

Primary Sources Assorted

On the Treatment of Native Americans

Opinion of the Friars of St. Dominic (May 15, 1554)

As everyone knows, the Indians are weak by nature and are satisfied with having enough to get along on from day to day. And if there is any way to bring them out of their laziness and carelessness, it is to make them help the Spaniards in their commerce. In it the Indians are benefited through their wages, and thus they will become fond of commerce and profits, as, indeed, some of them have already done, in imitation of the Spaniards... And besides this, great good comes to the state and his Majesty from having the Indians help the Spaniards in their commerce and on their estates, because without Indians all trade and profit cease.

Antonio Vasquez de Espinosa, a Spanish friar and missionary who sought to convert the Indians to Christianity. (1620s)

These Indians are sent out every year under a captain whom they choose in each village or tribe for him to take them and oversee them for the year each had to serve; every year they had a new election, for as some go out, others come in. This works out very badly, with great losses and gaps in the quotas of Indians, the villages being depopulated; and this gives rise to great extortions and abuses on the part of the inspectors toward the poor Indians, ruining them and thus depriving the chief Indians of their property and carrying them off in chains because they do not fill out the mita assignment. So huge is the wealth which has been taken out of this range since the year 1545, when it was discovered, up to the present year of 1628, which makes 83 years that they have been working and reducing its ores, and that merely from the registered mines, as appears from an examination of most of the account in the royal records, 326,000,000 pesos have been taken out.

Bartolomeo del las Casas, Dominica friar, A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies. (1542)

As we have said, the island of Hispaniola was the first to witness the arrival of Europeans and the first to suffer the wholesale slaughter of its people and the devastation and depopulation of the land. It all began with the Europeans taking native women and children both as servants and to satisfy their own base appetites; then not content with what the local people offered them of their own free will (and all offered as much as they could spare) they started taking for themselves the food that natives contrived to produce by the sweat of their brows, (which was in all honesty little enough)...Some of them started to conceal food they had, others decided to send their women and children into hiding, and yet others took to the hills to get away from the brutal and ruthless cruelty that was being inflicted on them.

The Spaniards have shown not the slightest consideration for these people, treating them (and I speak from first-hand experience, having been there from the outset) not as brute animals--indeed, I would to God they had done and had shown them the consideration they afford their animals--so much as piles of dung in the middle of the road.

Friar	a member of one of several Roman Catholic religious communities of men 修道士:几个罗马天主教宗教团体之一的成员 수사:여러 로마 카톨릭 종교 공동체 중 하나의 구성원
deprive	deny the possession or use of something 剥夺篡夺:拒绝拥有或使用某物 박탈
Ruthless	hard and cruel 无情:坚硬而残酷 무자비