

and-mouse with the extraordinary strangers that had marched from some other world into the midst of his army. He could not conceive that, with the odds so completely in his favor, the Spaniards would be the first to attack. Nor could he imagine that an attack would come without warning or provocation, before he had even held his meeting with Governor Pizarro.

The Spaniards themselves had acted in terror and desperation, and could scarcely believe the crushing success of their ambush. "Truly, it was not accomplished by our own forces, for there were so few of us. It was by the grace of God, which is great."

Note

References for all quotations can be found in the original version of this piece, in John Hemming's *The Conquest of the Incas* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970), pp. 23-45.

? IN DEFENSE OF THE INDIANS

Bartolomé de las Casas

Contrary to the stereotype of their monolithic wickedness in the subjugation of the Americas' indigenous peoples, some Spaniards protested the brutality of conquest and colonial rule. None was more influential than Bartolomé de las Casas, the long-lived Dominican bishop of Chiapas in Mexico. Although later to be blamed for supposedly exaggerating his countrymen's cruelty and advocating the enslavement of Africans instead of Indians as a "lesser evil," the aristocratically born Andalusian was a tireless champion of Indian rights. His writings were widely read in colonial Peru. These excerpts from "In Defense of the Indians," a passionate response to court theologian Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda's assertion of Indian inferiority, give a flavor of his forthright criticism of Spain's role in the New World.

And so what man of sound mind will approve a war against men who are harmless, ignorant, gentle, temperate, unarmed, and destitute of every human defense? For the results of such a war are very surely the loss of the souls of that people who perish without knowing God and without the support of the sacraments, and, for the survivors, hatred and loathing of the Christian religion. Hence the purpose God intends, and for the attainment of which he suffered so much, may be frustrated by the evil and cruelty that our men wreak on them with inhuman barbarity. What will these people think of Christ, the true God of the Christians, when they see Christians venting their rage against them with so many massacres, so much bloodshed without any just cause, at any rate without any just cause that they know of (nor can one even be imagined), and without any fault committed on their [the Indians'] part against the Christians?

What good can come from these military campaigns that would, in the eyes of God, who evaluates all things with unutterable love, compensate

for so many evils, so many injuries, and so many unaccustomed misfortunes? Furthermore, how will that nation love us, how will they become our friends (which is necessary if they are to accept our religion), when children see themselves deprived of parents, wives of husbands, and fathers of children and friends? When they see those they love wounded, imprisoned, plundered, and reduced from an immense number to a few? When they see their rulers stripped of their authority, crushed, and afflicted with a wretched slavery? All these things flow necessarily from war. Who is there who would want the gospel preached to himself in such a fashion? Does not this negative precept apply to all men in general: "See that you do not do to another what you would not have done to you by another"? And the same for the affirmative command: "So always treat others as you would like them to treat you." This is something that every man knows, grasps, and understands by the natural light that has been imparted to our minds.

From the fact that the Indians are barbarians it does not necessarily follow that they are incapable of government and have to be ruled by others, except to be taught about the Catholic faith and to be admitted to the holy sacraments. They are not ignorant, inhuman, or bestial. Rather, long before they had heard the word Spaniard they had properly organized states, wisely ordered by excellent laws, religion, and custom. They cultivated friendship and, bound together in common fellowship, lived in populous cities in which they wisely administered the affairs of both peace and war justly and equitably, truly governed by laws that at very many points surpass ours, and could have won the admiration of the sages of Athens. . . . Now what belief will be placed in the Spaniards—greedy, violent, and cruel men who put unarmed and harmless Indians to the sword and rob them with extraordinary avarice? From this we conclude that the Indians, seeing their wicked deeds, commit no sin and do not deserve punishment if they do not accept the gospel. Nor would any nation have been guilty for not accepting the faith of Christ if, supposing the impossible, the Apostles had behaved like the Spaniards. In this regard we have the Lord's statement: "If I had not performed such works among them as no one else has ever done, they would be blameless."

War is not a suitable means for spreading Christ's glory and the truth of the gospel, but rather for making the Christian name hateful and detestable to those who suffer the disasters of war. So war against the Indians, which we call in Spanish *conquistas*, is evil and essentially anti-Christian. For that is not a reason why we may pursue them by war, nor have they ever, even in past centuries, committed any crime against us that would



Figure 8. Indian kicked at an inn. (From Guamán Poma de Ayala, *Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno*)

call for war. They have been totally unknown in our regions. Therefore, since war should not be waged unless there has first been a provocation by the person against whom warfare is being prepared toward the one who is waging the war, it follows that war against the Indians is unlawful.

Finally, let all savagery and apparatus of war, which are better suited to Moslems than Christians, be done away with. Let upright heralds be sent to proclaim Jesus Christ in their way of life and to convey the attitudes of Peter and Paul. The Indians will embrace the teaching of the gospel, as I well know, for they are not stupid or barbarous but have a native sincerity and are simple, moderate, and meek, and, finally, such that I do not know whether there is any people readier to receive the gospel. Once they have embraced it, it is marvelous with what piety, eagerness, faith, and charity they obey Christ's precepts and venerate the sacraments. For they are docile and clever, and in their diligence and gifts of nature, they excel most peoples of the known world.

OUR HOUSE

Marco Martos

Even into the twentieth-century conservative regimes of Benavides and Prado, official history celebrated the role of the Spanish in Peru. Francisco Pizarro's bones still lie in state in Lima's cathedral, just across the Plaza de Armas from an equestrian monument to the capital's founder. Spain's language, religion, and music—these imports were seen as the defining pillars of Peruvian culture. Yet the memory of the conquest as the country's downfall also persisted in the thinking of many Peruvians. The view of a "house divided in spoonfuls" as Spain's legacy to Peru prevails in this poem from contemporary poet Marco Martos, whose work is characterized by the sense of irony and moral outrage evident here.

In galleons, on war-horses, with their lances
and helmets—illiterate the first lot—
they arrived in waves
and in this house which was ours,
right here, they laid down the law.
They were the kings,
they had the weapons.
And when in the end they went
after some deaths, shootings and treaties,
as a legacy, they left us
their blood and the cross, a language and nothing;
the house divided
in spoonfuls.
Now neighbors, invited guests,
starving beggars, all claim us as their own.