THE SPANISH CONQUISTADORES

John Francis Bannon

Men
or
Devils

SOURCE PROBLEMS IN WORLD CIVILIZATION

A Note from the Publisher

Source Problems in World Civilization are designed to give you an introduction to the historian's task. This task, like that of the natural or social scientist or the critic of the arts, is essentially one of selection. Selection is essential to history as it is to every scholarly discipline, for it is only through selection that knowledge can be arranged in meaningful and usable patterns. The historian selects from the vast raw material of his subject by continually asking himself questions. The process may also take the form of stating and testing hypotheses, but the outcome is the same.

Since the formulation of significant questions or hypotheses is itself a selective process, requiring some familiarity with a given field, the subjects of Source Problems in World Civilization are in the form of questions. Some of these questions are ones that historians have asked; some are examinations of popular suppositions; some are reflections of current public issues.

The material presented in each pamphlet of this series has been selected by an expert as a representative sample of the kinds of evidence with which the historian works. It is called source material because it is mostly *primary* —that is, directly related to the events concerned. Some *secondary* comments or analyses may also be included when these seem particularly helpful. An effort has been made to present as many different points of view as possible, although obviously space limitations preclude exhaustive coverage. It has also been necessary to limit the readings to those that can be comprehended by a nonspecialist, but there has been no attempt to avoid challenging concepts.

You are encouraged to reach your own answer to the question presented or, if your judgment so dictates, to revise the question and defend your revision. In case you are stimulated to explore a problem more deeply, you will find plentiful suggestions for further reading.

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Men or Devils?

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INTRODUCTION

As he seeks to reconstruct the picture of the past, its personalities and its events, the historian is often, most regularly to be more exact, faced with evidence of a somewhat contradictory nature. This is at times the case when he studies events. It is more consistently true when the subject of his research is a person or a group of persons. Their contemporaries may have seen the individual or individuals with the eyes of friends and admirers, or with those of mere acquaintances, or, perhaps, with those of opponents or even enemies. The viewpoint will color the reporting and the judgments expressed. There will be instances in which the subject of the historian's study will have written of himself. The mass of materials available is likely to be considerable and, at times, confusing. The historian has to interpret. And, besides the primary materials at his disposal, he may often have the views of his own predecessors or contemporaries to consider or contend with.

One of the reasons for this present work and the series to which it belongs is to introduce the student to the intricacies of this process of weighing sources, to show him some of the raw materials out of which history is constructed, and to give him an opportunity to try his hand at historical evaluation.

The subjects of this study are those Spaniards who came to the new world of the Americas in the last years of the fifteenth and the early decades of the sixteenth century to explore, conquer, settle. They are the men known to history as the conquistadores. Much has been written about them; they or their scribes have written much about themselves. Some of this "much" is highly laudatory; some is distinctly less so. And later writers have complicated, rather than clarified, the picture of these men by offering the most contradictory opinions concerning them. We read all this and ask ourselves: "The Spanish Conquistadores, were they simply men, much like ourselves, or were they devils, temporarily on leave from those nether regions where they belonged?"

As we work through this cross-section of selections, some from the actors themselves and others from more modern writers, there are several considerations which we, as historians, must bear in mind. The English philosopher Thomas Hobbes was, unfortunately, not too far from a rather true description of humankind when he spoke of *homo homini lupus* (man a wolf as regards fellow man). Men, unless profoundly and charitably motivated by a religious or, at least, a humanitarian ideal, are always ready to prey on their fellows. Crass selfishness is a constant in the human story, and not infrequently this vice turns up in a most ugly and extreme form, as frightening cruelty, or a callous disregard of others and their rights, or a very ugly manifestation of lower instincts.

The expansion of Europe which began in the late fifteenth century threw many temptations in the path of those sons and daughters of the West who went forth to win empires or to amass personal wealth and build their futures. The imperialist process has left records behind which are not always pleasant to read, which too often are embarrassing to us, its heirs. The strong have

regularly conquered weaker neighbors with a large measure of ruthlessness; pagans have fought Christians and Christians have fought pagans and infidels and, in between times, one another; the white races have preyed on the colored; the "superior" peoples have felt compelled to bring their way of life to folk less fortunate, at least by their self-established standards. Sometimes these activities were powered by naked force, at others by perverted religious convictions or racial prejudices. It is in the light of this continuing, all too human record that one must judge the first Europeans who came upon the native Americans. In most instances these "first Europeans" were Spaniards, that breed of men known as the conquistadores.

From the beginning the conquistadores wrote of their exploits, official and unofficial accounts of the New World which they were subduing for both Majesties, King and God, and of the new subjects which they were adding to the rolls of both. The literate, such as Columbus and Cortés and Valdivia and a few more, penned their own stories; others had chroniclers, *escríbanos* they were called, along on their expeditions or recounted their experiences to others who set them down for posterity. Two selections from these on-the-spot reports are included here, one an account of a famous episode in the conquest of Mexico and a second about an equally famous step in Pizarro's advance against the Inca Empire of Peru.

Shortly after mid-sixteenth century a most important piece came off the printing press in Seville, a future "best-seller" (outside of Spain), the *Brevísima Relación de la Destrucción de las Indias,* by the Dominican friar and bishop Bartolomé de Las Casas. It was a devastating and merciless blast at his countrymen, penned by a man who for half a long lifetime had sought to win royal protection for the American natives. His scathing indictment of the conquistadores was picked up before many years by Spain's enemies, read and relished, translated and published in many languages. It would not be wholly correct to say that in 1552, the date of its publication, the "Black Legend" was born. But, most certainly, this little work did much to nurture anti-Spanish prejudice and to sustain such sentiments through subsequent years. Later in the century, as Spain's enemies began to multiply, they sought in every way possible, as is the human manner, to blacken the reputation of the adversary and to stimulate patriotic opposition by turning the Spaniards into monsters. The Dutch, smarting from the wounds sustained in their fight for independence, were the first to adapt the views of the Bishop of Chiapa to their purposes. They soon had the engraver De Bry at work illustrating the Spanish "atrocities" with his seventeen most graphic and revolting prints. The first English translation of the *Brevísima Relación* was issued in London, in 1583. Others of Spain's rivals joined the chorus of vilification and condemnation—the French, the Germans, the Italians, and more.

The popular image of the conquistador by the end of the sixteenth century was a very confused one. Was he saint or devil, man or demon, hero or beast? Through the centuries he has come down to us a most equivocal figure, controversial and controverted, as the selections presented here will testify. Opinions have often been influenced by nationalistic and even religious considerations. Belligerent Protestants, at times, have held up the Spanish conquistador as a sterling example of the Catholic and his "good works." Hispanophobes have

found him a very convenient bogey-man to scare their countrymen into a patriotic frenzy. In the first decades of the nineteenth century the Latin American creoles, descendants of these very conquistadores, contrived to overlook the ancestral strain and revived, with all the zeal of an earlier Dutchman or Englishman, the story of Spanish cruelty. They were fighting for their independence from Spain and the deeds of the conquistadores served their propaganda purposes. As late as the last years of that same century, when the United States was in altercation with Spain over the fate of the Cubans, the conquistador story, in the Las Casas manner, was recalled with relish.

More modern writers have striven to find a middle ground of objectivity in evaluating the conquistador. How successful they have been or how convincing are questions which the reader must answer for himself.

1 BERNAL DÍAZ DEL CASTILLO (1492-1584)

The following selection is from one of the most fascinating of the chroniclers of the deeds of the conquistadores. Born in Spain the very year of the discovery, 1492, Bernal Díaz arrived in the New World in 1514, a soldier in the retinue of the governor of Darién, Pedrarias Dávila. Next he went over to Cuba, where a relative, Diego Velásquez, was governor. Bernal Díaz was on the Córdoba expedition of 1517, which uncovered the Mayan civilization on the Yucatan Peninsula. In the next year he shipped out with Juan de Grijalva and on his return from the first survey of the Mexican coast joined the Cortés company, in 1519. He fought through the years of the conquest and survived to become a respected hacendado *in Guatemala. In 1552 there appeared the first "official" history of the conquest, the work of the former chaplain of the Cortés family, Francisco López de Gómara. The Gómara version roused the old soldier to correct some of the impressions left by that story with his own* Historia Verdadera* *(The True Story . . .) Bernal Díaz tries to tell the story of conquest through the eyes of the "little men," the common soldiers, and historians have agreed that he does it well.*

The selection here is his account of the controversial episode at Cholula. Cortés and his party landed at Vera Cruz in 1519. The leader has gathered much information from the people along the coast about the great empire in the highlands; several embassies have come down from Montezuma to encourage the newcomers to turn back; but the Spaniards are not minded to withdraw, especially after having seen the richness of the gifts sent by

* *Historia Verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva España* was written in the 1560's but not published until 1632. Historians had to content themselves with this poor edition and its equally faulty successors until 1904 when the Mexican historian Genaro García brought out a careful and exact edition. Beginning in 1908 the Hakluyt Society published the excellent translation by A. P. Maudslay. This selection is from *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1956), pp. 171-180, 181, a reissue of sections of Maudslay. Used by permission of the publishers, Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, Inc.

the Aztec emperor. They have begun their march to Tenochtitlán; they have met, defeated, and won the Tlascalans. The sacred city of Cholula is their next stop, and Montezuma has contrived to make it the last.

After the people of Cholula had received us in the festive manner already described, and most certainly with a show of good will, it presently appeared that Montezuma sent orders to his ambassadors, who were still in our company, to negotiate with the Cholulans that an army of 20,000 men which Montezuma had sent and equipped should, on entering the city, join with them in attacking us by night or by day, get us into a hopeless plight and bring all of us that they could capture bound to Mexico. And he sent many presents of jewels and cloths, also a golden drum, and he also sent word to the priests of the city that they were to retain twenty of us to sacrifice to their idols.

The warriors whom Montezuma sent were stationed in some ranchos and some rocky thickets about half a league from Cholula and some were already posted within the houses.

They fed us very well for the first two days, but on the third day they neither gave us anything to eat nor did any of the Caciques or priests make their appearance, and if any Indians came to look at us, they did not approach us, but remained some distance off, laughing at us as though mocking us. When our Captain saw this, he told our interpreters to tell the Ambassadors of the Great Montezuma to order the Caciques to bring some food, but all they brought was water and fire wood, and the old men who brought it said there was no more maize.

That same day other Ambassadors arrived from Montezuma, and joined those who were already with us and they said to Cortés, very impudently, that their Prince had sent them to say that we were not to go by his city because he had nothing to give us to eat, and that they wished at once to return to Mexico with our reply. When Cortés saw that their speech was unfriendly, he replied to the Ambassadors in the blandest manner, that he marvelled how such a great Prince as Montezuma should be so vacillating, and he begged them not to return to Mexico, for he wished to start himself on the next day, to see their Prince, and act according to his orders, and I believe that he gave the Ambassadors some strings of beads and they agreed to stay.

When this had been done, our Captain called us together, and said to us: "I see that these people are very much disturbed, and it behoves us to keep on the alert, in case some trouble is brewing among them," and he at once sent for the principal Cacique, telling him either to come himself or to send some other chieftains. The Cacique replied that he was ill and could not come.

When our Captain heard this, he ordered us to bring before him, with kindly persuasion, two of the numerous priests who were in the great Cue near our quarters. We brought two of them, without doing them any disrespect, and Cortés ordered each of them to be given a Chalchihuite, and addressing them with friendly words he asked them what was the reason that the Cacique and chieftains and most of the priests were frightened, for he had sent to summon them and they did not want to come. It seems that one of these priests was a very important personage among them, who had charge of or command over all the Cues in the City, and was a sort of Bishop among the

priests and was held in great respect. He replied that they, who were priests, had no fear of us, and if the Cacique and chieftain did not wish to come, he would go himself and summon them, and that if he spoke to them he believed they would do as he told them and would come.

Cortés at once told him to go, and that his companion should await his return. So the priest departed and summoned the Cacique and chieftains who returned in his company to Cortés' quarters. Cortés asked them what it was they were afraid of, and why they had not given us anything to eat, and said that if our presence in their city were an annoyance to them, we wished to leave the next day for Mexico to see and speak to the Lord Montezuma, and he asked them to provide carriers for the transport of the baggage and *tepusques* and to send us some food at once.

The Cacique was so embarrassed that he could hardly speak, he said that they would look for the food, but their Lord Montezuma had sent to tell them not to give us any, and was not willing that we should proceed any further.

While this conversation was taking place, three of our friends, the Cempoala Indians, came in and said secretly to Cortés, that close by where we were quartered they had found holes dug in the streets, covered over with wood and earth, so that without careful examination, one could not see them, that they had removed the earth from above one of the holes and found it full of sharp pointed stakes to kill the horses when they galloped, and that the *Azoteas* had breastworks of *adobes* and were piled up with stones, and certainly this was not done with good intent for they also found barricades of thick timbers in another street. At this moment eight Tlaxcalans arrived, from the Indians whom we had left outside in the fields with orders that they were not to enter Cholula, and they said to Cortés: "Take heed, Malinche, for this City is ill disposed, and we know that this night they have sacrificed to their Idol, which is the God of War, seven persons, five of them children, so that the God may give them victory over you, and we have further seen that they are moving all their baggage and women and children out of the city." When Cortés heard this, he immediately sent these Tlaxcalans back to their Captains, with orders to be fully prepared if we should send to summon them, and he turned to speak to the Caciques, priests and chieftains of Cholula and told them to have no fear and show no alarm, but to remember the obedience which they had promised to him, and not to swerve from it, lest he should have to chastise them. That he had already told them that we wished to set out on the morrow and that he had need of two thousand warriors from the city to accompany us, just as the Tlaxcalans had provided them, for they were necessary on the road. They replied that the men would be given, and asked leave to go at once to get them ready, and they went away very well contented, for they thought that between the warriors with whom they were to supply us, and the regiments sent by Montezuma, which were hidden in the rocky thickets and barrancas, we could not escape death or capture, for the horses would not be able to charge on account of certain breastworks and barricades which they immediately advised the troops to construct, so that only a narrow lane would be left through which it would be impossible for us to pass. They warned the Mexicans to be in readi-

ness as we intended to start on the next day and told them that our capture would be sure, for they had made sacrifices to their War Idols who had promised them victory.

As our Captain wished to be more thoroughly informed about the plot and all that was happening, he told Doña Marina to take more chalchihuites to the two priests who had been the first to speak, for they were not afraid, and to tell them with friendly words that Malinche wished them to come back and speak to him, and to bring them back with her. Doña Marina went and spoke to the priests in the manner she knew so well how to use, and thanks to the presents they at once accompanied her. Cortés addressed them and asked them to say truly what they knew, for they were the priests of Idols and chieftains and ought not to lie, and that what they should say would not be disclosed in any manner, for we were going to leave the next morning, and he would give them a large quantity of cloth. They said the truth was that their Lord Montezuma knew that we were coming to their city, and that every day he was of many minds and could not come to any decision on the matter, that sometimes he sent orders to pay us much respect when we arrived and to guide us on the way to his city, and at other times he would send word that it was not his wish that we should go to Mexico, and now recently his Gods Tescatepuca and Huichilobos, to whom he paid great devotion, had counselled him that we should either be killed here in Cholula or should be sent, bound, to Mexico. That the day before he had sent out twenty thousand warriors, and half of them were already within this city, and the other half were stationed near by in some gullies, and that they already knew that we were about to start to-morrow; they also told us about the barricades which they had ordered to be made and the two thousand warriors that were to be given to us, and how it had already been agreed that twenty of us were to be kept to be sacrified to the Idols of Cholula.

Cortés ordered these men to be given a present of richly embroidered cloth, and told them not to say anything about the information they had given us for, if they disclosed it, on our return from Mexico we would kill them. He also told them that we should start early the next morning, and he asked them to summon all the Caciques to come then so that he might speak to them.

That night Cortés took counsel of us as to what should be done, for he had very able men with him whose advice was worth having, but as in such cases frequently happens, some said that it would be advisable to change our course and go by Huexotzingo, others that we must manage to preserve the peace by every possible means and that it would be better to return to Tlaxcala, others of us gave our opinion that if we allowed such treachery to pass unpunished, wherever we went we should be treated to worse treachery, and that being there in the town, with ample provisions, we ought to make an attack, for the Indians would feel the effect of it more in their own homes than they would in the open, and that we should at once warn the Tlaxcalans so that they might join in it. All thought well of this last advice. As Cortés had already told them that we were going to set out on the following day, for this reason we should make a show of tying together our baggage, which was little enough, and then in the large courts with high walls, where we were lodged, we should fall on the Indian warriors, who well deserved

their fate. As regards the Ambassadors of Montezuma, we should dissemble and tell them that the evil-minded Cholulans had intended treachery and had attempted to put the blame for it on their Lord Montezuma, and on themselves as his Ambassadors, but we did not believe Montezuma had given any such orders, and we begged them to stay in their apartments and not have any further converse with the people of the city, so that we should not have reason to think they were in league with them in their treachery, and we asked them to go with us as our guides to Mexico.

They replied that neither they themselves nor their Lord Montezuma knew anything about that which we were telling them. Although they did not like it, we placed guards over the Ambassadors, so that they could not go out without our permission.

All that night we were on the alert and under arms with the horses saddled and bridled, for we thought that for certain all the companies of the Mexicans as well as the Cholulans would attack us during the night.

There was an old Indian woman, the wife of a Cacique, who knew all about the plot and trap which had been arranged, and she had come secretly to Doña Marina, having noticed that she was young and good looking and rich, and advised her, if she wanted to escape with her life, to come with her to her house, for it was certain that on that night or during the next day we were all going to be killed. Because she knew of this, and on account of the compassion she felt for Doña Marina, she had come to tell her that she had better get all her possessions together and come with her to her house, and she would there marry her to her son, the brother of a youth who accompanied her.

When Doña Marina understood this (as she was always very shrewd) she said to her: "O mother, thank you much for this that you have told me, I would go with you at once but that I have no one here whom I can trust to carry my clothes and jewels of gold of which I have many, for goodness sake, mother, wait here a little while, you and your son, and to-night we will set out, for now, as you can see, these Teules are on the watch and will hear us."

The old woman believed what she said, and remained chatting with her, and Doña Marina asked her how they were going to kill us all, and how and when and where the plot was made. The old woman told her neither more nor less than what the two priests had already stated, and Doña Marina replied: "If this affair is such a secret, how is it that you came to know about it?" and the old woman replied that her husband had told her, for he was a captain of one of the parties in the city; as to the plot she had known about it for three days, for a gilded drum had been sent to her husband from Mexico, and rich cloaks and jewels of gold had been sent to three other captains to induce them to bring us bound to their Lord Montezuma.

When Doña Marina heard this she deceived the old woman and said: "How delighted I am to hear that your son to whom you wish to marry me is a man of distinction. We have already talked a good deal, and I do not want them to notice us, so Mother you wait here while I begin to bring my property, for I cannot bring it all at once, and you and your son, my brother, will take care of it, and then we shall be able to go." The old woman believed all that was told her, and she and her son sat down to rest. Then Doña Marina went swiftly to the Captain and

told him all that had passed with the Indian woman. Cortés at once ordered her to be brought before him, and questioned her about these treasons and plots, and she told him neither more nor less than the priests had already said, so he placed a guard over the woman so that she could not escape.

When dawn broke it was a sight to see the haste with which the Caciques and priests brought in the warriors, laughing and contented as though they had already caught us in their traps and nets, and they brought more Indian warriors than we had asked for, and large as they are (for they still stand as a memorial of the past) the courtyards would not hold them all.

We were already quite prepared for what had to be done. The soldiers with swords and shields were stationed at the gate of the great court so as not to let a single armed Indian pass out. Our Captain was mounted on horseback with many soldiers round him, as a guard, and when he saw how very early the Caciques and priests and warriors had arrived, he said: "How these traitors long to see us among the barrancas so as to gorge on our flesh, but Our Lord will do better for us." Then he asked for the two priests who had let out the secret, and he sent our interpreter, Aguilar, to tell them to go to their houses, for he had no need of their presence now. This was in order that, as they had done us a good turn, they should not suffer for it, and should not get killed. Cortés was on horseback and Doña Marina near to him, and he asked the Caciques why was it, as we had done them no harm whatever, that they had wished to kill us, and why should they turn traitors against us, when all we had said or done was to warn them against certain things of which we had already warned all the towns that we had passed through, and to tell them about matters concerning our holy faith, and this without compulsion of any kind? To what purpose then had they quite recently prepared many long and strong poles with collars and cords and placed them in a house near to the Great Temple, and why for the last three days had they been building barricades and digging holes in the streets and raising breastworks on the roofs of the houses, and why had they removed their children and wives and property from the city? Their ill will however had been plainly shown, and they had not been able to hide their treason. They had not even given us food to eat, and as a mockery had brought us firewood and water, and said that there was no maize. He knew well that in the barrancas near by, there were many companies of warriors lying in wait for us, ready to carry out their treacherous plans, thinking that we should pass along that road towards Mexico. So in return for our having come to treat them like brothers and to tell them what Our Lord God and the King have ordained, they wished to kill us and eat our flesh, and had already prepared the pots with salt and peppers and tomatoes. If this was what they wanted it would have been better for them to make war on us in the open field like good and valiant warriors, as did their neighbours the Tlaxcalans. He knew for certain all that had been planned in the city and that they had even promised to their Idol, that twenty of us should be sacrificed before it, and that three nights ago they had sacrificed seven Indians to it so as to ensure victory, which was promised them; but as the Idol was both evil and false, it neither had, nor would have power against us, and all these evil and traitorous designs which they had planned and put into effect were about to recoil on themselves.

Doña Marina told all this to them, and made them understand it very clearly, and when the priests, Caciques, and captains had heard it, they said that what had been stated was true but that they were not to blame for it, for the Ambassadors of Montezuma had ordered it at the command of their Prince.

Then Cortés told them that the royal laws decreed that such treasons as those should not remain unpunished and that for their crime they must die. Then he ordered a musket to be fired, which was the signal that we had agreed upon for that purpose, and a blow was given to them which they will remember forever, for we killed many of them, so that they gained nothing from the promises of their false idols.

Not two hours had passed before our allies, the Tlaxcalans, arrived, and they had fought very fiercely where the Cholulans had posted other companies to defend the streets and prevent their being entered, but these were soon defeated. The Tlaxcalans went about the city, plundering and making prisoners and we could not stop them, and the next day more companies from the Tlaxcalan towns arrived, and did great damage, for they were very hostile to the people of Cholula, and when we saw this, both Cortés and the captains and the soldiers, on account of the compassion that we had felt, restrained the Tlaxcalans from doing further damage, and Cortés ordered Cristóbal de Olid to bring him all the Tlaxcalan captains together so that he could speak to them, and they did not delay in coming; then he ordered them to gather together all their men and go and camp in the fields, and this they did, and only the men from Cempoala remained with us.

Just then certain Caciques and priests of Cholula who belonged to other districts of the town, and said that they were not concerned in the treasons against us (for it is a large city and they have parties and factions among themselves), asked Cortés and all of us to pardon the provocation of the treachery that had been plotted against us, for the traitors had already paid with their lives. Then there came the two priests who were our friends and had disclosed the secret to us, and the old woman, the wife of the captain, who wanted to be the mother-in-law of Doña Marina, and all prayed Cortés for pardon.

When they spoke to him, Cortés made a show of great anger and ordered the Ambassadors of Montezuma, who were detained in our company, to be summoned. He then said that the whole city deserved to be destroyed, but that out of respect for their Lord Montezuma, whose vassals they were, he would pardon them, and that from now on they must be well behaved, and let them beware of such affairs as the last happening again, lest they should die for it.

Then, he ordered the Chiefs of Tlaxcala, who were in the fields, to be summoned, and told them to return the men and women whom they had taken prisoners, for the damage they had done was sufficient. Giving up the prisoners went against the grain with the Tlaxcalans, and they said that the Cholulans had deserved far greater punishment for the many treacheries they had constantly received at their hands. Nevertheless as Cortés ordered it, they gave back many persons, but they still remained rich, both in gold and mantles, cotton cloth, salt and slaves. Besides this Cortés made them and the people of Cholula friends, and, from what I have since seen and ascertained, that friendship has never been broken.

Furthermore, Cortés ordered all the priests and Caciques to bring back the people to the city, and to hold their markets and fairs, and not to have any fear, for no harm would be done to them. They replied that within five days the city would be fully peopled again, for at that time nearly all the inhabitants were in hiding. They said it was necessary that Cortés should appoint a Cacique for them, for their ruler was one of those who had died in the Court, so he asked them to whom the office ought to go, and they said to the brother of the late Cacique, so Cortés at once appointed him to be Governor.

In addition to this, as soon as he saw the city was reinhabited, and their markets were carried on in safety, he ordered all the priests, captains and other chieftains of that city to assemble, and explained to them very clearly all the matters concerning our holy faith, and told them that they could see how their Idols had deceived them, and were evil things not speaking the truth; he begged them to destroy the Idols and break them in pieces. That if they did not wish to do it themselves we would do it for them. He also ordered them to whitewash a temple, so that we might set up a cross there. . . .

This affair and punishment at Cholula became known throughout the provinces of New Spain and if we had a reputation for valour before, from now on they took us for sorcerers, and said that no evil that was planned against us could be so hidden from us that it did not come to our knowledge, and on this account they showed us good will.

2 PEDRO PIZARRO (1515-1602?)

The following selection is from another eye witness to the events described. The writer is young Pedro Pizarro, who came to the New World with his cousin, the famous Francisco Pizarro, when the future conqueror of the Inca Empire returned from the court with the king's blessing on his projected enterprise. First as a page to Francisco and later as a full-fledged fighting man of the expedition, Pedro Pizarro was an eye witness or, at very least, intimate with the actual participants in the stirring events which he records. There is a point in his narrative where he remarks, "Up to this point I tell what I have heard. Henceforth I shall tell what I have seen."

To pick up the thread of the larger story: The band of adventuresome Spaniards, now free from the threat of interference by the officious new governor of Panama, has sailed down the Pacific coast of the southern continent. They have found Tumbez in ruins. They have slipped over to punish the folk of the island of Puna. They have established the base point of San Miguel and are now moving southward to meet the fabled ruler of the Inca Empire. The meeting with Atahualpa (Atabalipa, in the Pizarro narrative) takes place at Cajamarca. This encounter has given the critics of Pizarro and the Spaniards much ammunition, for heavy bloodshed ensued.

By the standards of Spain's enemies, it all added up to characteristic treachery. Here is the story from one "who was there." *

Then, having arranged for the settlement and the allotment of land at Tangarala, the Marquis left as lieutenant-governor Antonio Navarro, His Majesty's paymaster; here also remained the other officers [including] the treasurer and inspector. Then, taking all the rest of the men, leaving only those who were the settlers in that place, he [the Marquis] set out for Caxamalca, publishing it among the natives that he was going to favour and assist Guascar, the natural Lord of this kingdom, who was now fallen and whom the captains of Atabalipa, Quizquiz and Challicuchima, were carrying off in a state of vanquishment. Then, as they were journeying along with this purpose in Sarran, the same Indian named Apoo who, as I have said, was misused by Hernando Pizarro at Pohechos, came out [to meet the Spaniards]. He came openly, with certain impudent drakes, and two shirts with decorations of silver and gold, all of which he presented to Don Francisco Pizarro, saying that it was sent by Atabalipa. And the coming of this Indian was for the purpose of counting how many men there were, and so he went from one Spaniard to another, trying their strength in such a manner that they laughed at him, and asking them to draw their swords and show them to him. It befell that when he came to one Spaniard to do this he [the Indian] laid his hand upon his [the Spaniard's] beard, for which the Spaniard gave him many violent blows. When this was learned of by the Marquis Don Francisco Pizarro he proclaimed that no one should lay hands upon an Indian for anything which he did. Then, having counted the Spaniards, and having done the things which I have related, the Indian returned to his Lord Atabalipa, and related to him all that he had seen, and he said that, in all, there were some one hundred and ninety Spaniards of whom about ninety were cavalry, and that they were robbers and wastrels who came as knights, mounted on sheep, as I have before declared, and that they had caused to be prepared many ropes in order to tie them [the horses], because they came very full of fear, and [he said] that when they [the Spaniards] saw the troops which he [Atabalipa] had, they would flee. With this news Atabalipa took courage, and he held them to be of but small account, for had he held them in fear he would have sent troops to the slopes of the mountains, which is a slope of more than three leagues and very difficult, a place where there are many bad passes unknown to the Spaniards. With the third part of the troops which he had, and which he might have stationed in these passes, he could have killed all the Spaniards who were going up [into the mountains] or at least the greater portion of them, and those who escaped would have turned in a rout and would have been slain upon the road. Our Lord ordered matters thus because it was for His service that Christians entered this land. Then, the Marquis [went on] travelling by forced marches,

* *Relación del Descubrimiento y Conquista de los reinos del Perú*, translated by Philip Ainsworth Means and published by The Cortés Society under the title *Relation of the Discovery and Conquest of the Kingdoms of Peru*, 2 vols. (New York, 1921). This selection is from Vol. I, pp. 171-185, and is reprinted with the permission of The Cortés Society.

and when we were come to the ascent into the mountains, did not lack for a sufficiency of fear lest there should be soldiers in ambush who would deliver a surprise attack upon us. When we had issued from the mountains and had arrived at Caxamalca, Atabalipa was at some baths which are something more than a league from the town of Caxamalca where he [Atabalipa] had established his Camp, and, according to what we learned, he had more than forty thousand Indian warriours. Then, this same, day, the Marquis Don Francisco Pizarro sent Hernando de Soto with twenty cavalrymen to where Atabalipa was, [with orders to] say to him that he [Pizarro] had come on behalf of God and the King to preach to them and to have them as friends and to say other words of peace and friendship, and [to announce to Atabalipa] that he [Pizarro] was coming to see him. . . .

Then the Spaniards spent the whole night on guard, as I have said, with a fair measure of fear, for Soto and those who were with him related what they had seen and the great number of troops which the Indian [Atabalipa] had and because they were without knowledge of how these Indians fought or of what valour was theirs, because up to that time they had not fought with Indian warriours, save in Tumbez and on la Puna where the number of them did not go above six hundred. After dawn, the Marquis Don Francisco Pizarro arranged his troops, dividing the cavalry into two portions of which he gave the command of one to Hernando Pizarro and the command of the other to Hernando de Soto. In like manner he divided the infantry, he himself taking one part and giving the other to his brother Juan Pizarro. At the same time, he ordered Pedro de Candia with two or three infantrymen to go with trumpets to a small fort which is in the plaza of Caxamalca and to station themselves there with a small piece of ordnance which he carried in the field, and [it was arranged] that when all the Indians, and Atabalipa with them, had entered the plaza, they [the Spaniards] would make them [Candia and his men] a signal, after which the firing should begin and the trumpets should sound, and at the sound of the trumpets the cavalry should dash out of the large galpón where they were in readiness, and wherein many more of them might have been hidden than there were in their troop. The galpón had many doors, all those on the plaza being large, so that they might easily allow those who were within to dash out mounted. At the same time, Don Francisco Pizarro and his brother Juan Pizarro were in another part of the same galpón so as to come out after the cavalry. Thus it was that all [the Spaniards] were in this galpón, without one of them being lacking. Nor did they go out into the plaza, because the Indians did not see what sort of troops they were and because it would put fear into their [the Indians'] hearts when they all came out together. All [the Spaniards] decked their horses' trappings with bells in order to fill the Indians with fear. When all was thus with the Spaniards, the news was carried to Atabalipa by some Indians who were spying about that all the Spaniards were waiting in readiness in a galpón, full of fear, and that none of them [dared to] appear on the plaza. And in very deed the Indians told the truth, for I have heard that many of the Spaniards made water without knowing it out of sheer terror. On learning this, Atabalipa bade them give him food to eat, and he ordered that all his men should do likewise. These people had the custom of dining

in the morning, and it was the same with all the natives of this kingdom. The Lords, having dined, were wont to spend the day drinking until the evening, when they supped very lightly, and the lowly Indians spent the day in toil. Then, having dined, finishing about the hour of high mass, he [Atabalipa] began to draw up his men and to approach nearer to Caxamalca. When his squadrons were formed in such wise that they covered the fields, and when he himself had mounted into a litter, he began to march; before him went two thousand Indians who swept the road by which he travelled, and these were followed by the warriours, half of whom were marching in the fields on one side of him and half on the other side, and neither half entered upon the road itself at all. In like manner, he bore with him the Lord of Chincha, riding upon a litter, which seemed to his men a wonderful honour, for no Indian, no matter how great a Lord he might be, ever appeared before him [the Inga] save with a burden upon his back and with naked feet. Then, too, so great was the amount of furniture of gold and silver which they bore, that it was a marvel to observe how the sun glinted upon it. Likewise, there marched before Atabalipa many Indians singing and dancing. This Lord required for his going over the half league between the baths where he was and [the city of] Caxamalca [the time between] the hour of high mass, as I have said, and three hours before nightfall. Then the [Indian] troops having arrived at the entrance of the plaza, the squadrons began to enter it to the accompaniment of great songs, and thus entering they occupied every part of the plaza. The Marquis Don Francisco Pizarro, observing how Atabalipa had now drawn near to the plaza, sent Padre Fray Vicente de Valverde, first bishop of Cuzco, Hernando de Aldana, a good soldier, and Don Martinillo, the interpreter, with orders to go and speak to Atabalipa and require it of him in the name of God and of the King that he subject himself to the law of our Lord Jesus Christ and to the service of His Majesty, and [to say] that the Marquis would regard him as a brother, and would not consent that any injury be done to him nor any damage be done to his land. When the Padre had arrived at the litter in which Atabalipa travelled, he spoke to him and told him the things he had come to say, and he preached unto him the matters pertaining to our holy faith, they being declared [unto the Inga] by the interpreter. The Padre carried in his hands a breviary from which he read the matters which he preached. Atabalipa asked him for it, and he [Valverde] closing it, handed it to him [Atabalipa]. When he had it in his hands he did not know how to open it, and he threw it upon the ground. He [Valverde] called upon Aldana to draw near to him [Atabalipa] and give him the sword, and Aldana drew it and brandished it, but did not wish to plunge it into the Inga. When this occurred he told them to get them thence, as they were mere scurvy rogues, for he was going to have all of them put to death. Hearing this, the Padre returned and related all to the Marquis, and Atabalipa entered the plaza with all his pomp and the Lord of Chincha in his train. When they had entered the plaza and had seen that no Spaniard made his appearance, he asked his captains where were these Christians who failed to appear, and they said to him: Lord, they are in hiding for very fear. The Marquis Don Francisco Pizarro seeing the two litters did not know which was that of Atabalipa, so he ordered Juan

Pizarro his brother to attack one with the infantry and he would attack the other. This being ordered, he made the signal to Candia, who began to fire and at the same time caused the trumpets to sound, and the cavalry came out in troop formation, and the Marquis with the infantry, as has been said, and it all happened in such wise that, with the noise of the firing, and the blowing of the trumpets and the bells on the horses, the Indians were thrown into confusion and were cut to pieces. The Spaniards attacked them and began to slay them, and so great was the fear which the Indians had, and so great was their anxiety to flee, that, not being able to pass through the gateway [of the plaza], they threw down a portion of the wall around the plaza, a portion more than two thousand paces long and more than an estado high. The cavalry pursued them as far as the baths where they wrought great havoc among them, and would have wrought much more but for the coming of night. To return now to Don Francisco Pizarro and his brother, they sallied, as has been said, with the infantry, and the Marquis attacked the litter of Atabalipa, and his brother that of the Lord of Chincha; [the latter of] whom they killed there in his litter, and the same fate would have been Atabalipa's had not the Marquis been there, because they were unable to pull him out of the litter, and although they slew the Indians who bore it, others at once took their places and held it aloft, and in this manner they spent a great time in overcoming and killing Indians, and out of weariness, a Spaniard made as if to give him [Atabalipa] a blow with a knife in order to kill him, and the Marquis Don Francisco Pizarro prevented it, and by his prevention the Marquis received a wound in the hand from the Spaniard who wished to slay Atabalipa. Because of this, the Marquis gave loud cries, saying: Let no one wound the Indian on pain of death. Hearing these words seven or eight Spaniards were spurred on, and they rushed upon the litter from one side, and, with great efforts, they turned it over on its side, and thus was Atabalipa made a prisoner, and the Marquis carried him off [with him] to his room, and there they set a guard over him who watched him day and night. Then, night having come, all the Spaniards gathered together and gave many thanks to our Lord for the mercies he had vouchsafed to them, and they were well content with having made prisoner the Lord, because, had they not taken him so, the land would not have been won as it was won.

3 BARTOLOMÉ DE LAS CASAS (1474-1566)

Bartolomé de Las Casas is the man whose writings are often credited with having given birth to the "Black Legend." Actually, propaganda about Spain's greed and cruelty would undoubtedly have been employed by her enemies without any help from Las Casas. But it is certainly true that envious criticism of those first, the luckiest and most successful of the colonizers of the New World received a strong assist from the comments of this Do-

minican bishop about his fellow Spaniards. Las Casas had come to the islands early, as a conquistador. Later, he became a priest. After participating in the conquest of Cuba, he was inspired to work for the welfare of the Indians and joined the Dominican order, whose friars since the day when Fray Antonio de Montesinos lashed out against the conquistadores had been in the forefront of the fight for social justice for the American natives. From 1514 to the date of his death in 1566 at the age of ninety-two, Bartolomé de Las Casas championed the Indian cause—in word and work, in books and tracts, in the Indies and at the court of Spain. Unquestionably, he is one of the bright lights of the Age of the Conquistadores. At times, however, his crusading enthusiasm may have colored his story of what was happening overseas and his devotion to the cause of charity and justice may have prompted him to support his pleas for the native Americans with a recital of only the most dastardly of deeds and to bypass the virtues of the conquistadores to tell of their vices, which, without doubt, made better copy for the cause he was championing.

The following selections are taken from the most highly charged of his polemic writings, the little work entitled Brevísima Relación de la Destrucción de las Indias.* *It was written some years before but not published until 1552, just after the famous debate with Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda over the rights of Spain to conquer the Americas and the official attitude to be adopted toward the Indians ("natural slaves" or free vassals).*

The Indies were discovered in the year fourteen hundred and ninety-two. The year following, Spanish Christians went to inhabit them, so that it is since forty-nine years that numbers of Spaniards have gone there: and the first land, that they invaded to inhabit, was the large and most delightful Isle of Hispaniola, which has a circumference of six hundred leagues.

2. There are numberless other islands, and very large ones, all around on every side, that were all—and we have seen it—as inhabited and full of their native Indian peoples as any country in the world.

3. Of the continent, the nearest part of which is more than two hundred and fifty leagues distant from this Island, more than ten thousand leagues of maritime coast have been discovered, and more is discovered every day; all that has been discovered up to the year forty-nine is full of people, like a hive of bees, so that it seems as though God had placed all, or the greater part of the entire human race in these countries.

4. God has created all these numberless people to be quite the simplest, without malice or duplicity, most obedient, most faithful to their natural Lords, and to the Christians, whom they serve; the most humble, most patient, most peaceful, and calm, without strife nor tumults; not wrangling, nor querulous, as free from uproar, hate

* Since its appearance in 1552 the *Brevísima Relación* has been published in various editions and translations. The translation here used is from Appendix I of Francis Augustus MacNutt, *Bartholomew de Las Casas, His Life, Apostolate and Writings* (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1909). The "chapter titles" and the paragraph divisions of the original have been retained. Reprinted by permission of the publishers, The Arthur H. Clark Company.

and desire of revenge, as any in the world.

5. They are likewise the most delicate people, weak and of feeble constitution, and less than any other can they bear fatigue, and they very easily die of whatsoever infirmity; so much so, that not even the sons of our Princes and of nobles, brought up in royal and gentle life, are more delicate than they; although there are among them such as are of the peasant class. They are also a very poor people, who of worldly goods possess little, nor wish to possess: and they are therefore neither proud, nor ambitious, nor avaricious.

6. Their food is so poor, that it would seem that of the Holy Fathers in the desert was not scantier nor less pleasing. Their way of dressing is usually to go naked, covering the private parts; and at most they cover themselves with a cotton cover, which would be about equal to one and a half or two ells square of cloth. Their beds are of matting, and they mostly sleep in certain things like hanging nets, called in the language of Hispaniola *hamacas*.

7. They are likewise of a clean, unspoiled, and vivacious intellect, very capable, and receptive to every good doctrine; most prompt to accept our Holy Catholic Faith, to be endowed with virtuous customs; and they have as little difficulty with such things as any people created by God in the world.

8. Once they have begun to learn of matters pertaining to faith, they are so importunate to know them, and in frequenting the sacraments and divine service of the Church, that to tell the truth, the clergy have need to be endowed of God with the gift of preeminent patience to bear with them: and finally, I have heard many lay Spaniards frequently say many years ago, (unable to deny the goodness of those they saw) certainly these people were the most blessed of the earth, had they only knowledge of God.

9. Among these gentle sheep, gifted by their Maker with the above qualities, the Spaniards entered as soon as they knew them, like wolves, tigers, and lions which had been starving for many days, and since forty years they have done nothing else; nor do they otherwise at the present day, than outrage, slay, afflict, torment, and destroy them with strange and new, and divers kinds of cruelty, never before seen, nor heard of, nor read of, of which some few will be told below. . . .

De la Isla Española

4. The Christians, with their horses and swords and lances, began to slaughter and practise strange cruelty among them. They penetrated into the country and spared neither children nor the aged, nor pregnant women, nor those in child labour, all of whom they ran through the body and lacerated, as though they were assaulting so many lambs herded in their sheepfold.

5. They made bets as to who would slit a man in two, or cut off his head at one blow: or they opened up his bowels. They tore the babes from their mothers' breast by the feet, and dashed their heads against the rocks. Others they seized by the shoulders and threw into the rivers, laughing and joking, and when they fell into the water they exclaimed: "boil body of so and so!" They spitted the bodies of other babes, together with their mothers and all who were before them, on their swords.

6. They made a gallows just high enough for the feet to nearly touch the ground, and by thirteens, in honour and reverence of our Redeemer and the twelve Apostles, they put wood un-

derneath and, with fire, they burned the Indians alive.

7. They wrapped the bodies of others entirely in dry straw, binding them in it and setting fire to it; and so they burned them. They cut off the hands of all they wished to take alive, made them carry them fastened on to them, and said: "Go and carry letters": that is; take the news to those who have fled to the mountains.

8. They generally killed the lords and nobles in the following way. They made wooden gridirons of stakes, bound them upon them, and made a slow fire beneath: thus the victims gave up the spirit by degrees, emitting cries of despair in their torture.

9. I once saw that they had four or five of the chief lords stretched on the gridirons to burn them, and I think also there were two or three pairs of gridirons, where they were burning others; and because they cried aloud and annoyed the captain or prevented him sleeping, he commanded that they should strangle them: the officer who was burning them was worse than a hangman and did not wish to suffocate them, but with his own hands he gagged them, so that they should not make themselves heard, and he stirred up the fire, until they roasted slowly, according to his pleasure. I know his name, and knew also his relations in Seville. I saw all the above things and numberless others.

10. And because all the people who could flee, hid among the mountains and climbed the crags to escape from men so deprived of humanity, so wicked, such wild beasts, exterminators and capital enemies of all the human race, the Spaniards taught and trained the fiercest boar-hounds to tear an Indian to pieces as soon as they saw him, so that they more willingly attacked and ate one, than if he had been a boar. These hounds made great havoc and slaughter.

11. And because sometimes, though rarely, the Indians killed a few Christians for just cause, they made a law among themselves, that for one Christian whom the Indians killed, the Christians should kill a hundred Indians. . . .

De la Tierra Firme

In the year 1514 there passed over to the continent an unhappy Governor* who was the cruellest of tyrants, destitute of compassion or prudence, almost an instrument of divine fury. His intention was to settle large numbers of Spaniards in that country. And although several tyrants had visited the continent, and had robbed and scandalised many people, their stealing and ravaging had been confined to the sea-coast; but this man surpassed all the others who had gone before him, and those of all the Islands; and his villainous operations outdid all the past abominations.

2. Not only did he depopulate the sea-coast, but also countries and large kingdoms where he killed numberless people, sending them to hell. This man devastated many leagues of country extending above Deldarien to the kingdom and provinces of Nicaragua inclusive, which is more than five hundred leagues; it was the best, the happiest, and the most populous land in the world. There were very many great lords and numberless settlements, and very great wealth of gold: for until that time, never had there been so much seen above ground. For although Spain had been almost filled with gold from Hispaniola, and that of the finest, it had been dug by the labour of the Indians from the bowels of the earth, out

* Pedro Arias Dávila or Pedrarias.

of the aforesaid mines, where, as has been said, they perished.

3. This governor and his people invented new means of cruelty and of torturing the Indians, to force them to show, and give them gold. There was a captain of his who, in an incursion, ordered by him to rob and extirpate the people, killed more than forty thousand persons, putting them to the sword, burning them alive, throwing them to fierce dogs, and torturing them with various kinds of tortures: these acts were witnessed by a Franciscan friar with his own eyes, for he went with the captain, and he was called Fray Francisco de San Roman. . . .

De la Nueva España

New Spain was discovered in the year 1517. And the discoverers gave serious offence to the Indians in that discovery, and committed several homicides. In the year 1518 men calling themselves Christians went there to ravage and to kill; although they say that they go to populate. And from the said year 1518, till the present day (and we are in 1542) all the iniquity, all the injustice, all the violence and tyranny that the Christians have practised in the Indies have reached the limit and overflowed: because they have entirely lost all fear of God and the King, they have forgotten themselves as well. So many and such are the massacres and cruelty, the murder and destruction, the pillage and theft, the violence and tyranny throughout the numerous kingdoms of the great continent, that everything told by me till now is nothing compared to what was practised here. . . .

Among other massacres there was one took place in a town of more than thirty thousand inhabitants called Cholula; all the lords of the land, and its surroundings, and above all the priests, with the high priest came out in procession to meet the Christians, with great submission and reverence, and conducted them in their midst to lodge in the town in the dwelling houses of the prince, or principal lords; the Spaniards determined on a massacre here or, as they say, a chastisement to sow terror and the fame of their valour throughout that country, because in all the lands the Spaniards have invaded, their aim has always been to make themselves feared of those meek lambs, by a cruel and signal slaughter.

2. To accomplish this, they first sent to summon all the lords and nobles of the town and of all its dependencies, together with the principal lord; and when they came, and began to speak to the captain of the Spaniards, they were promptly captured, without any one who could give the alarm, noticing it.

3. They had asked for five or six thousand Indians to carry their baggage, all of whom immediately came and were confined in the courtyards of the houses. To see these Indians when they prepared themselves to carry the loads of the Spaniards, was a thing to excite great compassion for they come naked, with only the private parts covered, and with some little nets on their shoulders containing their meagre food; they all sit down on their heels, like so many meek lambs.

4. Being all collected and assembled in the courtyard, with other people who were there, some armed Spaniards were stationed at the gates of the courtyard to guard them: thereupon all the others seized their swords and lances, and butchered all those lambs, not even one escaping.

5. Two or three days later, many Indians who had hidden, and saved themselves under the dead bodies (so many were they) came out alive covered with blood, and they went before the Spaniards, weeping and asking for mercy,

that they should not kill them: no mercy, nor any compassion was shown them; on the contrary, as they came out, the Spaniards cut them to pieces.

6. More than one hundred of the lords whom they had bound, the captain commanded to be burned, and impaled alive on stakes stuck in the ground. One lord however, perhaps the chief and king of that country, managed to free himself, and with twenty or thirty or forty other men, he escaped to the great temple, which was like a fortress and was called *Quu*, where they defended themselves during a great part of the day.

7. But the Spaniards, from whom nothing is safe, especially among these people destitute of weapons, set fire to the temple and burned them, they crying out: "wretched men! what have we done unto you? why do you kill us? go then! in Mexico you will find our universal lord Montezuma who will take vengeance upon you for us." It is said, that while those five, or six thousand men were being put to the sword in the courtyard, the captain of the Spaniards stood singing. . . .

De la Provincia y Reino de Guatemala

Let us again speak of the great tyrant captain,* who went to the kingdom of Guatemala, who, as has been said, surpassed all past and equalled all present tyrants. The provinces surrounding Mexico are, by the route he took (according to what he himself writes in a letter to his chief who sent him), four hundred leagues distant from the kingdom of Guatemala: he advanced killing, ravaging, burning, robbing and destroying all the country wherever he came, under the above mentioned pretext, namely, that the Indians should subject themselves to such inhuman, unjust, and cruel men, in the name of the unknown King of Spain, of whom they had never heard and whom they considered to be much more unjust and cruel than his representatives. He also gave them no time to deliberate but would fall upon them, killing and burning almost at the same instant that his envoy arrived.

When he reached this kingdom, he began with a great massacre. Nevertheless the principal lord, accompanied by many other lords of Ultatlan, the chief town of all the kingdom went forth with trumpets, tambourines and great festivity to receive him with litters; they served him with all that they possessed, and especially by giving him ample food and everything else they could.

2. The Spaniards lodged outside the town that night because it seemed to them to be strong, and that they might run some risk inside it. The following day, the captain called the principal lord and many others, and when they came like tame lambs, he seized them and demanded so many loads of gold. They replied that they had none, because that country does not produce it. Guiltless of other fault and without trial or sentence, he immediately ordered them to be burned alive.

3. When the rulers throughout all those provinces saw that the Spaniards had burnt that one and all those chief lords, only because they gave them no gold, they all fled from their towns and hid in the mounains; they commanded all their people to go to the Spaniards and serve them as their lords, but that they should not, however, reveal to them their hiding place.

4. All the inhabitants came to offer themselves to his men and to serve them as their lords. This compassionate captain replied that he would not receive them; on the contrary, he would kill them all, if they did not disclose the whereabouts of their chiefs. The In-

* Pedro de Alvarado.

dians answered that they knew nothing about them but that the Spaniards should make use of them, of their wives and children whom they would find in their houses, where they could kill them or do with them what they wished. And this the Indians declared and offered many times.

5. Stupefying to relate, the Spaniards went to the houses where they found the poor people working in safety at their occupations with their wives and children, and there they wounded them with their lances and cut them to pieces. They also went to a quiet, large and important town, where the people were ignorant of what had happened to the others and were safe in their innocence; within barely two hours they destroyed it, putting women, children, and the aged to the sword, and killing all who did not save themselves by flight.

6. Seeing that with such humility, submission, patience and suffering they could not break nor soften hearts so inhuman and brutal, and that they were thus cut to pieces contrary to every show or shadow of right, and that they must inevitably perish, the Indians determined to summon all their people together and to die fighting, avenging themselves as best they could on such cruel and infernal enemies; they well knew, however, that being not only unarmed but also naked and on foot, they could not prevail against such fierce people, mounted and so well armed, but must in the end be destroyed.

7. They constructed some pits in the middle of the streets, covered over with broken boughs of trees and grass, completely concealing them: they were filled with sharp stakes hardened by fire which would be driven into the horses's bellies if they fell into the pits. Once, or twice, did some horses fall in but not often, because the Spaniards knew how to avoid them. In revenge, the Spaniards made a law, that all Indians of whatsoever rank and age whom they captured alive, they would throw into the pits. And so they threw in pregnant and confined women, children, old men and as many as they could capture who were left stuck on the stakes, until the pits were filled: It excited great compassion to see them, particularly the women with their children.

8. They killed all the others with lances and knives; they threw them to savage dogs, that tore them to pieces and ate them; and when they came across some lord, they accorded him the honour of burning in live flames. This butchery lasted about seven years from 1524 to 1531. From this may be judged what numbers of people they destroyed.

4 WILLIAM HICKLING PRESCOTT (1796-1859)

Yankee historian Prescott, along with Washington Irving, stands at the head of a lengthening line of United States writers who sought to interpret Spain, at home and in her Indies, to their fellow countrymen. The first result of Prescott's interest in things Hispanic appeared in print in 1838, with his volumes the History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella the Catholic. *Five years later came the* History of the Conquest of Mexico, *to be followed*

in 1847 by the History of the Conquest of Peru. *Later, in the years immediately preceding his death, in 1859, the volumes of his* History of the Reign of Philip the Second, King of Spain *were published.*

The works on Mexico and Peru quickly became American classics; both have gone through numerous editions. Although much further research and more writing have been done on each of these subjects in the past century, Prescott's studies remain, in the words of a recent commentator, works "that we still depend on . . . for some of our fundamental historical understanding." So many Americans of past generations received their ideas of the conquistadores through Prescott's pages that several selections belong in this little booklet. He is not wholly free from the prejudices of a nineteenth-century New Englander, as will be noted; but Prescott has come a far distance in the direction of a fairer judgment. It might be said that under his pen the "Black Legend" becomes a light gray.

COMMENT ON THE CONQUISTADORES, INSPIRED BY THE CHOLULA INCIDENT*

He had entered Cholulu as a friend, at the invitation of the Indian emperor, who had a real, if not avowed, control over the state. He had been received as a friend, with every demonstration of good-will; when, without any offence of his own or his followers, he found they were to be the victims of an insidious plot,—that they were standing on a mine which might be sprung at any moment, and bury them all in its ruins. His safety, as he truly considered, left no alternative but to anticipate the blow of his enemies. Yet who can doubt that the punishment thus inflicted was excessive,—that the same end might have been attained by directing the blow against the guilty chiefs, instead of letting it fall on the ignorant rabble, who but obeyed the commands of their masters? But when was it ever seen, that fear, armed with power, was scrupulous in the exercise of it? or that the passions of a fierce soldiery, inflamed by conscious injuries, could be regulated in the moment of explosion?

We shall, perhaps, pronounce more impartially on the conduct of the Conquerors, if we compare it with that of our own contemporaries under somewhat similar circumstances. The atrocities at Cholula were not so bad as those inflicted on the descendants of these very Spaniards, in the late war of the Peninsula, by the most polished nations of our time; by the British at Badajoz, for example,—at Taragona, and a hundred other places, by the French. The wanton butchery, the ruin of property, and, above all, those outrages worse than death, from which the female part of the population were protected at Cholula, show a catalogue of enormities quite as black as those imputed to the Spaniards, and without the same apology for resentment,—with no apology, indeed, but that afforded by a brave and patriotic resistance. The consideration of these events, which, from their familiarity, make little impression on our senses, should render us more lenient in our judgments of the past, showing, as they do, that man in a state of excitement, savage or civilized, is much the same in every age. It may teach us, —it is one of the best lessons of history,

* *History of the Conquest of Mexico,* Book III, Ch. vii. (Since so many editions of Prescott have appeared through the years this and the following selections will be identified by reference to the author's internal divisions of his two works, rather than to pages.)

—that, since such are the *inevitable* evils of war, even among the most polished people, those who hold the destinies of nations in their hands, whether rulers or legislators, should submit to every sacrifice, save that of honor, before authorizing an appeal to arms. The extreme solicitude to avoid these calamities, by the aid of peaceful congresses and impartial mediation, is, on the whole, the strongest evidence, stronger than that afforded by the progress of science and art, of our boasted advance in civilization.

It is far from my intention to vindicate the cruel deeds of the old Conquerors. Let them lie heavy on their heads. They were an iron race, who perilled life and fortune in the cause; and, as they made little account of danger and suffering for themselves, they had little sympathy to spare for their unfortunate enemies. But, to judge them fairly, we must not do it by the lights of our own age. We must carry ourselves back to theirs, and take the point of view afforded by the civilization of their time. Thus only can we arrive at impartial criticism in reviewing the generations that are past. We must extend to them the same justice which we shall have occasion to ask from Posterity, when, by the light of a higher civilization, it surveys the dark or doubtful passages in our own history, which hardly arrest the eye of the contemporary.

But, whatever be thought of this transaction in a moral view, as a stroke of policy it was unquestionable. The nations of Anahuac had beheld with admiration mingled with awe the little band of Christian warriors steadily advancing along the plateau in face of every obstacle, overturning army after army with as much ease, apparently, as the good ship throws off the angry billows from her bows, or rather like the lava, which, rolling from their own volcanoes, holds on its course unchecked by obstacles, rock, tree, or building, bearing them along, or crushing and consuming them in its fiery path. The prowess of the Spaniards—"the white gods," as they were often called—made them to be thought invincible. But it was not till their arrival at Cholula, that the natives learned how terrible was their vengeance,—and they trembled!

THE CHARACTER OF CORTÉS*

His character is marked with the most opposite traits, embracing qualities apparently the most incompatible. He was avaricious, yet liberal; bold to desperation, yet cautious and calculating in his plans; magnanimous, yet very cunning; courteous and affable in his deportment, yet inexorably stern; lax in his notions of morality, yet (not uncommon) a sad bigot. The great feature in his character was constancy of purpose; a constancy not to be daunted by danger, nor baffled by disappointment, nor wearied out by impediments and delays.

He was a knight-errant, in the literal sense of the word. Of all the band of adventurous cavaliers, whom Spain, in the sixteenth century, sent forth on the career of discovery and conquest, there was none more deeply filled with the spirit of romantic enterprise than Hernando Cortés. Dangers and difficulties, instead of deterring, seemed to have a charm in his eyes. They were necessary to rouse him to a full consciousness of his powers. He grappled with them at the outset, and, if I may so express myself, seemed to prefer to take his enterprises by the most difficult side. He conceived, at the first moment of his landing in Mexico, the design of its conquest. When he saw the strength of its

* *History of the Conquest of Mexico,* Book VII, Ch. v.

civilization, he was not turned from his purpose. When he was assailed by the superior force of Narvaez, he still persisted in it; and, when he was driven in ruin from the capital, he still cherished his original idea. How successfully he carried it into execution, we have seen. After the few years of repose which succeeded the Conquest, his adventurous spirit impelled him to that dreary march across the marshes of Chiapa; and, after another interval, to seek his fortunes on the stormy Californian Gulf. When he found that no other continent remained for him to conquer, he made serious proposals to the emperor to equip a fleet at his own expense, with which he would sail to the Moluccas, and subdue the Spice-Islands for the Crown of Castile!

This spirit of knight-errantry might lead us to undervalue his talents as a general, and to regard him merely in the light of a lucky adventurer. But this would be doing him injustice; for Cortés was certainly a great general, if that man be one, who performs great achievements with the resources which his own genius has created. There is probably no instance in history, where so vast an enterprise has been achieved by means apparently so inadequate. He may be truly said to have effected the Conquest by his own resources. If he was indebted for his success to the coöperation of the Indian tribes, it was the force of his genius that obtained command of such materials. He arrested the arm that was lifted to smite him, and made it do battle in his behalf. He beat the Tlascalans and made them his stanch allies. He beat the soldiers of Narvaez, and doubled his effective force by it. When his own men deserted him, he did not desert himself. He drew them back by degrees, and compelled them to act by his will, till they were all as one man. He brought together the most miscellaneous collection of mercenaries who ever fought under one standard; adventurers from Cuba and the Isles, craving for gold; hidalgos, who came from the old country to win laurels; broken-down cavaliers, who hoped to mend their fortunes in the New World; vagabonds flying from justice; the grasping followers of Narvaez, and his own reckless veterans,—men with hardly a common tie, and burning with the spirit of jealousy and faction; wild tribes of the natives from all parts of the country, who had been sworn enemies from their cradles, and who had met only to cut one another's throats, and to procure victims for sacrifice; men, in short, differing in race, in language, and in interests, with scarcely anything in common among them. Yet this motley congregation was assembled in one camp, compelled to bend to the will of one man, to consort together in harmony, to breathe, as it were, one spirit, and to move on a common principle of action! It is in this wonderful power over the discordant masses thus gathered under his banner, that we recognize the genius of the great commander, no less than in the skill of his military operations. . . .

Cortés was not a vulgar conqueror. He did not conquer from the mere ambition of conquest. If he destroyed the ancient capital of the Aztecs, it was to build up a more magnificent capital on its ruins. If he desolated the land, and broke up its existing institutions, he employed the short period of his administration in digesting schemes for introducing there a more improved culture and a higher civilization. In all his expeditions he was careful to study the resources of the country, its social organization, and its physical capacities. He enjoined it on his captains to attend particularly to these objects. If he was greedy of gold, like most of the Spanish

cavaliers in the New World, it was not to hoard it, nor merely to lavish it in the support of a princely establishment, but to secure funds for prosecuting his glorious discoveries. . . .

Cortés was not cruel; at least not cruel as compared with most of those who followed his iron trade. The path of the conqueror is necessarily marked with blood. He was not too scrupulous, indeed, in the execution of his plans. He swept away the obstacles which lay in his track; and his fame is darkened by the commission of more than one act which his boldest apologists will find it hard to vindicate. But he was not wantonly cruel. He allowed no outrage on his unresisting foes. This may seem small praise, but it is an exception to the usual conduct of his countrymen in their conquests, and it is something to be in advance of one's time. . . .

One trait more remains to be noticed in the character of this remarkable man; that is, his bigotry, the failing of the age,—for, surely, it should be termed only a failing. When we see the hand, red with the blood of the wretched native, raised to invoke the blessing of Heaven on the cause which it maintains, we experience something like a sensation of disgust at the act, and a doubt of its sincerity. But this is unjust. We should throw ourselves back (it cannot be too often repeated) into the age; the age of the Crusades. For every Spanish cavalier, however sordid and selfish might be his private motives, felt himself to be the soldier of the Cross. Many of them would have died in defence of it. Whoever has read the correspondence of Cortés, or, still more, has attended to the circumstances of his career, will hardly doubt that he would have been among the first to lay down his life for the Faith. He more than once perilled life, and fortune, and the success of his whole enterprise, by the premature and most impolitic manner in which he would have forced conversion on the natives. To the more rational spirit of the present day, enlightened by a purer Christianity, it may seem difficult to reconcile gross deviations from morals with such devotion to the cause of religion. But the religion taught in that day was one of form and elaborate ceremony. In the punctilious attention to discipline, the spirit of Christianity was permitted to evaporate. The mind, occupied with forms, thinks little of substance. In a worship that is addressed too exclusively to the senses, it is often the case, that morality becomes divorced from religion, and the measure of righteousness is determined by the creed rather than by the conduct.

THE SPIRIT OF THE CONQUERORS*

It is not easy at this time to comprehend the impulse given to Europe by the discovery of America. It was not the gradual acquisition of some border territory, a province or a kingdom that had been gained, but a New World that was now thrown open to the European. The races of animals, the mineral treasures, the vegetable forms, and the varied aspects of nature, man in the different phases of civilization, filled the mind with entirely new sets of ideas, that changed the habitual current of thought and stimulated it to indefinite conjecture. The eagerness to explore the wonderful secrets of the new hemisphere became so active, that the principal cities of Spain were, in a manner, depopulated, as emigrants thronged one after another to take their chance upon the deep. It was a world of romance that was thrown open; for, whatever might be the luck of the adventurer, his reports on his return were

* *History of the Conquest of Peru*, Book II, Ch. i.

tinged with a coloring of romance that stimulated still higher the sensitive fancies of his countrymen, and nourished the chimerical sentiments of an age of chivalry. They listened with attentive ears to tales of Amazons which seemed to realize the classic legends of antiquity, to stories of Patagonian giants, to flaming pictures of an *El Dorado*, where the sands sparkled with gems, and golden pebbles as large as birds' eggs were dragged in nets out of the rivers.

Yet that the adventurers were no impostors, but dupes, too easy dupes of their own credulous fancies, is shown by the extravagant character of their enterprises; by expeditions in search of the magical Fountain of Health, of the golden Temple of Doboyba, of the golden sepulchres of Zenu; for gold was ever floating before their distempered vision, and the name of *Castilla del Oro*, Golden Castile, the most unhealthy and unprofitable region of the Isthmus, held out a bright promise to the unfortunate settler, who too frequently, instead of gold, found there only his grave.

In this realm of enchantment, all the accessories served to maintain the illusion. The simple natives, with their defenceless bodies and rude weapons were no match for the European warrior armed to the teeth in mail. The odds were as great as those found in any legend of chivalry, where the lance of the good knight overturned hundreds at a touch. The perils that lay in the discoverer's path, and the sufferings he had to sustain, were scarcely inferior to those that beset the knight-errant. Hunger and thirst and fatigue, the deadly effluvia of the morass with its swarms of venomous insects, the cold of mountain snows, and the scorching sun of the tropics, these were the lot of every cavalier who came to seek his fortunes in the New World. It was the reality of romance. The life of the Spanish adventurer was one chapter more—and not the least remarkable—in the chronicles of knight-errantry.

The character of the warrior took somewhat of the exaggerated coloring shed over his exploits. Proud and vainglorious, swelled with lofty anticipations of his destiny, and an invincible confidence in his own resources, no danger could appall and no toil could tire him. The greater the danger, indeed, the higher the charm; for his soul revelled in excitement, and the enterprise without peril wanted that spur of romance which was necessary to rouse his energies into action. Yet in the motives of action meaner influences were strangely mingled with the loftier, the temporal with the spiritual. Gold was the incentive and the recompense, and in the pursuit of it his inflexible nature rarely hesitated as to the means. His courage was sullied with cruelty, the cruelty that flowed equally—strange as it may seem—from his avarice and his religion; religion as it was understood in that age,—the religion of the Crusader. It was the convenient cloak for a multitude of sins, which covered them even from himself. The Castilian, too proud for hypocrisy, committed more cruelties in the name of religion than were ever practised by the pagan idolater or the fanatical Moslem. The burning of the infidel was a sacrifice acceptable to Heaven, and the conversion of those who survived amply atoned for the foulest offences. It is a melancholy and mortifying consideration, that the most uncompromising spirit of intolerance—the spirit of the Inquisitor at home, and of the Crusader abroad—should have emanated from a religion which preached peace upon earth and good-will towards man!

What a contrast did these children

of Southern Europe present to the Anglo-Saxon races who scattered themselves along the great northern division of the western hemisphere! For the principle of action with these latter was not avarice, nor the more specious pretext of proselytism; but independence, —independence religious and political. To secure this, they were content to earn a bare subsistence by a life of frugality and toil. They asked nothing from the soil, but the reasonable returns of their own labor. No golden visions threw a deceitful halo around their path, and beckoned them onwards through seas of blood to the subversion of an unoffending dynasty. They were content with the slow but steady progress of their social polity. They patiently endured the privations of the wilderness, watering the tree of liberty with their tears and with the sweat of their brow, till it took deep root in the land and sent up its branches high towards the heavens; while the communities of the neighbouring continent, shooting up into the sudden splendors of a tropical vegetation, exhibited, even in their prime, the sure symptoms of decay.

It would seem to have been especially ordered by Providence that the discovery of the two great divisions of the American hemisphere should fall to the two races best fitted to conquer and colonize them. Thus the northern section was consigned to the Anglo-Saxon race, whose orderly, industrious habits found an ample field for development under its colder skies and on its more rugged soil; while the southern portion, with its rich tropical products and treasures of mineral wealth, held out the most attractive bait to invite the enterprise of the Spaniard. How different might have been the result, if the bark of Columbus had taken a more northerly direction, as he at one time meditated, and landed its band of adventurers on the shores of what is now Protestant America!

5 THE *NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW* ON PRESCOTT

The following selection from an unsigned review of Prescott's* History of the Conquest of Peru *is neatly indicative of the traditional view of the Spanish conquistadores which came to the Americas with the early English settlers and endured for many centuries thereafter. It must be remembered that sixteenth-century Spain was England's great enemy, not only internationally but also religiously. The decline of Spanish power did not necessarily lessen an inherited antipathy. Spain's role in the American Revolution, somewhat equivocal in that she was an ally of France but no friend of the revolting colonies, did not warm American feeling toward her. Spanish truculence in the early days of the Republic did not help to change American opinion, nor did her determined resistance to the bid of her own colonies for independence in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.*

* LXV (1847). Reprinted in the Prescott memorial issue of the *Hispanic American Historical Review,* XXXIX (February, 1959), 173-175.

Americans were predisposed to dislike Spain and Spaniards. They were strong supporters of the "Black Legend," as this reviewer shows.

The Spanish adventurer in America in the sixteenth century was a singular compound of the bigot, the pirate, and the knight-errant. He was fierce, rapacious, and cruel; his conduct towards the natives was restrained by no sense of honor, no touch of compassion, no regard for the laws of God or man. A demon let loose from hell to wreak his spite and vengeance upon the sons of men could hardly have matched him in savageness, perfidy, and debauchery, and would have appeared even less odious, because incapable of his rapacity and fanaticism. A thirst for gold can work wonders, but it certainly never accomplished a greater miracle than in throwing the vices of this monster somewhat into the shade by mingling with them some of the most attractive qualities of chivalry; by imparting to him a reckless bravery, an invincible fortitude, and an untamable thirst for enterprise and distinction. The religion he professed, a wicked perversion of the name and spirit of Christianity, was hardly more dignified, or at all less hateful, than most forms of paganism; for it added the fervors of bigotry to the practice of crimes so monstrous, that the natural spirit and uninstructed conscience of man would have shrunk from them with loathing and horror. To say that he was sincere in his belief does not palliate the enormity of his offences against the law of justice and humanity, or give him any advantage over the untutored Indian whom he persecuted so remorselessly. And we have not confidence in the sincerity of his professions of zeal for the advancement of the faith, and the conversion of the heathen. This motive alone would never have led him to encounter danger and hardship with so firm a mind, to brave the perils of the unexplored sea and wilderness with so much daring and constancy, as to throw into the shade all the achievements of the heroes of older time. It was the accursed thirst for gold, acting on an excitable temperament, a lawless will, and a fervid imagination, which sustained him in his almost superhuman exertions; and in this point of view, of course, he sinks to a level with the swindler and the picaroon.

The magnitude of the evil accomplished by him was unhappily in full proportion to the atrocity of his intentions and character. Never had crime a broader or more magnificent theatre on which to act than in the conquest and subsequent desolation of the happy kingdoms of Mexico and Peru, and the subjection of millions of a simple and inoffensive people to the lust and wickedness of a few European adventurers. Seldom had robbery and murder been practised before on so grand a scale, even in the progress of Roman arms, or in the invasion of the Northern hordes which avenged the cause of outraged humanity on the descendants and successors of those who had fought under Caesar and Agricola. The pitiable condition, down to the present day, of these portions of America which were ravaged and colonized by the followers of Cortés and Pizarro, the frightful picture which their annals present of ceaseless anarchy and bloodshed, poverty, pestilence, and crime, seems but a fit though terrible retribution for the deeds of their ancestors. And under the iron heel of the invader they are even now expiating the long arrears of

guilt. It seems hardly too fanciful to say, that the siege of Mexico by Cortés has found its parallel and its punishment in the terrific bombardment of Vera Cruz.

We have used strong language to characterize the proceedings of the Spanish conquerors, because it seems to us that Mr. Prescott's imagination has been somewhat carried away by the romantic nature of their exploits, the grandeur of the scene on which they acted and of the results which they accomplished, the thrilling story of their expeditions through the wilderness and along the frightful passes of the Andes, and above all by their knightly appearance and language, their chivalrous daring, fortitude, and prodigality, so that he appears at times forgetful of the baseness of their motives and the moral atrocity of their acts. We do not say by any means that he labors to excuse or palliate them; on the contrary, the moral tone of his work is elevated and pure, and when he stops to consider their conduct at all in its ethical aspect, he invariably stamps it with the reprobation it deserves. Still, he follows with so much enthusiasm the wonderful story of their achievements, and depicts in such glowing colors their noble bearing and prowess, that the general effect is like that of a record of knight-errantry; his heart is stirred within him, as at the sound of a trumpet, by the recital of their deeds; and the consequence is, that the reader is hurried along with him, and cheated into admiration of a pack of robbers and murderers. A grave reflection comes at last, which shows their character in its true light; but it is not fraught with the full sternness of moral indignation, and the reader gladly escapes from it, and indulges in the pleasing delusion again. . . .

6 GENARO GARCÍA (1867-1920)

The bitterness against Spain, quite understandably characteristic of the days when American patriots were struggling to free their young nations from the rule of the mother country, sometimes endured in the Latin Americas to color the interpretation of Spanish overseas enterprise in the colonial centuries. In the period of the wars Las Casas often became something of a "patron saint." Genaro García, a Mexican historian, collector, and editor of note, belongs to that "unforgiving school" of Latin Americans. In reply to a critic of his work, Carácter de la Conquista española en América y en México, *Genaro García remarked: "I can say to you, and with positive evidence, that the conquest* in se *produced nothing worthwhile, not a single benefit, absolutely none." The selection from the prologue of this work* will indicate the opinion of a modern who feels that Las Casas was, if anything, mild in his characterization of the conquest and the conquistadores.*

* *Carácter de la Conquista española en América y en México, según los textos de los historiadores primitivos* (México: Oficina Tipográfica de la Secretería de Fomento, 1901), Prólogo, pp. 1-9, *passim.* Translated by John Francis Bannon.

For a very long time in Spain it was thought that there was nothing more meritorious in the eyes of God or of man than the slaughter of the infidel. A noted historian [Mariana], referring to Ferdinand I of Castile, writes: "During his reign he enjoyed a secure peace and in matters of government maintained strong control; but in order not to pass his days in idleness he embarked on a war against the Moors. He was convinced that in no other way could he win more acclaim from his people or act in a manner more pleasing to God than by turning his energies to so holy a war." Such ideas were not cut down by the scythe of civilization; rather, they became more deeply rooted with the passing centuries. The clergy from a very early date forsook its mission of peace and charity and went so far as to preach, with the authority of God's own word by way of justification, the extermination of the infidel. One result, among many more examples, was that general massacre of the Jews which the Spanish people perpetrated in 1391, urged thereto by Fray Pedro de Olligoyen and Canon Ferrán Martínez [as related by the chronicler Amador de los Rios]. At the end of the sixteenth century, "Don José Esteve, bishop of Orihuela . . . in his commentary on the Books of the Machabees, a work dedicated to Pope Clement VIII, explains the case of conscience in which a private individual can, without the interposition of public authority, take the life of heretics or infidels and decides that one may kill renegades from the faith without scruple, and further affirms that the kings of Spain ought to kill the Moors or at very least drive them from their realm, even though in so doing they would be violating pacts made by their predecessors. . . ."

Given such a background, and without trying to adduce other evidence, one might very properly predict that, come the hour of the discovery of America, the reaction of the Spanish conquistadores would be cruel, as often as they came face to face with an idolatrous people, beings "more like ferocious beasts than rational creatures." And the prediction would have been more than fulfilled. These conquistadores practically depopulated the Indies. These men believed that "since the Indians were folk without the faith, they might kill them without compunction, enslave them, take their lands and their possessions."

Notwithstanding all this, in the verbal accounts which the conquistadores who returned to the mother country gave to the Crown, as well as in letters and reports which they wrote, they very humanly contrived to glorify their acts, in order to escape possible censure and to win favors and rewards, and at the same time they were careful to pass over, or at very least to minimize, whatever was less honorable, consistently depicting the American natives as ferocious and detestable idolators, given over to every conceivable vice and villainy. . . .

Actually, before too many years accounts began to reach Spain which were both wholly trustworthy and completely contrary to the above-mentioned stories. But the monarchy saw to it that these new reports were quickly buried in the archives, and there they have remained under the seal of greatest secrecy. It was feared that, were they released, Spain might lose her good name. . . . Despite the fact that among historians who wrote about the conquest at an early date there were some who saw the more trustworthy documents, these writers used only such as might redound to Spanish interests. . . .

As a result the history of the conquest, seriously distorted, continues to be a series of highsounding panegyrics on the conquistadores and a counterseries of harsh strictures on and diatribes against the Indians. . . . It is necessary that a voice be raised, late though the hour be, to render tribute to truth and justice and, therewith, to the outraged memory of the unfortunate early Americans.

Lacking both the time and the talents, it is impossible for me to retell the entire story of the conquest. Therefore, I have limited myself to sketching its broad lines and very particularly as it affected my own country [Mexico]. In most instances I will take care to refer only to the writings of the conquerors themselves. In fact, utilizing only these I have succeeded in demonstrating that the glorious Don Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas wrote at all times with *truth* and even stayed *short* of it. These adventurers, despite their desire to eulogize themselves to a point wholly unbelievable and at the same time to play down the natives, still confess, and this with a certain coldness, many of their own horrible deeds, convinced, as Don Fernando I of Castile, that thus they would win the plaudits of the people and be praiseworthy in God's sight. Without realizing what they were doing, blinded by their own ignorance and crudeness, these reporters often give a great number of details which show the splendid civilization which they destroyed and the signal virtues of their unfortunate victims. . . .

7 RUFINO BLANCO-FOMBONA (1874-1944)

*The versatile Venezuelan Blanco-Fombona distinguished himself in many fields of literary endeavor—as novelist and poet, essayist and critic, sociologist and historian. He was a member of the anti-Yankee school at the turn of the century, along with the better known José Enrique Rodó and others. Quite regularly, Blanco-Fombona ranged himself on the side of those Latin Americans who have not hesitated to acknowledge the debt of their nations to Mother Spain. Some of his strictures on the conquistadores have not always pleased those of his Spanish "cousins" who tend to lose perspective in their patriotic ardor to clear their forebears of all taint of criticism for their American deeds. Still, his analysis of the conquistador is penetrating and shows much sympathetic understanding.**

The conquistadores, viewed with objectivity, are no more the bandits of Heine than they are the brothers of Saint Francis. Neither are they the heroic types to which the fighting men of a great and democratic nation of our century must conform. Who, then, are they?

They are simply Spaniards, Spanish adventurers of the sixteenth century. In them are to be found all the virtues of their nation and of the age to which they belong. And in them, too, one finds the national defects of that day,

* *El Conquistador español del siglo XVI: Ensayo de Interpretación* (Madrid: Editorial Mundo Latino, 1922), pp. 9-10, 175-183 *passim*, 195, 225. Translated by J.F.B.

magnified, perhaps, by the less civilized peoples and the far-off setting in which these conquerors worked and by the well nigh complete lack of control which they manifested and within which they led their lives. . . .

The discoverers and Spanish conquerors of America, whom we can judge today without preconceived ideas and with a much more accurate perspective of their accomplishments, were marvelous human beings, very Spanish and very much of the sixteenth century.

What is their record of accomplishment? They shrank the earth. They uncovered and subjected nearly one quarter of this planet, an entire continent unknown up to their time. In that continent, peopled by native races of varying degrees of cultural development, they conquered within the short space of less than half a century an extent of territory running for more than eighty degrees of latitude, to the north and to the south of the Equator. . . .

The conquests were effected amid the greatest obstacles which man can encounter, and by an almost insignificant number of men. . . . In this instance, success went neither to numbers nor to intrepidity, but rather to a superior over an inferior race, to a civilization which possessed the arquebus and the sword, the mastiff and the horse, against one which had no more than the arrow and the war club and wholly without either draught or war animals. Not without reason has it been remarked that, had the Indians known the use of iron, the Europeans might not have been able to overpower the American empires.

Advantages of political organization and training favored the Spaniards. Conditioned by a national struggle which had lasted for centuries, the Spaniard was dominated by three governing factors: the idea of the unity of the territory from which he came, the driving force of the concept of the race of which he was a member, and the universal religious faith of his fatherland. The Indians lacked such dominating forces in their lives and their thinking. Instinctively they fought to retain possession of their native soil; but some "nations," out of hatred for neighbors, often allied themselves with the invaders against fellow Americans. This last, the lack of a common spirit and feeling of brotherhood, greatly facilitated the conquest.

The Spaniards made use of natives against natives to such a degree that in the army of Cortés, to take but one example, which had only 518 Spanish infantrymen, thirty-two archers, thirteen musketmen, and 120 sailors, along with some two hundred Indian and a few Negro servants, there were more troops than in the army of Gonzalo de Córdoba. In the campaign against the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlán, thousands upon thousands of Indian allies fought for Cortés—barbarians unwittingly preparing their own destruction along with that of their Indian foes.

The spirit of servility to their own royalty also contributed its share to the defeat of the Indians. Once their emperors had fallen, the native peoples, as a general rule, felt themselves powerless to continue the resistance. . . .

The fact that the Indians had never had contact with the white race also proved fatal. In the beginning their tendency to look upon the invaders as divine beings had its moral effect. . . . Besides that, the boldness of the Spaniards completely upset every native concept of heroism. . . .

We will speak of the conquistador as a type, without distinction between the rank-and-file and the leaders. Some of these latter do have a character of

their own; but all, captains and privates, among whom there was no line of separation such as we know modernly, all, belong to that same race and family of youthful adventurers.

Valdivia is a soldier. So skilled was he in his profession and so well known as a military man by his fellows that, when the Pizarros, after the death of Francisco, were in revolt against royal authority, Gonzalo's great field leader, Carbajal, during the course of a battle against the royalists on taking a survey of the alignment of the opposition forces, remarked: "Valdivia just has to be on the other side!" And so he was, recently back from Chile and on the orders of the viceroy taking part in the campaign.

Pedro de Alvarado is dashing, cruel, and an urchin at bottom, called "The Sun" by the Indians who were taken by his blond hair. None was more avaricious. He sacked the islands and the coasts of the Gulf of Mexico. He sacked Texcoco—there, because the Indian chief, Cacame, did not bring in as much gold as Alvarado had hoped for, the poor American was tied to a post and his naked body smeared with boiling tar. Alvarado sacked Imperial Mexico, Magnificent Utatlan. In search of gold, braving unbelievable suffering, he went from Guatemala to Ecuador; then, for money, to the sum of 120,000 castellanos, allowed himself to be bought off.

Almagro was a rude fellow, unlettered, but valiant, courageous, generous, a good organizer, indefatigable, who had an instinct for the fighting, for which he was born. With no semblance of good judgment and without the slightest trace of shrewdness or cunning, he allowed himself to be duped by the Pizarro clan, who having taken this old comrade of Francisco their prisoner, did him to death after a farce of a trial. . . .

Pedrarias Dávila, favorite of the king, who put him at the head of a great expedition, is a man of despicable character. He betrayed and, out of jealousy, juridically assassinated Balboa, of a hundred million times greater value and worth than he. . . .

Balboa and Cortés are the most brilliant pair among the conquistadores. Both the one and the other have their cruel sides, but cruelty was by no means the predominant note in those warrior lives. More unfortunate than Cortés, Balboa crossed the path of a man unprincipled and powerful and on his way to greatness. Balboa had a good intellect, a strong will, a fine sense of diplomacy, few scruples, and an energy which could not rest. The discovery of the Pacific is the exploit for which he is remembered by posterity. He, and no other, seemed to be destined to become the conqueror of Peru —and he would have been the man for the job.

Cortés, better educated and of more honorable lineage than the majority of his heroic companions, is also a skillful leader, although there is a strain of religious fanaticism which mars his character at least to a degree. Able, energetic, an ultra-believer, he reminds one a good deal of Cromwell, though without the Protector's morbid severity. Cortés is a patron of laughter, a friend of the fair sex, and a devotee of high living. He is liberal, and most opportunely so, with friends and his lieutenants. . . . He thinks clearheadedly. He knows how to handle men. He writes with a free hand, gilding and highlighting his own personal exploits. He is clever in his policies and phrases his reports to superiors in such wise as to deceive both his sovereign and poster-

ity as well. He had a twofold good fortune, a magnificent stage upon which to display his political and military abilities and a literate companion in arms, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, who was to immortalize him.

Pizarro is definitely inferior to Cortés, with whom he is frequently compared. He is not without a shrewd native intelligence, but which had no formal training. He also lacks the fine heroic temper of Cortés and Balboa, and their iron determination. Rather he is wavering, ignorant, fanatical, ungracious, avaricious, and very cruel. He had little of the statesman about him. He even lacks those great qualities of the warrior, beyond daring and the natural bent of a leader of men. In his military record there are no pages to compare with the siege of Tenochtitlán. . . .

To what class in society do the conquistadores belong? To the lowly classes; they are men of the people. Among the first explorers and conquerors there is not a single name from an illustrious family. This is quite understandable, since the well placed among men rarely go off on such a dubiously successful venture. It is a challenge to the adventurous, to those who have nothing, who are nobodies, the poor devils who are potential cannon fodder. . . .

It would be a mistake to suppose that the sole motive force impelling the conquistadores was an uncontrollable and consuming thirst for gold. Other motives, as will be shown, drove these men. But hunger and thirst for gold did play an important part in the conquest. . . .

8 FREDERICK ALEXANDER KIRKPATRICK (1861-1953)

Kirkpatrick, a Cambridge don was long interested in the story of Spain and her children, both at home and overseas. Among his many works, The Spanish Conquistadores,* *is one of the more fascinating. The conviction that the English-reading public needed a modern over-all picture of the men who made the last years of the fifteenth and many of the sixteenth century some of the most exciting in the long record of the Western world led him to put this book together. The following selection is from the concluding pages of the study.*

In viewing the work of Spaniards in America, thought naturally turns to the later work of the English farther north. Points of contrast at once occur. Since the first permanent Spanish settlement dates from 1493 and the first permanent English settlement from 1607, both countries reproducing themselves in the New World, the England so reproduced was the England of the Stuarts and the Commonwealth, whereas the Spain so reproduced was that of the Catholic sovereigns and of Charles V. Spanish settlement coincided with

* *The Spanish Conquistadores* (London: A. & C. Black Ltd., 1934), pp. 345-347. Reprinted with permission of The Macmillan Company and A. & C. Black, Ltd.

the period of adventurous exploration: English settlement followed the period of adventure. When the Spanish Conquistadores are accused of inhumanity and inefficiency, this difference of time must be remembered: all that has been said—in the first instance by Spaniards—about that inhumanity and inefficiency is true, but not the whole truth. It may be noted that during the same period the English too were pursuing conquest and colonisation—in Ireland: and one would hesitate to claim that their work was more efficient or more humane.

Thus the two movements differed in the world which they brought with them; they differed still more in the world which they found: the English found no Mexico, no Peru, no Bogota.

But there was also a difference of theory: 'In Spanish America,' says E. G. Bourne, 'the natives from the start were regarded as the subjects of the Crown of Spain, whereas in English America they were generally treated as independent nations—friends or enemies as the case might be. . . . Daniel Denton in 1670 quaintly observes: "it hath been generally observed that where the English come to settle, a divine hand makes way for them by removing or cutting off the Indians either by wars one with another or by some raging mortal disease."' The Spaniards on the other hand constantly deplored the depopulation which they caused; they wished to rule a subjugated population. The Spaniards were conquerors who spread in little groups over a vast area: the English were colonists who made homes for themselves on the margin of the Atlantic. Yet theory and method were modified by circumstances; the Spaniards had to deal with peoples and tribes differing widely in culture, and where the natives did not fit into the Spanish scheme, they disappeared: the Pampa Indians have travelled the same road as the 'redskins' of New England and Virginia.

Spain was the precursor; the English leaders of thought and action, Hakluyt and Raleigh, repeatedly point to Spanish example. Raleigh in his *History of the World* turns aside to write: 'I cannot forbear to commend the patient virtue of the Spaniards. We seldom or never find that any nation hath endured so many misadventures and miseries as the Spaniards have done in their Indian discoveries; yet persisting in their enterprises with invincible constancy, they have annexed to their kingdom so many goodly provinces as bury the remembrance of all dangers past. Tempest and shipwrecks, famine, overthrows, mutinies, heat and cold, pestilence and all manner of diseases both old and new, together with extreme poverty and want of all things needful, have been the enemies wherewith every one of their most noble discoverers at one time or another hath encountered. Many years had passed over their heads in the search of not so many leagues; yea more than one or two have spent their labour, their wealth and their lives in search of a golden kingdom without getting further notice of it than what they had at their first setting forth; all which notwithstanding, the third and fourth and fifth undertakers have not been disheartened. Surely they are worthily rewarded with those treasuries and paradises which they enjoy; and well they deserve to hold them quietly, if they hinder not the like virtue in others, which perhaps will not be found.'

9 JEAN DESCOLA (1910-)

The author, from whose work Les Conquistadors *the following selections are taken,* is a Parisian by birth, and very definitely a Hispanophile. Much of his writing has been on Spain and Latin America and* Les Conquistadors *and another work have won coveted French literary prizes.* Les Conquistadors *took Le Grand Prix d'Histoire; his* Histoire de l'Espagne chrétienne, *Le Prix Thiers. Descola is sympathetic toward, almost an apologist for, the conquistadores. He is a good example of a modern upon whom they have worked their strange charm. As a Frenchman, he is a bit less susceptible to the "Black Legend" virus which infects so many Nordic writers or against which they have to guard themselves so carefully. Spain was never to the same degree the national enemy of the French as she was of the Dutch and English. Descola writes without the handicap of national prejudice against the men of the Iberian Peninsula.*

Here are a few judgments on the Conquistadors. Heinrich Heine was categorical: "They were bandits," he said. Angel Canivet claims that they conquered "by spontaneous necessity, by virtue of a natural impulse toward independence, without other purpose than to reveal the grandeur which hid itself beneath their apparent smallness." Maurice Legendre says: "Spain, by its Conquistadors, was going to seek outside, by sheer energy, the strength which at home she had only potentially and which it was essential for her to realize in order to maintain her independence." Salvador de Madariaga finds in them "the typically Spanish trait: the coexistence of contrary tendencies."

Each of these opinions, even that of Heine, who detested Spain and understood her little, has its share of the truth. Bandits at certain times—crises of panic and greed—the Conquistadors never lost their sense of grandeur. This was one of their contradictions. But the most striking was to have so closely associated the religion of self and the love of country.

The people of Spain, whatever may be her political regime, are the least possible "community-minded." They do not believe in the "collective soul," that invention of sociologists, useful sometimes as a propaganda theme but as sterile as it is theoretical. How could a collection of individuals form a single individual, at least without denying the personal soul? Deny the soul! An old proverb says that every Spaniard *"tiene su alma en su almario"*: a play on words, meaning that he keeps his soul in his closet; it is his own property, a secret thing. Pride and privation: that was the Spaniard of the sixteenth century.

Although fiercely individualistic, the Conquistadors were no less ardently patriotic. Every Spaniard carried in his heart a fragment of Spain and very often bathed it in his solitary tears. Andalusia had provided the first sailors,

* *The Conquistadors,* translated by Malcolm Barnes (New York: The Viking Press, 1957), pp. 358-360, 370-373. Reprinted with the permission of The Viking Press, Inc.

and Castile the majority of the soldiers. Columbus's sailors were almost all from Palos and Moguer, and the captains of the conquest came from Estremadura. Francisco Pizarro had recruited his companions at Trujillo, his native village; Cortés was from Medellín, Balboa from Jerez de los Cabelleros, Valdivia from Villanueva de la Serena. They must have dreamed constantly of their *casa solariega* and the herd at the bottom of the field tilled by the elder brother. Manor houses with nail-studded doors, or huts of slate —the thought evokes them both. That sunburned landscape of Estremadura, with its wide and melancholy horizons, haunted the Conquistadors, and to their conquests they gave the names of home: Medellín, Guadalajara, Trujillo, Cáceres, Badajoz, and countless Santiagos. This was the compensation of these voluntary exiles, who were so attached to their homeland that one might have been able, it seems, by scratching the soles of their shoes, to find a scrap of the red clay of the Tierra de Baros.

"*So color de religión—van á buscar plata y oro—del encubierto tesoro . . .*": "Under the pretense of religion, they went in search of silver and gold and of hidden treasure." These harsh words of Lope de Vega in his play *El Nuevo Mundo* calls for comment, if not for correction. Certainly the injustices and the crimes committed in the name of religion revolt the heart as well as the conscience. Certainly the Conquistadors used the instruments of the Faith to further their ventures. Thus Ovando, when fighting in Cuba, had given the signal to an ambush by placing his hand on his cross of the Knights of Alcántara, while Valverde warned Pizarro's soldiers that the moment of attack had come by waving the Bible at Atahualpa. The system of *requerimiento* inflicted on the primitive people, the mass baptisms, the conversions *in extremis* that preceded strangulation, the expiatory stake, and the massacres that ended in the *Te Deum* seem to justify the words of one Indian, exhorted by a monk to die in the Christian faith: "Are there Spaniards in your Paradise? Then I prefer to die a heathen!" Who would dream of denying that the ceremonial of the liturgy often took on the appearance of a funeral procession? But Lope de Vega was wrong on one point: the violent acts of the Conquistadors—abduction, robberies, assassinations—though sometimes performed "in the name of" religion, were never "under the pretense of" religion.

The Conquistadors were sincere. The legality of the enterprise was guaranteed them by pontifical bulls. They had been given to understand that they were leaving for a crusade—the one against Islam having ended but recently—and that after the Jew and the Mohammedan, it was now a question of converting the Heathen. They had been born into a hatred and terror of heresy. They had wept with delight at the capture of Granada, trembled before the Inquisition, and shuddered at the very name of Luther. While still children, they had often spat at the passing of a Moor or set fire to the booth of a Jew. Spain in the sixteenth century was nothing but a vast monastery, noisy with orisons and bells. They had grown up in the shadow of cathedrals and breathed the odor of incense from their earliest years, while the first words they had uttered had been the names of the saints.

The Conquistadors, although for the most part illiterate, had had no need of letters to feel the same fanatical spirit as did the horsemen of the Prophet when they invaded the old

Greco-Latin world, or the Crusaders when they spread over the Syrian plains, or their own fathers at the reconquest of Granada. They had been told—they had been convinced—that millions of Indians would burn forever in Hell if they, the Conquistadors, did not bring them the Faith. They believed this quite simply. Religion was for them not a pretext but a banner. The existence of God in three persons, the immortality of the soul, sin, the Last Judgment—it never occurred to any one of them to dispute these facts or even to discuss them. These men of war and passion had retained the faith of little children. Their confessions were sincere, they participated in the Mass not only in the flesh but also in the spirit. The worst of them died in penitence. Pierced by arrows, or with a sword blade in the throat, or tied to the stake under torture, they called loudly for the last rites. *So color de religión.* . . . What an error! No ulterior motive colored the faith of the Conquistadors. They remained men of the Middle Ages. Religious hypocrisy had not yet been invented; it was to turn up later, covering iniquity with its black cloak. The hypocrite is a creature of the seventeenth century.

The Conquistadors believed in God fiercely and unreservedly. But they believed also—above all else!—in the Devil. Now, the New World was the empire of the Devil, a Devil with multiform face, always hideous. The somber Mexican divinities, Huitzilopochtli (the Sorcerer-Hummingbird) and Tezcatlipoca (the Smoking Mirror), the horrible Kinich Kakmo of the Mayas, the Peruvian Viracocha who symbolized boiling lava, the sinister totems of the Araucanians and Diaguites. . . . Why, the medieval demon with short horns, lustful eye, and a tail that was curled like a vine shoot seemed a "good devil" besides such as these! Spaniards who in Estremaduran twilights had taken the flight of a bat for the passing of the Evil One were naturally terrified before these monsters of stone, with bared fangs and gleaming eyes, that seemed to come to fantastic life as night fell. How could they have watched an Aztec ceremony without nausea? The black-robed priests with matted hair, burrowing with their knives in the breasts of their victims, the human skulls piled up at the feet of the teocallis, the cannibal feasts around statues spattered with putrid blood, and the charnel-house stench which all the perfumes of Mexico were never able to hide. . . .

Such things froze the spirits of the Conquistadors, surpassing the nightmares of their childhoods. Satan himself was there, and his worship was celebrated among the dismembered corpses. His maleficent power was honored. He was no longer, as in Spain, the familiar accomplice that could be driven off by a flick of the finger, or the shameful specter slipping furtively through one's conscience but put to flight by a sprinkling of holy water. He was enthroned. Carved in granite, incrusted with precious stones and encircled with golden serpents, he was the superb incarnation of Evil. He glorified sin. Nothing was lacking in this perfect representation of Hell, not even the pots in which certain tribes of the Colombian jungle cooked their enemies alive. This indeed was Satan himself, adorned with all his lugubrious attractions.

Why, therefore, should we be astonished at the reactions of the Spaniards? In the depths of the Indian sanctuaries they could see the Prince of Darkness standing in all his macabre splendor. Looking heavenward, they could distinguish the silvery figure of Saint

James galloping across the clouds. The conflict between the true and the false, between good and evil, was manifest in this double apparition. The problem was simple and their duty was clear. The Indians were possessed of the Devil, who had to be exorcised, first by destroying the material evidence of Devil worship. This is why the conquerors, activated by the same blind zeal as early Christians when they shattered the Roman statues, overturned the pre-Columbian idols and burned the ritual articles and the manuscripts that transmitted the sacred tradition—in short, showed a holy ardor to abolish the very memory of the heathen liturgy. This they counted as pious work and a salutary need.

Iconoclasts? Vandals? These epithets would have scandalized the Conquistadors. Who would have applied such words except the agents of Satan who served a vile master? But the Conquistadors did not limit themselves to casting down the idols. In order that the exorcism be fully effective, it was not enough to drive away the demons; it was proper also to set up in their places the symbols of the True Faith. Just as holy medals were laid upon flesh that was eaten away with ulcers, the soldiers of Charles V planted crosses on the tops of the teocallis or at crossroads. On the stones that were still spattered with blood from the sacrificial tables, they raised altars to Our Lady of Guadalupe. Tolerance was not for them. Others would follow who would use gentler methods. No one doubts that these booted and armored Christians often lacked the Christian spirit and that charity was almost always missing from their pitiless fervor; but their Faith and their good faith were whole. More even than the love of God and of one's neighbor, the horror of Beelzebub explains certain of the Conquistadors' attitudes, though of course it is understood that to explain is not to absolve.

10 WILLIAM LYTLE SCHURZ (1886-)

Dr. Schurz acquired his Hispanic interest at the University of California in an atmosphere of fair play for the Spaniards which Professor Herbert E. Bolton was building so well. From a short teaching career, at the University of Michigan, he went on to serve the United States government for many years and in many capacities which brought him into intimate contact with the Latin Americas. Later, Dr. Schurz returned to the classroom, at the American Institute of Foreign Trade, Phoenix, Arizona. His delightful study, The Manila Galleon, *the story of the trade between New Spain and the Philippines in the colonial centuries, has recently appeared in a paperback edition, attesting its continued popularity. The following selection* is from one of his more recent works, equally delightful, and may be taken as a fair sampling of the modern Anglo American historian's evaluation of these controversial Spanish adventurers.*

* *This New World* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1954), pp. 118-122. Reprinted with the permission of E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc.

The epic quality of the Conquest is not only due to the magnitude of the scene and the stakes, but to the legendary heroism of the small companies of paladins who overthrew vast and warlike nations. They had an utter contempt for odds, as at Otumba and Cajamarca and in the battles against the Araucanians. They showed a reckless disregard for the dangers which they could not see and, without calculating the risks, plunged headlong into mountains and jungle where they might easily have been ambushed and annihilated. Whenever sheer weight of numbers forced them to give ground, they never yielded to panic. Physically, they were well conditioned for the trials and exertions of the Conquest by the sober style of living of their race, and the fortitude and endurance of the Spanish soldier always amazed their Indian foes, habituated to the environment.

They were also zealous in their faith and delighted in the destruction of heathen idols as the visible symbol of the Devil's domain over their foes. They naturally lacked a sense of future archaeological values and, in their crusade against the infidel, they no more respected the impressive temples of the official worship at Cholula and Mexico, and at Cuzco and Pachacamac than they did the humble roadside shrines of the common folk. In their campaigns, chaplains as hardy as they were, like Father Olmedo of Cortés's army, shared their hardships and ministered to their religious needs. And whenever one of the soldiers took an Indian woman as his concubine, the priest hurriedly inducted her into the Christian community and provided her with a familiar Spanish name.

In their writings, the soldier-chroniclers reveal the qualities of their own breed and the conditions under which they fought and lived. "As for the hardships and hunger they have faced, no other nation in the world could have endured it," wrote Cieza de León. "The daring of the Spaniards is so great that nothing in the world can daunt them," he said without boasting. Again he added: "No other race can be found which can penetrate through such rugged lands, such dense forests, such great mountains and deserts, and over such broad rivers, as the Spaniards have done without help from others, solely by the valor of their persons and the forcefulness of their breed. In a period of seventy years they have overcome and opened up another world, without bringing with them wagons of provisions, or great store of baggage, or tents in which to rest, or anything but a sword and a shield, and a small bag in which they carried their food." "God endowed Spain," wrote Oviedo, "with many valiant cavaliers and illustrious hidalgos, and He made its inhabitants of great boldness and determination and of a warlike nature."

Sometimes the odds seemed too great for men to bear. The spokesman of one of the bands which penetrated into the back country of Venezuela, told their leader: "We do not want gold. We are dying here. Take us away from this evil land, and though later you wish to come back, take us just to Coro, so that we can get back our health and get new clothes and weapons. For we are naked and in need of everything. And, Sir, we will come back with you with new equipment and with better chance of success than if we keep on now. For, as we are now, we do not want gold or anything else, only our lives, and not to lose them to no purpose, fighting the sky and defying the impossible."

Seville's Escuela de Estudios hispano-americanos *is a busy center of investigation and publication. The following selection* is from a recent study of one of its members, who is also the editor of* Anuario de Estudios Americanos. *Francisco Morales Padrón in this study typifies a trend among modern Spanish historians to adduce more and more evidence to effect a re-evaluation of Spain's colonial enterprise overseas, in a word a*

* *Fisonomía de la Conquista indiana* (Sevilla: Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos de Sevilla, 1955), pp. 73-74, 75-76, 77, 81, 82. Translated by J.F.B.

THE "BLACK LEGEND"

Ever since the Conquest, the Spaniards have been charged with dire crimes against the aborigines of the New World. This "Black Legend" of Spanish cruelty originated very early in the propagandistic exaggerations of the famous Las Casas, who advocated the cause of the Indians against the excesses of their conquerors. Since his book, *La Destrucción de las Indias,* furnished a convenient text for the resentments of all the envious rivals of Spain, it was eagerly translated into other European languages. The result was that those nations who had no Indians of their own to oppress could moralize in their self-righteousness at the expense of the Spaniard. The damning tradition has been as persistent as the myth, inspired by Suetonius, that universal lechery was responsible for "the downfall of the Roman Empire," and in our own time it has been preserved for future generations in the canvases of Diego Rivera.

No people had a monopoly of cruelty or of mercy in the sixteenth century. In spite of the restraints of Christianity and the new dignity which the Renaissance gave to the personality of the individual man, it was a rough and ruthless age. Underneath the shiny new polish of western civilization, there was still much heartlessness and brutality, as was to be demonstrated in the religious wars of Europe. It happened that the Spaniards and the Portuguese were the first Europeans to be thrown into contact with "inferior" races and they probably dealt with them as humanely as any other European people would have done under the same conditions. And in their mutual hates, they could be as cruel to one another as they ever were to the Indians.

In the first surge of the period of discovery the Spaniards harried the major islands of the Antilles. Disillusioned as to the wealth which they expected to find, and their sadistic instincts aroused by the very gentleness of the natives, many of them followed the example of the callous Roldán. As the depopulation of Hispaniola by mistreatment and disease proceeded, slaves were brought in from the Spanish Main to fill the gaps in the manpower of the colony. Las Casas, himself a lay colonist and employer of Indian labor before he became a Dominican friar, witnessed this phase of the Conquest and was inspired by what he saw to deliver his burning polemic against his fellow Spaniards.

As the process of Conquest spread to the mainland, the Spaniards encountered the resistance of large numbers of warlike Indians who aroused their respect by their fighting qualities. In the violence of the wars that followed the invasion of the continent, no quarter was given on either side and each treated the other with complete disregard of any rules or principles of humanity or fair play. The ferocity of the Indians invited retaliation in kind, as it did in Colombia or when the Aztecs sacrificed their Spanish prisoners to the war god in the sight of their comrades. The various conquistadores differed greatly in their treatment of the Indians. Nuño de Guzmán, who overran the Pánuco country of northern Mexico, was a killer and slave hunter, who was called to account for his crimes by Bishop Zumárraga. Cortés, severe from military necessity during the period of actual fighting, later won the confidence of the Indian peoples of Mexico by his moderation.

Similarly, Balboa, after the initial rigors of hostilities were over, kept the peace throughout the Darien region by his fair treatment of the various tribal

chiefs, only to have his work undone by Pedrarias Dávila. Although the Spanish Main was long a lethal hornet's nest of poisoned Carib arrows for any Spaniard who ventured ashore, Pedro de Heredia, founder of Cartagena, managed to establish satisfactory working relationships with the Indians of the neighborhood. In Peru, but particularly in the coastal part of the country, the Indians suffered greatly during the Conquest and the civil wars which accompanied them. After Cajamarca, they always expected the worst from Francisco Pizarro and were seldom disappointed. Gonzalo enjoyed a much better reputation with the Indians than did his brother, and Pizarro's partner, Almagro, "had a way" with the Indians, as he did with his own men.

If the Spaniard was often cruel to the Indian in the heat of the Conquest, once the fighting had ceased and the conqueror turned colonist, the lot of the Indians generally improved. If he settled down on an encomienda, the Indians who dwelt on the land became *his* people. As their *patrón,* he felt a responsibility for their welfare and he preferred to see them happy around him, because their happiness contributed to his own peace of mind. In the new relationship, the basic justice and humanity of the Spaniard tended to assert itself, and though there were individual exceptions, the institution of the encomienda with the safeguards established by the new laws was probably as satisfactory a framework as was possible for reconciling the interests of conqueror and conquered in that imperfect age.

When there were abuses, first to protest against them were Spaniards, both clerics and laymen. It is to the everlasting credit of Spain that there were priests like Montesinos and Las Casas and the early Dominicans and Franciscans in Mexico, and men among the conquerors themselves, like Cieza and Oviedo and Cabeza de Vaca to raise their voices on behalf of the Indians. And no other nation had so humane a code of laws to protect a subject people as had Spain. Among them all, there was none who undertook with so much wisdom and devotion and good sense to preserve the values and institutions of the native civilization against the impact of the new forces as Vasco de Quiroga, Bishop of Michoacán and disciple of Thomas More. The fundamental fact remains that most of the blood in over half the Latin American republics is still Indian blood.

11 FRANCISCO MORALES PADRÓN

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campaign to discredit the "Black Legend." In this effort Morales Padrón is joined by historians such as Julián Juderías, Constantino Bayle, and Rómulo Carbia.

There is many a monograph devoted to the study of his [the conquistador's] psychology, his social status, his ambitions. . . . The conquistador is a man of his age, an age when Luther counseled that the German peasants in revolt should be cut down as so many dogs. If the conquistador sinned more than his contemporaries of other nations it was because he had more opportunities and more temptations. Aside from this, a century later the English in Virginia treated the natives and their own fellow Britains with a classic barbarism. These "habits of horror," in the opinion of A. J. Toynbee, were acquired in their campaigns against the survivors of the Celtic race in the highlands of Scotland and the bogs of Ireland. And we will say nothing about the Germans in Venezuela, where they operated between 1528 and 1546. What did they do? What did they leave behind? In the event the reader does not recall, the answer we will supply: They killed off thousands of Indians and established no more than a pair of settlements. There is no reason, then, to be disturbed by the actions of the conquistador, Spaniard though he was, he was no more or no less a man of his age. . . . We feel, and have often contended, that there is no better way to know these men than through their deeds and the documents they have left behind. There is no place here for modern interpretations of Freudian stamp. . . . There is neither a black legend nor a rose-colored one. America had to be conquered, and this was accomplished. The men who went thither were not unfeeling assassins; they were typical humans, acting under the influence of their environment, conditioned by their epoch, the circumstances, the enemy, and their own historical outlook. The Conquest highlighted both the virtues and the defects of the race to which they belonged.

To come close to an understanding of the psychology of the conquistador we must withdraw from the soft life of our own stage of cultural development and abandon, as well, the prejudices and the criteria of our modern age. We must judge the conquistadores and their lives by the standards of their own age, and with due consideration taken of the circumstances and the environment in which they operated. Many historians, sitting in judgment on these men, have found them greedy and cruel; to others they appear as near-saints. The wonder is that, given the distance from home control and the milieu in which they found themselves, they did not become great despots and conduct themselves with more complete abandon. It is impossible to universalize and to portray a typical conquistador, the archetype as it were. They were men of differing temperaments who did their deeds in very different circumstances. A Cortés is not like . . . a Valdivia . . . or a Jiménez de Quesada. . . .

Let us avoid oversimplification and also the conviction that they were a gang of thugs, looking only for gold, blood, and women. . . .

They were individualists, and they will continue to be such as long as they are Spaniards. . . . They were religious, without being sacristans. . . . Fortitude they had in the face of adversity and

suffering, and it was necessary to ensure the goals to which they were committed. They suffered almost beyond the power of words to describe, and they resigned themselves and never allowed themselves to drift toward despair or self-destruction. . . . There is no need to bring forward examples of rashness and daring in speaking of these men. . . . Honor and fame motivated one and all. . . .

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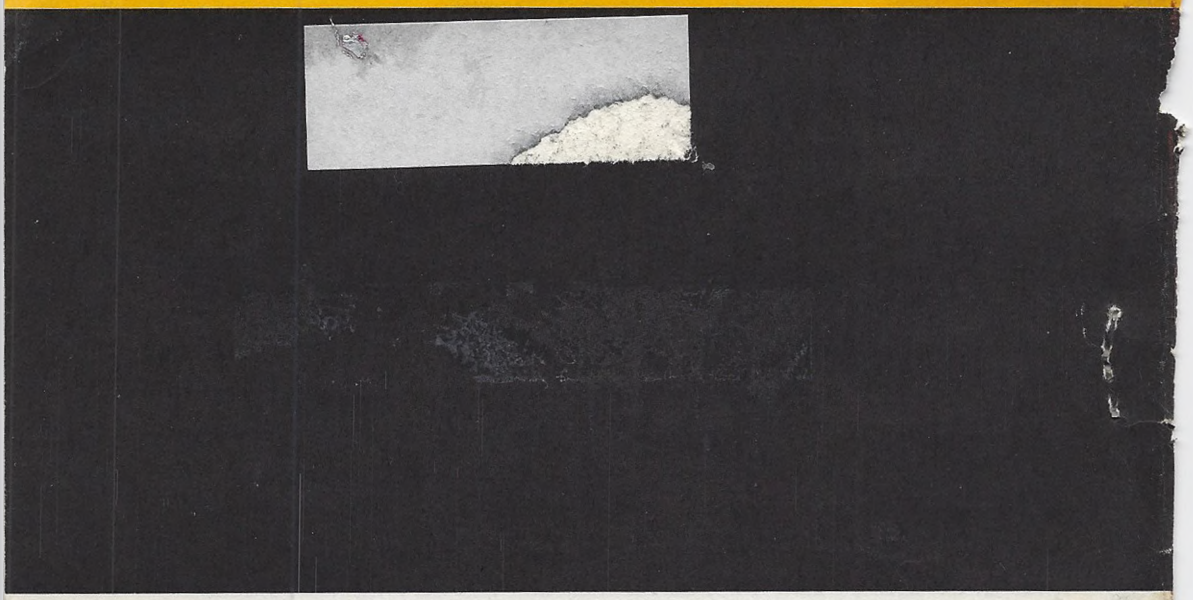

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