. From his Guárico *hato*, Crespo declared such a move illegal, stating that any reforms would take effect in 1894. However, Andueza Palacio remained in power and suspended Congress. Crespo was then left with no choice but to launch his Revolución Legalista in 1892. Sebastián Casañas,

at the head of an army of four thousand men, was sent to subdue the wayward rebel. Meanwhile, in Táchira, the Baptistas, Araujos, José Manuel Gabaldón, and Victoriano Márquez Bustillos, the latter state president, took up Crespo's banner against Andueza Palacio. Castro, however, defended the government's position. On his suggestion, General José María González, head of the Táchira frontier army, appointed Gómez to the rank of colonel.

On March 20, 1892, Castro left for Colón with a small army that included Emilio Fernández, Francisco Croce, Francisco Antonio Colmenares Pacheco, Pedro María Cárdenas, Pedro Murillo, and Modesto Castro. This army sought to relieve González's reduced army, which was being attacked by his old enemy Espíritu Santo Morales. After twenty hours of hard battle, Castro defeated Morales whose army scattered in disarray. In El Topón, General Eliseo Araujo, who had arrived in San Cristóbal to reestablish order as president of the Andes after Márquez Bustillos joined the rebels, was decidedly beaten on March 22, 1892 by General José María González, commander of the border troops, and Colonel Juan Vicente Gómez, commander of the sectional troops, and later joined by Castro,[18] forcing Araujo to flee the state. Later at Táriba and Caneyes, Castro and Gómez defeated the government troops and then followed the rebels to Palmira and San Juan de Lagunillas, entering triumphantly in Mérida at the head of three thousand men.

Castro's plan to carry the fighting to Caracas was debated, with some arguing that his duty was to protect the Andes. However, Castro's reasoning won the day, and preparations were made to march toward the capital. This plan was halted when General José María García Gómez delivered a message from Andueza Palacio, which brought the sad news that the government had capitulated. Castro remained adamant about proceeding to Caracas, but the pessimism of García Gómez persuaded him to desist in his quest. As a result Crespo, after seven months of hard fighting, was able to consolidate his power with his government. More authoritarian than Andueza Palacio, Crespo appointed General Espíritu Santo Morales, Castro's old enemy, to take over in Táchira. A conspiracy against Castro had already taken place, with General Croce Moreno maneuvering to take over power from him by joining up with the Rangelistas, the followers of Rangel Garbiras. However, as soon as General Morales arrived in San Cristóbal and assumed power, he threw out Croce Moreno. Castro was left with no alternative but to resign his army commission and seek refuge in Colombia, with Gómez following closely after him.

Castro's campaign to defend the Palacio government meant that his *hacienda* in Táchira had been destroyed, with his personal loss estimated at Bs 10,000.[19] In the neighboring republic, Castro acquired the small estate of Bella Vista in a region near the frontier town of Cúcuta, with the financial assistance of Gómez.[20] Gómez acquired the Buenos Aires estate, close

to his *compadre*. Most of Gómez's children with Dionisia Bello were born here, including José Vicente Gómez and Ali Gómez, his favorite, who would die in the 1918 influenza epidemic.[21] Over the next seven years Gómez built up a successful business of cattle ranching and coffee production, amassing a small fortune that was estimated at Bs 30,000.[22] This enabled Gómez to finance both Castro's trips to Caracas and the 1899 invasion. During this period Castro spent his time planning his political return, and meeting many of the leaders of Colombian Liberalism such as Carlos Díaz Irwin and Benjamín Ruiz.

Castro was a frequent visitor to Gómez's *hacienda*, with the conversation always focusing on how to depose Crespo. The Venezuelan President wanted to get the fiery Táchira rebel on his side by persuading him to join the government in exchange for Castro handing over the arms that he had hidden in Colombia for the country's Liberals. Alirio Diaz, Crespo's Colombian private secretary, invited Castro to Caracas. However, the president's overtures went unheeded, and Castro instead put forward his own ideas about reorganizing the country. The result was a stalemate, with Castro returning to his exile in his *hacienda* in Colombia. In the second of his two trips to Caracas, which were financed by Gómez, Castro returned to the capital in 1893 to speak to Crespo about the deteriorating political situation in the Andes. However, this time he was ignored and dismissed with the scathing remark that "he is an indian who is too big for his boots."[23]

MOCHO HERNÁNDEZ

Crespo's victory, however, had managed to unify the old *liberalismo amarillo* of Guzmán Blanco against the rising tide of conservatism that José Manuel (Mocho) Hernández propounded. Crespo allowed his former enemies, who were not revolutionaries, to form a Representative Cabinet of Opposition that was led by Manuel Antonio Matos. This neutralized part of the opposition but entailed giving Matos the treasury portfolio, which backfired as the enemies of the new finance minister also wanted to be part of the government. At the same time Crespo also initiated a period of open elections, an action that was vigorously taken up by the conservative Mocho Hernández, who earned his nickname at the age of seventeen when his right arm and neck were wounded in the battle of Los Lirios at the beginning of the Septenio.[24] Mocho Hernández, who had led a colorful career, cofounded with Alejandro Urbaneja the Partido Democrático during Rojas Paúl's time. In 1897 Urbaneja proposed the formation of the Partido Liberal Nacionalista with Mocho Hernández at its head. The party's goals included adopting traditional liberal principles and "promising to establish the democratic practices which had not been fulfilled and to suppress corruption and those lucrative business ventures which for too long had been

considered as part of the government's largesse."[25] A committee composed of Alejandro Urbaneja, Jorge Nevett, David Lobo, Miguel Páez Pumar, Cristóbal Soublette, and Pedro Manuel Ruiz launched the presidential candidacy of Mocho Hernández in May 1897.

The official government candidate was Ignacio Andrade. After the Revolución Legalista, Andrade had been minister of Public Works and Education and became the second most powerful man in the country when he was elected president of Miranda, which up to 1898 comprised the states of Miranda, Aragua, and Guárico.[26] From his exile in Curacao, Rojas Paúl also launched his candidacy. Other contenders with no hope of winning, such as Pedro Arismendi Brito, Francisco Tosta García, and Juan Francisco Castillo, also entered the race.

Mocho Hernández used the latest electioneering techniques, which he had seen in action in the United States during the presidential campaigns of William Jennings Bryan and William McKinley. During his campaign Mocho Hernández "organised an intensive program of tours, speeches, mass meetings, explaining his program, which consisted of a restatement of all the liberties that had been consistently trampled in Venezuela for over half a century."[27] Mocho Hernández was an incessant campaigner, who, at the start of the campaign, had only Bs 2,000, but who never lacked money because of the enthusiasm that he was able to convey to the public. He canvassed for support across the country, visiting the Aragua valleys, La Guaira, Maiquetía, and Macuto. This was the first time that an election campaign using modern electoral techniques had been conducted in the country.

Jacinta Parejo de Crespo, wife of Crespo, was opposed to Andrade's candidacy and gave her support first to Claudio Bruzual Sera and then to Custodio Milano. In official circles as well, Andrade was not given much support. Many wanted Crespo to launch his candidacy, but he stood resolute in not seeking reelection.

When the polls opened on September 1, the government flooded the cities with peasants armed with *machetes*, who took over the electoral tables and prevented people from depositing their ballots. The result was that Andrade won with 406,610 votes to 2,203 votes for Mocho Hernández, 203 votes for Rojas Paúl, 152 votes for Guzmán Blanco and 31 for Nicolás Rolando. Congress duly confirmed the result, electing Andrade who, according to Lecuna, was "a stooge."[28] Crespo, who had divided the country into five military areas, with himself commanding the most important central zone, ensured that the country accepted the result.

Mocho Hernández, who felt that he had been robbed of the election, wanted to rebel immediately against the fraud. However, he was unable to leave his house in Caracas because he was under virtual house arrest, as his home was being watched constantly. An escape plan was devised in which Mocho Hernández feigned sickness with only David Lobo, his doc-

tor, seeing him. Later, Eloy Escobar, secretary to Urbaneja, arrived dressed in dark glasses and a thick beard accompanied by two ladies. After a suitable time Mocho Hernández left the house disguised as Eloy Escobar, heading first for the home of his friend Felipe Llamozas and then hurrying to Escobar's own house. During the short time at his disposal before his departure from Caracas, Mocho Hernández issued many orders and despatched numerous letters to his supporters around the country. At 1:00 A.M., Mocho Hernández, accompanied by Eloy Escobar and his adviser Juan José Michelena, left for the house of Rafael Ramos, a train conductor in Palos Grandes who lived near the train station. Ramos hid him in the luggage compartment where repair equipment was usually kept in case of emergencies. Ironically, Crespo lived opposite the station.

At dawn the following day, José María Escobar and Vicente Lecuna, Mocho Hernández's agents, arrived at the station to accompany the important "parcel" for part of its journey. Escobar's final destination was Guárico and Apure, while Lecuna headed for Falcón and Lara to finalize arrangements for the forthcoming uprising. At 3:00 P.M., after what must have been an extremely uncomfortable journey, Mocho Hernández arrived in Valencia. However, he was only released from what had become almost a torture chamber at 8:00 P.M. Mocho Hernández immediately left for La Loma, from where he rode on horseback to General Evaristo Lima's *hacienda* of La Queipa. After lengthy discussions it was decided that March 2 would be the most suitable date on which to launch the rebellion. However, the uprising started on March 1, when Mocho Hernández and three hundred peasants took up arms with his Grito de Queipa.

Crespo took control of the government forces and immediately pursued Mocho Hernández. However, Crespo was killed by a stray bullet at Mata Carmelera on April 16, 1898, precipitating a national crisis that shook the foundations of the *liberales amarillos*. The new government of Andrade was placed on the defensive as it was now a foregone conclusion that the popular Mocho Hernández would enter Caracas unopposed and form the next government. However, at the insistence of Matos, Ramón Guerra was named head of the government's armed forces. Ramón Guerra managed to capture Mocho Hernández at Churuguara in Cojedes state in June and he was taken to Caracas and imprisoned.

By the beginning of 1899 the *liberales amarillos* were divided into the Crespistas, who were "resentful and conspirators" as Velásquez has called them, and the Andradistas who were formed by the brothers of Ignacio Andrade and by Febres Cordero, Troconis, Arvelo, Carrillo Guerra and Leopoldo Baptista. The Crespistas would later surround and support Ramón Guerra because he had saved the country from the rule of Mocho Hernández, thereby preventing the dreaded Conservatives from gaining enough power to replace the deceased Crespo as president of the Miranda state. Andrade, fearful of the real intentions of Guerra, did not want to

give him so much power, preferring to split the state into its three constituent parts: Miranda, Aragua, and Guárico with Pepe Rojas Fernández; Morales and Guerra their respective presidents, and the Crespistas, after realizing that their influence was waning, supporting Guerra. Andrade would further erode Guerra's power base by making him replace some of his officers, thereby pushing him into rebellion on February 19, 1899, at Calabozo. Guerra proclaimed Guárico an autonomous state and accused Andrade of violating the constitution. Andrade ordered General Augusto Lutowsky to take three thousand men to Calabozo. Generals Manuel Guzmán Alvárez and Lorenzo Guerra also converged with battalions from Guárico, forcing Ramón Guerra to seek refuge in Colombia.

TACHIRA'S INVOLVEMENT IN NATIONAL POLITICS

Táchira at the close of the nineteenth century had the highest per capita income of Venezuela. However, during this time there was a drastic decline in coffee prices that produced a great deal of discontent among the urban middle-class population of the state, who perceived that the policies that the Federal Government pursued, such as an increase in taxation and higher import duties to pay off the country's foreign debt, diminished their economic opportunities, especially those of the educated middle class and the small farmers. Many frowned on civil disorders because it was only with peace and order that business could prosper. However, many of the *bachilleres* suffered from the economic depression, and there were no "industries with gratifying perspectives to employ those people."[29] It must have occurred to many of them to incorporate themselves more fully into national politics in what Rangel calls "participating in the adventure of the Venezuelan civil wars."[30] The nascent middle class of Táchira, however, was dissatisfied with the general state of affairs of the country. It was predominantly from this group and the young, urban sector of Táchira that Castro drew his strength in 1899, forming a movement of "high school students transformed into warriors,"[31] as Rangel so eloquently described the rebels that invaded Venezuela that year.

ANDRADE IS NAMED PRESIDENT

Upon his appointment as president on February 28, 1898, Ignacio Andrade sought to release the hold that the deceased Crespo still had on the country and to consolidate his own power by splitting the country back into its twenty states and granting them full autonomy. The *secciones* of the Andes state, for example, would have their status upgraded to that of a full state. By doing this Andrade had to appoint new legislative and judicial bodies, both at the national and state level. He would then get rid of the Crespistas by appointing his own men while at the same time further

consolidating his power. Such a move was a solid legal blow against the Crespo political machinery because it attracted to the Andrade camp those people who wanted to recover their old political power. It also lessened the influence of the state presidents. Anyone who opposed Andrade's move, such as the members of the Supreme Court, would be jailed under the pretext that they were conspiring against the government. The measure had the added attraction that it could be applied immediately, as there was no need to change the constitution because according to Bello Rodríguez, the interior minister, all that was necessary under the 1864 constitution was for Congress to approve the change.

Nevertheless, Andrade's action caused violent opposition within the Liberal Party. The Crespistas and Anduecistas united with Francisco Tosta García, while José Landislao Andara and Ramón Ayala joined the old *guzmancista*, Francisco González Guinán. They all argued that the country's political division would not be immediate and could only be applicable during the presidential period following its approval, which would start on January 1, 1902. In Táchira the vexed question of representation of the state at the national level increased political unrest. In January the Asambleas Legislativas met to proclaim the independent wishes of the Trujillo, Mérida, and Táchira *secciones*, which formed the Andes state. The Trujillanos decided to breakaway, forming their own independent state, while Mérida and Táchira chose to form a smaller state whose president would be Espíritu Santo Morales. They chose La Grita as the new capital, an idea well received in Táchira but causing consternation in Mérida. The Meridenos appealed to Andrade, but he gave Morales all the support he needed. It was time for Castro to place his political marker.[32]

CASTRO PREPARES TO INVADE VENEZUELA

During his period of exile Castro was constantly visited by people who kept him in touch with events in Caracas. In early 1898 he held talks with Carlos Rangel Garbiras, his old adversary and head of the Nacionalismo in the Andes, at La Donjuana in Colombia. However, an agreement could not be reached because his old foe wanted a dual leadership structure with him as civil chief and Castro as military chief. This was unacceptable to Castro because he reasoned that two leaders would weaken their position. In reality both men felt that they should be the sole leader of the revolution. The *liberales continuistas* of Andueza Palacio and José Ignacio Pulido had gone into exile after their defeat in 1892 by the *liberales legalistas*. However, they had returned to the country with the death of Crespo and were not willing to give up without a fight. They viewed Andrade as a conservative because of his social background and considered themselves to be the "real trustees of the purity of the yellow liberal cause."[33] The result was that the Anduecistas began to conspire to end Andrade's rule. Cipriano

Castro was one such Anduecista who had been in exile since 1892. Pulido, Ayala, and Andueza Palacio invited him to participate in the rebellion, designating him chief of the Andes state.

On February 28, 1899, Castro sold a life policy to Gómez for $1,298 with a surrender value of $5,000 so that he could travel to Caracas to confer with Andrade about what political role he could play in the future. In exchange for supporting Andrade, Castro demanded the presidency of the Andes, but he was unable to put his views to the president because Mendoza Solar, secretary to Andrade, prevented a meeting from taking place between the two men. At this snub Castro immediately put into effect his plan to topple Andrade and seize power, which he had spent so much time mulling over at his *hacienda* in Colombia.

On his return journey back to his status of political exile in Colombia he stopped at Curacao, where he was able to enlist the support of an important group of Venezuelan Anduecistas exiles on the island, including José Ignacio Pulido, Juan Pietri, and Ramón Ayala.[34] In Maracaibo, at the home of Don Felipe Arocha, who was the foster uncle of Castro's wife and ran a large trading house, a number of important business leaders promised to support Castro in his revolutionary quest. During the rest of the year Castro kept busy seeking support for his plans by forming a Centro Directivo del Partido Ciprianista. Lucio Baldó was president of the committee, and other members included Santiago Briceño Ayesterán, Rafael María Velasco Bustamante, Román Moreno, Pedro Pablo Rodríguez, Trino Niño, and Ramón Buenahora. The committee later expanded with the incorporation of other Liberals such as Colonel Régulo Olivares, General Froilán Prato, and General Obdulio Cacique. Although Castro funded the initial expenses, most of the financial backing came from Gómez, the successful entrepreneur.

The objective of the rebels was to acquire power in the Andes and then take over the country. Castro also informed his small band of supporters in the center and western areas of the country of the purpose of his actions so that he could count on their backing. He declared that the first man to enter "the capital triumphantly would be accepted as the chief of state, with everybody having to acknowledge and support him."[35] Many took up his offer, but the government squashed all their attempts. In Caracas, General Esteban Chalbaud Cardona, Castro's second in command who had travelled to Caracas to communicate the news to the rebels, was imprisoned.

A CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS

The new national administrative structure posed a tricky constitutional question because the seven states mentioned in the first article of the 1881 constitution no longer existed, implying that the constitution needed to be

reformed completely. Consequently, Congress met on February 20, 1899, to discuss these matters. It essentially became a constitutional assembly, with all legislative and governmental powers from the president downward becoming provisional until the constitutional matters had been resolved. To compound the government's difficulties, the year would be an economic disaster, with coffee prices plummeting and revenues shrinking as imports fell. The country also suffered from a smallpox epidemic, a locust plague that destroyed many of the crops, and a long draught that decimated cattle stocks.

The idea of returning the country to twenty states was not in dispute. However, the way to obtain this result divided Congress into two distinct camps: the *Inmediatistas* who were supported by Andrade and who wanted to immediately create the twenty states, and the *Constitucionalistas*, who preferred to amend the constitution first to create the twenty new states. The *Inmediatistas* proposed returning to the political division of the 1864 constitution by changing the second clause of the constitution, which allowed the creation of provisional states and the appointment of interim officials within the new states. When it came to a congressional vote on this proposal, Andrade's supporters won by sixty-six votes to twenty-five. On April 22, Congress enacted the formation of twenty states in Venezuela, with the large states of Bermúdez, Miranda, and Andes splitting into smaller entities. Such an outcome amounted, according to Velásquez, to a *coup d'etat* "in which the soldiers were replaced by deputies and senators and the rifles for ballot papers."[36] At the beginning of May, Andrade and Bello felt sufficiently strong to release Mocho Hernández from prison, reasoning that all Liberals would unite with them against the Conservatives.

Castro did not agree with the result, arguing that the changes that Congress had approved were unconstitutional. However, the constitution allowed the creation of such entities on a provisional basis while it was debated in Congress, and the appropriate amendments to the constitution had been enacted. Castro had nevertheless found the pretext he needed to launch his revolution, and so he began to rally his supporters by setting up local committees in Táchira for the restoration of the constitution. In Capacho the committee was composed of Pedro María Cárdenas, Rafael María Velasco, Evaristo Prieto, Jorge Bello, and José María García Gómez. In San Cristóbal, Ovidio Salas, José Antonio Dávila, Joaquín Garrido, Gumersindo Méndez, César Ibarra were ready to spring into action, while in Táriba, Santiago Briceño Ayesterán, and Clodomiro Sánchez were ready. Other Castro supporters were dotted about the state, with Juan Alberto Rámirez in Rubio, Luis Varela in Santa Ana, Régulo Olivares and Florentino Vargas in Lobatera, Maximiano Casanova in Palmira, Régulo Olivares' brothers in Colón, and Roberto Pulido in San Antonio. In Tovar, Mérida state, Eulogio Moros was in charge of Castro's supporters. Many of Castro's strongest allies, such as Régulo Olivares, Santiago Briceño Ay-

esterán, and Pedro María Cárdenas, travelled to Colombia to cross the border with him. However, there was one last attempt to get Andrade to change his mind in the form of a memorandum proposing that Castro be appointed president of Táchira. Andrade rejected the suggestion, something that he would live to regret. By October he would be in exile in Curacao, and Castro would start his nine-year rule of the country.

NOTES

1. Arturo Guillermo Muñoz, "The Táchira Frontier, 1881–1899: Regional Isolation and National Integration in the Venezuelan Andes," PhD. diss., Stanford University, 1977, p. 126.
2. Ibid., p. 138.
3. William M. Sullivan, "The Rise of Despotism in Venezuela: Cipriano Castro 1899–1908," PhD. diss., The University of New Mexico, 1974, p. 73.
4. Muñoz, p. 138.
5. Ibid., p. 132.
6. Ibid., p. 143.
7. Gómez's ancestors came from Colombia and were involved in the independence movement. Gómez's grandfather was José del Rosario García Bustamante, who was the son of Eleuterio García Rovira, a neogranadine hero and brother of Custodio García Rovira, a martyr of Colombia. José del Rosario García Bustamante, Gómez's grandfather, was born in Cúcuta. He owned La Mulera in Táchira. He had three sons with Ana Dolores Gómez Nieto, his common-law wife: Pedro Cornelio, Fernando, and Silverio. Pedro Cornelio, Gómez's father, inherited La Mulera. José del Rosario García Bustamante married María Concepción Bustamante, who was related to him. They had two sons, Eleuterio and José Rosario García. Through the Bustamante surname came the family relation among Gómez, José María García, José Rosario García and Rafael Velasco Bustamante.
8. Pedro José Domínici, *Un Sátrapa. Notas sobre una Tiranía*, Paris, n.p. 1901, p. 21.
9. Muñoz, p. 40.
10. Pablo Emilio Fernández, *Gómez el Rehabilitador*, Caracas, Jaime Villegas Editor, 1956, p. 63.
11. Ibid., p. 65.
12. The crime was never solved.
13. Ramon J. Velásquez, *La Caida del Liberalismo Amarillo*. Tiempo y Drama de Antonio Paredes (Caracas: Ediciones centauro, 1991) p. 207.
14. Vicente Lecuna, *La Revolución de Queipa*, Caracas, Ed. Garrido, 1954, p. 17.
15. Julian Nava, "The Illustrious American: The Development of Nationalism in Venezuela under Antonio Guzmán Blanco," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 45:4, November 1965, pp. 428, 527–43.
16. Lecuna, p. 18.
17. Ibid., p. 39.
18. Santiago Briceño Ayesterán, *Memorias de Su Vida Militar y Política*, Caracas, Tip. América, 1948, p. 26.

19. Equivalent to $49,000 in 1999. This is a rough estimate and is used for illustrative purposes.

20. Enrique Bernardo Núñez, *El Hombre de la Levita Gris (Los Años de la Restauración Liberal)*, Caracas, Ediciones Elite, 1953, p. 17.

21. Others include Josefa, who married Carlos Delfino; Flor, who married José María Cárdenas; Graciela, who married Julio Méndez; Servilia, who married Ignacio Andrade Sosa; Gonzalo, who married Josefina Leyva; and José Vicente, who married Josefina Revenga.

22. Equivalent to $145,000 in 1999.

23. Carlos Siso, *Castro y Gómez. Importancia de la Hegemonía Andina*, Caracas, Editorial Arte, 1985, p. 145.

24. Lecuna, p. 42.

25. Ibid., p. 46.

26. Ignacio Andrade's father was General Escolástico Andrade, a hero of the Wars of Independence. Andrade finished his schooling in the United States and was a man "of ample knowledge and with an excellent background in business administration." (Zoilo Bello Rodríguez, *Archivo Político*, Caracas, Ediciones de la Secretaría de la Presidencia y del Ministerio de la Defensa, 1979, Prologue by R. J. Velásquez, p. vii).

27. Nikita Laureano Harwich, "Cipriano Castro and the 'Libertadora' Revolution. A Hypothesis in Historical Development," Senior Honors History Seminar Paper, Duke University, 1971–72, p. 48.

28. Lecuna, p. 60.

29. Domingo Alberto Rangel, *Los Andinos en el Poder*, Caracas, n.p., 1964.

30. Ibid., p. 67.

31. Ibid., p. 67.

32. A. Arellano Moreno, *Mirador de Historia Política de Venezuela*, Caracas, Imp. Nacional, 1967, p. 191.

33. Zoilo Bello Rodríguez, *Archivo Político*, Caracas, Ediciones de la Secretaría de la Presidencia y del Ministerio de la Defensa, 1979, Prologue by R. J. Velásquez, p. viii.

34. See Domínici.

35. Briceño Ayesterán, p. 37.

36. Velásquez, p. 204–5.