

THE DEVASTATION OF THE INDIES:
A BRIEF ACCOUNT
by Bartolome de Las Casas
1552

THE INDIES were discovered in the year one thousand four hundred and ninety-two. In the following year a great many Spaniards went there with the intention of settling the land. Thus, forty-nine years have passed since the first settlers penetrated the land, the first so-claimed being the large and most happy isle called Hispaniola 2 which is six hundred leagues in circumference. Around it in all directions are many other islands, some very big, others very small, and all of them were, as we saw with our own eyes, densely populated with native peoples called Indians. This large island was perhaps the most densely populated place in the world. There must be close to two hundred leagues of land on this island, and the seacoast has been explored for more than ten thousand leagues, and each day more of it is being explored. And all the land so far discovered is a beehive of people; it is as though God had crowded into these lands the great majority of mankind.

And of all the infinite universe of humanity, these people most devoid of wickedness and duplicity, the most obedient and faithful to their native masters and to the Spanish Christians whom they serve. They are by nature the most humble, patient, and peaceable, holding no grudges, free from embroilments, neither excitable nor quarrelsome. These people are the most devoid of rancors, hatreds, or desire for vengeance of any people in the world. And because they are so weak and complaisant, they are less able to endure heavy labor and soon die of no matter what malady. The sons of nobles among us, brought up in the enjoyments of life's refinements, are no more delicate than are these Indians, even those among them who are of the lowest rank of laborers. They are also poor people, for they not only possess little but have no desire to possess worldly goods. For this reason they are not arrogant, embittered, or greedy. Their repasts are such that the food of the holy fathers in the desert can scarcely be more parsimonious, scanty, and poor. As to their dress, they are generally naked, with only their pudenda covered somewhat. And when they cover their shoulders it is with a square cloth no more than two varas in size.¹ They have no beds, but sleep on a kind of matting or else in a kind of suspended net called hamacas. They are very clean in their persons, with alert, intelligent minds, docile and open to doctrine, very apt to receive our holy Catholic faith, to be endowed with virtuous customs, and to behave in a godly fashion. And once they begin to hear the tidings of the Faith, they are so insistent on knowing more and on taking the sacraments of the Church and on observing the divine cult that, truly, the missionaries who are here need to be endowed by God with great patience in order to cope with such eagerness. Some of the secular Spaniards who have been here for many years say that the goodness of the Indians is undeniable and that if this gifted people could be brought to know the one true God they would be the most fortunate people in the world.

Yet into this sheepfold, into this land of meek outcasts there came some Spaniards who immediately behaved like ravaging wild beasts, wolves, tigers, or lions that had been starved for many days. And Spaniards have behaved in no other way during the past forty years, down to the present time, for they are still acting like ravaging beasts, killing, terrorizing, afflicting, torturing, and destroying the native peoples, doing all this with the strangest and most varied new methods of cruelty, never seen or heard of before, and to such a degree that this Island of Hispaniola, once so populous (having a population that I estimated to be more than three millions), has now a population of barely two hundred persons.

The island of Cuba is nearly as long as the distance between Valladolid and Rome; it is now almost completely depopulated. San Juan' and Jamaica are two of the largest, most productive and attractive islands; both are now deserted and devastated. On the northern side of Cuba and Hispaniola lie the neighboring Lucayos⁵ comprising more than sixty islands including those called Gigantes, beside numerous other islands, some small some large. The least felicitous of them were more fertile and beautiful than the gardens of the King Of Seville. They have the healthiest lands in the world~ where lived more than five hundred thousand souls; they are now deserted, inhabited by not a single living creature. All the People were slain or died after being taken into captivity and brought to the Island of Hispaniola to be sold as slaves. When the Spaniards saw that some of these had escaped, I voyaged for three years among the islands searching for those who had escaped being slaughtered, for a good Christian had helped them escape, taking pity on them and had won them over to Christ; of these there were eleven and these I saw.

More than thirty other islands in the vicinity of San Juan are for the most part and for the same reason depopulated and the land laid waste. On these islands I estimate there are 2,100 leagues of land that have been ruined and depopulated, empty of people.

As for the vast mainland, which is ten times all Spain, even including Aragon and Portugal, containing more land than the distance between Seville and Jerusalem, or more than two thousand leagues, we are sure that our Spaniards, with their cruel and abominable acts, have devastated the land and exterminated the rational people who fully inhabited it. We can estimate very surely and truthfully that in the forty years that have passed, with the infernal actions of the Christians, there have been unjustly slain more than twelve million men, women, and children. In truth, I believe without trying to deceive myself that the number of the slain is more like fifteen million.

The common ways mainly employed by the Spaniards who call themselves Christian and who have gone there to extirpate those Pitiful nations and wipe them off the earth is by unjustly waging cruel and bloody wars. Then, when they have slain all those who fought for their lives or to escape the tortures they would have had to endure, that is to say, when they have slain all the native rulers and young men (since the Spaniards usually spare only the women and children, who are subjected to the hardest and bitterest servitude ever suffered by man or beast), they enslave any survivors. With these infernal methods of tyranny they debase and weaken countless numbers of Indian nations.

Their reason for killing and destroying such an infinite number of souls is that the Christians have an ultimate aim, which is to acquire gold, and to swell themselves with riches in a very brief time and thus rise to a high estate disproportionate to their merits. It should be kept in mind that their insatiable greed and ambition, the greatest ever seen in the world, is the cause of their villainies. And also, those lands are so rich and felicitous, the native peoples so meek and patient, so easy to subject, that our Spaniards have no more consideration for them than beasts. And I say this from my own knowledge of the acts I witnessed. But I should not say "than beasts" for, thanks be to God, they have treated beasts with some respect; I should say instead like excrement on the public squares. And thus they have deprived the Indians of their lives and souls, for the millions I mentioned have died without the Faith and without the benefit of the sacraments. This is a wellknown and proven fact which even the tyrant Governors, themselves killers, know and admit. And never have the Indians in all the Indies committed any act against the Spanish Christians, until those Christians have first and many times committed countless cruel aggressions against them or against neighboring nations. For in the beginning the Indians regarded the Spaniards as angels from Heaven.' Only after the Spaniards had used violence against them, killing, robbing, torturing, did the Indians ever rise up against them.

HISPANIOLA

On the Island Hispaniola was where the Spaniards first landed, as I have said. Here those Christians perpetrated their first ravages and oppressions against the native peoples. This was the first land in the New World to be destroyed and depopulated by the Christians, and here they began their subjection of the women and children, taking them away from the Indians to use them and ill use them, eating the food they provided with their sweat and toil. The Spaniards did not content themselves with what the Indians gave them of their own free will, according to their ability, which was always too little to satisfy enormous appetites, for a Christian eats and consumes in one day an amount of food that would suffice to feed three houses inhabited by ten Indians for one month. And they committed other acts of force and violence and oppression which made the Indians realize that these men had not come from Heaven. And some of the Indians concealed their foods while others concealed their wives and children and still others fled to the mountains to avoid the terrible transactions of the Christians.

And the Christians attacked them with buffets and beatings, until finally they laid hands on the nobles of the villages. Then they behaved with such temerity and shamelessness that the most powerful ruler of the islands had to see his own wife raped by a Christian officer.

From that time onward the Indians began to seek ways to throw the Christians out of their lands. They took up arms, but their weapons were very weak and of little service in offense and still less in defense. (Because of this, the wars of the Indians against each other are little more than games played by children.) And the Christians, with their horses and swords and pikes began to carry out massacres and strange cruelties against them. They attacked the towns and spared neither the children nor the aged nor pregnant women nor women in childbed, not only stabbing them and dismembering them but cutting them to pieces as if dealing with sheep in the slaughter house. They laid bets as to

who, with one stroke of the sword, could split a man in two or could cut off his head or spill out his entrails with a single stroke of the pike. They took infants from their mothers' breasts, snatching them by the legs and pitching them headfirst against the crags or snatched them by the arms and threw them into the rivers, roaring with laughter and saying as the babies fell into the water, "Boil there, you offspring of the devil!" Other infants they put to the sword along with their mothers and anyone else who happened to be nearby. They made some low wide gallows on which the hanged victim's feet almost touched the ground, stringing up their victims in lots of thirteen, in memory of Our Redeemer and His twelve Apostles, then set burning wood at their feet and thus burned them alive. To others they attached straw or wrapped their whole bodies in straw and set them afire. With still others, all those they wanted to capture alive, they cut off their hands and hung them round the victim's neck, saying, "Go now, carry the message," meaning, Take the news to the Indians who have fled to the mountains. They usually dealt with the chieftains and nobles in the following way: they made a grid of rods which they placed on forked sticks, then lashed the victims to the grid and lighted a smoldering fire underneath, so that little by little, as those captives screamed in despair and torment, their souls would leave them.

I once saw this, when there were four or five nobles lashed on grids and burning; I seem even to recall that there were two or three pairs of grids where others were burning, and because they uttered such loud screams that they disturbed the captain's sleep, he ordered them to be strangled. And the constable, who was worse than an executioner, did not want to obey that order (and I know the name of that constable and know his relatives in Seville), but instead put a stick over the victims' tongues, so they could not make a sound, and he stirred up the fire, 34 but not too much, so that they roasted slowly, as he liked. I saw all these things I have described, and countless others.

And because all the people who could do so fled to the mountains to escape these inhuman, ruthless, and ferocious acts, the Spanish captains, enemies of the human race, pursued them with the fierce dogs' they kept which attacked the Indians, tearing them to pieces and devouring them. And because on few and far between occasions, the Indians justifiably killed some Christians, the Spaniards made a rule among themselves that for every Christian slain by the Indians, they would slay a hundred Indians.

THE KINGDOMS THAT ONCE EXISTED ON THE ISLAND HISPANIOLA

On the island Hispaniola there were five very large principalities ruled by five very powerful Kings to whom almost all the other rulers paid tribute, since there were other princes in distant provinces who recognized no one as their superior. There was a kingdom called Magui, the last syllable accented, which name means "The Realm of the Fertile Lowlands." This land is among the most notable and admirable places in the world, for it stretches across the island from the southern sea to the northern sea, a distance of eighty leagues. It averages five leagues in width but at times is eight to ten and is of very high altitude from one part to another and is drained by more than thirty thousand rivers and creeks, twelve of the rivers being as large as the Ebro and Duero and Guadalquivir combined. All the rivers flow from the western highland,

which means that twenty or twenty-five thousand of them are rich in gold. For in those highlands lies the province of Cibao, where are the famous Cibao mines harboring a fine and remarkable pure gold.

The King who ruled this realm was called Guarionex. Great lords were his vassals, one of them having assembled an army of sixteen thousand men to serve Guarionex, and I know or knew some of them. That virtuous King Guarionex was by nature very pacific and was devotedly obedient to the Kings of Castile and in certain years gave them, through the nobles under his command, a generous amount of gold dust. Each man who had a house was given for this purpose a spherical bell, or rather, a spherical grain measure resembling a bell. This was stuffed full with gold dust (brought down by the rivers) for the people of this realm did not have the skill to work the mines. When there was not enough, some years, to fill the measure, then it was cut in half and one half was filled. This King Guarionex proclaimed himself ready to serve the King of Castile with a labor force that would be brought to Santo Domingo from the city of Isabella, the first Christian settlement, fifty leagues distant, and said, with reason, that they should not have to pay in gold because his vassals did not know how to procure it. That labor force, he said, would work the mines with great heartiness and their labor would be worth to the King of Spain, each year, more than three million castellanos.¹⁰ And had that labor force been so employed, there would be, today, more than fifty cities the size of Seville, on this island.

The recompense they gave this great and good Indian ruler was to dishonor him through his wife, who was raped by a Christian officer. And King Guarionex, who, in time, could have assembled his people to avenge him, chose instead to go alone into hiding and die exiled from his kingdom, deprived of his rank and possessions, placing himself under the protection of the chieftain of the province called Ciguayos, one of his vassals.

When his hiding place was discovered, the Christians waged war on Ciguayos, massacring a great number of people until they finally took the exiled King and, in chains, put him on a vessel that was to take him to Castile. But the vessel was lost at sea and with it were drowned many Christians along with the captive King, and in this shipwreck was lost a quantity of gold dust and gold nuggets weighing the equivalent of 3,600 castellanos. Such was God's vengeance for so many terrible injustices.

Another kingdom on the island was called Mari6n and is now called Puerto Real. It is situated at the end of the fertile lowlands toward the north and is larger than Portugal, although much more suitable for development and settlement. Many mountain chains exist here, which are rich in copper and gold. The King of this province was called Guacanagari, many of whose vassals were known to me. It was this King who welcomed the Admiral" when he first landed in the New World and set foot on the island of Hispaniola.

The welcome extended by this King to the Admiral and all those accompanying him could not have been more cordial and generous, even had it been the voyagers' native land and their own King greeting them with food and provisions of every kind, everything that was needed, which was a great deal, for the vessel on which Columbus had voyaged was lost here.

I know all this from conversations with the Admiral.

Well, that same King, while fleeing to the mountains to escape the cruel persecutions meted out to him and his people by the Christians, died, having been stripped of his rank and possessions by those same Christians, and all his vassals perished in the tyrannical persecutions and enslavements which I shall later on describe.

The third kingdom on the island of Hispaniola was Maguana, where the best sugar in that island is now made. The King of that realm was called Caonab6 and in condition and importance he surpassed all the others. The Spaniards captured this unhappy King by using great and wicked subtlety, laying hands on him while he was in his house. Afterward, they put him on a ship outward bound for Castile. But while still in port with six other outwardbound vessels, God desired to manifest Himself against this great iniquity and sent a violent storm that sank all the vessels and drowned all the Christians on board, along with the shackled King of Maguana.

This native ruler had three or four brothers, who, like him, were strong and fearless. When their brother and lord was taken captive and his subjects killed or enslaved, these brothers, upon seeing the slaughter being carried out by the Christians, took up arms in revenge. The Christians met their attack with cavalry (horses being the most pernicious weapon against the Indians) and in the battles that followed half the land was laid waste and depopulated. The fourth kingdom was that of Xaragud and it was like the marrow and medulla of the island, its sovereign court. Its King surpassed all the other princes in eloquence, refinement, and education and good breeding. Likewise, his government was the best ordered and the most circumspect. At his court there was a multitude of nobles whose beauty and elegance excelled all others.

Behechio, the King of Xaragui, had a sister, by name Anacaona. Together, the brother and sister rendered great services to the Kings of Castile and afforded great benefactions to the Christians, helping them to avoid countless mortal dangers. After the death of her brother the King, Anacaona continued to rule the land.

Then, one day the Christian Governor of the island arrived with a cavalry force of sixty horses and three hundred foot soldiers. The cavalry alone could lay waste the land. Having been promised safe conduct there soon arrived three hundred Indian nobles. These, or most of them, were tricked into entering a very big Indian house of straw where they were shut in and burned alive when the house was set on fire. Those who did not perish in the conflagration were put to the sword or the pike, along with a countless number of the common people. As a special honor, the lady Anacaona was hanged.

And it happened that those Christians, either out of piety or cupidity, took some boys to shield them from the slaughter and placed them on the croup of their horses. But other Spaniards came up from behind and ran the boys through with their pikes. When the victims fell from the horses the Spaniards cut off their legs with a sword. Some of the nobles who managed to flee from this inhuman cruelty took refuge on a small island nearby, about eight leagues out to sea. And the said Christian Governor condemned all those who had gone there to be sold as slaves because they had fled the butchery.

The fifth kingdom was called Higuey and its ruler was an aged queen who was called Higuanama. They hanged her. And there were countless people that I saw burned alive or cut to pieces or tortured in many new ways of killing and inflicting pain. They also made slaves of many Indians.

Because the particulars that enter into these outrages are so numerous they could not be contained in the scope of much writing, for in truth I believe that in the great deal I have set down here I have not revealed the thousandth part of the sufferings endured by the Indians, I now want only to add that, in the matter of these unprovoked and destructive wars, and God is my witness, all these acts of wickedness I have described, as well as those I have omitted, were perpetrated against the Indians without cause, without any more cause than could give a community of good monks living together in a monastery. And still more strongly I affirm that until the multitude of people on this island of Hispaniola were killed and their lands devastated, they committed no sin against the Christians that would be punishable by man's laws, and as to those sins punishable by God's law, such as vengeful feelings against such powerful enemies as the Christians have been, those sins would be committed by the very few Indians who are hardhearted and impetuous. And I can say this from my great experience with them: their hardness and impetuosity would be that of children, of boys ten or twelve years old. I know by certain infallible signs that the wars waged by the Indians against the Christians have been justifiable wars and that all the wars waged by the Christians against the Indians have been unjust wars, more diabolical than any wars ever waged anywhere in the world. This I declare to be so of all the many wars they have waged against the peoples throughout the Indies.

After the wars and the killings had ended, when usually there survived only some boys, some women, and children, these survivors were distributed among the Christians to be slaves. The repartimiento or distribution was made according to the rank and importance of the Christian to whom the Indians were allocated, one of them being given thirty, another forty, still another, one or two hundred, and besides the rank of the Christian there was also to be considered in what favor he stood with the tyrant they called Governor. The pretext was that these allocated Indians were to be instructed in the articles of the Christian Faith. As if those Christians who were as a rule foolish and cruel and greedy and vicious could be caretakers of souls! And the care they took was to send the men to the mines to dig for gold, which is intolerable labor, and to send the women into the fields of the big ranches to hoe and till the land, work suitable for strong men. Nor to either the men or the women did they give any food except herbs and legumes, things of little substance. The milk in the breasts of the women with infants dried up and thus in a short while the infants perished. And since men and women were separated, there could be no marital relations. And the men died in the mines and the women died on the ranches from the same causes, exhaustion and hunger. And thus was depopulated that island which had been densely populated.

I will speak only briefly of the heavy loads the Indians were made to carry, loads weighing three to four arrobas, Christian tyrants and captains had themselves carried in hammocks borne by two Indians. This shows that they treated the Indians as beasts of burden. But were I to describe all this and the buffetings and beatings and birchings endured by the Indians at their labors, no amount of time and paper could encompass this task.

And be it noted that the worst depredations on these islands in the New World began when tidings came of the death of Her most Serene Highness, Queen Isabel, which occurred in the year one thousand five hundred and four. Because, up to that time, only a few provinces on the island of Hispaniola had been destroyed in unjust wars, but not the entire island, since, for the most part, the island was under the royal protection of the Queen and she, may God rest her, took admirable and zealous care of these people, their salvation and prosperity, as we saw with our own eyes and touched with our hands.

Another rule should be noted: in all parts of the Indies, whether they have landed or passed through, the Christians have always committed atrocities against the Indians, have perpetrated the slaughters and tyrannies and abominable oppressions against innocent people that we have described, and have added worse and more cruel acts, ever since God allowed them most suddenly to fall into dishonor and opprobrium.

THE ISLANDS OF SAN JUAN AND JAMAICA

The Spaniards passed over to the islands of San Juan and Jamaica (both of them veritable gardens and beehives of activity) in the year one thousand five hundred and nine, with the aim and purpose of making these islands a part of Hispaniola.

And on those islands the Spaniards perpetrated the same acts of aggression against the Indians and the wicked deeds described above, adding to them many outstanding cruelties, massacres and burnings of the people, or executing them by flinging them to the fierce dogs, torturing and oppressing the survivors, condemning them to the hard labor of the mines, thus eradicating them from the earth, despoiling the land of those unfortunate and innocent people. Before the arrival of the Spaniards there had lived on these islands more than six hundred thousand souls, it has been stated. I believe there were more than one million inhabitants, and now, in each of the two islands, there are no more than two hundred persons, all the others having perished without the Faith and without the holy sacraments.

THE ISLAND OF CUBA

In the year one thousand five hundred and eleven, the Spaniards passed over to the island of Cuba, which as I have said is at the same distance from Hispaniola as the distance between Valladolid and Rome, and which was a well-populated province. They began and ended in Cuba as they had done elsewhere, but with much cruelty.

Among the noteworthy outrages they committed was the one they perpetrated against a cacique, a very important noble, by name Hatuey, who had come to Cuba from Hispaniola with many of his people, to flee the calamities and inhuman acts of the Christians. When he was told by certain Indians that the Christians were now coming to Cuba, he assembled as many of his followers as he could and said this to them: "Now you must know that they are saying the Christians are coming here, and you know by experience how they have put So and So and So and So, and other nobles to an end. And now they are coming from Haiti (which is Hispaniola) to do the same here. Do you know why they do this?" The Indians replied: "We do not know. But it may be that they are by nature wicked and cruel." And he told them: "No, they do not act only because of that, but because they have a God they greatly worship and they want us to worship that God, and that is why they struggle with us and subject us and kill us."

He had a basket full of gold and jewels and he said: "You see their God here, the God of the Christians. If you agree to it, let us dance for this God, who knows, it may please the God of the Christians and then they will do us no harm." And his followers said, all together, "Yes, that is good, that is good!" And they danced round the basket of gold until they fell down exhausted. Then their chief, the cacique Hatuey, said to them: "See here, if we keep this basket of gold they will take it from us and will end up by killing us. So let us cast away the basket into the river." They all agreed to do this, and they flung the basket of gold into the river that was nearby.

This cacique, Hatuey, was constantly fleeing before the Christians from the time they arrived on the island of Cuba, since he knew them and of what they were capable. Now and then they encountered him and he defended himself, but they finally killed him. And they did this for the sole reason that he had fled from those cruel and wicked Christians and had defended himself against them. And when they had captured him and as many of his followers as they could, they burned them all at the stake.

When tied to the stake, the cacique Hatuey was told by a Franciscan friar who was present, an artless rascal, something about the God of the Christians and of the articles of the Faith. And he was told what he could do in the brief time that remained to him, in order to be saved and go to Heaven. The cacique, who had never heard any of this before, and was told he would go to Inferno where, if he did not adopt the Christian Faith, he would suffer eternal torment, asked the Franciscan friar if Christians all went to Heaven. When told that they did he said he would prefer to go to Hell. Such is the fame and honor that God and our Faith have earned through the Christians who have gone out to the Indies.

On one occasion when we went to claim ten leagues of a big settlement, along with food and maintenance, we were welcomed with a bounteous quantity of fish and bread and cooked victuals. The Indians generously gave us all they could. Then suddenly, without cause and without warning, and in my presence, the devil inhabited the Christians and spurred them to attack the Indians, men, women, and children, who were sitting there before us. In the massacre

that followed, the Spaniards put to the sword more than three thousand souls. I saw such terrible cruelties done there as I had never seen before nor thought to see.

A few days later, knowing that news of this massacre had spread through the land, I sent messengers ahead to the chiefs of the province of Havana, knowing they had heard good things about me, telling them we were about to visit the town and telling them they should not hide but should come out to meet us, assuring them that no harm would be done to them. I did this with the full knowledge of the captain."¹ And when we arrived in the province, there came out to welcome us twenty-one chiefs and caciques, and our captain, breaking his pledge to me and the pledge I had made to them, took all these chieftains captive, intending to burn them at the stake, telling me this would be a good thing because those chiefs had in the past done him some harm. I had great difficulty in saving those Indians from the fire, but finally succeeded.

Afterward, when all the Indians of this island were subjected to servitude and the same ruin had befallen there as on the island Hispaniola, the survivors began to flee to the mountains or in despair to hang themselves, and there were husbands and wives who hanged themselves together with their children, because the cruelties perpetrated by one very great Spaniard" (whom I knew) were so horrifying. More than two hundred Indians hanged themselves. And thus perished a countless number of people on the island of Cuba.

That tyrant Spaniard, representative of the King of Spain, demanded, in the repartimiento, that he be given three hundred Indians. At the end of three months all but thirty of them had died of the hard labor in the mines, which is to say only a tenth of them had survived. He demanded another allocation of Indians, and they also perished in the same way. He demanded still another large allocation, and those Indians also perished. Then he died, and the devil bore him away.

In three or four months, when I was there, more than seventy thousand children, whose fathers and mothers had been sent to the mines, died of hunger.

And I saw other frightful things. The Spaniards finally decided to track down the Indians who had taken refuge in the mountains. There they created amazing havoc and thus finished ravaging the island. Where had been a flourishing population ' it is now a shame and pity to see the island laid waste and turned into a desert.

THE MAINLAND

In the year one thousand five hundred and fourteen there went to the mainland a wretch of a Governor," a most cruel tyrant, ruthless and imprudent, lacking any piety. He regarded himself as an instrument of Divine Wrath. His chief aim was to settle the mainland with a large population of Spaniards. Other tyrants had gone to the mainland before him, and had robbed and committed many atrocities along the coast, but now this Governor surpassed all others who had ravaged the mainland in the cruelties he committed. His nefarious deeds went far beyond past abominations in the Indies. He ruthlessly exterminated the people and turned the land into an inferno. He laid waste the land for many leagues between Darién² and the southern kingdom of Nicaragua, that is to say, more than five hundred leagues of what had been the richest and most densely populated locality in the New World. Many great chieftains had ruled it, for this land possessed a wealth of gold such as had not been seen by the Spaniards, even on the island of Hispaniola where large quantities of gold had been extracted from the bowels of the earth by the Indians (who died of that hard labor) with which Spain has been stuffed.

This tyrant-Governor who had gone to the mainland along with a large company of Spaniards invented new cruelties, new methods of torture to force the Indians to reveal and hand over their stores of gold. One captain, at the orders of the Governor, slew in a single attack more than forty thousand Indians. This massacre was witnessed by a Franciscan religious who was with him, by name Fray Francisco de San Román. The people were killed by the sword, by fire, by being torn to pieces by the fierce dogs kept by the Spaniards, and by being tortured to death in various ways.

And because of the pernicious blindness that has always afflicted those who have ruled in the Indies, nothing was done to incline the Indians to embrace the one true Faith, they were rounded up and in large numbers forced to do so. Inasmuch as the conversion of the Indians to Christianity was stated to be the principal aim of the Spanish conquerors, they have dissimulated the fact that only with blood and fire have the Indians been brought to embrace

the Faith and to swear obedience to the kings of Castile, or by threats of being slain or taken into captivity. As if the Son of God who died for each one of them would have countenanced such a thing! For He commanded His Apostles: "Go ye to all the people" (*Euntes docete omnes gentes*). Christ Jesus would have made no such demands of these peaceable infidels who cultivate the soil of their native lands. Yet they are told they must embrace the Christian Faith immediately, without hearing any sermon preached and without any indoctrination. They are told to subject themselves to a King they have never heard of nor seen and are told this by the King's messengers who are such despicable and cruel tyrants that deprive them of their liberty, their possessions, their wives and children. This is not only absurd but worthy of scorn.

This wretch of a Governor thus gave such instructions in order to justify his and their presence in the Indies, they themselves being absurd, irrational, and unjust when he sent the thieves under his command to attack and rob a settlement of Indians where he had heard there was a store of gold, telling them to go at night when the inhabitants were securely in their houses and that, when half a league away from the settlement, they should read in a loud voice his order: "Caciques and Indians of this land, hark ye! We notify you that there is but one God and one Pope and one King of Castile who is the lord of these lands. Give heed and show obedience!" Etcetera, etcetera. "And if not, be warned that we will wage war against you and will slay you or take you into captivity." Etc., etc.

Then, in the early dawn, when these innocents are asleep with their wives and children, the Spaniards attack and enter the town and set fire to the houses, which, being commonly made of straw, bum rapidly with all who are within them.

Thus they proceeded, killing as many as they liked, and torturing those they took alive, because they had been told of other settlements where there was gold, more than there was in this one, and then they took a number of survivors in chains, to sell them as slaves.

They always searched for gold in the ruins of the towns they burned. In this manner and with such acts, that Godforsaken Governor busied himself and his company from the year fourteen until the year twenty-one or twenty-two, sending into those actions five or six of his officers, giving each of them such and such an amount of the booty. The major part of the gold, the pearls, the enslaved Indians falling to himself as their captain-general. The representatives of the King acted in the same way, each one sending out as many underlings as they could, and the first Bishop of that kingdom also sent out his underlings so as to have his share of the treasure-trove. I believe I underestimate when I say they robbed more gold in that time and in that kingdom than was worth one million castellanos, of which amount they sent to the King only three thousand castellanos. And during these actions they killed some eight hundred thousand souls.

The other tyrant who succeeded this one on the mainland until the year one thousand five hundred and twentythree, killed and allowed to be killed by his henchmen in the wars that followed all the native peoples that survived.

That wretch of a Governor who first penetrated the mainland committed countless vile deeds, of which I shall mention a few. A cacique (as a native ruler was called) had given the tyrant, either of his own accord or impelled by

fear, gold worth nine thousand castellanos. Not content with this amount, the Governor had the cacique bound to a stake in a sitting posture, his legs extended, and set a fire to burn the soles of his feet, demanding more gold. The cacique sent to his house for more gold and the servant brought back three thousand castellanos' worth. Not content with this, more gold was demanded of the cacique. And, either because there was no more or else he was unwilling to give more, he continued to be tortured until the bone marrow came out of the soles of his feet and he died. Such things were done to the Indians countless times, always with the aim of getting as much gold as possible from them.

Another instance of such cruelty was when a company of Spaniards made an attack on a mountain refuge where some Indians were hiding from the pestilential acts of the Christians. Falling upon this numerous band, the Spaniards captured some women and maidens, sixty or eighty of them, holding them captive while they killed most of the men. Next day, some of the surviving Indians, anxious about the captive women, came upon the Christians from the rear and attacked them. Seeing they were hardpressed, the Christians, who hesitated to bring up their cavalry, set their swords against the bodies of the women and maids, leaving not one of them alive. At sight of this, the Indians screamed in an access of grief and horror: "Oh, vile men! Oh, cruel Christians! So you kill women? (In their language their word for women is *iras*, meaning wrath, or vengeance.)

At a distance of ten or fifteen leagues from Panama was a great chief named Paris, who was very rich in gold. The Spaniards went there and he received them as if they were brothers, presenting the captain with gold worth fifty thousand castellanos, giving this of his own free will. It seemed to the captain of the Christian troops that anyone who could give that amount freely must possess a very great quantity (and discovering such treasures of gold was their sole aim and consolation). They dissimulated and made as if to depart. But in the early dawn they turned back and fell upon the town, setting fire to it, killing and burning many people. When the fires died down, they found and took away gold worth fifty or sixty thousand castellanos.

The cacique managed to escape, was neither killed nor captured, and very quickly he assembled as many surviving Indians as he could, and by the end of two or three days caught up with the Christians who were carrying away his gold, and valiantly attacked them, killing fifty Christians and taking the gold from them. The others, badly wounded, fled. But later on they marched against that cacique with a large company and killed him, along with a great many of his troops, taking captives and subjecting them to slavery in the usual way. In short, at the present time there remains no vestige of the large town where once ruled a great chieftain. And this does not take into account the killings and destructions that wretch of a Governor carried out which resulted in the extinction of those kingdoms.

THE PROVINCE OF NICARAGUA

In the year one thousand five hundred and twentythree, at the end of the year, this same tyrant went into Nicaragua to subjugate that most flourishing province and a sorrowful hour it was when he entered that land. Who could exaggerate the felicity, the good health, the amenities of that prosperous and numerous population? Verily it was a joy to behold that admirable province with its big towns, some of them extending three or four leagues, full of gardens and orchards and prosperous people. But because this land is a great plain without any mountains where the people could take refuge, they had to allow, with great anguish, the Christians to remain in the province and to suffer cruel persecutions from them. And since these Indians were by nature very gentle and peace-loving, the tyrant and his comrades (all of whom had aided him in destroying other kingdoms) inflicted such damage, carried out such slaughters, took so many captives, perpetrated so many unjust acts that no human tongue could describe them.

He once sent fifty horsemen with pikes to destroy an entire province. Not a single human being survived that massacre, neither women nor children nor aged and infirm. And that province was larger than the county of Russell in Spain. This terrible massacre was punishment for a trifling offense: some Indians had not responded to a summons. Promptly enough when the tyrant had commanded that they bring him a load of maize (that grain taking the place of wheat in this region), or else had asked for more Indians to be assigned to serve him or his comrades. And there was no place where the Indians could take refuge from the tyrant-Governor's wrath.

He sent companies of Spaniards to open up other provinces—that is to say, to attack and pillage the peoples in those provinces. They were allowed to capture as many Indians as they liked in peaceful settlements, to become their slaves. And they put the captives in chains and made them carry heavy loads, weighing as much as three arrobas. And they had to carry these cargoes on their backs for long marches. The result was that the number of captives soon dwindled, most of them dying from exhaustion, so that from four thousand captives there remained only six. They left the dead bodies on the trail. They were decapitated corpses, for when a captive sank under the heavy load, the Spaniards cut off his head, which fell to one side while the body fell to the other while the captives chained together continued their march without interruption. When commanded to do similar labor, with this experience behind them, the surviving Indians went off weeping and saying, "These are the roads down which we went to serve the Christians. In the past, even when we worked hard we could return to our houses, our wives, and children. But now we go without hope of ever again seeing them."

This tyrant once took it into his head to make a new repartimiento (distribution of captives among the Spaniards) this being either a caprice of his or, as was rumored, to rid himself of some Indians he disliked and pass them on to someone else. This occurred at the time of year when grain should be sowed and it kept the Indians from their usual tasks at seed-time. Later on, as a result, the Christians lacked grain, whereupon they seized the stores of grain the Indians kept for themselves and their families. In the famine that followed, more than thirty thousand Indians perished of starvation and there were cases when a woman would kill and eat her own child, in desperation.

Since all the settlements of the Indians in this fertile land were situated in the midst of gardens and orchards, the Christians resided in them, each Christian taking over the houses of the Indians who had been allocated to him

according to the royal grant known as the encomienda. The Indian who had owned the house now worked for the Christian as his servant, cooking his meals, tilling the soil, working without rest. Oh, the pitiful Indians! Men and women, the aged and the children all worked for this Spanish Christian. For the children, as soon as they could stand on their legs, were put to work. And thus the Indians have been used up and consumed, and the few who survive are still being wasted away. Nor are these hardworking Indians allowed to own a house or anything of their own, and in this respect the Spaniards in Nicaragua have gone beyond the excesses of injustice that have prevailed on the island of Hispaniola.

The greatest and most horrible pestilence that has laid waste the province of Nicaragua was the freedom given by the Governor to his subordinates in the matter of petitioning slaves from the caciques of the towns. They petitioned every four or five months and each time a new allotment. The Governor could obtain fifty slaves at a time by threatening the cacique with being burned at the stake or thrown to the fierce dogs if he refused. Since the Indians do not commonly have slaves, at the most a cacique may have two or three or four, he simply went through the settlement, taking to begin with all the orphans, then taking one son from those who had two, and two sons from those who had three. In this way the cacique completed the number demanded by the tyrant, with loud lamentations and weeping by the people, for it seems they most greatly love their sons. And since this act was repeated many times, that whole kingdom became depopulated during the twenties and until the year thirty-three.

For this transaction was aided by six or seven ships voyaging along the coast to take on board and sell the surplus requisitioned slaves in Panama and Peru. And all of those captives soon died for as it has been ascertained from experience repeated a thousand times, the Indians when uprooted from their native land very soon perish. Then, too, they are never given enough to eat and their labor is never lightened in any way, since they are bought and sold to do only heavy work.

Thus more than five hundred thousand Indians were torn out of this province and sold into slavery. And those Indians had been as free as I am. In the infernal wars waged by the Spaniards another five or six hundred thousand souls have perished up to the present time. And these ravages continue. In a matter of fourteen years this province has undergone these things. There must now be in Nicaragua four or five thousand Spaniards who kill, each day, through acts of violence, oppression, and servitude, numerous Indians, and they boast that they have established one of the great population centers in the world.

NEW SPAIN

In the year one thousand five hundred and seven New Spain" was discovered and during the discovery great outrages were perpetrated against the Indians and some of the discoverers were slain. In the year one thousand five hundred and eighteen, Spaniards who called themselves Christians went there to massacre and kill, although they said their aim was to settle Christians in the province. And from that year to this day (we are in the year one thousand five hundred and forty-two), the climax of injustice and violence and tyranny committed against the Indians has been reached and surpassed. Because the Spaniards have now lost all fear of God and of the King, they have ceased to know right from wrong. Because among so many and such different nations they have committed and continue to commit so many acts of cruelty, such terrible ravages, massacres, destructions, exterminations, thefts, violences and tyrannies of all kinds that all the things we have related are as nothing by comparison. But were we to describe all the infinite number of such acts they would be as nothing when compared to what they have done this day and year of one thousand five hundred and forty-two, and today in this month of September are doing, for they continue to commit acts of the most abominable kind. As we have said above, the rule is always this: from the beginning the Spaniards have always continually increased and expanded their infernal acts and outrages.

Thus, from the beginning of their discovery of New Spain, that is to say, from the eighteenth of April in the year one thousand five hundred and eighteen until the year thirty, a period of twelve whole years, there were continual massacres and outrages committed by the bloody hands and swords of the Spaniards against the Indians living on the four hundred and fifty leagues of land surrounding the city of Mexico, which comprised four or five great kingdoms as large as and more felicitous than Spain. Those lands were all more densely populated than Toledo or Seville and Valladolid and Zaragoza all combined, along with Barcelona. Never has there been such a population as in these cities which God saw fit to place in that vast expanse of land having a circumference of more than a thousand leagues. The Spaniards have killed more Indians here in twelve years by the sword, by fire, and enslavement than anywhere else in the Indies. They have killed young and old, men, women, and children," some

four million souls during what they call the Conquests, which Were the violent invasions of cruel tyrants that should be condemned not only by the law of God but by all the laws of man (since they were much worse than the deeds committed by the Turks in their effort to destroy the Christian Church). And this does not take into account those Indians who have died from ill treatment or were killed under tyrannical servitude. In particulars, no tongue would suffice, nor word nor human efforts, to narrate the frightful deeds committed simultaneously by the Spaniards in regions far distant from each other, those notorious hellions, enemies of humankind. And some of their deeds committed in the Indies, in their quality and circumstances, truly they could not, even with much time and diligence and writing, could not be explained. I will narrate, along with protests and sworn statements by eyewitnesses, only some portions of the story, for I could not hope to explain a thousandth part.

Among other massacres there was the one in a big city of more than thirty thousand inhabitants, which is called Cholula. The people came out to welcome all the lords of the country and the earth; first of all came the priests with the head priest of the Christians in procession and received them with great respect and reverence, and took them to lodge in the center of the town, where they would reside in the houses of the most important nobles.

Soon after this the Spaniards agreed to carry out a massacre, or as they called it a punitive attack, in order to sow terror and apprehension, and to make a display of their power in every corner of that land. This was always the determination of the Spaniards in all the lands they conquered: to commit a great massacre that would terrorize the tame flock and make it tremble.

With this aim, therefore, they sent a summons to all the caciques and nobles of the city and in the localities subject to it, and also the head chieftain, and as they arrived to speak with the Spanish captain they were taken prisoner, so unexpectedly that none could flee and warn the others. The Spaniards had asked for five or six thousand Indians to carry their cargo. When all the chiefs had come, they and the burden-bearers were herded into the patios of the houses. What a grievous thing it was, to see those Indians as they prepared to carry the loads of the Spaniards: it was a grievous sight for they came naked, stark naked except for their private parts, which were covered. And they had a netting bag slung over their shoulders, holding their meager nourishment. They were all made to squat down on their hancches like tame sheep.

When they were all placed close together they were bound and tied. At the closed doorways armed guards took turns to see that none escaped. Then, at a command, all the Spaniards drew their swords or pikes and while their chiefs looked on, helpless, all those tame sheep were butchered, cut to pieces. At the end of two or three days some survivors came out from under the corpses, wounded but still alive, and they went, weeping, to the Spaniards, imploring mercy, which was denied. The Spaniards had no compassion but drove them back and cut them down. Then the Spaniards had the chiefs, a total of more than a hundred, who were already shackled, burned at the stakes that had been driven into the ground.

But one of the caciques, and who knows, he may have been the ruler of that land, managed to escape with twenty or thirty of his followers. They took refuge in the great temple that was there, which was like a fortress, and was called Cuu, and there he defended himself for the greater part of the day. But the Spaniards, against whom there is no protection, especially no protection for these unarmed people, set fire to the temple and burned them there as they cried out: "Oh, wicked men! What have we done against you? Why are you killing us? Go to the city of Mexico, where our lord and master, Montezuma, will revenge us!"

It is said that when the Spaniards were putting the five or six thousand Indians in the patios to the sword one captain sang out: "Nero of Tarpeia watched Rome burn and the cries of the young and the old did not move him."

They carried out another great massacre in the city of Tepeaca, which was much larger and more densely populated than Cholula. Many perished, too many to count, and great acts of particular cruelty were committed.

From Cholula they marched toward the city of Mexico, and the great Montezuma sent them thousands of presents and an assembly of chiefs and people celebrated fiestas on the road, and as the Spaniards reached the pavements of the city at a distance of two leagues, the great ruler sent them his own brother accompanied by many nobles, bearing gifts of silver and gold and rich garments. At the entrance to the city he himself greeted them and accompanied them to the palace in which he had arranged for them to be lodged. And that very day, as I was told by some of those who

were there, the Spaniards deceitfully set a guard of eighty men to capture the great King Montezuma and put him in chains.

But I leave all this, even though there are many important events to relate, and shall only summarize what those tyrants did. The captain-general took his troops down to the sea to encounter and defeat a certain other Spanish captain" who was marching against him, but left a number of his officers in Mexico City and about a hundred men to guard the captive King and gave them permission to commit an outstanding crime, with the aim of increasing and spreading terror throughout the land, using their utmost methods of cruelty.

The Indians, nobles and commoners alike, throughout the city, thinking only of giving pleasure to their lord imprisoned within the palace assembled nearby to celebrate a fiesta" in a public square, singing and dancing the dance they called mitote which is like the arieta of the islands. At this fiesta the nobles donned their gala Costumes to display their wealth, and some of these nobles were of royal lineage. Celebrating this fiesta were more than a thousand nobles, the flower of Indian youth, the elite of Montezuma's empire.

The Spanish captain set out toward this fiesta with a company of his men and sent out other squadrons to the other fiestas being celebrated in other parts of the city, with orders that at a certain set time they were to attack the celebrants mercilessly, after pretending at first merely to be enjoying the fiestas.

Being a little drunk and having safely penetrated to the very center of the fiesta nearest the palace, he called out, "Now, Santiago be with us, and at them!" And with naked swords they attacked those delicate bodies, letting that generous blood flow, leaving not one of the Indian nobles to survive. While in other parts of the city the same atrocities were committed.

This was an event that spread terror throughout those kingdoms and filled the people with bitterness, anguish, and revolt. That calamity, which deprived them of the flower of the nobility, meant, for them, the end of the world, and they have never ceased lamenting and recounting the story in their songs and the dances called arietas, as in their stories called "romances." They have never recovered from that loss of succession to all the nobility, which had been for many years their glory.

The unheard-of cruelty and injustice of this massacre stirred up the Indians to revolt, although until that time they had tolerated the imprisonment of their universal ruler, because Montezuma himself had commanded them not to plot against the Spanish conquerors. Now, throughout the city they took up arms, attacked the Christians, wounding and killing many of those who did not manage to escape. And when Montezuma came out into the corridors of the palace and commanded the Indians to go away in peace, their leader set his dagger against the King's breast and they all swore henceforth not to obey him and that they would consult together and elect another lord who would guide them in their battles.

For they intended to wage war against the captain-general when he should return from Veracruz, victorious. But when he did return, it was with a larger army of Christians, and the Indian uprising, which had lasted three or four days, was coming to an end.

The attack made by the augmented army against all the Indians of that land produced a battle so fierce that, fearing all the Christians would be slain, in self-defense they declared a truce and left the city. The Indians had killed a great many Christians on the bridges of the lagoon, in this righteous war.

After this, there followed the battle for the city, the Christians having returned in full strength and they created great havoc. In this strange and admirable kingdom of the Indies, they slew a countless number of people and burned alive many great chiefs.

Later, when the Spaniards had inflicted extraordinary abominations on the city Of Mexico and the other cities and towns, over a surface of fifteen Or twenty leagues, killing countless Indians, they Pressed forward to spread terror and lay waste the province of Nnoco, where an amazing number of people were slain.

Likewise, they destroyed the province of Tututepec, and then the province of Ipilcingo, and after that the province of Colima, each of those lands being more vast than the kingdoms of Le6n and Castile. To recount the ravages and

massacres and cruelties they perpetrated in each of those lands would no doubt be difficult if not impossible and would be a story unbearable to hear.

At this point we should take note of the reason the Spaniards gave for conquering these lands and why they tried to destroy all those innocents and to devastate those regions where the aspect of the joy and happiness of a numerous population should have caused them to become veritable Christians. Their aim, they said, was to subject the people to the King of Spain, who had commanded them to kill and to enslave. And the Indians who did not obey stupid messages and would not put themselves in the hands of the iniquitous and ruthless Christians would be considered rebels unwilling to serve His Majesty. And their argument was set down in letters addressed to our lord the King. And the blindness of those who ruled the Indies prevented them from understanding that in the King's laws is expressed the following: that no one is or can be called a rebel if, to begin with, he is not a subject of the King. The Christians (who know something of God and of reason and of human laws) should realize how astounding all this is to simple people, living peacefully on their lands and who have their own chiefs, to be told by the Spaniards of a new Spanish ruler never seen or heard of before, and that if they do not subject themselves to that King they will be cut to pieces. It makes their hearts stand still, for they have seen from experience that this will be done. And the most horrifying thing is that the Indians who do obey are placed in servitude where with incredible hard labor and torments even harder to endure and longer lasting than the torments of those who are put to the sword they are finally, with their wives and children and their entire generation exterminated. And now that, with these fears and under threats, these peoples and others in the New World have come to obey and to recognize the authority of the foreign King, these rotten and inconstant Viceroy, blinded and confused by ambition and diabolical greed, do not see that they have not acquired one jot of right as veritable representatives of the King, that both natural and human and divine right are something quite different, that they have acquired nothing when the Indians are terrorized into giving submission and tribute to the foreign King but have earned the punishment of the devil and of the eternal fires of hell. They do not see that they are even committing offenses against the King of Castile in destroying these kingdoms and in annihilating the inhabitants. Yet such are the services the Spaniards in the Indies have rendered to their King and are still rendering today.

It was with this supposedly just cause that the tyrant Governors sent out two other tyrants even more cruel and ferocious, of even less piety and mercy, to several flourishing and happy kingdoms. One of them went to Guatemala toward the southern sea, while the other proceeded to Naco and its bordering kingdoms of Honduras and Guaimura on the northern sea, which are, at a distance of three hundred leagues from Mexico. One of the captains went by land, the other by sea, each captain in command of many horsemen and foot soldiers.

I am stating the truth when I say that both captains committed wrongs, most notably the one who went to Guatemala, for the other one came to a bad end before he could commit so many ferocious deeds. But the injustices, cruelties, exterminations committed in Guatemala comprise a story that horrifies the centuries, past, present, and to come, and these alone would swell a very big book. Because the campaign of that captain surpassed in vile deeds all others past and present, both in quality and quantity, the people he "terminated and the lands he laid waste were countless.

The captain who went by sea committed, before he died, some great robberies and outrages, winnowing the people in the coastal towns, people who came out to welcome him with gifts in the kingdom of Yucatin, which is on the route to Naco and Guatemala. After he arrived there he sent out captains in command of many troops throughout all the land, to pillage and kill and raze the towns. There was one captain who made off with three hundred troops and penetrated into the interior for more than one hundred and twenty leagues toward Guatemala, destroying, pillaging, and burning everything in his way. The troops sent to follow him saw the whole land laid waste. But shortly the captain-general who had sent out this rascal died, and there was a succession of other tyrants, all of them merciless, all of them committing frightful cruelties, capturing Indians, selling them as slaves to the ships that were laden with cargoes of wine and clothing and other things. With such actions in the years between one thousand five hundred and twenty-four and one thousand five hundred and thirty-five, they destroyed the provinces of Naco and Honduras, which had been the most populous and fertile lands that could exist in the world.

And now as we cross these lands we see them so deserted and destroyed that anyone, no matter how hardened, would have his heart torn with grief. In those eleven years more than two hundred thousand souls were killed, leaving today on more than a hundred square leagues of land no more than two thousand, and these, each day, are being killed in the aforementioned servitude.

Turning back the clock, I will now speak at greater length of the captain-general who invaded the kingdom of Guatemala which, as I have said, exceeded in size and population all the other kingdoms of the past and present time, extending four hundred leagues south of the Mexican border (which was the route taken), and as this captain-general himself wrote in a letter to the prince who sent him, he massacred and pillaged and burned and devastated all the land wherever he went, considering it his right, as I have said, to subject the native peoples to the inhuman and unjust Spaniards, doing all this in the name of the King of Spain, who was unknown to these peoples and never seen or heard of by them. And without even letting them have time to reflect and deliberate, the Spaniards, almost as soon as their messengers arrived with a warning, began their brutal attacks.

THE PROVINCE AND KINGDOM OF GUATEMALA

When he arrived in said kingdom, he carried out in the first attack a great massacre of the people. And this, in spite of the fact that the chief ruler and other nobles had come out to welcome him, borne in litters, accompanied by trumpets and timbrels, and they celebrated the arriving Spaniards with many fiestas at the gates of the capital city of Ultatlin," where they placed everything at the disposal of the captain-general. They had entertained the Spaniards with especially lavish banquets, and had given them all they asked for and more.

The Spaniards slept that night outside the city, which seemed safer to them, for they thought they might be in danger had they slept inside the city. Next day they summoned the chief ruler and many nobles, and when they came like tame sheep they were seized and commanded to furnish the Christians with a certain weight of gold. The Indians replied that they did not have it to give, because their land lacked gold. The Spaniards then had them burnt alive, without trial or sentencing.

And when the people saw that their chief ruler and the nobles of all those provinces had been slain for no other reason than that they could not provide the gold asked of them, they left their villages and fled to hide in the mountains, and ordered their servants to go to the Spaniards and serve them as their lords, but telling them that they must not reveal where their masters were hidden. And all the common people came to the Spaniards and said they would serve them.

The response made by this pious captain-general was that he could not receive them into his service until they had revealed where their masters were hidden, and that otherwise he would kill them all. The Indians said they did not know where their masters were, but surely their masters' wives and children must know and they were still in their houses, therefore the Spaniards could go there and do with them as they liked. The Indians repeated this many times. And, marvelous to relate, the Spaniards went to the villages where the poor people worked at their tasks, living with their wives and children, confident of their safety. And there the Spaniards attacked them with swords and cut them to pieces.

Another incident of unprovoked cruelty was when the Spaniards entered a large and prosperous town no better guarded than another, and in the course of two hours almost destroyed it, putting to the sword men, women, and children and the aged and infirm who could not manage to escape.

When the Indians saw that humility and the offering of gifts were of no avail to soften the hearts of the Spaniards, and that patience and endurance were useless, and that without any appearance or color of reason they would be attacked and slain, they agreed to assemble and stand together and die in a war, revenging themselves as best they could against the cruel and infernal enemies; since they well knew that being not only unarmed but naked, they would be opposing ferocious men on horseback so well armored that to prevail against them would be impossible, they conceived the idea of digging holes in the middle of the roads, into which the horsemen would fall and have their bellies pierced by the sharp sticks with which the holes would be filled, covered over with turf and weeds. Once or twice horsemen did fall into the holes, but not more than that, for the Spaniards learned how to avoid them. But to avenge themselves against the Indians they threw into those holes all the Indians they could capture of every age and kind. And thus children and old men and even pregnant women and women but lately in childbed were thrown in and perished. As many Indians as could be seized were flung into those holes to be mortally wounded on the sharp sticks; a pitiful sight, especially the women and children. All the remaining Indians were slain with pikes or swords, or were thrown to the savage dogs, which tore them to pieces and devoured them.

Whenever the Spaniards captured an important noble or chieftain, they did him the honor of burning him at the stake. This butchery lasted for close to seven years, from the year twenty-four to the year thirty or thirty-one. You can judge what would be the number of victims that were swallowed up in the holocaust.

An infinite number of vile actions against the Indians were carried out by that miserable tyrant in conjunction with his brothers (for they were no less inhuman and hardhearted than he or the other tyrants who aided him). It was more than enough what those Spaniards did in the province of Cuzocatin where the Villa San Salvador is situated, or is at least in the vicinity. It was a felicitous land bordering the coast of the southern sea, extending a distance of forty or fifty leagues, and in the capital city of Cuzocatin the Indians gave the Spaniards a great welcome, more than twenty or thirty thousand coming out with gifts of live chickens and cooked foods. In response to this welcome, the captain-general ordered each of his officers to take as many Indians as they liked to serve them as cargo bearers. Each Spaniard then took one to five hundred Indians they needed to be well served, and the innocent Indians endured being allocated in this way and they served the Spaniards faultlessly, wholeheartedly, revering them.

Meanwhile the captain-general commanded the Indians to bring him gold, much gold, for that was mainly what he had come there for. The Indians replied that they would gladly provide the Spaniards with all the gold they possessed, and they gathered together a large quantity of copper axes overlaid with a coating of gold, giving them the aspect of solid gold. The captain then had the gold assayed and when it was found that the axes were of copper, he exclaimed: "To the devil with this land! There is no gold here," and he commanded his men to put the Indians that served them in chains and branded as slaves. This was done and to all the Indians they could lay hands on, and I saw one of the sons of the ruler of that city being chained and branded. Some Indians escaped, and when the Indians of the land heard of this great misfortune, they gathered together and took up arms and in the battle that followed, the Spaniards massacred and tortured a great number of Indians. Then they built a city which has now, by divine justice, been destroyed in three deluges, one of water, another of muddy earth, the third of stones larger than thirteen oxen.

When the Spaniards had killed all the chieftains and all the Indians capable of making war, they cast all the others into infernal servitude. And when the Spaniards demanded tribute-slaves, they gave them their sons and daughters, the only slaves they had. These the Spaniards sent by shiploads down the coast to be sold in Peru.

Thus, with massacres and other outrages they laid waste a kingdom extending for more than one hundred square leagues, a land that had been among the most flourishing and populous in the whole world.

And this very same tyrant has written that the land of Guatemala was even more Populous than Mexico, which is the truth. But he and his brothers and other Spaniards have slain four or five million souls in fifteen or sixteen Years from the year twenty-four to the year forty, and they are still killing and destroying those who survived, and they will go on killing.

Now, it was the habit of this captain-general, when he was about to make war on a town or province to take with him ten or twenty thousand already subjected Indians and set them to fight the Indians in the town or province he intended to invade. And since he did not provide food for his Indians he gave them permission to eat the enemy Indians they captured. And thus he had, in his royal kingdom, a butchery of human beings, where, in his presence' children were killed, cooked, and eaten, and where men were killed merely for their hands and feet which were esteemed as delicacies. And since these inhumanities were occurring in other parts of the Indies, the Indians knew not where to hide. They killed a countless number of Indians in the course of shipbuilding. They also took Indians aboard for voyages to the north and south along the coast. The Indians had to carry anchors to the coast weighing three or four quintals, and they marched, thus shackled, those pathetic naked creatures, one behind the other, their hands clinging to the shoulders and waist of the one in front, carrying heavy burdens on their backs. And I saw many Indians thus laden struggling in anguish down the roads.

The Spaniards broke up marriages, separating husbands and wives, robbed couples of their children, took for themselves the wives and daughters of the people, or gave them to the sailors and soldiers as consolation, and the sailors bore them away on their vessels that were crowded with Indians, all of them dying of hunger and thirst. And truth to say, if one wanted to tell about this in detail or to describe all the cruelties perpetrated, it would make a big book that would horrify the world.

This captain had two fleets built, many ships in each one, and with these he set ablaze, as if with fire from Heaven, the entire coastal land. Oh! How many orphans did he make, how many families did he rob of their sons, how many husbands did he deprive of their wives, how many women did he leave without husbands, how many adulteries and rapes and other acts of violence did he commit! How many did he deprive of liberty, how much anguish, how many calamities did the Indians suffer because of him! How many tears were shed, how many groans were uttered, how many people were left alone, how many were condemned to eternal servitude because of him! And not only Indians in great number but also unfortunate Christians who, in his company, perpetrated grave deeds, how many sins and detestable abominations! And may God have mercy on their souls and be satisfied with the vile ending He gave that tyrant.