

BERNAL DÍAZ DEL CASTILLO

The True History of

# THE CONQUEST OF NEW SPAIN



Translated, with an Introduction and Notes, by  
JANET BURKE and TED HUMPHREY

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to the students of Barrett, the Honors College at  
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# INTRODUCTION

## **The Conquest in Context**

Bernal Díaz del Castillo's *The True History of the Conquest of New Spain* is one of the foundational works for piecing together and understanding the initial Spanish encounter with the mainland of the Americas and its peoples. This chronicle has served as one of the principal resources for most scholars striving to provide a narrative of the events to which we refer as the conquest of Mexico. His account was neither the first to have been written from and about the Americas nor the first written account of the Spaniards' deeds in Mexico to have reached Europe. Indeed, the manuscript did not see the light of day until a copy was found in a library in Madrid in the 1630s, edited, and subsequently published some fifty years after Bernal Díaz's death in 1585. Other accounts antedate it—those of Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, Bartolomé de las Casas, Hernando Cortés, and Francisco López de Gómara among them. Nonetheless, Bernal Díaz's account claims pride of place as the only narrative by a single participant voice that carries through from the earliest European landing on present-day Mexican soil to the fall of Tenochtitlan. Although the narrative may have gaps, be faultily recalled or told in places, contain inaccurate dates and other flaws of omission or commission, it does provide a relatively continuous thread to which one may relate other early accounts of the Spanish conquest, including those recorded from the indigenous peoples themselves.

One has reasons for being cautious in accepting what Bernal Díaz writes. First, he did not begin to write until some thirty years after the events had occurred. Further, he had clear and understandable motives for committing his story to paper, among which were his concern that certain rights and privileges originally

granted him in perpetuity might be rescinded at his death and thus not pass to his children. In addition, he believed that previous accounts—those found in Hernando Cortés's letters to the Spanish Crown, which had been in wide circulation from the time they were received in Europe, and Francisco López de Gómará's *Historia de la conquista de México*, an account written at the behest of Cortés and his heirs—attributed all the success of and honor for the conquest of New Spain to Hernando Cortés at the expense of those who were with him, including Bernal Díaz. One thus finds Bernal Díaz giving a rather full account of his efforts and merits as well as those of other ordinary members of the company and their captains. These normal authorial characteristics make the other narratives essential for understanding the process by which the Europeans came to, conquered, and colonized the Americas and its peoples; but the account of Bernal Díaz is the one through which, ultimately, historians from William H. Prescott to Hugh Thomas, in telling the tale of the Spanish conquest of Mexico, relate the other accounts to one another and even adjust and correct Bernal Díaz's narrative.

Because the Spanish conquest of New Spain, of Moctezuma (referred to by Bernal Díaz as Montezuma) and the Aztecs of Mexico is so prominent in the popular mind, people have been tempted to take it for a singular event that occurred not long after Christopher Columbus's landfall in the Americas. Although the Spaniards set foot on the Yucatan only about twenty-five years after Columbus landed on Hispaniola (now home to the Dominican Republic and Haiti), much had happened in that quarter century. Most importantly for our present purposes, the pattern of events that emerged as the Spaniards imposed control on the natives of Hispaniola, Cuba, and Tierra Firme (modern-day Panama) set the stage for the more widely known occupations of what are now Mexico and, a bit later, Peru, patterns we briefly examine in what follows.

Columbus and his crew first sighted the lands of the New World on October 12, 1492, and after some relatively cursory explorations of a number of islands in the Lesser and Greater

Antilles, he settled a party of thirty-nine men on Hispaniola before returning to Spain to report his findings and fit out for a second voyage. The second voyage involved seventeen ships and some twelve hundred men of diverse backgrounds and skills who were coming with the explicit purpose of colonizing the recently discovered lands. Among those who came on that second voyage was Diego Velázquez, who would be centrally involved in settling first Cuba and then, at least indirectly, the Mexican mainland. Arriving for the second time at Hispaniola, Columbus and those with him found the fort he had originally built destroyed and more than a quarter of the men he had left behind dead, having been overrun by the native Taino people. Nonetheless, in the face of this destruction, Columbus determined to establish a settlement some sixty miles to the north, still on Hispaniola, but in what is today the Dominican Republic. That location, La Isabela, proved unsuitable for permanent occupation because it could provide few of the resources necessary to maintain a large colony. The site was inhospitable with difficult weather and little of the gold necessary for trade with Spain to secure the goods the settlers needed to make the kind of life they desired in coming to the Americas. Internal strife among the settlers with respect to their rights to *encomiendas*—officially sanctioned rights to the labor of native peoples<sup>1</sup>—as well as a desire for greater independence in establishing domains of power and influence led to the final breakdown of the settlement. Thus, almost immediately, parties went off to Tierra Firme and, under the leadership of

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1. The reference here is to the *encomienda* system, which gave an indigenous sociopolitical unit under its leader, its cacique, to an individual Spaniard, primarily to receive labor from it, but also and increasingly other benefits, and, on the mainland, tribute in whatever it had from precious metals to food and supplies. At the time of the conquest of Mexico, one spoke of *repartimientos*, units given out in distribution, and not of *encomiendas*, but by the time Bernal Díaz wrote his chronicle, *encomienda*, which had become current in public decrees and disputes, had displaced *repartimiento*.

Diego Velázquez, to Cuba to establish new colonies and subject native peoples to their dominance.

The goal of these expeditions was not to establish trade relations with the native peoples but to establish control over a territory and its population for purposes of extracting resources of value, for example, gold, that could be traded for goods produced in the metropolis. These expeditions, then, followed a standard pattern, one originally developed during Spain's successful reconquest of its own territory from the Moors. In this pattern, a senior but subordinate member of a given settlement group would, with the permission and support of the settlement's leader, form a party to underwrite the costs of an expedition to new territories. In the Americas, the requirements for such an expedition included ships, horses, and supplies necessary for bringing a territory under control and properly settling it. Those participating in such an expedition were effectively investors in the enterprise, not paid soldiers. The rewards they received by way of position and rank, allotments of Indian labor and, indirectly, land and estates, were largely a function of what they were able to invest of themselves and what goods they could devote to the enterprise. Such goods included horses, arms, and other resources necessary to an expedition's success, as well, of course, as the esteem in which the expedition's leader held them. Thus, in 1511, with the permission of the governor of Hispaniola, fray Nicolás de Ovando, Diego Velázquez formed a company of some three hundred thirty men to make an expedition to the island of Cuba for the ostensible purpose of capturing Huatey, one of the native caciques who had led resistance against the Spaniards on Hispaniola. But Diego Velázquez soon slipped out from under the control of the governor of Hispaniola and, seeking endorsement from the Spanish Crown, claimed the governorship of Cuba, setting up his own court and entourage, which included many of the individuals who populate Bernal Díaz's narrative. In forming these companies, family and other personal relations—relations arising from being a member of a household, rendering prior loyal service, and being from a given Spanish city or region, all relations to which Bernal Díaz

refers—were of utmost importance.<sup>2</sup> They were fundamental social binders, even if they did not guarantee continued loyalty, for one is, after all, dealing with men who were proud, adventurous, and, above all, interested in securing their fortunes. Finally, being the designated organizer and leader of a company gave primacy to an individual, as did serving as a captain of men and simply being among the first to enter and subdue a given area.

Even before Cortés's expedition to the Mexican mainland, the process of taking control of new territories had been well established. The matter of first importance was to subdue the native populations by capturing their leaders and, if possible, subordinating those leaders to the Spaniards' control, thereby making the native peoples sources of labor both for mining and for providing agricultural and household labor. The Spaniards much preferred working through native leaders, as the latter had already established authority within their communities and were thus in the best position to communicate the Spaniards' desires and keep their peoples compliant with them. The Spanish leader of a given expedition or *entrada* controlled the allotment of Indian labor; this control was one source of significant influence and power. An individual's allocation of Indian labor determined to a large degree his or her prospects for wealth, prosperity, and political position—particularly in dominating the municipal councils. Such allocations were not entirely arbitrary, inasmuch as those who contributed most to an expedition were able to lay claim to at least proportional shares of the spoils it produced. In this way, senior leaders of expeditions themselves gained wealth, influence, and even property, often leading to conflicts with the original leader of the expedition, conflicts that led to enmities,

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2. Bernal Díaz notes that he was a member of Diego Velázquez's household. Further, Diego Velázquez offered the captaincy generalship of the third expedition to three relatives, all of whom declined because they already had comfortable situations on Cuba. Even Diego Velázquez's offer of the post to Hernando Cortés was based on relationships of prior loyal service and Cortés's marriage to a member of Velázquez's extended family.

divisions, and, ultimately, to further expeditions in search of lands and populations of which the subordinate might himself become principal leader. This was the situation with Governor Ovando and Diego Velázquez when the latter organized his expedition to go to Cuba, and it would be the situation when, finally, Velázquez named Hernando Cortés captain general of the third expedition to Mexico. Cortés maneuvered his independence from Velázquez when he, Cortés, contrived to found Villa Rica de la Veracruz and have himself named captain general and *justicia mayor*.

The other major factor that drove the exploration and settlement of new territories was the decline of productivity in already established ones. The fundamental reason for declining productivity was the decrease in native populations whose labor the Spaniards could exploit. Native populations seemed not to hold up well under the kinds of labor, mining and sugar cane cultivation in particular, to which the Spaniards subjected them, and they were particularly susceptible to the diseases the Spaniards brought from Europe, diseases to which the native populations had not previously been exposed. With the wearing out of the populations native to a given area, the Spaniards had not only to locate new territories with populations sufficient to carry out the work they required but also to seek other sources of labor among enslaved Africans. The Spaniards, having arrived on Hispaniola in relatively large numbers in 1493, had to a great extent exhausted its human resources by 1501. They moved on to Puerto Rico and then, in 1511, to Tierra Firme under Pedrarias Dávila and, a bit later, to Cuba under Diego Velázquez. Accompanying Velázquez were Hernando Cortés and Pánfilo de Narváez, both of whom figure significantly in Bernal Díaz's account of the conquest of Mexico. One sees, then, that the expeditions to Mexico fall into a pattern of Spanish expansion in the Americas, for by 1518, a generation after the Spaniards had arrived in the New World, they found it necessary and were staged to move from the islands of the Caribbean onto the mainland.

Diego Velázquez initiated three expeditions to the mainland, the first led by Francisco Hernández de Córdoba, which made

its way up the coast of the Yucatan but finally suffered defeat at the hands of the natives at Chanpoton, where they had landed in search of water. Juan de Grijalva led the second expedition, which left Cuba in 1518 and retraced much of the route Córdoba followed, encountering many of the same obstacles. He became convinced, however, that the land had promise and should be settled, although he had neither the men nor the resources to do so. Instead, he sent Pedro de Alvarado back to Cuba to let Diego Velázquez know of his findings.

In the meantime, fearing that the Spanish Crown might grant rights of exploration and settlement to some other, more preferred person, Diego Velázquez had already begun to organize a third expedition, the one to be led by Hernando Cortés, who, as Bernal Díaz's account makes clear, assiduously set about organizing the largest, most experienced, and best outfitted company yet to set out for the mainland, a company that included almost one-third of Cuba's Spanish population and greatly diminished the island's food and other supplies.<sup>3</sup> Although large, the expedition Cortés led, then, was not an initial or particularly innovative effort to reach and settle the mainland, but rather one that built upon the efforts of and information from earlier attempts to establish a foothold on the continent. One sees throughout Bernal Díaz's account that Cortés used the information he had gleaned judiciously, taking, if not seeking, the advice of those among his company who had participated in the earlier expeditions: Antón de Alaminos, Pedro de Alvarado, and others. Further, Cortés's strategies of seeking interpreters and large populations with whom he could establish alliances, as well as founding Villa Rica de la Veracruz, by which he established a claim to independence from Diego Velázquez, were ones he must have observed among earlier expedition leaders; they had all become part of standard Spanish practice in settling the Caribbean. None of the foregoing detracts from the skill and

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3. See Robert Himmerich y Valencia, *The Encomenderos of New Spain, 1521–1555* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 10.

forcefulness of Cortés's leadership nor of the accomplishment of those who either set out with him or later joined the expedition, but it does show that his effort built upon established practice.

The record indicates that Moctezuma, *tlatoani* or chief ruler of the Aztecs or Mexica, became aware of the Spanish during the Grijalva expedition and that he had their progress followed as they moved up the eastern coast of the mainland. He became alarmed when he learned of Cortés's even larger expedition, and, clearly, he gathered increasingly detailed information about it. Cortés, meanwhile, upon disembarking at San Juan de Ulúa, set out not only to find a location suitable for establishing a settlement, but also to discover what substantial populations of native peoples might be located in the area. In fact, he did not so much come across them as they came to him, and he soon began to gather information about the dominant power in the region, the Aztecs, and to establish alliances with those peoples who had become subject and tribute payers to them. Because territorial and other divisions existed among the peoples native to Mexico, the Spaniards were able to assert themselves and lend their weight to the balance of power relative to the dominant Aztecs. During the course of the conquest, the Totonacs and, especially, the Tlaxcalans, who had been under pressure from the Aztecs for more than one hundred years, became allies without whom Cortés very likely could not have succeeded in overcoming the Aztecs and all but destroying their central city, Tenochtitlan. That is, those native peoples, far from foreseeing the future destruction of the indigenous forms of life, focused their decisions to form alliances with the Spaniards on their desire to overthrow Aztec dominance.

In conquering the Aztecs and other peoples native to Mexico, Cortés employed several strategies that had proven effective in the Caribbean campaigns. Beyond establishing alliances with local populations, the most important of these was capturing and placing Moctezuma under house arrest, an event that, taken in itself, seems enormously audacious—as indeed it probably was, given the total set of circumstances—but the type of event that had proven possible and effective in earlier Spanish conquests.

Most importantly, the Spaniards, greatly outnumbered in general, enjoyed a near-overwhelming advantage with respect to the technology of arms: First, they had forged steel for their swords, shields, and armor, although for the latter they adopted the native habit of wearing quilted cotton. Second, their horses served as sixteenth-century equivalents to tanks and gave them much more mobility on a relatively level and open battlefield, where they typically sought to engage the enemy. Third, the Spaniards had crossbows, *escopetas*—short matchlock scatter guns—and cannons that shot both steel balls and balls fashioned from stone. All three, with crossbows being the most accurate, gave the Spaniards an advantage at long range. For the native peoples, such arms were completely new weapons of war. Fourth, the Spaniards had the experience not only of prior conquests in the Caribbean but also of their war against the Moors; the men who journeyed to the Americas came from those parts of Spain where the majority of Spaniards who fought the battles against the Arabs and the Italians lived. They were battle wise and battle hardened. Finally, they fought to kill and to subdue. On the other hand, for all their advantages on open battlefields—witness the Battle of Otumba in which the Spaniards with diminished forces, most of whom were wounded, routed the Aztecs—the Spaniards were vulnerable in closed spaces, either within the walls of a city or in mountain passes that did not afford ready escape routes and where indigenous warriors had the advantage of numbers, as the events of the *noche triste* amply show.

By the time the Spaniards arrived on the Mexican mainland, the native populations had developed battle traditions that in the beginning, at least, disadvantaged them in their engagements with the invaders. First, their technology had not reached that of the Bronze Age and their armaments were produced from natural products, that is, cotton, leather, wood, and various kinds of stones and obsidian. They had knives and spear-throwers, but their spears and darts had only fire-hardened tips, which, to be sure, could penetrate cotton and even leather armor, but not steel. Their battle clubs and swords had inset obsidian edges,

which, although fragile, were devastatingly sharp, as Bernal Díaz notes in several places. The war clubs or *macanas*, with their rows of inset obsidian blades on either side of the club, were capable of decapitating even a horse and of inflicting deep bleeding wounds. The native peoples fought in tightly organized groups led by warriors who had proven themselves in previous battles and who wore livery that made it easy to identify them, that is, feathered insignias attached to rods bound to the body and rising above the bearer's head. When those leaders were wounded, captured, or killed, the groups they led tended to become disorganized and ineffective as a fighting force. Further, as Ross Hassig points out, in battling one another the native peoples had developed a fundamental strategy of attacking in full force, hurling masses of spears, darts, and rocks from slings at the opponents to stun and disorganize them.<sup>4</sup> They followed this barrage with an assault to capture, not kill, the enemy, for, in the end, the objective of warfare on the Mexican mainland was first to reduce the enemy peoples to payers of tribute in the form of cloth, feathers, food, and other goods and, second, to secure men, women, and children for sacrifice at the major religious festivals—in the Aztec cosmology the return of human blood to the cosmos was essential to sustaining it. Although the Aztecs did not give up their fundamental strategy of seeking to capture Spaniards for sacrifice, particularly those they perceived to be leaders, they saw quickly that this strategy tended to disadvantage them. One does see, as Bernal Díaz's narrative proceeds, that the Aztecs adapted to the new battle conditions they faced. They learned to lure the Spaniards into mountain passes and narrow passageways or streets and throw rocks down on them. To the very end, they brought every human and natural resource at their disposal to their opposition of the Spaniards, even using captured Spanish swords, crossbows, and other weaponry, and

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4. See Ross Hassig, *Mexico and the Spanish Conquest*, 2nd ed. (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 30 ff.

one can only admire their courage and resoluteness in seeking to maintain their freedom.<sup>5</sup>

The goal of the Spaniards involved in the conquest, of course, was to establish a place for themselves in the newly subdued territories, using the native peoples to extract resources, primarily gold (and silver), that could be readily traded in Spain, the metropolis, for goods that would allow them to have the kind of lives they would have had in Spain. To be sure, many of the more successful conquistadors returned to Spain and set up rich households using the wealth they had gained in the Americas, but most remained in the territories they had conquered. Those who came with Cortés and those who later allied themselves with him were able to claim rights as first conqueror and conqueror, respectively, when it came time to distribute captured lands, peoples, and goods. The leader of the company, in this instance Cortés, was the one to reward them, with the confirmation of the Spanish Crown to be sure, first in rough proportion to what they had invested in and otherwise contributed to the enterprise and second with respect to when they joined the conquest company. Those who were able to provide a boat, food, or other supplies for the expedition, perhaps particularly a horse, received the greatest shares; a man and a horse, for instance, were held equivalent to at least two men.

One sees, as the Spanish conquest of the Americas progressed, not only that successful strategies came to be repeated, but also that those undertaking the next stage of expeditions had, in fact, served the leaders of the preceding expeditions well. Very often, however, primarily because of ambition, they came into conflict

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5. None of the foregoing mentions the impact of new diseases the Spaniards brought to the Americas, particularly smallpox, which by the time Cortés and his followers began their second assault on Mexico had devastated the native populations, making it increasingly difficult to form the large groups of warriors that might more effectively have resisted the Spaniards. One has to count the spread of that new-to-the-Americas disease as a major factor in the Spanish success.

with those same leaders and threw over their authority. Certainly one sees such a dynamic between Diego Velázquez and Governor Ovando, and the dynamic repeats itself when Cortés, who was among Velázquez's most important captains, either throws over or subverts the latter's control and authority. Cortés established the town and town council of Villa Rica de la Veracruz and sent certain members of his company to Spain with presents for the Spanish Crown; he also charged his emissaries with pleading the priority of Cortés and his company before the Crown and its court, even as Velázquez was himself waiting to be confirmed as governor of Cuba with rights to explore the Yucatan and Mexico. That Cortés was able successfully to press his case before the Crown derives to a high degree from the great importance attached to being a "first conqueror." This position of seniority in the community carried certain informal *de facto* rights both to claim the use of land and labor—note that all land was claimed in the name of the Crown and thus, strictly speaking, belonged to it—and also its allocation to those who contributed to its capture on behalf of the Spanish Crown. The foregoing helps one understand the alarm Velázquez showed when he came to suspect that Cortés intended to go off on his own and the alarm that Cortés and the leaders and members of his company felt when they learned that Velázquez had sent Pánfilo de Narváez to capture and, if necessary, kill Cortés and his men. Narváez, along with Cortés, had been one of Velázquez's leading captains when Velázquez subdued Cuba. Maintaining precedence was of the essence in having a viable and legitimate claim to the resources of conquered lands and peoples. It also explains the anger the men in Cortés's company felt when Cortés showed himself willing to make others, men in Narváez's company or latecomers who nonetheless brought important supplies with them, members of his company. Doing so threatened the potential rewards for the efforts of the original members of the company, that is, the original investors of their wealth and persons.

Each stage of the conquest brought its own further expansions, for ambitious, risk-taking men remain true to their nature and

demand their rewards. The captains of one stage became leaders of the next. The fall of Tenochtitlan—Mexico—having been accomplished, Cortés granted Pedro de Alvarado substantial *encomienda* rights to Guatemala, Gonzalo de Sandoval similar rights in Oaxaca, and Cristóbal de Olid such rights in Honduras, although Olid soon betrayed Cortés, at least as Cortés saw the matter, and Cortés had him captured and killed. Bernal Díaz accompanied Pedro de Alvarado to Guatemala and received *encomienda* rights there, rights that he and other first conquerors believed were to be held in perpetuity. As times and events would have it, however, the extension of those rights to his heirs came to be challenged; latecomers wanted to claim the use of the land and Indian labor for themselves and took their case to Spain. This challenge, Bernal Díaz's narrative reveals, becomes one motive for his taking pen in hand.

## Perspectives on the Conquest

One important feature of Bernal Díaz's account of the conquest of New Spain is that, no matter how biased it may be, it does provide a relatively continuous first-person participant account of the events leading from the first expeditions to determine what lay at the other side of the Caribbean to the fall of Mexico. Reading the narrative on its own without reference to other accounts might lead one to take it as definitive, but actual events, actual history, are too complex for a single narrative of the kind Bernal Díaz crafts to be definitive. It may provide a rough sequence of and timeline for the events it recounts, but it remains one person's account told from a particular place and with a specific and singular perspective. This fact does not imply that Bernal Díaz deliberately distorts or forthrightly falsifies the record; it simply acknowledges that he is a person with motives who is, after all, able to tell the story only from what he experienced or heard. He understands that one might question his memory and notes on occasion that persons have both remarked how clearly he seems to remember and wondered how he is able to do so. He is aware of

the questions that might arise regarding his account. On the other hand, he also often notes those events about which he knows only at second hand, although he does not suggest the reader consult other sources. One charming and defining characteristic of the text is Bernal Díaz's use of the phrases "as I remember it," or "according to my memory," where he uses but does not necessarily emphasize the first-person pronoun, acknowledging that the account is his and from his perspective but not that the account is somehow subjective. Nonetheless, he does want us to understand that he was present at the events and his presence lends his account important weight, particularly in relation to the account that comes from Francisco López de Gómara, whom he regards as a mere glorifier of Cortés. Bernal Díaz holds that account in disdain and seems to take particular joy in pointing out its faults, not the least of which in his view is its polished rhetoric in the service of a flawed narrative. Bernal Díaz casts himself not only as a common man who fought on the ground with sword and buckler but also as a plainspoken, simple, and honest man who does not command fine phrases and honeyed words. He is, in that regard, prototypically American, foreswearing Europe's learning and sophistication.

Let us consider three of the more dramatic incidents one finds in Bernal Díaz's conquest narrative and compare them with Hernando Cortés's *Letters*, Francisco López de Gómara's *Historia de la conquista de México* (translated as *Life of the Conqueror*), and the *Florentine Codex*,<sup>6</sup> an indigenous account of events solicited and recorded by fray Bernardino Sahagún: the securing of Marina as interpreter, Pedro de Alvarado's attack on the dancers at the

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6. Hernán Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, trans. and ed. Anthony Pagden (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986); cited as *Letters*. Francisco López de Gómara, *Cortés: The Life of the Conqueror by His Secretary*, trans. and ed. Lesley Byrd Simpson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966); cited as Gómara. James Lockhart, trans. and ed., *We People Here: Nahuatl Accounts of the Conquest of Mexico* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004); cited as *FC*.

Toxcatl festival, and the Battle of Otumba. Bernal Díaz's account of how Cortés acquired Marina occurs in Section 5 of this volume. His telling of the episode is poignant and also makes clear that she will be important to the expedition; he repeatedly mentions her throughout the narrative, dedicating entire chapters to her and indicating that she is everywhere Cortés is. Cortés, on the other hand, provides no information regarding the initial encounter and mentions her only twice, once as his "interpreter, who is an Indian woman" (*Letters*, 71) and once as his "interpreter . . . Marina, who traveled always in my company after she had been given to me as a present . . ." (*Letters*, 376). Francisco López de Gómara embeds Marina's story in an episode in which Cortés is frustrated at not being able to communicate with the natives he was meeting, during which "he heard one of the twenty women given to them [the Spaniards] in Potonchán speaking to the governor's men and understanding them very well, as if they were of her own language. So Cortés took her and promised her more than her liberty if she would establish friendship between him and the men of her country, and he told her that he would like to have her for his interpreter and secretary . . ." (Gómara, 56). She is not mentioned by name nor even referred to again in Francisco López de Gómara's Spanish text. The *Florentine Codex* introduces Marina in the following passage: "And it was told, presented, made known, announced, and reported to Moteucōma, and brought to his attention that a woman, one of us people here, came accompanying them as interpreter. Her name was Marina and her homeland was Tepeticpa, on the coast, where they first took her" (*FC*, 86). Later, the same text gives this account of her work as interpreter: "And when the speech that Moteucōma directed to the Marqués had concluded, Marina reported it to him, interpreting it for him. And when the Marqués had heard what Moteucōma said, he spoke to Marina in return, babbling back to them, replying in his babbling tongue" (*FC*, 118).

The accounts of Pedro de Alvarado's attack on the Toxcatl dancers are similarly discrepant, although with respect to them, one must keep in mind that all are at second hand, including Bernal Díaz's in Section 15. The *Florentine Codex's* account is the most detailed and moving:

When things were already going on, when the festivity was being observed and there was dancing and singing, with voices raised in song, the singing was like the noise of waves breaking against the rocks. When it was time, when the moment had come for the Spaniards to do the killing they came out equipped for battle. They came and closed off each of the places where people went in and out. . . . And when they had closed these exits, they stationed themselves in each, and no one could come out any more.

When this had been done, they went into the temple courtyard to kill people. Those whose assignment it was to do the killing just went on foot, each with his metal sword and his leather shield, some of them iron-studded. Then they surrounded those who were dancing, going among the cylindrical drums. They struck a drummer's arms; both of his hands were severed. Then they struck his neck; his head landed far away. Then they stabbed everyone with iron lances and struck them with iron swords. They struck some in the belly, and then their entrails came spilling out. They split open the heads of some, they really cut their skulls to pieces, their skulls were cut up into little bits. And some they hit on the shoulders; their bodies broke open and ripped. Some they hacked on the calves, some on the thighs, some on their bellies, and then all their entrails would spill out. And if someone still tried to run it was useless; he just dragged his intestines along. There was a stench as if of sulfur. Those who tried to escape could go nowhere. (*FC*, 132–34)

Francisco López de Gómara's account is brief but not inconsistent with that of the *Florentine Codex*:

While the Mexican gentlemen were dancing in the temple yard of Huitzilopochtli, Pedro de Alvarado went there, whether of his own notion or following the decision of the rest, I cannot say. Some say he had been warned that the Indian nobles of the city had assembled to plot the mutiny and rebellion which they later carried out; others, that [the Spaniards] went to see them perform this much-praised and famous dance, and, seeing them so rich, they coveted the gold the Indians were wearing, so he [Alvarado] blocked the entrances with ten or twelve Spaniards at each one, himself went in with more than fifty, and cruelly and pitilessly stabbed and killed the Indians, and took what they were wearing. Cortés, who must have felt badly about the affair, dissembled his feelings so as not to irritate the perpetrators, for it happened at a time when he had need of them, either against the Indians, or to put down trouble among his own men. (Gómara, 208)

Cortés's own account of this crucial event, the one that precipitated the greatest Spanish catastrophe of the conquest, is circumspect in the extreme and never mentions Pedro de Alvarado by name:

I...sent a messenger to the city of Temixtitlan [Tenochtitlan] to inform the Spaniards who remained there of all that had happened to me [in the confrontation with Narváez]. This messenger returned within twelve days bringing me a letter from the alcalde [Alvarado] who had remained there in which he informed me of how the Indians had attacked the fortress and set fire to it in many places and tried to mine it, and that the Spaniards had been greatly pressed and in great danger and might yet be killed if Mutezuma did not order a cease fire, for although they were not at present being attacked, they were still surrounded and not permitted to venture outside the fortress at all. . . . They

were in dire need and I must, for the love of God, come to their aid as swiftly as possible. (*Letters*, 128)

The escape from Tenochtitlan, generally known as the *noche triste*, is one of the most harrowing stories in all literature. The Spaniards, those who did escape, literally did so barely with their lives, a fact Bernal Díaz's account makes clear. And they were not truly free of the power of the Mexica until after the Battle of Otumba, as Bernal Díaz terms it, which he also recounts in Section 15. His is much the most detailed of all those we have; it is one of the central events of his narrative. Cortés's account of this battle, on the other hand, is vivid but modest:

[T]he fields all around were so full of them that nothing else could be seen. We could hardly distinguish between ourselves and them, so fiercely and so closely did they fight with us. Certainly we believed that it was our last day, for the Indians were very strong and we could resist but feebly. . . . But Our Lord was pleased to show His power and mercy, for with all our weakness we broke their great arrogance and pride, and many of them died, including many important persons. . . . We spent most of that day in the fight until God ordained that one of their chieftains should die, and he . . . was of such importance that the battle ended. (*Letters*, 142)

Francisco López de Gómara, with Bernal Díaz, attributes more of the success to Cortés, who he describes as charging "into the thick of the enemy's ranks. He broke through to the man who was bearing the royal standard of Mexico, struck him twice with his lance, and felled and killed him. When the Indians saw their standard and its bearer fall, they dropped their banners to the ground and fled, for such is their custom in war when their general is killed and their standard knocked down" (Gómara, 224–25).

The *Florentine Codex* does not represent the Mexica as actively pursuing the Spaniards to engage them in battle, nor does it single out any Spaniard for particular honor in the engagement:

And when the Spaniards saw them [the Mexica] coming, they waited for them, they set themselves up to encounter them, consider well how they would be able to handle them. When it was time, they charged at them, all who had been in the homes rushed out among them, stabbing and piercing, Mexica and Tlatelolca died there in great abundance. They simply gave themselves to them, they hurled themselves into their hand, they pursued death. . . . And when the Spaniards had done the killing and vented their wrath, they went off, with all the bearers following behind. . . . There [the Mexica] turned back; they stopped tracking the Spaniards and left them behind. (*FC*, 174)<sup>7</sup>

The most important comment one can make about these and other differing accounts is that we are fortunate they have come down to us; they allow us to develop a more nuanced picture of what occurred during the conquest. They do not so much conflict with one another as mutually support and supplement one another by bringing different perspectives to bear on the same set of phenomena. Each has its own case to argue, each brings to the fore the specific reasons its author had for committing his memories to paper. Having them together gives reason for approaching each with caution as one attempts to reconstruct what actually occurred. What commends Bernal Díaz's account to us is its narrative drive and vividness, its engaged first-person narrative structure, which gives it a compelling quality often

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7. As we note on page xix above, the Spaniards' reversal of fortune between the escape from Tenochtitlan and this battle is largely a matter of the circumstances of the encounters. During their escape, the Spaniards were cooped up and hemmed in by the Aztecs, who could bring the full force of their numbers and weapons to bear on the Spaniards as they rushed to leave the city. By contrast, on the open field, the Spaniards, though diminished in numbers and mostly wounded, were able to use their superior weaponry and take advantage of the maneuverability their horses provided.

missing from the other available sources, with the exception of the *Florentine Codex*. So the issue at stake is not so much about which account is to be favored in terms of its accuracy as about how the different accounts help us to get at a truth that, in fact, is very likely independent of them all. Nonetheless, the richness of the expression of Bernal Díaz's experience of New Spain and its native peoples, his detailed account of the expedition through which Cortés and his company came to and conquered Mexico, the excitement the narrative arouses in the reader have given *The True History of the Conquest of New Spain* a special place among accounts of those world-changing events. Certainly, these are among the reasons historians from William H. Prescott to Hugh Thomas have so prominently featured it in their attempts at providing us with as full an account of the events as could be produced in their times.

## Bernal Díaz

At the outset of *The True History*, Bernal Díaz del Castillo introduces and provides a provenance for himself and, then, in the course of his account, gives other details regarding his life and person, all of which cast his story and its motivations in a particular light. The reader can garner this self-disclosure for him or herself. Clearly, Bernal Díaz led a rich, robust, and uncommonly long life for a man of his time, outliving the vast majority of those with whom he came to the Americas. Because he does tell us so much about himself in the course of his narrative, one can be brief in providing his biography, even though, having lived as long as he did after the fall of Mexico, a great deal further happened to him. Bernal Díaz del Castillo was born in Medina del Campo in 1492 to a family that was not wealthy, although his father held a position of some importance on the town council, suggesting that he did exercise some influence. He left his hometown and homeland in 1514 at age twenty-two to seek his fortune in the Americas. He came to the Americas with Pedrarias Dávila on the expedition to settle Tierra Firme, that is, the territory we now know as Panama. He became

discouraged at this settlement attempt and soon decided to go to Cuba, where he spent a relatively impoverished three years before signing on as a member, first, of Francisco de Córdoba's expedition to the Yucatan and, second, of Juan de Grijalva's expedition. Surviving those two dangerous and unsuccessful expeditions, Bernal Díaz demonstrated his sheer will and desire to establish a place for himself by joining the company formed by Cortés; *The True History* is an account of this expedition and its aftermath. Following the fall of Mexico, Bernal Díaz joined Pedro de Alvarado's expedition to Guatemala. There he ultimately settled and established himself as a first conquistador with *encomienda* rights and landholdings, which, in turn, led to his serving as a prominent and respected member of the town council.

Bernal Díaz undertook writing his *True History* sometime during the 1550s. His efforts at writing the document were sporadic; he did not complete the project until the late 1560s, and he did not send a copy to Spain for publication until the 1570s. The text was not published until 1632 and then only in a form that fray Alonzo Remón had significantly altered. Not until the middle of the first decade of the twentieth century, when Genaro García, a Mexican historian, discovered Bernal Díaz's original manuscript in Guatemala did the world have an edition of *The True History of the Conquest of New Spain* that conformed to Bernal Díaz's intentions. That edition is the one on which the present translators have based this abridgment of Bernal Díaz's extraordinary account.

## NOTE ON THE TRANSLATION

This translation is based on the Guatemala manuscript, the one scholars now accept as authoritative. The most readily available edition of that manuscript is the one produced by Genaro García in 1904–1905 and then widely distributed by numerous publishers, including Editorial Porrúa. In 2005, under the auspices of El Colegio de México, the Universidad Autónoma de México, the Servicio Alemán de Intercambio Académico, and the Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional, José Antonio Barbón Rodríguez issued the definitive critical edition of *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España*. This work is monumental in scope, reproducing the text in the original sixteenth-century Spanish orthography, with running alternate readings and comments on the text. The volume also includes more than one thousand pages in which Barbón Rodríguez has assembled a comprehensive set of commentaries and reference materials, including analyses of Bernal Díaz's vocabulary with paradigm cases of his usages, and onomastic and toponomastic indices. The translators have made use of these scholarly resources at every step of the way and want to acknowledge them as essential to a full understanding of *The True History*.

Bernal Díaz informs us that, first, unlike others who have written about the conquest, he is not learned, does not have the literary and rhetorical training and style of a Francisco López de Gómara, and does not have the latter's command of Spanish grammar or vocabulary.<sup>1</sup> Bernal Díaz chooses to present himself

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1. Barbón Rodríguez notes that one cannot read very far into Bernal Díaz's text before concluding that he is not a well-educated man, a man who has mastered the finer points of his language. True as that may be,

as a simple man who has spent his life as a conquistador among other persons similar to himself. He writes a plain but sometimes difficult-to-decipher Spanish that uses neologism, slang, and terms that arose in the Antilles or are adapted from indigenous languages. His vocabulary derives more from his extraordinary life experience than from reading the great authors, Spanish or other, although he does occasionally produce a pithy aphorism or common literary reference. One finds that he uses a limited vocabulary, that certain phrases occur repeatedly and almost ritualistically, and that he tends to write strung-out, if not run-on sentences that nonetheless cohere.<sup>2</sup> This style requires the translator to make some important decisions that are a matter of judgment more than knowledge of either the object or target language, all of which turn on the kind of translation the translator chooses to make. In the present instance, the translators have sought to identify and faithfully reproduce the particular way in which Bernal Díaz articulates himself and his experiences. Thus, we have attempted to honor the limited vocabulary in which he couches his experiences, used his repeated and ritualistic phrases, except when they simply become repetitious, and respected his narration of events in what sometimes appear to modern sensibilities to

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Bernal Díaz does have a sense of drama, and his memories of events and conversations or speeches can be profoundly moving.

2. One often finds paragraph-long sentences in which Bernal Díaz recounts a sequence of events or a series of conversational elements, stringing them together with commas or semicolons. In many, if not most instances, we have preserved his sequences by using either commas or semicolons, depending on the length and relative independence of the phrase or clause. We have been particularly careful to do so when we apprehended clear continuity and coherence internal to these sentences. In other words, we have allowed the context, content, and singleness of idea to determine our choices in these instances. Another feature of these long sentences is that they sometimes conclude with a short, often not fully relevant coda, and we have generally chosen to leave these as part of the sentence because they seem to us so much a part of Bernal Díaz's thought pattern and style of expression.

be overlong sentences. When we have chosen to do the latter, it is because we have detected an inner logic to the flow of those sentences that might be disrupted if broken up. On the other hand, we have divided them when we did not perceive continuity of thought. In many respects, the limited vocabulary has proved the most vexatious challenge, and with respect to it, the modifiers *muy bueno* and *muy grande* stand out. We have often been tempted either to leave them out or, following other translators, to provide context-specific and context-justifiable translations for them. For the most part, we have resisted both temptations, the first because, clearly, in using them, Bernal Díaz *is* expressing an aspect of his experience, namely, that something *is* or *was* “very good” or “very large,” and the reader needs to be aware of that fact. We resist the second temptation for more complex reasons. On the one hand, coming up with contextually justifiable renderings of the modifiers would make the text more varied, give it greater specificity and concreteness, and perhaps, make it more engaging than it might otherwise be. On the other hand, context-sensitive renderings can be nothing other than guesses at what Bernal Díaz might have intended; they are speculative and literally put words in his mouth. Further, the choice to provide context-sensitive renderings immediately creates a slippery slope; that is, having chosen to take the plunge, one cannot rationally decide where to stop, and the possibility that the text itself, whatever it might be, will become one’s own, not the one Bernal Díaz left, becomes quite real. The translators’ view is that, from the perspective of persons interested in what Bernal Díaz perceived and remembered about what occurred in that initial encounter, it is important to preserve to the degree and extent possible, his very text. In making this claim, we do not intend to criticize the choices other translators, particularly A. P. Maudslay, made. We regard Maudslay’s effort as nothing short of heroic. He produced a largely accurate, highly readable translation of the entire text. Having his text to refer to was, at certain points, even when we made different choices, invaluable. We consulted J. M. Cohen’s revision of Maudslay much less, but we did refer to it. However,

with regard to the issue of supplying context-sensitive modifiers, we did not follow their lead.

Another feature of those translations—the abridgement of Maudslay’s complete translation and Cohen’s revision of that abridgement—that we chose not to follow was their manner of dividing Bernal Díaz’s text into chapters different from the ones Bernal Díaz created. The original Spanish text consists of two hundred fourteen chapters, which Maudslay’s unabridged translation preserves. But Bernal Díaz’s chapters tend to be short, and the chapter titles are often long, sometimes fifty words long, even when the chapter is quite short. We have chosen an alternative strategy, retaining Bernal Díaz’s original chapters, minus the chapter titles but retaining the original chapter numbers, and also superimposing larger section titles on groups of chapters with the section titles drawn from the content of the particular section. The bracketed roman numerals throughout the abridged text designate the chapters in the Spanish original. We have included these even in our glosses of the text. Our reason for including these chapter numbers is to facilitate the efforts of readers who desire to go to relevant passages in the Spanish original. Our glosses of those portions of Bernal Díaz’s text that have been omitted are set off from the translation and italicized.

One final comment: Because Bernal Díaz began to compose his *True History* some thirty years after the events he describes, some of the Spanish terms in use often carried connotations that can mislead. One of the most important of these is *soldado*, which can only be translated “soldier,” but which inaccurately reflects the status of those who came with Cortés. Cortés’s men were not paid mercenaries but more like shareholders in the enterprise.<sup>3</sup> In a similar vein, throughout his text, Bernal Díaz primarily used the term *encomienda* to designate allocations of native labor, under

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3. See Matthew Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 30, for the definitive discussion of this matter.

the leadership of local caciques, allotted to Spaniards deemed worthy of reward for participating in an expedition or being loyal or doing otherwise meritorious service. By the time he wrote, that term had come into near universal use among Spanish speakers in the Caribbean and Mexico, almost obliterating the term *repartimiento*. *Repartimiento* does occur very occasionally in Bernal Díaz's text, where it designated the allocation of native labor under the leadership of local caciques on an occasional and rotating basis among grantees by the leader of a company of men such as Cortés organized. It was the system in effect at the time of the conquest of Mexico. Finally, one finds in the text three different Spanish terms to designate what we must consider either temporary or not particularly well-constructed shelters: *choza*, *rancho*, and *barraca*. These terms often occur in pairs, a typical rhetorical construction, and we have been unable to determine whether or to what extent the three words designated different kinds of structures. After considering a number of alternatives that we ultimately regarded as unacceptable, we decided not to preserve the doubling and have instead used a single English term, *hut*, to translate all three.

We have consistently used in the body of the translation and in our glosses on the text the names of persons and places as one finds them in Bernal Díaz's text, even when their Nahuatl or modern equivalents are well known and in general use in the literature. However, at the first instance of Bernal Díaz's use of a place or person name that is no longer current, we note the name now more commonly in use. We have not used the accent marks often used with names originating from the Nahuatl because, according to at least one preeminent scholar in the field, the accents were from the Spanish, not Nahuatl.

# FIGURES PROMINENT IN BERNAL DÍAZ DEL CASTILLO'S *TRUE HISTORY*<sup>1</sup>

**Aguilar, Jerónimo de** (1489–1531) Spaniard who went to the colony of Santo Domingo la Antigüedad de Darién in 1510 but then, after a dispute arose among leaders of the colony, left with sixteen other people in 1511. They were shipwrecked and eventually captured or enslaved by the Maya. During his captive years he learned a Mayan dialect that allowed him initially to serve as intermediary interpreter between Marina and Cortés and Nahuatl speakers.

**Alaminos, Antón de** (1482–1520) The chief pilot of Cortés's fleet. He had served as a pilot on two of Columbus's voyages and on the two voyages and attempted *entradas* led by Francisco Hernández de Córdoba and Juan de Grijalva, respectively, to the Yucatan. He was generally knowledgeable regarding sailing conditions in the Caribbean.

**Alvarado, Pedro de** (1485–1541) One of the three captains who led companies of men during the final siege of Tenochtitlan. Cortés left him in charge of the men who remained in Tenochtitlan while Cortés went to subdue Narváez; Pedro de Alvarado was responsible for the attack on the Aztecs during

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1. This list of the figures who populate Bernal Díaz's narrative is necessarily brief. In the instance of native figures, one finds the name Bernal Díaz uses most often in the text followed by the now more commonly used name. The quoted sentences describing the Spanish figures are from Bernal Díaz's text itself, cited by chapter.

their Toxcatl celebration. After Hernando Cortés, he was the most prominent member of the company of men who came on that third entrada. Pedro de Alvarado is generally credited with leading the conquest of Guatemala. A good horseman and talker, he was brave but rash.

**Cacamatzin (Cacama)** The ruler of Texcoco and nephew to Montezuma. When he learned of his uncle's house arrest by Cortés, he advocated resistance against the Spanish invaders.

**Coadlavaca (Cuitlahuac)** The ruler of Iztapalapa who succeeded Montezuma, his relative, as *tlatoani*, cacique of Mexico. He died of smallpox within eighty days of being raised up to that position.

**Cortés, Hernando** (1485–1547) Born in Medellín, Spain, he came to Hispaniola in 1504 and participated with Pánfilo de Narváez under Diego Velázquez in settling that island and then Cuba. Ultimately rebelling against Diego Velázquez, he led the third expedition from Cuba to the Yucatan and Mexico, laying siege to and conquering Tenochtitlan in 1521, the height of his career. He spent the rest of his life defending his accomplishments and seeking preferment from the Spanish crown.

**Díaz del Castillo, Bernal** (1495–1583) Came to Cuba in 1514 and claims to have been the only one of the conquistadors who participated in all three initial expeditions to the Yucatan and Mexican mainland. Not able initially to afford a horse, he fought afoot and wrote of his experiences in the conquest from that point of view.

**Escalante, Juan de** (n.d.) Close friend of and advisor to Cortés, to whom the latter gave the order to disable the ships on which the Cortés expedition came. Cortés named him captain general and justicia mayor of Villa Rica de la Veracruz, and he in turn warned Cortés at the arrival of Narváez and his fleet.

**The fat cacique** Cacique of the Totonac peoples, who were among the first allies of the Spaniards in their conquest of Mexico.

**Guatemuz (Cuauhtemoc)** Succeeded Coadlavaca (Cuitlahuac) as cacique of Tenochtitlan and led the resistance of the Aztecs during the siege undertaken by Cortés after returning from Tlaxcala.

**Huichilobos (Huitzilopochtli)** The patron god of the Aztecs, the god of war whose name signifies either “the left-handed hummingbird” or “the hummingbird from the south.”

**López, Martín** (c. 1487–c. 1577) Ship’s carpenter from Seville who came to Cuba in 1516 with goods and wine to resell. Martín López oversaw the design and construction of the brigantines that proved so essential to the final conquest of Tenochtitlan.

**López de Gómara, Francisco** (1511–1566) Secretary to and biographer of Cortés after the latter’s return to Spain. Wrote *Historia de la conquista de México*, one of the works to which Bernal Díaz’s *True History* is a reaction and response.

**Lugo, Francisco de** (d. 1548?) One of Cortés’s captains, known for bravery. Saved Cortés from capture during the battle at San Juan de Ulúa and apprehended for execution the leader of a group who conspired to assassinate Cortés.

**Marina (Malinal; La Malinche; Malinaltzin)** Nahuatl-speaking cacica enslaved by Mayan caciques who gave her to Cortés as a gift of friendship. Along with Jerónimo de Aguilar, she served as interpreter for Cortés. Marina knew Nahuatl and Yucatec Mayan and could communicate with Aguilar, who knew Yucatec Mayan and Spanish. Bernal Díaz consistently addresses her as “doña.”

**Maseescaci (Maxixcatzin)** Tlaxcalan cacique, rough contemporary of Xicotenga the elder. Initially opposed the Spaniards on their first entry into Tlaxcalan territory but subsequently allied with them in their battle against the Aztecs.

**Montezuma (Moctezuma/Motecuhzoma)** The fifth tlatoani, cacique of Tenochtitlan who ruled from 1502 to 1520. He reputedly was killed accidentally at the hands of his own people while a captive of Cortés and his men.

**Narváez, Pánfilo de** (1478–1528) Loyal to Diego Velázquez, whom he helped conquer Cuba, Narváez led a large expedition to Mexico to stop Cortés and those with him from claiming and establishing themselves on the Mexican mainland. Cortés defeated his party and convinced many of its members to join his effort to conquer Mexico. Narváez led a later expedition, which met with disaster, to Florida.

**Olid, Cristóbal de** (1488–1524) One of Cortés's three captains who led a group of men during the final siege of Tenochtitlan. After the fall of Tenochtitlan, he "died in Naco, beheaded [at Cortés's command] because he revolted with a fleet that Cortés had given him." (CCV)

**Ordaz, Diego de** (1480–1532) Chief steward to Diego Velázquez, who charged him with keeping track of Cortés to make sure he did not rebel against and steal from Velázquez. "He was about forty when he came to [New Spain]; he was captain of soldiers with sword and shield because he was no horseman, a brave man of good counsel." (CCVI)

**Sandoval, Gonzalo de** (1498–1529) One of the three captains who led a group of men during the final siege of Tenochtitlan. Loyal to Cortés, he was "a very brave captain of about twenty-four years when he came here to [New Spain]. . . . He had the best horse, the best galloper and the most easily turned from one side to the other." (CCVI)

**Tezcatēpuca (Tezcatlipoca)** A central Aztec deity associated with the night sky, night winds, the north, the earth, and obsidian. His Nahuatl name is often translated "smoking mirror." Bernal Díaz consistently refers to this Aztec god in conjunction with Huichilobos (Huitzilopochtli), referring to it as the "god of the inferno," imposing his Christian perspective on it.

**Velázquez, Diego** (1465–1529) Came to Hispaniola with Columbus on his second voyage in 1493, conquered Cuba, and subsequently became governor. He was responsible for initiating

the voyages to the Yucatan and the Mexican mainland of Francisco Hernández de Córdoba, Juan de Grijalva, Cortés, and Pánfilo de Narváez.

**Xicotenga the elder (Xicotencatl; don Lorenzo de Vargas)**

Cacique of the Tlaxcalans, traditional enemies of the Aztecs, allied with the Spaniards in the conquest of Mexico.

**Xicotenga the younger (Xicotencatl the younger)**

Son of Xicotenga the elder, opposed Cortés and led the Tlaxcalans against the Spaniards when they initially entered Tlaxcalan territory. Later, at the siege of Tenochtitlan, he was executed at Cortés's orders.

# TIMELINE FOR THE CONQUEST OF MEXICO

|                   |                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1492              | Columbus makes landfall and sets foot on an island, probably Hispaniola, now called Santo Domingo.                                                                   |
| 1502              | Moctezuma II becomes <i>tlaton</i> , or ruler, of Tenochtitlan and its vast empire in Mexico.                                                                        |
| 1511–1514         | Spaniards enter Cuba and establish themselves on the island.                                                                                                         |
| 1517              | Francisco Hernández de Córdoba leads the first Spanish expedition to explore Mexico; Aztecs reported to have observed omens of change and disruption to their world. |
| 1518              | Juan de Grijalva explores the Yucatan but suffers defeat in an encounter with its peoples and eventually returns to Cuba.                                            |
| Late 1518         | Diego Velázquez, governor of Cuba, selects Hernando Cortés to lead the third expedition to explore Mexico.                                                           |
| February 10, 1519 | Defying Governor Velázquez's orders withdrawing Cortés's leadership of the third expedition, the latter leaves Cuba to explore and settle Mexico.                    |
| June 3, 1519      | Under Hernando Cortés's leadership, the Spaniards arrive at Cempoala and establish an alliance with the Cempoalans.                                                  |

|                      |                                                                                                                                            |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| June 28, 1519        | Villa Rica de la Veracruz formally founded as a municipality.                                                                              |
| September 2–20, 1519 | The Spaniards encounter and fight the Tlaxcalans but end by establishing an alliance with them.                                            |
| October 1519         | The Spaniards enter Cholula and, on reports that the Cholulans intend to trap and kill them, carry out a countermassacre of the Cholulans. |
| November 8, 1519     | The Spaniards arrive at and enter Tenochtitlan.                                                                                            |
| November 14, 1519    | Cortés puts Moctezuma under house arrest.                                                                                                  |
| May 1520             | Cortés leaves Tenochtitlan to fight men sent by Diego Velásquez under the leadership of Pánfilo de Narváez.                                |
| May 1520             | Pedro de Alvarado and the Spaniards remaining in Tenochtitlan carry out an attack on the celebrants at the Toxcatl festival.               |
| June 24, 1520        | Cortés returns to Tenochtitlan with his men and reinforcements from men who came with Narváez.                                             |
| June 1520            | Cuitlahuac raised up as <i>tlatoani</i> , or ruler, of Tenochtitlan.                                                                       |
| June 1520            | Moctezuma struck by hurled rocks while speaking to his people and soon dies.                                                               |
| June 30, 1520        | <i>La noche triste</i> (the Night of Sorrows), when the Spaniards suffer heavy losses of men and treasure fleeing Tenochtitlan.            |
| July 1520            | After staving off numerous attacks and fighting the Battle of Otumba, the Spaniards reach and are welcomed in Tlaxcala.                    |
| October 1520         | Smallpox plague ravages Tenochtitlan.                                                                                                      |

|                 |                                                                                             |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| December 1520   | Cuitlahuac dies from smallpox.                                                              |
| February 1521   | Cuauhtemoc raised to tlatoani of Tenochtitlan.                                              |
| May 1521        | The Spaniards lay siege to enter Tenochtitlan.                                              |
| May 1521        | The Spaniards cut off water to Tenochtitlan.                                                |
| June 1521       | The Spaniards attempt to enter Tenochtitlan.                                                |
| July 1521       | The Spaniards decide to destroy Tenochtitlan.                                               |
| August 7, 1521  | Pedro de Alvarado and his men suffer heavy losses trying to take marketplace of Tlatelolco. |
| August 13, 1521 | Cuauhtemoc captured, ending the battle for Tenochtitlan.                                    |

## SOURCES AND FURTHER READING

The Spanish conquest of Mexico is one of the most discussed of all topics regarding the European encounter with the Americas; consequently, the bibliography of available materials is enormous. What follows is a brief list of materials that can provide the interested reader with a baseline of information regarding the conquest and many of its major figures as well as guidance to further study. For those who desire to undertake a detailed study of Bernal Díaz's *True History*, the edition by José Antonio Barbón Rodríguez below is essential and exhaustive. The bibliographies in Elliott, Lockhart and Schwartz, Pagden's edition and translation of Cortés's letters, and Restall are particularly useful guides to the literature. Thomas's listing of sources is an impeccable guide to primary sources from which to glean an exhaustive account of conquest history.

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THE TRUE HISTORY OF  
THE CONQUEST OF  
NEW SPAIN



## I AM BERNAL DÍAZ DEL CASTILLO

I have noticed how the most famous chroniclers, before they begin to write their histories, first create their prologues and prefaces with arguments and lofty rhetoric to give luster and believability to their arguments so that curious readers might appreciate their music and flavor. But I, as I am not a student of Latin, venture to create neither preface nor prologue. To extol our heroic feats and exploits in conquering New Spain and its provinces in the company of the valiant and courageous captain don Hernando Cortés—who in later time became the Marquess del Valle for his heroic feats—and to write it with the loftiness it deserves would require an eloquence and rhetoric greater than mine. But as a good eyewitness, with the help of God, I will write very plainly what I saw and experienced fighting in it, without twisting it one way or another; and because I am an old man of more than eighty-four years and have lost my eyesight and hearing and, unfortunately, have no other wealth to leave to my children and descendents save this, my true and remarkable account, for now I will do nothing more than tell and inform about my country, where I was born, what year I left Castile,<sup>1</sup> in the company of which captains I went as a soldier, and where I am now established and have my dwelling.

[I] I am Bernal Díaz del Castillo, citizen and member of the town council of the most loyal city of Santiago de Guatemala,

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1. Castile was the largest of the four Spanish kingdoms of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, occupying the central portion of present-day Spain with access to oceans or seas on three sides.

one of the first discoverers and conquerors of New Spain and its provinces and the Cape of Honduras and Higueras—as it is called in this land—a native of the most noble and distinguished town of Medina del Campo, son of Francisco Díaz del Castillo, former member of that town’s council, who was also called *el Gallant*,<sup>2</sup> and María Díez Rejón, his lawful wife—may they have blessed glory. I write about what concerns me and all the true conquerors, my companions, who have served His Majesty in discovering, conquering, pacifying, and settling all the provinces of New Spain, one of the best parts of the New World, which we discovered at our expense without His Majesty knowing anything about it. I am also speaking here in response to what some people have said and written, people who had no knowledge of it, nor saw it, nor had real information about what they have put forward on this matter except to speak of what is to their taste, in order to obscure, if they can, our many and remarkable services, so they might not be renowned or held in the high esteem they deserve. And as human malice is of such a nature, those evil slanderers do not even want us to be given the preference and recompense His Majesty has ordered his viceroys, presidents, and governors to give. Leaving these arguments aside, I am writing so that such heroic things as I will talk about will not be forgotten, or even more, so that they will not be reduced to nothing; so that the truth of these things might clearly be known; so that the books now written on this subject will be rejected and shown to be nothing because they pervert and obscure the truth; and so that there might be notable fame for our conquests, for it is only just that such illustrious feats as ours be placed, in the histories of heroic deeds, among the most famous in the world. For we have ventured our lives and run excessive risks of death and wounds and countless miseries, both by sea discovering lands that were completely unknown and from battling day and night with a multitude of aggressive warriors, so far from Castile without help or aid of any kind save

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2. “The Gallant.”

the great mercy of Our Lord God, who is the true help, whom it has pleased that we conquer New Spain and the very famous and great city of Tenochtitlan, Mexico—for thus it is named—and so many other cities and provinces that I will not mention their names here. After we had pacified the lands and settled them with Spaniards, as good and loyal vassals and servants we sent to give and deliver those lands with much respect to our king and natural lord through our ambassadors to Castile, and from there to Flanders where His Majesty was at that time with his court. Then, as I will tell further on, many good results have come from it, including the conversion of a huge number of souls that have been saved and are being saved every day, earlier lost to hell. Besides this holy work, I will call attention to the great riches we sent from these parts as gifts, which have gone and go daily to His Majesty as royal fifths<sup>3</sup> as well as what was taken by many other people of all conditions. I say that I shall tell in this account who was the first discoverer of the province of Yucatan and how we went about discovering New Spain, who were the captains and soldiers who conquered and settled it, and many other things we experienced during such conquests, which are worthy of being known and of not being forgotten, all of which I will tell as briefly as I can and, above all, with very certain truth, as an eyewitness.

*Bernal Díaz proceeds to claim that he participated in the two previous voyages staged from Cuba at the behest of its governor, Diego Velázquez, to determine precisely what lay to the west. The first of these expeditions involved some one hundred and ten men who solicited a wealthy Cuban encomendero,<sup>4</sup> Francisco Hernández de Córdoba, to lead the voyage.*

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3. The royal fifth, or *quinto*, was a tax levied by the Spanish crown initially on mined gold but eventually on most goods extracted, captured, or produced in the Americas. This form of taxation originated in the Caribbean and then extended into the rest of the territories that came under Spanish domination.

4. An *encomendero* held rights to the labor of an allotment of Indians living within a given area; an *encomienda* consists of the rights to such

*Together they bought, outfitted, and provisioned three ships and engaged Antón de Alaminos as chief pilot. Departing February 8, 1517, from Santiago de Cuba, this expedition sailed east, rounding the eastern end of Cuba, then west along its northern coast, stopping at Havana,<sup>5</sup> and continuing southeast to Cape Catoche—strangely not sighting the island of Cozumel—rounded the Yucatan peninsula and made its final stop in Chanpoton. At Cape Catoche the Córdoba expedition had its first hostile engagement with mainland peoples, lured into an ambush by a seemingly friendly cacique.<sup>6</sup> The Spanish party quickly defeated the attackers, taking two prisoners, who, upon being baptized, were named Julián and Melchorejo. Continuing to sail west for two weeks, the party cautiously disembarked at Campeche to replenish its drinking water. While there, Bernal Díaz states, the Spaniards heard the Indians calling out, “Castilan, Castilan,” but they did not understand the meaning of the word Castilan. Leaving Campeche, the Córdoba expedition made its way to Chanpoton, where, because their water casks “were not watertight, but their staves gaped,” they were again forced to land in search of water. Having disembarked more cautiously this time, the Spaniards once more met Indians who approached them shouting the strange words they had heard at Campeche. Taking proper precautions, the expedition stayed on land overnight with the intent of resupplying its water in the morning. However, as dawn broke, the Spaniards found themselves surrounded, vastly outnumbered, and under attack. In an hour-long battle, they saw “two of their soldiers carried off alive, their captain with ten arrow wounds, almost all the rest of the men with two or three arrow wounds, and more than fifty dead.” The survivors barely escaped with their lives. With this encounter, the Córdoba expedition was effectively at an end and made its way back to Cuba by way of Florida.*

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labor, normally granted by the individual who led the taking of the land and its population. See the Introduction, pp. xiii and xxxv–xxxvi.

5. The Havana to which Bernal Díaz refers is not modern-day Havana, which is on the northern coast of Cuba, but to an earlier site on the south coast of the island and a bit to the east.

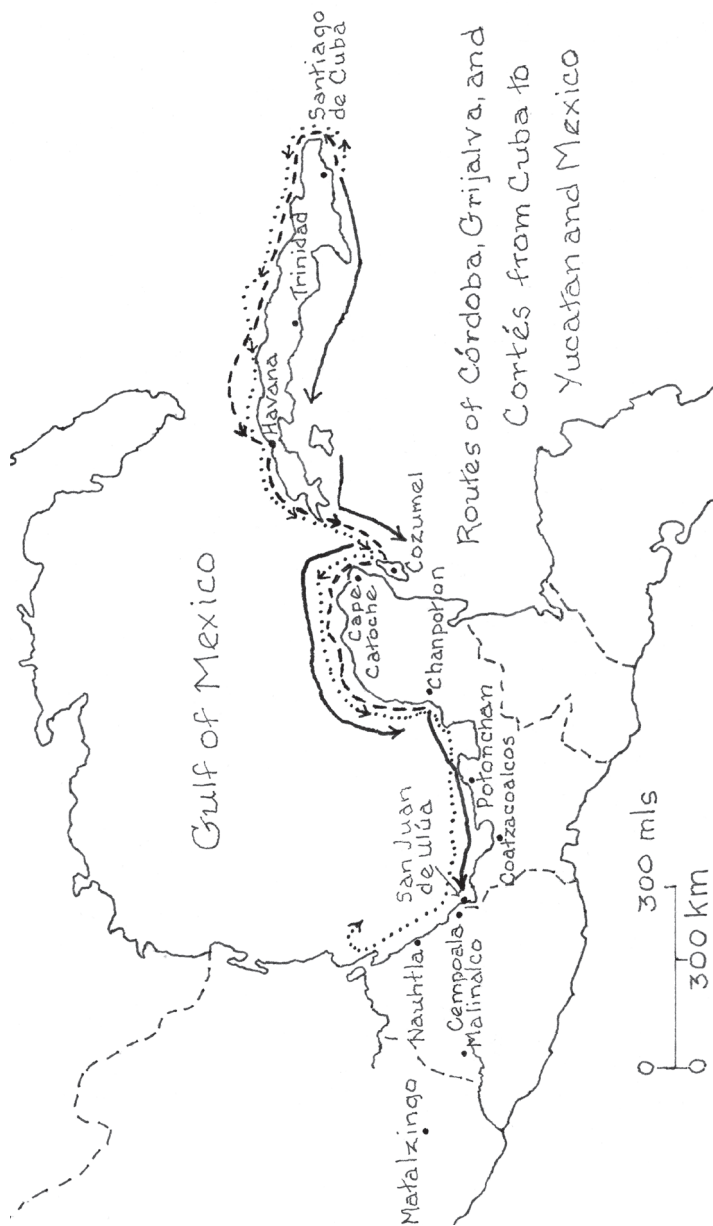
6. *Cacique* is a Caribbean term for a chief or leader.

*Having been told and believing that the mainland overflowed with great riches, Diego Velázquez immediately began to organize another expedition, this time with four ships, which departed from Santiago de Cuba on April 8, 1518, with Juan de Grijalva as captain general and Antón de Alaminos as chief pilot. The Grijalva expedition included Alonso de Ávila, Pedro de Alvarado, and Francisco de Montejo as captains as well as Bernal Díaz, whom Diego Velázquez “ordered to go . . . as standard-bearer.” This expedition followed the same route as the Córdoba expedition, except that after leaving Cuba it drifted a bit more eastward and came upon Cozumel, from which it proceeded to Chanpoton, where the Spaniards again met resistance that left “seven soldiers dead, Juan de Grijalva with three arrow wounds and two broken teeth, and seventy of us wounded,” but the Indians nonetheless fled. Working westward, Grijalva first entered the Boca de Terminos, where the men of the expedition hunted game with the help of a hound that stayed behind as they left to sail to the Río Tabasco. In honor of Grijalva’s discovery of the Río Tabasco, they renamed it the Río Grijalva. Nearby was the large settlement of Tabasco, and, with the aid of Julián and Melchorejo, now serving as interpreters, Grijalva and his men carried on trade. By this time, word of the Grijalva expedition had reached Montezuma, and it seems that he ordered his governors along the coast to trade with Grijalva and his men but keep them under observation. Grijalva’s ships continued to make their way to the west and discovered three islands, Isla Blanca, Isla Verde, and the Isla de Sacrificios. Sailing on, trading with Indian towns as he went, Grijalva claimed lands on behalf of the king and emperor and, finally, having lost another thirteen men from wounds received in various battles, Grijalva and his captains determined to “make their situation known to Diego Velázquez so he could send help and because Grijalva had a great desire to settle in that place, even though he had few soldiers with him.” Grijalva dispatched Pedro de Alvarado to carry messages from each of the captains to Diego Velázquez as well as to take back some of the gold for which they had bartered and those members of the company who were too sick to go on with Grijalva. Having sent Pedro de Alvarado, Grijalva, with his two remaining captains, Francisco de Montejo and Alonso de Ávila,*

*continued northward exploring the coast, finally reaching the Río de Canoas in the province of Pánuco, after which they began their return to Cuba. In the meantime, Diego Velázquez, fearing that something had befallen the Grijalva expedition, had sent a party in search of it. Further, "concerned that some court favorite in Spain might receive rights to explore and settle the mainland," Diego Velázquez sent an envoy to Spain to plead his case to the emperor don Carlos and also began to organize the next expedition, of which Hernando Cortés was to be named captain general.*

I came the third time with the successful and courageous captain don Hernando Cortés. I say that no captain or soldier went to New Spain three times in succession, one after another, as I did. Therefore, I am the most senior discoverer and conqueror who has been or is in New Spain.

It has pleased God to shield me from many dangers of death, both in this difficult discovery and in the bloody Mexican wars. I give God many thanks and much praise for this, so that I might tell and make known what happened in those same wars. More than this, so that curious readers might reflect and think about it carefully, I was at that time about twenty-four years old, and the governor of the island of Cuba, my relative Diego Velázquez, promised me he would give me Indians from among the first that became available, but I did not want to wait until he gave them to me. I always had zeal for being a good soldier, both to serve God and our king and lord and to try to win honor, as noble men should do in life, and to go from good to better. I put out of my mind the death of the companions they killed in those times as well as the wounds they gave me and the fatigues and hardships I experienced, which those who go to discover new lands experience as we put ourselves at risk, being so few companions entering such great towns filled with a multitude of aggressive warriors. From the year 1514 when I came from Castile and began to serve as a



Routes of Córdoba, Grijalva, and Cortés from Cuba to Yucatan and Mexico. Sea routes from Cuba to the Yucatan and Mexico of Córdoba (dashed line), Grijalva (dotted line), and Cortés (solid line).

soldier in the army of Tierra Firme<sup>7</sup> and to discover the Yucatan and New Spain, I was always in front and I did not fall into the many vices there were on the island of Cuba. As my ancestors and my father and brother were always servants of the Royal Crown and the Catholic kings, don Fernando and doña Isabel of most glorious memory, I wanted to be a little like them.

[XVIII] While writing this, my chronicle, I happened to see what Gómara, Illescas, and Jovio<sup>8</sup> wrote about the conquest of Mexico and New Spain. When I read their words and considered how polished they were and how crude and unrefined mine, I stopped writing my chronicle because such good histories were available. With this in mind, I began to read and look very closely at the conversations and arguments in their histories, but neither in the beginning nor the middle nor the end do they talk about what really happened in New Spain. When they talked about how many inhabitants were living in the large cities, they were as likely to say eighty thousand as eight thousand. Then, as for those massacres they say we committed, we were only four hundred fifty soldiers going into that war, and we had our hands full just defending ourselves so that the Indians would not kill and defeat us. Even had the Indians held back, we would not have killed all that many, primarily because they had cotton armor that covered their bodies as well as bows, arrows, shields, large spears, and two-handed double-edged swords that were sharper than our swords, and they were very bold warriors. Those chroniclers

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7. Tierra Firme, sometimes called the “Spanish Main,” literally means “mainland” and referred to a long stretch of the Caribbean coast of what we now call South and Central America, but centered on Panama and extended across the Caribbean Sea from Hispaniola south to Cape Vela in present-day Venezuela and west roughly to what is the border between present-day Honduras and Nicaragua. These boundaries delineated rights to exploration and exploitation granted by the Spanish crown.

8. Bernal Díaz refers here to Francisco López de Gómara’s *Historia de la conquista de México*, 1552, and Gonzalo de Illescas’s *Historia pontifical y católica*, 1554, and Paolo Jovio’s *Elogios o vidas breves de los cavalleros antiguos y modernos*, 1568.

I mention wrote that we were responsible for so many deaths and cruelties that Athalaric, a very fierce king, and Attila,<sup>9</sup> a very proud warrior, did not, according to their recorded histories, kill as many men on their Catalanian battlefields. They say we demolished and burned many cities and temples, which are called *cus*,<sup>10</sup> and they must think that saying this would delight their readers, but they neither saw nor understood what happened even though they wrote about it. The actual conquistadors and the curious readers who know what really happened will say of them that if everything they write about other histories resembles what they wrote about New Spain, it will all be wrong. The strangest thing is that they praise some captains and speak badly of others, and they say that some who were not among the conquistadors were there, and many other such things. There are so many things they do not get right that I will simply not go into it. Then they say something worse, that Cortés secretly ordered the ships destroyed. This is not so, because on my advice and that of all the rest of the soldiers, he ordered them to be wrecked openly so that their crews would help us keep watch and fight. In general, what they write is completely faulty. And why am I so involved in writing, in telling each thing as it actually happened, which wastes paper and ink? I am cursing what they wrote because they had such good style.

Having looked over everything I have said here, how what they wrote regarding what happened in New Spain is a total mockery,

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9. Athalaric (516–534), king of the Ostrogoths in Italy, was noted for drinking and excessive physical cruelty, and Attila (405–453), king of the Hunnic nation, was known for cruelty and rapacity in his attacks on Rome.

10. *Cu* and its plural, *cus*, is the Spanish adaptation of the Mayan word *ku*, pronounced with a glottalized *k*, which is not a sound normal to Spanish speech. The term designates a building or temple, normally quite high, set aside for religious practice. In general, one may think of the term as the rough equivalent of another term Bernal Díaz uses in relation to such structures, *adoratorio*, with which he often pairs *cu*. According to one authority, one pronounces the singular *cu* as *coo*, the sound a dove or pigeon makes, whereas one pronounces the plural, *cus*, as *quays* or *cways*.

I decided to proceed with my account because the true polish and grace of composition is to tell the truth. Contemplating this, I decided to go ahead with my attempt, using the order and conversations you will see, so that it might be published and the conquests of New Spain will appear clearly, as they should. With pen in hand, I want to return like the good pilot sounding the depths, revealing shoals in the sea ahead when he senses they are there. Thus shall I do in talking about the mistakes of the chroniclers, but not all of them, because if I had to deal with them as a whole, the cost of gathering the gleanings would be greater than the true harvest. The chroniclers can exalt and praise the valiant and courageous captain Cortés and the strong conquistadors, because so great an enterprise came from our hands, and those of us who were eyewitnesses in those times will tell the truth about what they wrote, just as we now talk about Cortés's contradictions. How do they have the insolence and audacity to write so incorrectly and falsely when we know that truth is blessed and sacred and that everything they said contrary to it will be cursed? Besides, it seems that Gómara became overenthusiastic in his praise of the valiant Cortés. We now know for certain that they greased Gómara's palm, given that Cortés's son, marquess as he now is, selected Gómara as his chronicler, saying to our king and lord that Gómara rightly had to be chosen and entrusted with it. The gentlemen of the Royal Council of the Indies<sup>11</sup> should have ordered that the mistakes written in their books had to be erased.

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11. The Royal and Supreme Council of the Indies developed from the Council of Castile for the purpose of administering the Spanish empire in the Americas (and Asia) on behalf of the Spanish crown. Its creation was conceived of and guided by Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca, bishop of Burgos and archbishop of Rosano.

## A GENTLEMAN NAMED HERNANDO CORTÉS

[XIX] When captain Juan de Grijalva returned to Cuba, Governor Diego Velázquez began to understand how rich the lands were; so he ordered a substantial fleet to be sent, much larger than earlier ones, and he already had ten ships ready in the port of Santiago de Cuba where he lived. Four of those ships were ones in which we had returned with Juan de Grijalva, which he immediately had careened,<sup>1</sup> and the other six they gathered from throughout the island. He had them provisioned with cassava bread and salt pork, because at that time there were neither cattle nor sheep on the island of Cuba, as it had been recently settled. These supplies were sufficient only to get to Havana where we had to secure all the provisions, which we did.

Before that journey began, there were many disputes and obstacles because certain gentlemen said that Vasco Porcallo, a relative of the Count of Feria, should become captain, but Diego Velázquez feared that, because Porcallo was bold, he would use the fleet to revolt. Others said that Agustín Bermúdez, Antonio Velázquez Borrego, or Juan Bernardino Velázquez, relatives of the governor, should be captain. The rest of us soldiers said that Juan de Grijalva should be returned to that position because he was a good captain, lacked nothing with respect to his person and

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1. Careening a ship involves grounding and tipping it on its sides to scrape it clean of accumulated moss, sea grasses, and barnacles and then caulking it.

knew how to command. With matters proceeding in this way, two great favorites of Diego Velázquez—Andrés de Duero, secretary to the governor himself, and Amador de Lares, accountant to His Majesty—kept secret company with a gentleman named Hernando Cortés, native of Medellín, who had Indians in encomienda on that island, and who a short while before had married a woman named doña Catalina Suárez, the Marcaida.<sup>2</sup> She was sister to Juan Suárez, who became a citizen of Mexico after the conquest of New Spain. From what I understood and other people said, Cortés married her for love. Other people who have knowledge of this very long marriage talk about it so I will not say anymore on that note, but I will return to talking about the company.

It was like this: These favorites of Diego Velázquez agreed that they would have Velázquez give the captaincy general of the entire fleet to Hernando Cortés, and among the three of them they would divide the profits from Cortés's share of the gold, silver, and jewels because, secretly, Diego Velázquez was sending the fleet not to settle, as he had announced and proclaimed, but to trade, as became clear from the instructions he later gave for the trip. This agreement made, Duero and the accountant used all means possible on Diego Velázquez. They spoke fine and honeyed words to him, greatly praising Cortés, saying he was the one who should be given the post of captain because, besides being very courageous, he would know how to command and be feared and he would be very faithful in everything entrusted to him in matters of the fleet and everything else. Besides this, they said Cortés was Velázquez's godson because Velázquez was Cortés's sponsor when Cortés married doña Catalina Suárez.<sup>3</sup> In this way they persuaded Velázquez, who then chose Cortés as captain general, and the secretary Andrés Duero wrote up the orders skillfully, or, as

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2. Bernal Díaz here refers to Cortés's wife as "doña" but later drops the designation, for she was not actually addressed as "doña" at the time being recounted, which made the designation a matter of some controversy.

3. In selecting and recruiting persons for expeditions, family and hometown ties were significant factors.

the saying goes, in very good ink, giving Cortés plenty of power, as he wanted. When his selection was made public, some people were delighted and others disappointed.

One Sunday, Diego Velázquez was going to mass, accompanied as governor by the rest of the town's noble citizens, and to honor Hernando Cortés he had him on his right side. In front of Diego Velázquez went a buffoon known as Cervantes the Crazy, making faces and vulgarities. He said, "Merrily, merrily my friend Diego. Oh Diego! Oh Diego! What a captain you've chosen, who is from Medellín in Extremadura, a captain of great good fortune, but I fear, Diego, that he might use the fleet to rise up against you because everyone considers him very manly in his affairs!" He said other crazy things, all of which tended to be malicious, and because he was carrying on in that way, Andrés de Duero, who was walking along with Diego Velázquez, slapped the buffoon about the head and said, "Be quiet, crazy drunk, stop being such a scoundrel. We've well understood that these malicious things, under the pretext of jests, are not coming from you." Still, the crazy man continued talking no matter how much they slapped him about the head, "Long live, long live the glory of my master Diego and his fortunate captain. I swear to you my master Diego, I want to go with him to those rich lands so I don't have to see you weep over the bad bargain you've now made!" People assumed the governor's relatives gave that jester some gold pesos so he would say those malicious things under the pretext of jests, but everything came out just as he said. They say that crazy people are sometimes correct in what they say.

Truly, Hernando Cortés was chosen to glorify our holy faith and serve His Majesty, as I will discuss later. Before going ahead, I want to talk about how the valiant and courageous Hernando Cortés was a nobleman distinguished by four noble lineages: the first, the Cortéses, and so his father was named Martín Cortés; the second, through the Pizarros; the third, through the Monroys; the fourth, through the Altamiranos. As he was such a valiant, courageous, and successful captain, from here on I will not use any of these titles like "valiant," or "courageous" nor "Marquess del Valle," but

only Hernando Cortés, because the very name Cortés was held in as much esteem in all the Indies and in Spain as was the name of Alexander in Macedonia and, among the Romans, Julius Caesar, Pompey, and Scipio and, among the Carthaginians, Hannibal, and in our Castile, Gonzalo Hernández,<sup>4</sup> the great captain. The valiant Cortés himself was happy that they were not giving him those exalted titles, but only his name, and so I will call him from now on.

[XX] Well, since Hernando Cortés had now been chosen commander, he began to look for all kinds of weapons, such as *escopetas*,<sup>5</sup> gunpowder, and crossbows, and as much provisioning for arms as he could obtain, and he looked for barter items and other things necessary for the journey. He also began to refine and dress up his person much more than before, putting on his plumed helmet with his medal, a chain of gold, and a cloak of velvet set with some golden bowknots, that is, as a fierce and courageous captain. Of course, he had nothing to meet these expenses, because at that time he was very much in debt and poor, even though he had good Indians in encomienda and extracted gold from the mines. But he spent everything on his person and on finery for his wife, whom he had recently married, and on some guests from another place. People gathered round him because he was even-tempered and a man of good conversation, and twice he had been *alcalde*<sup>6</sup> in the town of San Juan de Baracoa, where he lived; in these lands, *alcaldes* are held in great esteem. Some merchant friends of his, Jaime Tría, Jerónimo Tría, and Pedro de Jerez, learned of his post as captain general, so they lent him four thousand pesos of gold and gave him credit for another four thousand in goods against his Indians, property, and pledges.

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4. Spanish general instrumental in the siege and conquest of Granada; he also fought in the Italian wars between 1498 and 1511.

5. An *escopeta* is a matchlock, smoothbore, muzzle-loading handgun that shot pellets; a very early predecessor to what became the shotgun.

6. The *alcalde* is both a municipal judge and a member of the municipal council.

He ordered two standards and flags to be made, the royal arms and a cross worked in gold on each side, with an inscription that said, "Brothers and Companions, let us follow the Sign of the Holy Cross, with True Faith, that with it We Might be Victorious." He ordered proclamations made and trumpets and drums sounded in the name of His Majesty and, in the king's royal name, Diego Velázquez, and in his own name as their captain general, to the effect that anyone who wanted to go in his company to the newly discovered lands to conquer and settle them would receive shares of whatever gold, silver, and riches might be found, and, after they were pacified, encomiendas of Indians. For this Diego Velázquez had authority from His Majesty. Although this statement about authority from the king our lord was proclaimed, the chaplain Benito Martín, whom Diego Velázquez had sent to get it, had not yet returned from Castile with it.

Well, as this news became known throughout the island of Cuba, and Cortés also wrote to his friends in all the towns that they should join him on this voyage, some sold their property to get arms and horses, others made cassava bread and salt pork for the provisions and quilted cotton armor, and they provided themselves with what they needed as best they could. So we, more than three hundred fifty soldiers, gathered in Santiago de Cuba, where we left with the fleet. From the house of Diego Velázquez himself came his chief steward, Diego de Ordaz, sent by Velázquez to keep an eye on and busy himself with the fleet in case Cortés should plot against him, because Diego Velázquez was always afraid that Cortés would rebel, although he did not let him know that. One Francisco de Morla came, and one Escobar, whom we called *el Paje*,<sup>7</sup> and one Heredia, Juan Ruano, Pedro Escudero, Martín Ramos de Lares, and many others who were friends and retainers of Diego Velázquez. Finally, I want to say here that I, too, came from the house of Diego Velázquez, because he was my kinsman.

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7. "The Page."

Cortés was very attentive in readying the fleet, and he moved most quickly in everything, because malice and jealousy reigned among Velázquez's kinsmen. They were insulted that he neither trusted nor listened to them and that he gave the post of captain to Cortés because of Cortés's marriage, even though he had been Cortés's great enemy only a few days before. So they went around grumbling about their relative Diego Velázquez and even about Cortés, and in every way they could they tried to set Velázquez against Cortés so that Velázquez would revoke the power Cortés had been given to head the expedition. Cortés had been warned, so he was constantly in the governor's company, showing himself to be the governor's great servant and continually telling the governor that he would make him, God willing, a very illustrious lord, and rich, in a short time. In addition to this, Andrés de Duero kept warning Cortés that he should quickly embark himself and his soldiers because Diego Velázquez's relatives were changing Velázquez's mind with their pestering and persistent begging. Once Cortés understood that, he ordered his wife to send immediately, for loading on the ships, everything he needed by way of provisions and any gifts that women usually make their husbands for such a long voyage. He had already ordered a proclamation alerting the shipmasters, pilots, and all the soldiers that they were going to embark that night and that no one should stay ashore. When he saw that they were embarked, he went to take his leave of Diego Velázquez, accompanied by those great friends of his, many other gentlemen, and all the most noble citizens of that town. After many promises and embraces from Cortés to the governor and from the governor to him, Cortés took his leave. Early the next day, having heard mass, we went to the ships, and Diego Velázquez himself went with us. Again they embraced with an exchange of courtesies. We set sail, and with favorable weather we arrived at the port of Trinidad. As we went ashore, all the inhabitants of that town came out to receive us and entertained us kindly. Here in this account you will see the obstacles that Cortés faced and how the words Gómara writes in his history are contrary to what happened.

[XXI] Then the foremost leaders of the town took Cortés and all of us to lodge among the citizens, and Cortés stayed in the captain Juan de Grijalva's house. Cortés then ordered that his standard and royal banner be put in front of his lodgings and that proclamations be declared as he had done in Santiago. He ordered that all types of arms and other necessary things and provisions be sought out and purchased. From that town came five brothers, Pedro de Alvarado, Jorge de Alvarado, Gonzalo, Gómez, and Juan de Alvarado, the elder, bastard. Also from this town came Alonso de Ávila, who had been a captain with Grijalva's expedition; Juan de Escalante; Pero Sánchez Farfán; Gonzalo Mejía, who later, as time went by, became treasurer in Mexico; one Baena and Joanes de Fuenterrabia; Lares, the good rider, whom we called that because there were other Lareses; Cristóbal de Olid, the very courageous man, who was *maestre de campo*<sup>8</sup> in the Mexican wars; Ortiz the musician; Gaspar Sánchez, nephew of the treasurer of Cuba; Diego de Pineda or Pinedo; Alonso Rodríguez, who had rich gold mines; Bartolomé García; and other gentlemen whose names I do not remember, all people of great worth. From Trinidad, Cortés wrote to the town of Santispiritus, which was eighteen leagues distant,<sup>9</sup> informing all the inhabitants that he was going on that voyage to serve His Majesty. With pleasant words and incentives he attracted many people of quality who had settled in that town: Alonso Hernández Puerto Carrero,<sup>10</sup> cousin of the Count of Medellín; Gonzalo de Sandoval,

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8. *Maestre de campo* was a rank of high order in the militia, designating someone who commanded a large number of men.

9. A *league* is a measure of distance equivalent to the distance a person, or a horse, can walk in an hour's time, usually taken as equivalent to three and one-half English miles or five and one-half kilometers.

10. Bernal Díaz sometimes uses this spelling of the name and at others "Puertocarrero." Occasionally, he inserts "de" between the two last names, i. e., "Puerto de Carrero." The actual name is "Puertocarrero." All designate the same person.

who later, as time went by, was *aguacil mayor*<sup>11</sup> in Mexico and for eight months was even governor of New Spain; Juan Velázquez de León, relative of Diego Velázquez; Rodrigo Rangel; Gonzalo López de Jimena and his brother, Juan Sedeño. This Juan Sedeño was a citizen of that town, and I am putting it that way because there were two other Juan Sedeños in our fleet.

All those I have named were well bred, and they came then from the town of Santispíritus to Trinidad, where Cortés was. When Cortés learned they had come, he went with all of us in his company to receive them and showed them every kindness, and they had great respect for him. The inhabitants I named had farms near that town with cassava bread and herds of hogs, and each tried to provide as much in the way of provisions as possible. As we were gathering soldiers and buying horses, which at that time were few and very expensive, the gentleman I mentioned, Alonso Hernández Puerto Carrero, had neither a horse nor the means to buy one; so Cortés bought him a silver-gray mare, for which he gave some of the gold bowknots on the velvet cloak he had had made in Santiago de Cuba. Just then a ship came from Havana loaded with cassava bread and salt pork, carrying Juan Sedeño, a citizen of Havana, who was going to sell those provisions at some gold mines near Santiago de Cuba. When he came ashore, Juan Sedeño went to pay his respects to Cortés. After many discussions, Cortés bought from Sedeño, on credit, the ship, salt pork, and cassava, and he went with us. We now had eleven ships, and everything was going successfully, thanks be to God. At this point, Diego Velázquez sent letters and orders to detain the fleet and have Cortés sent to him as a prisoner.

[XXII] *Here Bernal Díaz clarifies the foregoing comment. Diego Velázquez had changed his mind because of arguments made by his*

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11. *Aguacil mayor* is roughly “chief constable,” a position combining judicial, military, civil, and police powers that might or might not be held by a person with legal training.

*relatives, the Velázquezes, and “an old man named Juan Millán, whom they called the astrologer.” Velázquez sent two squires with orders for the alcalde mayor of Trinidad, his own brother-in-law, and wrote letters to friends and relatives, including Diego de Ordaz, not to let the fleet pass and to take Cortés prisoner. Cortés convinced those relatives and friends of Diego Velázquez in Trinidad to ignore Diego Velázquez and come into his service.*

So the matter was quietly dropped. One of the squires who brought the letters came with us, and his name was Pedro Laso de la Vega. By the other squire, Cortés wrote very warmly to Diego Velázquez that he was astonished Velázquez had made such a decision, that his desire was to serve God and His Majesty and Velázquez in his royal name, and he begged him not to listen anymore to his relatives nor change his mind because of an old madman like Juan Millán. He also wrote to all his friends and to Duero and the royal accountant, his associates. Then he ordered all the soldiers to get busy preparing their arms, and he ordered the blacksmiths in that town to make headpieces and the crossbowmen to arrange their supplies and make bolts. He appealed to and convinced the two blacksmiths to go with us, and they did so. We were in that town ten days.

I want those reading this to see the difference between it and Gómara's report, when he says Diego Velázquez ordered Ordaz to invite Cortés to a meal on the ship and take him to Santiago as prisoner. He put other deceitful things in his chronicle, which, so as not to drag this out, I leave to the opinion of curious readers.

*Cortés and the ships then set sail for Havana. Because they left at night, the ships of the fleet did not see Cortés's flagship and left port without him. Cortés finally caught up with them many days later, his ship having run aground near the Island of Pinos. In the interval, various men began maneuvering to assume captaincy of the fleet, should Cortés not return. When Cortés finally arrived, “all the rest of the horsemen and soldiers waiting for him were joyful except those who wanted to be captains.”*

After we put Cortés up in the home of Pedro Barba, Diego Velázquez's deputy in that town, he ordered his standards to be retrieved and put in front of the house where he was staying. As in the past, he also ordered that proclamations be made. From there, from Havana, came a gentleman named Francisco de Montejo, the one I have mentioned many times who, after Mexico had been won, was *adelantado*<sup>12</sup> of the frontier province and governor of the Yucatan. Diego de Soto also came, the one from Toro who was Cortés's *mayordomo*<sup>13</sup> in the Mexican expedition. One Angulo came, and Garcicaro, Sebastián Rodríguez, one Pacheco, so and so Gutiérrez, one Rojas (I am not talking about Rojas the rich), a young man named Santa Clara, two brothers named Martínez de Fregenal, and one Juan de Nájera (I am not talking about the deaf one who played the ball game in Mexico), all people of quality, as well as other soldiers whose names I do not remember. When Cortés saw all those gentlemen together, he was delighted. He immediately sent a ship to Cape Guaniguanico, to a town of Indians where, on a farm that belonged to Diego Velázquez, they made cassava and had many hogs, so they could provision the ship with salt pork. As captain of that ship, Cortés sent Diego de Ordaz, chief steward of Diego Velázquez's properties, and he did this to keep Diego de Ordaz away from him, because Cortés knew that Diego de Ordaz had shown himself not to favor him during the struggles over who would be captain when Cortés's ship was wrecked on the Island of Pinos. To avoid open opposition, he ordered Diego de Ordaz to stay in that port of Guaniguanico after loading the ship with supplies until another ship coming by the northern coast joined him. Then they would go in convoy to Cozumel, or Cortés would send Indians in canoes to tell him what to do. Cortés then ordered all the artillery to be taken out of

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12. Appointment as *adelantado* was by the Crown and the title was held for life.

13. The *mayordomo* was the servant whose primary responsibility was to organize and see to the smooth functioning of a household.

the ships, including ten brass cannons and some falconets,<sup>14</sup> and he put an artilleryman named Mesa, a Levantine named Arbenga, and one Juan Catalán in charge of them so they could clean and test them. He ordered them to have all the balls and powder ready, gave them wine and vinegar to polish them, and gave them someone named Bartolomé de Usagre to help them. He further ordered the crossbows, the bowstrings, the bow nuts, and the supply of bolts to be made ready. They were to shoot them at targets to see how many paces each of them went. Because in the countryside around Havana there was a lot of cotton, we made very well-quilted armor. Such armor is good among the Indians because they hurl many spears and arrows and make many lance thrusts, and the stones come like hail.

There, in Havana, Cortés began to set up household and act like a lord. His first *maestresala*<sup>15</sup> was Juan Guzmán, who later died or was killed by the Indians. I am not talking about the chief steward Cristóbal Guzmán, who was with Cortés and took Cuauhtemoc during the Mexican war. Cortés also took as chamberlain one Rodrigo Rangel and for steward one Juan de Cáceres, who was a rich man after Mexico was won. Everything organized, Cortés ordered us to prepare to embark and to divide the horses among all the ships. They made a manger and put aboard maize and dried grass.

Here I want, for the record, to set out all the horses and mares that came with us:

Captain Cortés, a chestnut<sup>16</sup> horse that later died in San Juan de Ulúa.

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14. The *falconet* was a light cannon, normally on wheels, that shot round balls of approximately one pound.

15. The *maestresala* was the first or head butler who served the lord and actually put plates on the table and tasted the food.

16. The actual description is “*zaino castaño*.” Both words mean “chestnut,” but *zaino* indicates that the horse’s coat is a single color all over, although some sources state the term indicates the horse has a nasty temperament.

Pedro de Alvarado and Hernán López de Ávila, a sorrel mare, very good for sport and as a charger. After we arrived in New Spain, Pedro de Alvarado bought half of the mare, or he took it by force.

Alonso Hernández Puerto Carrero, a gray mare, a good charger, which Cortés bought for him with the golden bowknots.

Juan Velázquez de León, another very powerful gray mare, which we named the “Bob Tail,” easily turned, a very good charger.

Cristóbal de Olid, a dark chestnut horse, very good.

Francisco de Montejo and Alonso de Ávila, a dark brown sorrel horse. It was not good for battle.

Francisco de Morla, a dark chestnut horse, a great runner and easily turned.

Juan de Escalante, a light chestnut horse with three white stockings. It was not good.

Diego de Ordaz, a gray mare, barren, reasonably good, although not a good runner.

Gonzalo Domínguez, an extremely good rider, a very good dark chestnut horse and great runner.

Pedro González de Trujillo, a good chestnut horse, perfectly chestnut, that ran very well.

Morón, a citizen of Bayamo, a beautiful cream-colored horse, very easily turned.

Baena, a citizen of Trinidad, a cream-colored horse with a slightly reddish-black sheen, not good for anything.

Lares, the very good rider, a very good horse of somewhat light chestnut color and a good charger.

Ortíz, the musician, and one Bartolomé García, who used to have gold mines, a very good dark horse they called “*el Arriero*.”<sup>17</sup> This was one of the best horses that came with us on the fleet.

Juan Sedeño, citizen of Havana, a chestnut mare, and this mare foaled in the ship. This Juan Sedeño was considered the richest soldier in the fleet because he brought his own ship, the mare, a black man, and cassava and salt pork, for at that time one could find neither horses nor black men, except at exorbitant prices. For this reason more horses did not come with us, because no one had anything to buy them with.

[XXIV] To be understood fully, some things in this report necessarily require repetition. So I say this, it seems that when Diego Velázquez understood and knew for certain that Francisco Verdugo, his deputy and brother-in-law, who was in Trinidad, did not want to compel Cortés to give up the fleet, but, along with Diego de Ordaz, helped Cortés leave, it is said that he was so angry that he bellowed, and he accused the secretary Andrés de Duero and the royal accountant Amador de Lares of deceiving him by the agreement they made with Cortés, who was now rebelling. He decided to send one of his servants with letters and commands to his deputy in Havana, Pedro Barba, and he wrote to all his relatives who were citizens there and to Diego de Ordaz and Juan Velázquez de León, his kinsmen and friends, emotionally begging them that, no matter what, they should not let that fleet sail, that they should immediately seize Cortés and send him under heavy guard to Santiago de Cuba as a prisoner. When Garnica,<sup>18</sup> whom Velázquez sent with letters and commands, arrived in Havana, what he carried became known. Through this very messenger, Cortés was warned about what Velázquez sent, and it happened this way: A Mercedarian friar, who pretended to be well disposed to Velázquez and who was in his company, wrote to another friar

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17. This term normally designated someone in charge of beasts of burden, but the term could also be “the Carrier.”

18. Gaspar de Garnica was attached to Diego Velázquez’s household.

of his order, fray Bartolomé de Olmedo, who was with us. In that letter from the friar, Cortés's two associates, Andrés de Duero and the accountant, warned Cortés what was going on. Let us return to our tale.

Because Cortés had sent Ordaz with the ship on the expedition for provisions, as I have said, only Juan Velázquez de León remained in opposition to Cortés. As soon as Cortés talked to Juan Velázquez, he won him over to his command, especially because Juan Velázquez was not on good terms with his relative, who had not given him good Indians. Well, of all the rest to whom Diego Velázquez had written, not one paid attention to his request. Rather, all of them as one showed themselves for Cortés; the deputy Pedro Barba especially, the Alvarados, Alonso Hernández Puerto Carrero, Francisco de Montejo, Cristóbal de Olid, Juan de Escalante, Andrés de Monjaraz, his brother Gregorio de Monjaraz, and all of us would put our lives on the line for Cortés. So if the commands were covered up in Trinidad, they were hushed up even more this time. Using Garnica, the deputy Pedro Barba wrote to Diego Velázquez that he did not dare seize Cortés because, with his soldiers, he was very powerful, and that he, Barba, was afraid they might set about plundering and robbing the town and that Cortés might embark all the citizens and take them with him; besides, from what he understood, Cortés was well disposed to Velázquez, and that he would not dare do anything other than what he was doing. Cortés also wrote to Velázquez using the fine words and promises he knew how to employ so well, to tell him that the next day he would set sail and would remain his servant.

## ON THE TENTH DAY OF FEBRUARY, 1519, WE SET SAIL

[XXV] We did not hold a muster until we reached the island of Cozumel, but Cortés did order that the horses be embarked and that Pedro de Alvarado go by the north coast in a good ship named *San Sebastián*. He also ordered the pilot he had put in that ship to wait for him at Cape San Antón so that his ship could be joined there by all the other ships to go in convoy to Cozumel. He sent a messenger to Diego de Ordaz, who had gone for provisions, that he should wait and do the same because he was on the north coast. On the tenth day of February, 1519, having heard mass, we set sail along the southern coast in nine ships with the great number of horsemen and soldiers I have talked about; with the two ships on the north coast, including the one that Pedro de Alvarado had with sixty soldiers, we were eleven. I was in Pedro de Alvarado's company, and the pilot we carried, Camacho, did not heed what Cortés had ordered but followed his own course. We arrived in Cozumel two days before Cortés, and we anchored in the port. Cortés had not yet arrived with his fleet because in bad weather the ship captained by Francisco de Morla broke its rudder. The rudder was replaced with another from the ships that came with Cortés, and they all came in convoy. Let us return to Pedro de Alvarado. When we arrived in the port, we went ashore with all the soldiers to the town of Cozumel, and we found no Indians because they had all fled. Pedro de Alvarado ordered us to go immediately to another town a league from there where the natives had also escaped and fled but could not carry their

household goods, so they had left hens and other things. Pedro de Alvarado ordered us to take some forty of the hens. In a house for idol worship, there were some hangings from old cloths, some small chests in which there were something like crowns, idols, beads, and ear pendants made of low-grade gold. He also seized two Indian men and an Indian woman. We then returned to the town where we had disembarked.

Just then, Cortés arrived with all those ships and, after lodging, the first thing he did was order that the pilot Camacho be put in chains because he did not wait as ordered. When he saw the town without people and learned that Pedro de Alvarado had gone to the other town and taken hens, hangings, and other things of little value from the idols, and the gold half copper, he expressed as much anger about it as about the pilot failing to wait. Severely reprimanding Pedro de Alvarado, he told him that they were not to pacify the lands in that way, taking property from the natives. Then he ordered the two Indians and the Indian woman brought to him, and he spoke to them through the Indian Melchorejo, whom we had brought from Cape Catoche and who understood that language well. Through Melchorejo, Cortés told the Indians to call the caciques of that town and not be afraid. He ordered that the gold, vestments, and all the rest be returned to them and that they be given beads and little bells in return for the hens, which had already been eaten. In addition, he gave a Spanish shirt to each Indian. So they went to call the lord of that town, and the next day the cacique came with all the men, children, and women of the town. They walked among us as if they had dealt with us all their lives, and Cortés ordered the soldiers not to offend them in any way. Here on this island, Cortés began to command in earnest, and our Lord gave him grace so that whatever he set his hand to turned out well for him, especially in pacifying the towns and natives of those parts.

[XXVI] After three days in Cozumel, Cortés ordered us to muster so he would know how many soldiers there were. By his count, we had five hundred eight, not counting the sea captains, pilots, and sailors, who were about one hundred; sixteen horses

and mares, all fit for jousting and charging; eleven large and small ships with one, like a brigantine,<sup>1</sup> that Ginés Nortes brought loaded; thirty-two crossbowmen and thirteen *escopeteros*; ten brass cannons, four falconets, and a great deal of gunpowder and balls. I do not remember the number of crossbowmen very well, but that is not relevant to the story. After the muster, he ordered Mesa, the artilleryman, Bartolomé de Usagre, Arbenga, and a Catalan, all artillerymen, to keep the guns clean and in good repair and the cannons, balls, and gunpowder ready for use. As captain of the artillery he put Francisco de Orozco, who had been a soldier in Italy. Also, he ordered two crossbowmen, Juan Benítez and Pedro de Guzmán, experts at preparing crossbows, to see that all the crossbows had two or three bow nuts and as many strings and forestrings, always taking care to store them, to have planes and spoke shaves, and to practice shooting at targets.<sup>2</sup> He also ordered that the horses be very much at the ready. I do not now know why I waste so much ink on recording the preparation of arms and all the rest, because Cortés truly took great care in everything.

[XXVII] As Cortés was careful in everything, he sent for Martín Ramos, a Biscayan, and me and asked us what we thought about the “Castilan, Castilan” that the Indians of Campeche had said to us when we came with Francisco Hernández de Córdoba. We described what we had seen and heard. Cortés said that he had thought many times about it and wondered if, by chance, some Spaniards were in that land. He said, “It seems to me we should ask those caciques of Cozumel if they have any news of them.” Through Melchorejo from Cape Catoche, who now understood

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1. A *brigantine* was a light, normally seagoing vessel equipped both for sailing and rowing, associated with Mediterranean cultures.

2. The crossbow nut is the trigger mechanism on which the drawn string of the spanned crossbow is caught in preparation for loosing the bolt, that is, the projectile shot by the crossbow. The notches on nuts wore down with use and the strings either frayed or broke, requiring replacement.

a little bit of the Castilian language and knew that of Cozumel very well, Cortés asked all the chieftains, and all of them said that they knew of certain Spaniards, and they described them; that they were in the interior, a two suns' walk; that some caciques were holding them as slaves; and that in Cozumel some Indian merchants had spoken with them a few days previously. All of us rejoiced at that news. Cortés told them to go immediately to the Spaniards with letters, which they call *amales* in their language. He gave shirts to the caciques and the Indians who were going with the letters, and he spoke affectionately to them and told them that when they returned he would give them more beads. The caciques told Cortés he should send ransom for the masters holding the Spaniards as slaves so they would let them come. Thus it was done, and the messengers were given all types of beads. Then he ordered two of the smaller ships—one of which was little larger than a brigantine—to be prepared with twenty crossbowmen and escopeteros, and he appointed Diego de Ordaz captain. He ordered the larger ship to stay off the coast of Cape Catoche for a week, and in the meantime they would go and return with the response to the letters, and the small ship would come back to give the response to Cortés about what they were doing, for Cape Catoche is about four leagues away and visible from Cozumel. In the letter, Cortés wrote, "Gentlemen and Brothers: I've learned here, in Cozumel, that you are in the power of a cacique, in custody, and I beg you, as a service, to come immediately here to Cozumel, and for this I'm sending a ship with soldiers in case you have need of them, and ransom to give to those Indians you are staying with. The ship will wait a week for you. Come with all speed. You'll be well looked after by me and rewarded. I'm staying on this island with five hundred soldiers and eleven ships. God willing, I'm going in them to a town called Tabasco or Potonchan."

They embarked in the ships with the letters and the two Indian merchants from Cozumel who carried them, and in three hours they crossed the small strait and dropped off the messengers. In two days the messengers gave the letters and ransom to a Spaniard whose name we learned at that time was Jerónimo de Aguilar,

which I will call him from now on. When he had read the letters and received the ransom of beads, he was delighted and took it to his master, the cacique, so that he would give him permission to leave, which the cacique did, and Aguilar was able to go where he wanted. He walked to another town five leagues from there, where his companion Gonzalo Guerrero was, and as he read him the letters, Gonzalo Guerrero replied, "Brother Aguilar, I'm married, I have three children, and here they regard me as a cacique when there are wars. Go with God, for I've tattooed my face and pierced my ears. What would those Spaniards say of me should they see me like this! See how attractive these children of mine are. Upon your life, let me have some of those green beads to give to them, and I'll say that my brothers sent them from my land." Then Gonzalo's Indian wife spoke with Aguilar very angrily in her language, saying, "Look how this slave comes to summon my husband. Go away and do not discuss this any further." Aguilar spoke again to Gonzalo, reminding him that he was Christian, that he should not lose his soul for an Indian woman, and if he was doing this for his wife and children, then he should bring them with him if he did not want to leave them. No matter what Aguilar said or how he admonished him, Guerrero would not come. It seems that Gonzalo Guerrero was a seaman, a native of Palos. When Jerónimo de Aguilar saw that Gonzalo Guerrero was not going to come, he went right away with the two Indian messengers to where the ship had been waiting for them, but when he got there, the ship had already left because the week the ship was to wait, and even one more day, had already passed. Because Aguilar had not come, Ordaz returned to Cozumel without bringing any news. When Aguilar saw that the ship was not there, he was very sad and returned to his master, to the town where he had been living. When Ordaz returned with neither a message nor news about the Spaniards nor the Indian messengers, Cortés was very angry. He told Ordaz in angry words that he had believed he would bring back a different and better message than coming back without the Spaniards or news of them, because they were certainly in that land. At that very moment, some sailors who

were named the Peñates, natives of Gibraltar, had stolen some salt pork from a soldier named Berrío and would not give it back, and Berrío complained to Cortés. Taking an oath, the sailors perjured themselves, and in the inquiry the theft was proven. The salt pork had been divided among the seven sailors, and, in spite of the captains' pleas, Cortés ordered four of them to be whipped immediately. I will leave it there, with the sailors as well as the story of Aguilar until its time and season, and we went on our way without him.

I will talk about how many Indians, natives of the nearby towns of Cape Catoche and other parts of Yucatan, came in pilgrimage to that island of Cozumel, because it seems that some idols of a very monstrous shape were there, and they were in an *adoratorio*<sup>3</sup> of a type common for sacrifice in that land at that time. One morning, many Indian men and women burning resin, which is like our incense, filled a courtyard where the idols were. As it was new to us, we stopped to look at it closely. Soon an old Indian with a long cloak, who was priest of those idols, went up on top of an *adoratorio* and began to preach. Such priests were called *papas* in New Spain. Cortés and all of us watching him wondered how that black sermon would end. Cortés asked Melchorejo, who understood that language very well, what the old Indian was saying, and he learned that he was preaching evil things. Then Cortés summoned that cacique, all the chieftains, and the *papa* himself, and as best he could make himself understood with our interpreter, he told them that, if they were to be our brothers, they should remove those idols from that house, that the idols were very evil and made them fall into error, that they were not gods but evil things, and that they would carry their souls off to hell. He talked to them about other things that were good and holy. He said that they should set up an image of Our Lady, which he gave them,

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3. *Adoratorio* is one of the principal terms Spaniards used for buildings the New World indigenous peoples set aside for their (pagan) religious practice; English has a not-much-used direct equivalent, *adoratory*.

and a cross, and that they would always be helped, they would have successful plantings, and their souls would be saved. He told them other things about our holy faith, well spoken. The papa and the caciques replied that their ancestors worshipped those gods because they were good, that they did not dare do otherwise, and that should we remove them, we would see how badly things would go for us because we would be lost at sea. Cortés then ordered us to break the idols into pieces and roll them down the stairs, which we did. Then he ordered that a large quantity of lime, of which there was plenty in that town, be brought there along with Indian bricklayers. A very clean altar was erected where we put the image of Our Lady. Cortés ordered two of our finish carpenters, Alonso Yáñez and Álvaro López, to make a cross of some fresh timber, which was put in a kind of shrine erected near the altar. The father named Juan Díaz said mass, and the papa and cacique and all the Indians were watching attentively. I will leave it here, and I will go on to tell how we embarked.

[XXVIII] Each ship had its pilot,<sup>4</sup> with Antón de Alaminos as the chief pilot, and the pilots had instructions for where they had to guide the ship, what they had to do, and the lantern signals at night. Cortés took leave of the caciques and papas and commended that image of Our Lady to their charge, telling them to revere and keep the cross clean and decorated with greens, and they would see how much benefit would come to them from doing so, and they said they would do it. They brought him four hens and two pots of honey and they embraced. We embarked and set sail in the month of March, 1519, and in very good weather we went on our course. That same day at 10:00 a.m., loud shouts came from one of the ships, and they waved cloaks and shot a gun so all our ships coming in convoy would hear. When Cortés saw and heard this, he immediately stood at the railing of the flagship and saw that Juan de Escalante was returning to Cozumel. Cortés shouted

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4. Bernal Díaz has previously named the captains of the groups in each of the ships.

to the other ships that were close by, "What is that, what is that?" A soldier named Luis de Saragosa replied that Escalante's ship, which had all the cassava, was foundering. Cortés said, "May it be God's will that some misfortune not befall us." He ordered the pilot Alaminos to signal all the ships to put into port at Cozumel. That same day we returned to the port from which we had sailed and unloaded the cassava bread, and we found the image of Our Lady and the cross very clean and perfumed with incense, for which we rejoiced. The cacique and papas immediately came to speak with Cortés and asked him why we had returned. Cortés replied that a ship was taking in water, and he wanted to repair it, and he implored them to help the ship's boats remove the cassava bread with all their canoes, and they did so. We spent four days repairing the ship.

## I AM THE SPANIARD

[XXIX] When the Spaniard held by the Indians knew for certain we had returned to Cozumel with the ships, he rejoiced greatly, gave thanks to God, and very quickly embarked in a canoe with the two Indians who had brought him the letters and ransom. Because he paid well for the canoe with the green ransom beads we had sent him, he quickly found one and hired it with six Indian oarsmen. They rowed with such speed that they crossed the gulf between the two shores, some four leagues, in a short while, without running into strong sea winds. When they arrived on the coast of Cozumel and were still disembarking, some soldiers hunting the native pigs on that island told Cortés that a large canoe had come there, near the town, from Cape Catoche. Cortés ordered Andrés de Tapia and two other soldiers to go to see, for it was something new for Indians to come close to us in large canoes with no fear whatsoever. And they went immediately. As soon as the Indians who came in the canoe that carried Aguilar saw the Spaniards, they were fearful and wanted to re-embark and put out to sea. But Aguilar said to them in their language that they should not be afraid, that these were his brothers. Andrés de Tapia, when he saw they were Indians—because Aguilar looked like an Indian, no more no less—immediately sent a Spaniard to tell Cortés that seven Indians from Cozumel had arrived in a canoe. After they had come ashore, the Spaniard, mumbling badly and pronouncing poorly, said, “God and Saint Mary and Seville.” Tapia went immediately to embrace him, and another of the soldiers went with great haste to ask Cortés for a reward for the good news about how the person who had come in

the canoe was a Spaniard, and we all rejoiced to hear that. Then Tapia came with the Spaniard to where Cortés was, and before they arrived, some soldiers asked Tapia, "What has come of the Spaniard?" Even though the Spaniard was walking next to him, they mistook him for an Indian because he was dark anyway, and his hair was clipped like an Indian slave, he carried an oar over his shoulder, wearing one old native sandal, the other tied to his belt, a wretched old indigenous cloak, and a loincloth in worse shape with which he covered his private parts, and, tied up in the cloak was a bulky object that was a very old Book of Hours. Seeing them like that, Cortés was puzzled like the rest of the soldiers and asked Tapia what had come of the Spaniard, and when the Spaniard understood Cortés, he squatted down like the Indians do and said, "I am the Spaniard." Cortés immediately ordered that he be given things to wear, shirt and doublet, Valencian trousers, a hood, rope-soled sandals, for he had no other clothes, and he asked him about his life, what his name was and when he had come to that land. Aguilar told him, although not articulately, that his name was Jerónimo de Aguilar, that he was a native of Ecija, that he was a member of one of the minor orders. He said he had become lost eight years earlier when he and fifteen other men and two women were going from the Darién<sup>1</sup> to the island of Santo Domingo with one Enciso y Valdivia, because there had been some differences and disputes. He said they were carrying ten thousand gold pesos and legal proceedings of some against the others, and that their ship entered the Alacranes,<sup>2</sup> which it could not navigate, so he, his companions and the two women

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1. Sailing in 1511 from the Darién colony in Panama, transporting twenty thousand ducats of gold, Enciso y Valdivia ran aground on shoals named Las Viboras near Jamaica; the nineteen survivors of the wreck drifted westward in a small boat for about two weeks before landing on the Yucatan coast. Eight died of starvation during the two weeks, and those who made it to shore were captured by the local natives and were either enslaved or sacrificed.

2. The Alacranes Reef is in the Yucatan, north of the city of Merida.

put themselves in the ship's boat, believing they could make the island of Cuba or Jamaica, but the currents were very strong and cast them on this land. He said that the *Calachiones*<sup>3</sup> of the region divided them up among themselves, sacrificing many of his companions to the idols while others died of illness, and a short time ago the women died of work because they were made to do the grinding. As for him, they had him ready for sacrifice, but one night he fled and went to that cacique with whom he was living (I do not remember any more the name he gave us then). Of all of them, only he and one Gonzalo Guerrero stayed.

Cortés told him he would be well cared for and rewarded, and he asked him about the land and towns. Aguilar said that because he was a slave, he knew nothing except how to serve, carrying wood and water and digging in the maize fields; he had not traveled more than four leagues, and during that one trip, while carrying a load, he fell ill from it. However, he understood that there are many towns. Then Cortés asked him about Gonzalo Guerrero, and Aguilar said that Guerrero was married, that he had three children, that he had tattooed his face and pierced his ears and lower lip, that he was a seaman from Palos, and that the Indians regarded him as courageous. He also said that a little over a year ago, a captain with three ships came to Cape Catcoche (it seems to be when we came on the expedition with Francisco Hernández de Córdoba), and Guerrero was the one who came up with the idea that they should attack us, which they did, and that he came there with a cacique from a large town. When Cortés heard this, he said, "In truth, I'd like to get my hands on him because he'll never be up to any good." When the caciques of Cozumel saw how Aguilar spoke their language, they fed him very well, and Aguilar advised them always to have respect and reverence for the holy image of Our Lady and the cross, and they would come to understand that, because of this, much good would come to them. On the advice of Aguilar, the caciques asked for a letter of

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3. *Calachione* is a term for a rank equivalent to cacique, captain, or chief.

protection from Cortés so that if other Spaniards came to that port, the Indians would be well treated and the Spaniards would not harm them. Cortés gave them the letter at once. After taking leave with many flatteries and promises, we set sail for the Río Grijalva. This is the way we got Aguilar, and not in any other, as the chronicler Gómara writes about him, and I am not surprised, because what he says is from hearsay.

[XXX] On the fourth day of March, 1519, having such great fortune in having a good and faithful interpreter, Cortés ordered us to embark in the order we had come before we landed at Cozumel, with the same instructions and lantern signals at night. We were navigating in good weather, but when dusk fell, so strong and opposing a wind came up that it scattered the ships and put them in very great danger of running aground. But God willed that it subside at midnight. Immediately at daybreak all the ships came together again except Juan Velázquez de León's. We continued on our voyage without learning anything about him until midday, which made us very sad because we believed he might have wrecked on some shoals. When the day passed and Velázquez de León had not appeared, Cortés told the pilot Alaminos that we should not go further without finding out about him. The pilot signaled to all the ships that they should be watchful and close hauled and they should wait in case, by chance, the weather had driven Velázquez de León into some cove he could not leave because of contrary winds. When he did not come, the pilot said to Cortés, "Sir, you can be certain he's in some kind of port or bay and is staying behind because the wind won't allow him to leave. The pilot with him is Juan Alvarez, *el Manquillo*,<sup>4</sup> who came with Francisco Hernández and returned with Grijalva, and he knows that port." Then it was agreed that the whole fleet would go back to look for him, and in the bay indicated by the pilot we found him anchored, which delighted all of us. We were there one day, and we put two boats into the water in which the pilot and

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4. "The Lame."

a captain, Francisco de Lugo, went ashore. Some settlements with maize fields were there, the people made salt, and they had four houses for idols called *cus*, in which were many figures, mostly of women with tall bodies. That land came to be called the *Punta de las Mujeres*. I remember Aguilar said that the town where he had been a slave was near those outlying settlements, that he came there loaded down with what he was carrying for his master and fell ill from carrying the burden, and that Guerrero's town was not very far off. He said all the towns had gold but not very much, and if Cortés wanted Aguilar to guide him, we could go there. Cortés, laughing, told him he did not come for things of such little account, but to serve God and the king.

Cortés then ordered a captain named Escobar to go in his ship, which was very swift and had a shallow draft, to *Boca de Terminos* to look carefully at how that land lay and see whether it was a good port to settle and if it had good hunting as he had been informed. He gave this order on the advice of the pilot, so that when we passed by there with all the ships, we would not waste time entering it. After looking about, Escobar was to put up a sign, fell trees at the mouth of the port, or write a letter and put it where we could see it from any place in the port so that we would know he had entered it, or, alternatively, he should await the fleet at sea, beating to windward after he had inspected the port. Escobar went to what was called the port of *Terminos* and did everything he was ordered. He found the hound that had been left by the Grijalva expedition, and Escobar said that when the hound, which was fat and sleek, saw the ship entering the port, he was wagging his tail and giving other signs of affection and came immediately to the soldiers and got into the ship with them. Escobar's inspection completed, he left the port for the sea to await the fleet. However, it seemed that, with the wind coming from the south, he could not heave to and was forced far out to sea.

Let us return to our fleet. We were waiting at the *Punta de las Mujeres*, and the next morning we left with a good wind and arrived at the *Boca de Terminos*. As we did not find Escobar, Cortés ordered a boat with ten crossbowmen to go to look for

him in the Boca de Terminos or see if there was a sign or a letter. They found felled trees and a letter in which Escobar had written that it was a very good port, good land, good hunting and told about the hound. The pilot Alaminos told Cortés that we should keep to our course, because with the south wind, Escobar would have found it necessary to stand out to sea, but he would not have been able to go very far because he would have had to sail into the wind. As Cortés was concerned that some mishap might have befallen Escobar, he ordered the fleet to set sail, and later we came upon him. Escobar gave Cortés his excuses and the reason why he could not wait. At this point, we arrived at Potonchan, and Cortés ordered the pilot to anchor in that inlet, but the pilot replied that it was a bad port because the ships had to be anchored more than two leagues from land, for there is a great ebb tide. Cortés was thinking of giving the Indians of that town a good lesson for the defeat of Francisco Hernández de Córdoba and Grijalva. Many of us soldiers who had been in those battles begged him to go in and not leave without soundly punishing them, even though it might detain us for two or three days. The pilot Alaminos and the other pilots insisted that if we entered there, in a week we would not be able to leave because of adverse weather, and that now we had a good wind and would arrive in two days at Tabasco, so we went by it. In three days we arrived at the Río Grijalva, which the Indians call Tabasco.

[XXXI] On the twelfth day of March, 1519, we arrived with all the fleet at the Río Grijalva, which is called Río Tabasco, and as we already knew from the Grijalva expedition that large ships could not enter that port, the larger ones anchored at sea. Using the smaller ships and the boats, all the soldiers disembarked, as Grijalva had done, at Point Palmares, about a half league from the town of Tabasco. The river and the bank between some mangrove swamps were full of Indian warriors, which surprised those of us who had come with Grijalva. In addition, more than twelve thousand warriors equipped to attack us were gathered in the town.

*Cortés tried to forestall the attack through negotiation, including three requests for peace, but to no avail. The men from the Grijalva expedition remembered that a narrow path went from the palm trees behind which the Indians were gathered to the town through some streams and marshes. Cortés sent Alonso de Ávila with one hundred soldiers to the town by the pass. Cortés and the rest of the soldiers and captains went upriver in the smaller boats and ships. The Indians surrounded Cortés and his men, forcing them to stay in water up to their waists in some places. One of Cortés's shoes stayed in the mud when he could not pull it out, so "he reached dry land without a shoe on one foot. Later they pulled out his shoe and he put it on." The rest of the captains and soldiers went after the Indians, calling on señor Santiago, and just when they were completely surrounded by Indians, Alonso de Ávila and his men came by land from the palm groves, sending the Indians into retreat.*

Cortés took possession of that land for His Majesty and himself, in his royal name, and here is how he did it: As a sign of possession, he made three slashes in a large tree called a ceiba,<sup>5</sup> which was in the central part of the courtyard, and he said if any people there opposed it, he would defend it with his sword and a shield on his arm. All the soldiers present when that occurred replied that it was right to take that royal possession in the name of His Majesty and that we would be there to support him if anyone opposed him. He made that decree before a notary of the king.

The partisans of Diego Velázquez had begun grumbling about this act of possession. I remember that, in those hard-fought battles the Indians waged against us, fourteen soldiers were wounded and I received an arrow wound in my thigh, but a small one, and eighteen Indians were lying about or were dead in

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5. The ceiba tree is native to and common in such tropical climates as the Yucatan and Central America. Mature specimens can be quite large. Mayan peoples held the ceiba to be sacred and believed that such a tree was at the heart of the cosmos. Their trunks were often hollowed out to make canoes.

the water where we had disembarked. We slept there that night, having posted many watchmen and sentries.

[XXXII] The next morning Cortés ordered Pedro de Alvarado, as captain of one hundred soldiers, including fifteen crossbowmen and escopeteros, to go two leagues inland and to take along Melchorejo, the interpreter from Cape Catoche, but when they went to get Melchorejo, they did not find him, because he had fled with the people from Tabasco. It seems that the day before, he left his Castilian clothes hanging in the Punta de los Palmares and went off in a canoe at night. Cortés was angry at his leaving, fearing that he would tell the Indians, his fellow natives, things that would not serve us well. Let us let him go, and bad luck to him, and we will return to our story.

*Cortés also ordered the captain Francisco de Lugo to another area with another hundred soldiers and twelve crossbowmen and escopeteros. About a league from the camp, Francisco de Lugo, going along with his company, found himself among great captaincies and squadrons of Indians, archers, and others with lances, round shields, drums, and plumed headdresses. Francisco de Lugo retreated to the camp and sent an Indian from Cuba to ask Cortés for help. Meanwhile, the captain Pedro de Alvarado had run into a creek, very difficult to cross. At the same time, other captaincies of warriors had attacked where Cortés was with the wounded. When Cortés heard of Francisco de Lugo's situation from the Cuban Indian, he immediately went to help.*

Fifteen Indians were killed and three captured in those skirmishes, and one seemed to be some kind of chieftain. Aguilar the interpreter asked them why they were such fools, coming out to attack when they could see we would kill them if they returned another time. Then we sent one of those Indians with beads to give to the caciques so they would come in peace. The messenger we sent said that the Indian Melchorejo from Cape Catoche, whom we brought with us and who went to them at night, had advised them to attack us day and night and they would defeat us because we were so few, so we had brought with us both bad

support and our enemy. That Indian we sent as a messenger went and never returned and, from the other two, Aguilar learned with complete certainty that by the next day, every cacique from all the neighboring towns in that province would come together with their arms ready to attack us. They were to come the next day to surround the camp, and Melchorejo the interpreter had advised them to do this.

[XXXIII] When Cortés knew for certain they were coming to attack us, he ordered us to bring the horses quickly from the ships to land, and the escopeteros, crossbowmen, and all the soldiers to be fully ready with our arms, even if we were wounded. When the horses came onto land, they moved very awkwardly and were fearful of running as they had been in the ships for many days, but the next day they moved more freely. One thing happened at that time to six or seven young soldiers in good health that gave them a kidney ailment so that they could not stand on their feet but had to be carried on someone's back. We did not find out what caused this. They have said it was because of cotton armor, which they had on their bodies day and night, and because in Cuba they were comfortable and not accustomed to working, and the heat gave them that pain. So that they not stay on land, Cortés ordered them taken to the ships. He advised the horsemen that the best riders and horses were to go and that the horses have breastplates with small bells. He ordered them not to stop to lance until they had routed all the Indians, but that they keep their lances at face level. He chose thirteen horsemen and Cortés was captain, and they were those I name here: Cortés; Cristóbal de Olid; Pedro de Alvarado; Alonso Hernández Puerto Carrero; Juan de Escalante; Francisco de Montejo; Alonso de Ávila (they gave him a horse that belonged to Ortiz the musician and to Bartolomé García, neither of whom was a good rider); Juan Velázquez de León; Francisco de Morla; Lares, the good rider (I call him that because there was another Lares); Gonzalo Domínguez, an extraordinary horseman; Morón, the one from Bayamo; and Pedro González de Trujillo. Cortés ordered Mesa the artilleryman to have his artillery very much at the ready, and he appointed Diego de Ordaz captain of

all us soldiers, even the crossbowmen and escopeteros, for he was not a horseman.

Very early the next day, which was the Day of Our Lady of March,<sup>6</sup> after hearing mass, which fray Bartolomé de Olmedo said for us, we all fell in behind our standard-bearer, who at that time was Antonio de Villarroel (Isabel de Ojeda's husband, who later changed the name Villarroel and he called himself Antonio Serrano de Cardona). We went by some large savannas where the Indians had attacked Francisco de Lugo and Pedro de Alvarado; the savanna and town together were called Cintla, subject to Tabasco and a league from the lodging where we had gone out. Our Cortés was separated from us by a short distance because of some marshes the horses could not get through. As we were proceeding, we came upon the full strength of the Indian warrior squadrons coming to look for us at our lodgings. It was very near the town of Cintla on a large plain, and if those warriors wanted to attack us and were coming to look for us, we met them with the same idea in mind.

[XXXIV] I have already described our method and order for proceeding. We encountered all the Indian captaincies and squadrons that were coming in search of us: they had great plumed headdresses and carried drums and small trumpets, their faces painted red ochre, white, and black, and they had large bows, arrows, lances, shields, and swords like two-handed broadswords, and many slings, stones, and spears, and each was in his quilted cotton armor. They came at us like mad dogs, in large squadrons that covered all the savannas, and they surrounded us on all sides and cast so many arrows, spears, and stones that, at the first assault, they wounded more than seventy of our men, and with the lances, hand to hand, they did us great harm. One soldier died right away of an arrow wound in the ear. They kept shooting arrows and wounding our men, but we kept right up with them with our guns, escopetas, crossbows, and great thrusts

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6. By tradition, March 25.

of our swords. Little by little, as they came to know our sword thrusts, they withdrew. But it was only to shoot arrows from a safer place, given that Mesa the artilleryman killed many of them with the cannons because, since their squadrons were large and they did not retreat to a distance, he shot at them at his pleasure; but with all the hurt and wounds we inflicted on them, we could not drive them off. I said, "Diego de Ordaz, it seems to me we can engage them hand to hand because they're truly feeling the cut and thrust of our swords, and they're distancing themselves from us for fear of the swords and so they can better cast arrows, spears, and stones like hail." Ordaz replied that he did not agree, because there were three hundred Indians for each one of us and we could not endure such a multitude, which is why we were maintaining ourselves against them in the way we were. But we agreed to draw as close to them as we could, as I had suggested to Ordaz, to let them really feel our sharp steel, and feel it they did, so they went to another part of the swamp. In all this time Cortés did not come with the horsemen, and even though we greatly wanted him there with us, we were afraid that some disaster might have befallen him.

I remember that when we let loose with the cannon, the Indians whistled, cried out, and threw straw and dirt into the air so we would not see the harm we were doing them, and they played drums and small trumpets, whistled, shouted, and yelled, *Alala, alala*. At that point, we saw the horsemen begin to appear, but as those great squadrons of Indians were absorbed in attacking us, they did not immediately see the horsemen coming up behind them. Because the field was flat, the horsemen able, and some of the horses easy to maneuver and good chargers, our horsemen gave them much to handle and lanced at will. When those of us fighting saw the horsemen, we hit them so hard that, with those on horseback on one side and us on the other, they quickly turned their backs. The Indians here believed that the horse and horseman were one being, because they had never seen horses before. Those savannas and fields were filled with Indians running to take refuge in some dense forests nearby.

After we routed them, Cortés told us he had not been able to come more quickly because of a swamp and because he was fighting with other squadrons of warriors to keep them from getting to us. Three of the horsemen were wounded and five horses. After settling beneath some trees and houses there, we thanked God for so complete a victory. As it was the Day of Our Lady of March, a town that was settled some time later was named Santa Maria de la Victoria, both for the Day of Our Lady and for our great victory. This was the first war we had in the company of Cortés in New Spain. When it was over, we bound the wounds of the injured with cloths because nothing else was available, and we treated the horses by burning their wounds with grease from a dead Indian we had cut open for that purpose. We went to look at the dead in the field, and there were more than eight hundred, most of them from sword thrusts but others from the guns, escopetas, and crossbows. Many on the field were half-dead and just lying there, for wherever the horsemen had gone were great numbers of dead and others moaning because of their wounds. We were in this battle more than an hour, and we could not make those good warriors give ground until the horsemen came. We took five Indians, two of them captains, and as it was late and we were tired of fighting and had not eaten, we returned to the camp. We buried two soldiers who had been wounded, one in the throat, the other in the ear, and, with the grease from the Indian, we seared the wounds of the others and of the horses. We posted good watchmen and sentinels, ate and rested.

Here is where Francisco López de Gómara says that Francisco de Morla went out on a dappled gray horse before Cortés arrived with the horsemen and that the holy apostles señor Santiago or St. Peter appeared. I say that all our works and victories are by the hand of Our Lord Jesus Christ, but in that battle there were so many Indians for each one of us that they might have blinded us with fistfuls of dirt except that the great mercy of our Lord helped us in everything. Possibly those Gómara is talking about were indeed the glorious apostles señor Santiago or St. Peter, and I, a sinner, might not be worthy of seeing them. What I saw and knew then

was that Francisco de Morla came on a chestnut horse at the same time as Cortés, and it seems to me, now that I am writing it down, I see the whole war presenting itself to me through this sinner's eyes just as we experienced it. And I, because I am unworthy, might not be deserving of seeing those glorious apostles, but in our company were more than four hundred soldiers, including Cortés and many other gentlemen, and it would have been talked about and testimony would have been taken, and a church would have been built when the town was settled, and it would have been named Santiago de la Victoria or San Pedro de la Victoria, but it was named Santa Maria de la Victoria. If it were as Gómara says, we would be very bad Christians not to recognize the great gift Our Lord God gave us in sending his holy apostles and not reverencing that church every day and night and thanking God that it was as the chronicler says. Until I read his chronicle I never heard such things from among conquistadors who were there.

[XXXV] I have already said we took five Indians in that battle, two of them captains with whom Aguilar the interpreter was conversing, and from what they told him, he felt they would be good messengers, so he told Cortés they should be freed to go speak to the caciques of that town and any others they might see. He gave those Indian messengers green beads and blue rhinestones. Aguilar said many very pleasant and friendly things, that we would like to have them as brothers, that they should not be afraid, that they were responsible for the war that just occurred and that they should call together all the caciques of all the towns so we could speak to them. He also very gently warned them about other things to win them over to peace. They showed goodwill, and they spoke with the chieftains and caciques and told them everything we wanted them to know about peace. Having heard our message, they agreed among themselves to send fifteen Indians from among their slaves, all with their faces stained black, their cloaks and loincloths shabby, and with them they sent hens, roasted fish, and maize bread. When these slaves came before Cortés, he received them with goodwill, but Aguilar the interpreter said to them half angrily that because they came

with their faces done that way, they were coming more with war in mind than in peace and that they should go immediately to the caciques and tell them that if they wanted peace, as we offered it to them, their lords should come to discuss it, as is usual, and not slaves. Aguilar extended the usual friendly words to those black-stained people themselves and sent blue beads with them as a sign of peace and to soothe their minds.

The next day, thirty Indian chieftains came wearing rich cloaks, and they brought hens, fish, fruit, and maize bread. They asked Cortés for permission to burn and bury the bodies of the dead from the recently fought battles so they would not smell bad or be eaten by jaguars or mountain lions. Cortés agreed immediately, and they quickly brought many people to bury their dead and burn their bodies, which was their custom. Cortés learned from them that more than eight hundred men were missing, not counting those who had been wounded. They said they could not stay to talk peace with us because the next day all the chieftains and lords of those towns would come and discuss the peace. As Cortés was very prudent in everything, he joked with us soldiers who happened to be keeping him company, "You know, gentlemen, it seems to me that these Indians must be very afraid of the horses, and they must think the horses and cannon make war by themselves. I've thought of something else that will make them believe it more. Have them bring Juan Sedeño's mare, the one that foaled the other day in the ship, and have them tie it here where I am. Then, bring Ortiz the musician's horse, which becomes very aroused at the sight of a mare, and when it has the mare's smell, separate the mare and the horse and take them somewhere where the caciques who are to come won't be able to hear them whinnying nor see them until they are here speaking with me." So they did as Cortés ordered, taking the mare and the horse, and he picked up her odor in Cortés's building. Cortés also ordered them to load the largest gun we had with a good ball and lots of powder. Just then, and it was already midday, forty Indians came, all caciques, with good bearing and rich cloaks in their style, and they greeted Cortés and all of us, walking around perfuming everyone with their incense,

and they asked pardon for what had happened in the past and said that from then on they would be good. Cortés replied somewhat sternly, as though angry, and through our interpreter Aguilar, he said that they knew how many times he had asked for peace, that they were to blame, that they now deserved to be killed along with all the others who stayed in their towns. He also said that we are vassals of a great king and lord, don Carlos, who sent us to these parts and ordered us to help and favor those who would be in his royal service, and if they are good, as they promise, we would do so, and if not, he would loose some of those *tepuzques* that will kill them (in their language *tepuzque* means “iron”), and because of what happened in the past when they attacked us, they were still angry at them. Then secretly he ordered the loaded cannon to be fired, and it gave off the desired loud, thunder-like noise. The ball went buzzing through the forest, and as it was midday and the air was calm, it made a huge noise, and the caciques were terrified. Because they had never seen anything like that, they believed what Cortés said to them was true. Cortés told them through Aguilar that they should not be afraid any longer, that he had ordered the cannon not to harm them. Just at that moment, they brought the horse that had got the smell of the mare and tied it not far from where Cortés was speaking with the caciques. Because they had held the mare in the building where Cortés and the Indians were speaking, the horse kicked and whinnied and bellowed, his eyes always looking at the Indians and the building where he had picked up the mare’s smell. The caciques believed it was bellowing at them, and they were terrified. When Cortés saw them in that way, he got up from his chair, went toward the horse and ordered the two young squires to lead it far from there immediately, and he told the Indians he had ordered the horse not to be angry because they came in peace and were good. Just then, more than thirty Indian bearers, whom among themselves they call *tamemes*, arrived carrying a meal of hens, fish, and fruit. They seemed to have stayed behind and were not able to come at the same time as the caciques. Cortés and the caciques talked at length there, and the caciques said that the next day they would come with

a present and would speak about other things. So they left very content, where I leave them now until the next day.

[XXXVI] The next morning, the fifteenth of March, 1519, many caciques and chieftains from that town of Tabasco and other towns came, showing all of us much respect, and they brought a present of gold, including four diadems, several small lizards, something like two small dogs, ear pieces, five ducks, two images of Indian faces, two golden soles like the ones on their own sandals, and other things of little value, whose worth I no longer remember. They also brought cloaks of the kind they make, very coarse, because those who know something of that province will already have heard that the ones they have in that country are of very little value. This present was nothing compared with the twenty women, and among them a particularly excellent woman who came to be called doña Marina after becoming Christian. Cortés received that present with pleasure, and he withdrew to talk with all the caciques and Aguilar the interpreter. He told them he was very grateful for what they brought, but he had one request: They should immediately order all their men, women, and children to settle that town, and he would like to see it settled within two days; if they did this, he would know there would be true peace. The caciques immediately sent for all the men, and, with their children and women, the town was settled in two days. The other thing he ordered was that they give up their idols and sacrifices, and they replied that they would do so. We made known to them through Aguilar, as best Cortés could, things touching our holy faith, how we were Christians and worshipped one sole, true God, and Cortés showed them a most venerable image of Our Lady with her precious son in her arms, and he told them that we worship that holy image because she is in heaven and she is Mother of Our Lord God. The caciques said that the great *tecliciguata*, which is what they call the great women in those lands, seemed very good and that they would like to have her in their town. Cortés said that, yes, he would give it to them, and he ordered them to make a proper altar, well constructed, which they immediately did. The next morning, he ordered two of our finish

carpenters, Alonso Yáñez and Álvaro López, to make a very tall cross, and after ordering all this, he asked the caciques why they were attacking us when we had asked for peace three times. They answered that they had already asked and received pardon for it. The cacique said that his brother, the cacique of Chanpoton, had advised it so that he would not be regarded as cowardly. He had already been reproached and dishonored because he did not attack us when the other captain came with four ships, and it seems he meant Juan de Grijalva. Further, he said that the Indian we brought as an interpreter and who had fled one night advised him to attack us day and night. Cortés then ordered them to bring Melchorejo to him no matter what the circumstances, and they told Cortés that when Melchorejo saw that the battle was not going well for them, he fled, and even though they had looked for him, they did not know where he was. We learned later that they sacrificed him because his advice cost them so much. Cortés also asked them from where they brought the gold and those little jewels. They replied that they came from where the sun set, and they said “Culua”<sup>7</sup> and “Mexico,” but because we knew neither what Mexico nor Culua was, we ignored it. We brought another interpreter there, Francisco, whom we got during the Grijalva expedition, but he understood nothing of the Tabascan language, but that of Culua, which is the Mexican language. Partly using signs, he said to Cortés that Culua was much farther on, and he said Mexico, but we did not understand.

With this, the discussion stopped until the next day when we put on the altar the holy image of Our Lady and the cross, which we all worshipped, and fray Bartolomé de Olmedo said mass. All the caciques and chieftains were present, and that town was named Santa María de la Victoria, and the town of Tabasco has that name today. The same friar, with our interpreter Aguilar,

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7. Bernal Díaz consistently uses “Culua” to designate *Colhua*, a term associated with Colhuacan, Tenochtitlan’s parent state from where its royal line first came. *Colhua* means “one with grandfathers,” with a long line of forebearers, specifically the old Toltecs.

preached many good things about our holy faith to the twenty Indian women they had given us and told them not to believe in their idols, that they were evil and not gods, nor should they sacrifice to the idols anymore because the idols deceived them, but instead they should worship Our Lord Jesus Christ. They were then baptized, and the name doña Marina was given to that Indian woman they had given us there, and she was truly a great *cacica*, daughter of great caciques and mistress over vassals, which clearly showed in her person. Further on I will talk about how and in what way she was brought there. I do not remember well the names of all the other women, nor is it relevant to name them. But these were the first Christian women in New Spain, and Cortés gave each captain his own. This doña Marina, because she was of good appearance, curious about things, and uninhibited, he gave to Alonso Hernández Puerto Carrero, who as I have said was a very fine gentleman, cousin of the Count of Medellín; when he left for Castile, doña Marina was with Cortés and he had a son by her, who was named don Martín Cortés.

We stayed in that town five days, as much to let wounds heal as for those who had kidney ailments, which went away there. Because Cortés was always trying to win over the caciques with good words, he told how the emperor our lord, whose vassals we are, has many great lords at his command, that they should pledge obedience to him, and that whatever they might need, whether assistance from us or anything else, he will come to help them. All the caciques gave him thanks, and there they declared themselves vassals of our great emperor. These were the first vassals in New Spain who pledged obedience to His Majesty.

Cortés then ordered that the next day, Palm Sunday, very early in the morning, they should come to the altar with their children and women to worship the holy image of Our Lady and the cross. He also ordered that six Indian carpenters should come then and go with our carpenters into the town of Cintla, where it pleased Our Lord God to give us victory in the past battle, as I have mentioned. He told them to cut a cross in the wood of a large tree that was called a ceiba, and they made the cross so that it would

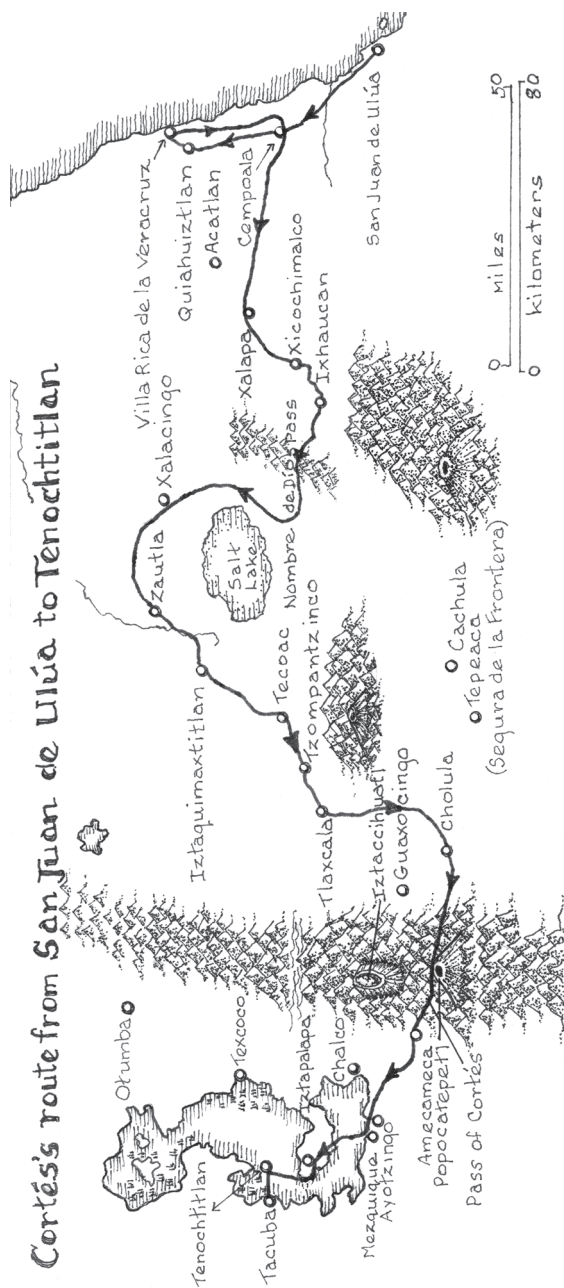
last a long time, because the cross will always be distinguished by bark that renews itself. When this was done, Cortés ordered them to prepare all the canoes they had to help us embark, because we wanted to set sail immediately on that holy day and also because two pilots came just then to tell Cortés that the ships were at great risk because of the north wind, which would strike them sideways. Early the next morning, all the caciques and chieftains came with all the canoes and their women and children, and they were already in the courtyard where we had the church and cross and many small cut branches for our procession. When we saw that all the caciques were gathered, Cortés, the captains, and everyone else walked together in a very pious procession with great devotion, and the Mercedarian father and Juan Díaz, the secular priest, in their vestments, mass was said, and we worshipped and kissed the holy cross, the caciques and Indians watching us. When we had completed our solemn fiesta, in accord with the season, the chieftains brought Cortés some ten hens and fish and vegetables. We took our leave of them and Cortés, continuing to commend the holy image and holy crosses to them, told them to keep them very clean, swept, and decorated with branches, and, if they honored the holy image and crosses, they would have health and good harvests. Because it was already late, we embarked; we set sail the next morning with fortunate navigation, and we followed the course to San Juan de Ulúa, always staying close to land.

Sailing along in good weather, those of us who knew the course said to Cortés, "Sir, there's the Rambla," which in the Indians' language is called *Ayagualulco*.<sup>8</sup> When we arrived at the site of Tonalá, which is called San Antón, we pointed it out. Further on, we showed him the great Río de Guazacualco.<sup>9</sup> He saw the very high snowy mountains and, later, the mountain range of San Martín. Farther on we showed him the split rock, which is made up of some large rocks that jut out into the sea, and they had a

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8. *Ayahualolco*, which means "where the water goes around."

9. *Coatzacualco*, which means "place of the serpent pyramid."



Cortés's route from San Juan de Ulúa to Tenochtitlan.

landmark on top, something like a seat. Farther on, we showed him the Río de Alvarado, which is where Pedro de Alvarado entered during Grijalva's expedition. Then we showed him the Río de Banderas, which was where we had bartered for the sixteen thousand pesos,<sup>10</sup> and then we showed him the Isla Blanca, and we told him also where the Isla Verde lay. Close to land he saw the Isla de Sacrificios, where we had found the altars during Grijalva's expedition and the sacrificed Indians. Then, with good fortune, we arrived at San Juan de Ulúa on Holy Thursday, after midday. I remember that a gentleman named Alonso Hernández Puertocarrero came and said to Cortés, "It seems to me, sir, that these gentlemen who have come two other times to these lands are saying to you, 'Behold France, Montesinos; / Behold Paris, the city; / Behold the waters of the Duero / where they go down to the sea.' And I tell you now to look at the rich lands around you, and know how to conduct yourself." By now Cortés well understood what the aim of these verses had been, and so he answered: "God give us the same good fortune in battle that he gave to the paladin Roldan;<sup>11</sup> as for the rest, with you and the other gentlemen as my masters, I'll know what to do."<sup>12</sup> This is what happened, and Cortés did not enter the Río de Alvarado like Gómara says.

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10. In Chapter VII, not included here, Bernal Díaz reports that the Grijalva expedition traded for sixteen thousand pesos worth of low-grade gold items of diverse craftsmanship.

11. "Roldan" refers to the hero of the epic poem *Cantar de Roldán* (*Song of Roland*), the nephew of Charlemagne who was killed in the Battle of Roncevaux in 778.

12. See David A. Borouchoff, "Beyond Utopia and Paradise: Cortés, Bernal Díaz and the Rhetoric of Consecration," *MLN* 106, no. 2, Hispanic issue (March 1991): 333.

## DOÑA MARINA, THEY SPREAD IT AROUND THAT SHE HAD DIED

[XXXVII] Before dealing with the great Montezuma and his great Mexico and Mexicans, I want to talk about doña Marina, how from childhood she was a great lady and cacica over towns and vassals. Here is her story: Her father and mother were lords and caciques of a town, Painala, eight leagues from the town of Guazacualco, and other towns were subject to it. Her father died when she was a very small child, and her mother married another young cacique with whom she had a son and, it seemed, they loved him very much, and the father and mother agreed that he should become cacique after their deaths. To avoid any obstacles, one night they gave the child, doña Marina, to some Indians from Xicalango so she would not be seen. At that same time, the child of one of their Indian slaves died, and they announced that the one who had died was the heiress doña Marina. The people of Xicalango gave doña Marina to the people of Tabasco, and the Tabascans gave her to Cortés. I met her mother and the son of this old woman, doña Marina's half-brother, who was now a man and commanded the town jointly with his mother, because the old woman's last husband was dead. After becoming Christian, the old woman was named Marta and the son Lázaro. I know this very well because in 1523, after the conquest of Mexico and other provinces, and when Cristóbal de Olid had rebelled in Honduras, Cortés went there and passed through Guazacualco. We were with him on that entire journey as was the greater part of the citizens of the town. As doña Marina was such an excellent woman and good interpreter in all the wars of New Spain, Tlaxcala, and Mexico,

Cortés always had her with him. During that journey a gentleman named Juan Jaramillo married her in the town of Orizaba, before certain witnesses, one of them named Aranda, a former citizen of Tabasco. He spoke of the marriage, and it is not as the chronicler Gómara tells it. Doña Marina had a great presence and commanded absolutely among all the Indians in New Spain.

In the town of Guazacualco, Cortés sent for all the caciques in that province in order to address them about the holy doctrine and about their good treatment, and doña Marina's mother and half-brother, Lázaro, came with other caciques. Some days earlier doña Marina told me that she came from that province and was the mistress over vassals, and the captain Cortés knew it well, as did Aguilar the interpreter. When the mother and her son, the brother, came, they recognized one another, and clearly doña Marina was her daughter because she looked very much like her. They were afraid of her, believing that she had sent for them to find and kill them, and they cried. When doña Marina saw this, she consoled them and said they should not be afraid, that when they gave her to the people from Xicalango, they did not know what they were doing, and she forgave them, gave them many golden jewels and clothes, and said they could return to their town. She said that God had done her a great favor in getting her to give up idol worship and become a Christian, to have a son by her master and lord Cortés, and to be married to a gentleman like her husband Juan Jaramillo. Even were they to make her cacica of all the provinces in New Spain, she said she would not want to be that, but would rather serve her husband and Cortés than anything else in the world. I know this with absolute certainty, and it seems to me to resemble what happened to Joseph with his brothers in Egypt, who, in the matter of the wheat, fell into Joseph's hands.<sup>1</sup>

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1. In the Bible, the book of Genesis, when Joseph was governor over Egypt, during the famine years, his father sent his brothers to secure wheat, and Joseph, recognizing his brothers, who had long before sold him into slavery, tested them, but eventually, through mercy, he provided them with the wheat they sought.

This is what happened and not the account that Gómara gave, and he also says other things I am ignoring. Returning to our topic, doña Marina knew the language of Guazacualco, which is the language of Mexico, and she also knew that of Tabasco, and Jerónimo Aguilar also knew the language of Yucatan and Tabasco, which is the same; they understood each other well, and Aguilar translated everything into Castilian for Cortés. It was a great beginning for our conquest, and thus things turned out for us, praise God, very fortunately. I wanted to talk about this, because without doña Marina we could not have understood the language of New Spain and Mexico.

[XXXVIII] On Holy Thursday, 1519, we arrived with the entire fleet at the port of San Juan de Ulúa, and as the pilot Alaminos knew it well from when we came with Juan de Grijalva, he immediately ordered us to anchor in a place where the ships would be secure from the north wind, and they put their royal standards and weather vanes on the flagship. About a half hour after we had anchored, two very large canoes, which they call pirogues, arrived. In them were many Mexican Indians, and when they saw the standards and the large ship, they knew that was where they had to go to speak to the captain. They went directly to the ship, went aboard and asked which was the *tatuan*, which means “ruler.” Doña Marina understood because she knew the language very well, so she pointed to Cortés. The Indians paid their respects to Cortés, as was their custom, and they said to him that he was very welcome, that a servant of the great Montezuma, their lord, sent them to find out who we were, what we were seeking, and that if we needed something for ourselves and the ships to tell them and they would provide it. Cortés answered through the two interpreters, Aguilar and doña Marina, that he was very grateful, and he then ordered that they be given something to eat, wine to drink, and some blue beads. When they had drunk, he told them we had come to see them and to trade, we would be no bother to them at all, and they should approve of our arrival in that land. The messengers went back delighted. The next day, Good Friday, we disembarked our horses and artillery in some

hills and dunes of sand that were there, very high, because there was no flat land, only sandy beaches. They pointed the cannons as seemed best to Mesa the artilleryman, and we made an altar where mass was then said. They made huts and bowers for Cortés and the captains, and some three hundred soldiers transported wood, from which we made our huts, and the horses were put where they would be safe; this is how we passed that Good Friday. The next day, Saturday, the eve of Easter, many Indians arrived, sent by a chieftain, a governor under Montezuma, whose name was Pitalpitoque,<sup>2</sup> whom we called Obandillo. They brought axes and worked on the huts of the captain Cortés and the others nearby, and they put large coarse cloths on top of them to keep out the sun, for it was the Lenten season and very hot. They brought hens, maize bread, and plums, which were in season, and it seems to me they brought some gold jewels then, all of which they presented to Cortés, and they said that the next day a governor would come to bring more provisions. Cortés thanked them very much for it, and he ordered that they be given certain things as barter, with which they were delighted.

The next day, Easter, the Holy Feast of the Resurrection, the governor about whom they had spoken, Tendile,<sup>3</sup> a man of business, arrived and brought with him Pitalpitoque, who was also very illustrious among them. With them were many Indians with presents and hens and vegetables, and Tendile ordered them to remove themselves some distance away to a promontory. With much humility they bowed to Cortés and then to all of us soldiers who were closest. Cortés welcomed them through the interpreters, embraced them, told them to wait, and said he would speak to them later. In the meantime, he ordered that an altar be made, the best that could be done at that time, and fray Bartolomé de Olmedo, who was a great singer, sang the mass, the father Juan Díaz assisted, and the two governors and other chieftains of their

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2. Cuitlalpitoc.

3. Teudilli.

company were at the mass. After mass, Cortés, certain captains, and the two Indian servants of the great Montezuma ate, and when the tables were taken away, Cortés with the two interpreters and those caciques withdrew, and he told them we were Christians and vassals of the greatest lord in the world, the emperor don Carlos, who has many great lords as vassals and servants, and that we came to these lands by his order, because for many years don Carlos has known of them and of the great lord who rules them, and he wanted to have that great lord as a friend and tell him many things in his royal name; Cortés also said that after the great lord knew and understood these things, he would be pleased, and that he would like also in good friendship to trade with him and his vassals, and he would like to know where his lordship rules so that they might meet. Tendile replied somewhat haughtily, "You have just now arrived and you already want to speak to him. Receive this present now that we give you in the name of our lord, and then you will tell me what might suit you." He then pulled many beautifully worked, rich pieces of gold from a large *petaca*<sup>4</sup> that is like a basket, and he sent for ten loads of white cotton cloth and feathers, things amazing to see, other things that I do not remember, and a lot of food, which included hens, fruit, and roasted fish. Cortés received it graciously and with smiles, and he gave them twisted beads and other small beads from Castile and asked that they order the people in their towns to come trade with us because he had brought many beads to exchange for gold. They said they would do as he ordered. We learned later that Tendile and Pitalpitoque were governors of some provinces called Cotastan,<sup>5</sup> Tustepeque, Guazpaltepeque, Tatalteco, and other towns they had recently subjugated. Then Cortés ordered that a chair with a back richly carved with inlays be brought, some pearls that were carefully worked and covered in some musk-imbued cotton to make them smell good, and a string of twisted diamond-cut beads as

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4. A *petaca* is a type of basket covered with leather or animal hide.

5. Cotaxtla.

well as a crimson cap with a gold medal of St. George on horseback killing a dragon with his sword. He told Tendile to send that chair right away so that the lord Montezuma, whose name we already knew, could sit on it when Cortés came to see and speak with him, and that he should put that cap on his head. He also said that the king our lord ordered him to give Montezuma that stone and everything else as a sign of friendship because he knows he is a great lord; and he asked that a time and place be set when he could go to see Montezuma. Tendile accepted the gift and said that his lord Montezuma was such a great lord that he would be pleased to know our great king and that he would take him that present quickly and would return with a response.

Tendile, it seems, brought with him great painters, for there are such in Mexico, and he ordered them to paint from life the face, expression, body, and features of Cortés and all the captains and soldiers, as well as the ships and sails, horses, doña Marina, and Aguilar, even the two hounds, the cannons and balls, and our whole army, and he carried the paintings to his lord. Cortés then ordered the artillerymen to have the cannons well loaded with a good load of powder so that when they were fired, there would be a huge noise. He ordered Pedro de Alvarado and all the horsemen to prepare themselves with small bells on their horses' breastplates, so Montezuma's servants could see them charge, and Cortés also went on horseback and said, "It would be good if we could gallop in these sand dunes, but they will see that we even get stuck in sand on foot. Let us go to the beach after the tide goes out and gallop two by two." He gave charge of all the horsemen to Pedro de Alvarado, whose sorrel mare was a great runner and turner. All this was done in front of those two ambassadors and, so that they might see the guns go off, Cortés pretended that he wanted to speak again with many of the chieftains, and then they fired the cannons. As the weather was calm then, the stones resounded throughout the forest with great noise, and the governors and all the Indians were terrified by such unfamiliar things, and they ordered their painters to paint all of it so their lord Montezuma might see it.

It seems that a soldier had a half-gilded but rusty helmet. Tendile, who was the more curious of the two Indians, saw it and said he would like to examine it, that it looked like one that had been left to them by their ancestors in the lineage from which they came, and they had put that one on their god Huichilobos,<sup>6</sup> so their lord Montezuma would be pleased to see this one. They immediately gave the helmet to him, and Cortés told them that because he wanted to know whether the gold of this land was the kind we extract from the rivers in our land, they should send him that helmet filled with grains of gold for us to send to our great emperor. After all this, Tendile took his leave of Cortés and all of us, and after many promises Cortés offered him, Tendile took his leave and said he would return in all due haste with his response. With Tendile gone, we came to understand that, besides being an Indian of great importance, he was the fastest runner his master Montezuma had. He went quickly and told the entire story to his lord, showing him all the painted sketches he had brought and the present Cortés had sent him. It is said that when the great Montezuma saw it, he was amazed, and, on the other hand, he was very happy, and when he saw the helmet and the one his Huichilobos had, he was sure that we were those people his ancestors said would come to rule over this land. Here is where the chronicler Gómara says many things that are not accurate.

[XXXIX] When Tendile left with the present the captain Cortés had given him for his lord Montezuma, the other governor, Pitalpitoque, stayed in our camp. He stayed in some huts a distance from us, where they brought Indian women to prepare bread from their maize, hens, fruit, and fish, and from that they provided Cortés and the captains who ate with him, but for us, the soldiers, nothing, unless we gathered shellfish or went to fish. At that time many Indians came from the towns I mentioned, whose governors were those servants of the great Montezuma, and some of them

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6. Huichilobos, now commonly referred to as Huitzilopochtli, is the tribal deity of the Mexica, the god of war and associated with the sun.

brought gold, jewels of little value, and hens to exchange for our trade goods, which were green beads, rhinestones, and other jewels, and we fed ourselves with these, because most soldiers had trade goods, as we had learned during Grijalva's expedition that it was good to carry beads. Six or seven days passed like this. Then Tendile came one morning with more than a hundred Indians loaded with goods. With them came a great Mexican cacique who looked like the captain Cortés in his face, features, and body; the great Montezuma had deliberately sent him because, according to what they said, when Tendile brought a picture of Cortés's face, all the chieftains with Montezuma said that a chieftain named Quintalbor looked like Cortés. So Montezuma called that great cacique to go with Tendile, and, as he looked like Cortés, we called him that in the camp, this Cortés here, that Cortés there. Let us return to his arrival and what they did. As he arrived where our captain was, he kissed the ground, and with clay braziers filled with incense they perfumed Cortés and all the rest of us soldiers who were close by. Cortés showed them much affection and seated them next to him.

That chieftain who came with that present was, along with Tendile, charged with speaking. As I have said, his name was Quintalbor. After welcoming us to that land and saying many other things, he ordered the present they carried to be brought out on top of some sleeping mats they called *petates* and other cotton cloths to be spread over them. The first present was a wheel in the shape of a sun the size of a wagon wheel, of very fine gold and with all types of painting, a great work to see, worth, as they said after they had weighed it, more than ten thousand pesos; another larger wheel of brilliant silver representing the moon with other figures on it, and it was of great weight, worth a great deal; and he brought the helmet filled with small grains of gold as they take it from the mines, which was worth three thousand pesos. That gold in the helmet was worth even more to us than if they had brought twenty thousand pesos because we knew then for certain that there were good mines. In addition, he brought twenty golden ducks, particularly excellent work, very lifelike, some gold in the likeness of the

kind of dogs they kept, many golden pieces of jaguars, mountain lions, and monkeys; ten collars of excellent workmanship and other pendants; and twelve arrows, a bow with its string, and two staffs of the kind justices carry, five palm spans in length; all this was of very fine molded gold. Then he ordered brought forward crests of gold and rich green feathers and other crests of silver and fans of the same material; then golden deer made from molds, and there were so many things and it was so many years ago that I cannot remember them all. Then he ordered brought there more than thirty loads of cotton cloth, of such excellence and with so many types of embroidery, with feathers of so many colors, that I do not want to write anything more about it because I will not know how to describe it. After he had presented it all, that great cacique, Quintalbor, and Tendile, said to Cortés that he should accept that present with the great goodwill with which their lord sent it, and that he should share it with the *teules*<sup>7</sup> and men he brings with him. Cortés accepted it with pleasure. Those ambassadors said to Cortés that they wanted to tell him what their lord sent them to say, and the first thing they said to him was that their lord rejoiced that such strong men, as they have said we are, have come to his land because he knew about the incident at Tabasco. He also said Montezuma would very much like to see our great emperor, for he is a great lord, because even from such distant lands as we came, the emperor knew of Montezuma, and he will send him a present of valuable stones, and, while we were there in that port, if he might serve us in some way, he would do so with great goodwill. As for the meetings, he said we should not be concerned about them for there was no reason to have them, and he gave many objections to them.

Cortés, looking delighted, again said thank you to them, and with many friendly words and promises, he gave each governor two shirts of Holland cloth and blue rhinestones and other little

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7. *Teul* is a term used generally to signify a god or an idol and, according to Bernal Díaz, the Spaniards as well.

things, and he requested them to return as his ambassador to Mexico to say to their lord, the great Montezuma, that because we had crossed so many seas and come from such far lands only to see him and to speak to him in person, that if he, Cortés, were to return not having seen Montezuma, our great king and lord would not receive him well, and that wherever Montezuma might be, Cortés wanted to come to see him and do whatever he orders. The governors said they would tell Montezuma that, but the meetings Cortés says he wants are out of the question. To Montezuma, Cortés sent with those messengers, from our poor resources, a cup of Florentine glass, etched and gilded with many groves of trees and hunting scenes, three shirts of Holland cloth, and other things, and he entrusted his response to them. The two governors left, and Pitalpitoque stayed in the camp, and it appears that Montezuma's other servants told him he should have food brought from the nearby towns.

[XL] With the messengers dispatched to Mexico, Cortés immediately ordered two ships to explore further along the coast, naming as their captain Francisco de Montejo. He ordered Montejo to follow the route we had taken with Juan de Grijalva, because Montejo himself had been in Grijalva's company, and to try to find a safe port and look for lands where we might be able to stay; for he already saw well that we would not be able to stay on those sandy beaches because of the mosquitoes and the distance from populated areas. He ordered Alaminos and Juan Álvarez el Manquillo to go as pilots, because they already knew that route, and he told them to go as far along the coast as they could in ten days. They did as he ordered and arrived at the site of the large river near Pánuco. They could not get through from there because of the strong currents. It was the river where we arrived on the captain Juan de Grijalva's expedition. Coming upon those unnavigable currents, Alaminos reversed course to go to San Juan de Ulúa with no other report except that twelve leagues from there they had seen a town like a fortified port, Quiahuiztlan, and that near the town it seemed to the pilot that ships would be

secure from the north. It was given an ugly name, Bernal's blank,<sup>8</sup> because it resembled another port in Spain that had that same ugly name. Montejo spent ten or twelve days in these goings and comings.

I will return to talking about how the Indian Pitalpitoque, who had stayed in order to bring food, slackened off so much that he brought nothing to the camp, so we had very little food because the cassava became bitter from mold and rot and dirty from cockroaches. If we did not go to gather shellfish, we did not eat, and the Indians who used to bring gold and hens to trade no longer came as they had at the beginning, and those who did come were reserved and fearful. We were waiting hour by hour for the messengers who went to Mexico. Just then Tendile returned with many Indians, and after having paid their customary respects, perfuming Cortés and all of us with incense, he delivered ten loads of very fine and precious feathered cloaks and four *chalchiuis*,<sup>9</sup> green stones of very great value, worth more among them than emeralds are among us, and they are green. He also presented some pieces of gold, which they said were worth by themselves, apart from the *chalchiuis*, three thousand pesos. Then came Tendile and Pitalpitoque, but the other great cacique, Quintalbor, did not return, having fallen ill on the road, and those two governors withdrew with Cortés, doña Marina, and Aguilar, and they told Cortés that their lord Montezuma received the present with pleasure but, as for the visits, they should speak no more about it. They said he sent those valuable stones, the *chalchiuis*, for the great emperor because they are so valuable that each one of them is worth an entire load of gold, that he held them in the greatest esteem and that Cortés should not send any more messengers to

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8. In the original, "*el tal de Bernal*": Here *el tal* is used in place of some word that, for whatever reasons, one deems inappropriate to include, much as in contemporary English one uses "the blankety-blank."

9. Usually *chalchihuites*, a word seemingly derived from indigenous languages meaning "green stone" or, possibly, "jade," but that was often used to designate any precious stone.

Mexico. Cortés thanked them and extended his promises, but he was certainly saddened that they had said so clearly to him that we could not see Montezuma, and he said to certain of us soldiers, “Truly he must be a great and rich lord, and if God wishes it, someday we’ll go to see him.” And we soldiers replied, “We only wished we were involved with him.”

Let us leave the visits for now and talk about how it was the hour of the Ave Maria; in the camp we rang a bell, and all of us knelt down before a cross we had put in a sand dune and prayed the Ave Maria. When Tendile and Pitalpitoque, who were very curious about things, saw us on our knees, they asked why we humiliated ourselves before that stick put together like that, and when Cortés heard it and the Mercedarian friar was present, he said to the friar, “This a good time and a good subject, Father, to explain to them through our interpreters matters touching on our faith.” He then gave them such a good explanation that some theologians could not do better. Having explained that we are Christians and all the appropriate things about our holy faith, Cortés and the Mercedarian friar then told them that their idols are evil and they are not good and that they flee from where that sign of the cross is, for on another cross of this shape, the Lord of heaven, earth, and all creation suffered his passion and death, and it is him we believe in and worship. He is our true god, his name is Jesus Christ, and he wanted to suffer and go through that death to save all humankind; he rose on the third day and is in the heavens, and we will be judged by him. He told them many other things, very perfectly spoken, and they understood them well and replied that they would tell these things to their lord Montezuma. He also stated that our great emperor sent us to these parts to stop them from sacrificing Indians or making any other type of evil sacrifice, nor should they rob each other nor adore those accursed figures. He implored them to put up in their city, in those houses of worship where they kept the idols they consider gods, a cross like that one and an image of Our Lady with her precious son in her arms, which he gave them there, and he told them they would see how well everything would go for them and what our God

would do for them. Because many other thoughts were uttered and I do not know how to describe them, I will leave this, and I will go back to discussing how many Indians came this last time with Tendile to trade pieces of gold, which were not worth much. All of us soldiers traded for gold, and we gave it to the seamen we had along in exchange for the fish they went to catch so we would have something to eat, for otherwise we would have suffered great hunger. Cortés was pleased with this, but he covered it up even though he saw it, and many friends and servants of Diego Velázquez questioned why he let us trade.

[XLI] When the friends of Diego Velázquez saw that some soldiers were trading gold, they asked Cortés why he consented to it, saying that Diego Velázquez did not send him so that the soldiers could carry off most of the gold. They said Cortés should proclaim that, except for himself, they not trade anymore, that they declare what they had gotten in order to extract the royal fifth, and that a suitable person should be given the office of treasurer. Cortés said that what they said was correct, that they should select the person themselves, and they settled on Gonzalo Mejía. This done, Cortés, with an unhappy expression, said to them, “Look, gentlemen, how much hardship our companions experience with no food. We had to look the other way so everyone could eat; besides, the amount they’re trading is a pittance and, God willing, we’re going to have much gold, because everything has its good and bad side. Now it’s proclaimed that there will be no more trading of gold, as you have wanted, and we’ll see what we’ll eat.” Here the chronicler Gómara says that Cortés did this so that Montezuma would believe that we attached no importance to gold, but he was not well informed, for since the Grijalva expedition on the Río de Banderas, Montezuma must have known this very well. Besides, when we sent the helmet to him requesting gold grains from the mine, and they saw us trade, well then, how were the Mexican people not to understand it? Let us leave this and talk about how one morning not a single Indian appeared of those in the huts who usually brought us things to eat, nor those who traded, nor Pitalpitoque, for without saying a word, they had fled. The reason

was, as we later learned, that Montezuma sent him an order not to wait for any more conversations with Cortés or with those who were with him, for it seems Montezuma was very devoted to his idols, Tezcatepuca and Huichilobos; they say the latter was the god of war and Tezcatepuca<sup>10</sup> the god of the inferno, and he sacrificed young boys to them every day so they would give him an answer to the question of what he should do with us. As we later learned, Montezuma's thought was that, if we did not go back in our ships, he would get his hands on all of us to use for breeding purposes and sacrifice. The answer his idols gave him was to avoid listening to Cortés as well as to messages Cortés sent him about erecting a cross, and they should not bring the image of Our Lady to their city, so they left without speaking.

When we heard this news, we believed it meant war, so we were always very much more on our guard. One day, another soldier and I, standing guard on the sandbanks, saw five Indians coming along the beach, and so as not to make an uproar for nothing in the camp, we let them come up to us. With smiling faces they paid their respects in their way, and using hand signals, they told us we should take them to the camp. I told my companion that he should stay at his post and I would go with them, for at that time my feet did not weigh me down as they do now that I am old. When they came to where Cortés was, they showed him great respect and said to him, *Lope luzio, lope luzio*, which in the Totonac language means, "Lord, and great lord." These men had large holes in their lower lips, in which were some stone disks painted blue, others with thin leaves of gold and, in the ears, very large holes in which were other disks with gold and stones, and they dressed and spoke very differently from the Mexicans who were usually with us. When doña Marina and Aguilar, the interpreters, heard that *Lope luze*, they did not understand it. Doña Marina asked

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10. Tezcatepuca, now commonly referred to as Tezcatlipoca, is not actually a god of hell, the inferno, or even the underworld, as Bernal Díaz represents him. Rather, he is associated with many concepts, ranging from obsidian, the night, smoke, mirrors, and the north.

in the language of Mexico if there were among them *nabuatlatos*, which are interpreters of the Mexican language, and two of the five replied, that, yes, they understood it, and they said we were welcome, that their lord sent them to find out who we were and that he would be pleased to serve men who were so courageous, because it seems they already knew about the incidents in Tabasco and Potonchan. They said more, that they would have come to see us before if not for fear of the people of Culua, who usually were there with us. *Culua* means Mexicans, which is as if we might say Cordobans or Sevillans, and they said they found out that three days ago the Mexicans had fled to their lands. From one discussion to another, Cortés learned that Montezuma had enemies and opponents, which pleased him, and with gifts and friendly words, he took his leave of those five messengers and told them to tell their lord he would come to see them very soon. From then on, we called the Indians from there the *lopes luzios*.

Let us move on to talk about the fact that there were always a lot of mosquitoes in those sandy beaches, both the long-legged ones and the small ones they call *xexenes*, which are worse than the large ones, and we could not sleep because of them; there were no provisions, the cassava was beginning to run out and become very moldy and dirty from the cockroaches, and some of the soldiers, especially the servants and friends of Diego Velázquez who used to have Indians on the island of Cuba, were longing to return to their homes. When Cortés saw how things were, he ordered us to go to the fortified town Montejo and the pilot Alaminos had seen, Quiahuiztlan, and the ships would be sheltered by the great rock I mentioned. As we were setting about the task of leaving, friends, kinsmen, and servants of Diego Velázquez asked Cortés why he wanted to make that voyage without provisions, saying there was no possibility of going on because more than thirty-five soldiers had died in our camp from wounds from the Tabasco incident and from ailments and hunger, that the country was large and the settlements full of people, and that the Indians would attack one day or another. They said it would be better for us to return to Cuba and to render an account to Diego Velázquez

of the gold traded, which was significant in quantity, and about Montezuma's great presents, the sun and silver moon, the helmet with bits of gold from mines, and all the jewels and cloth I mentioned. Cortés answered them that it was not good advice to return without seeing everything, that until now we have not been able to complain of fortune, that we should give thanks to God who has helped us in everything, and, as for those who have died, it usually happens in times of war and hardships, and it will be good to know what there is in the land, so in the meantime, unless he was much mistaken, we could eat maize and provisions that the Indians of neighboring towns had. With this response, the faction of Diego Velázquez was somewhat calmed down, but not much, and they still formed small groups, and there was talk in the camp about returning to Cuba.

## WE ORDERED THE CREATION, FOUNDING, AND SETTLING OF A TOWN

[XLII] I have said already that, in the camp, the relatives and friends of Diego Velázquez were going around agitating for us not to go forward, saying that from there, San Juan de Ulúa, we should return to the island of Cuba. It seems Cortés had already begun discussions with Alonso Hernández Puertocarrero, with Pedro de Alvarado and his four brothers, Jorge, Gonzalo, Gómez and Juan, all Alvarados, with Cristóbal de Olid, Alonso de Ávila, Juan de Escalante, Francisco de Lugo, and me, as well as with other gentlemen and captains, to the effect that we should request him as captain. Francisco de Montejo understood well what was going on and was looking out for what was best for himself. One night after midnight, Alonso Hernández Puertocarrero, Juan de Escalante, and Francisco de Lugo, to whom I was somewhat related and who was from my part of the country, came to my hut and said to me, “Ah, señor Bernal Díaz del Castillo, come out with your arms to patrol, for we are going to accompany Cortés as he makes the rounds.” When I was away from the hut, they said, “Look here, sir, keep secret for awhile what we’re going to tell you. It’s a serious matter, and the companions in your shelter who are of Diego Velázquez’s party don’t know about it.” What they discussed with me was, “Does it seem right to you, sir, that Hernando Cortés has been deceiving us all, proclaiming in Cuba that he was coming to settle, but we’re now told he doesn’t have the authority to do so, but only to trade, and they want us to

return to Santiago de Cuba with all the gold that's been collected, and we'll be left ruined, and Diego Velázquez will take the gold like the other time? Look, sir, you've now come here three times, including this one, using your own assets, going into debt, risking your life so many times with so many wounds. Let's explain to you, sir, why things can't continue this way. There are many of us gentlemen who believe that we're your friends and that this land should be settled in the name of His Majesty and Hernando Cortés in his royal name, while we await the possibility of making this fact known in Castile to our king and lord. Make sure, sir, to cast your vote so that we unanimously elect Cortés as captain, because doing so will serve God and our lord the king." I answered that going to Cuba would not be a good decision, that it would be good to settle the land and that we should elect Cortés general and *justicia mayor*<sup>1</sup> until His Majesty ordered otherwise. With this agreement going from soldier to soldier, the relatives and friends of Diego Velázquez, who were many more than we were, learned of it. With somewhat insolent words, they asked Cortés why he was planning tricks to stay in this land instead of going to give an account to the man who sent him as captain, because Diego Velázquez would not approve of what he was doing. They said we should embark soon and not have any more deceptions and going around in secret with the soldiers, for we had no provisions, no people, no possibility of settling.

Cortés replied without showing anger and said that he approved, that he would not go against the instructions and memoranda he had from Diego Velázquez, and he immediately had it proclaimed that the next day all of us would embark, each on the ship in which he had come. Those of us who had been in on the agreement replied to him that it was not good to keep us deceived in this

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1. The *justicia mayor* was the chief administrator of justice in the domain of his jurisdiction with broad responsibility and authority for appointing other administrators of justice and judges. Once the title is confirmed by the regent the individual retains it for life, even if he is relieved of his responsibilities.

way, that in Cuba he had proclaimed he was coming to settle, but now he is coming to trade. We challenged him on behalf of Our Lord God and His Majesty to settle immediately and do nothing else, because settling was a very great good and service to God and His Majesty. We said many other well-expressed things about the issue, arguing that the natives would not let us disembark another time as they had now, that once this land was settled, soldiers from all the islands would come to help us, that Diego Velázquez had ruined us by publicly proclaiming that he had decrees from His Majesty to settle when the opposite was true, that we wanted to settle and that whoever wanted to return to Cuba could do so. So Cortés accepted, although he made it look as if he took much convincing. As the saying goes, you are begging me but I want it. He did so on condition that we make him *justicia mayor* and captain general and, worst of all, that we concede to giving him a fifth of whatever gold should be acquired, after having taken out the royal fifth. We then gave him more than sufficient power before a notary of the king, Diego de Godoy, for all that was said above. We then ordered the creation, founding, and settling of a town, named *Villa Rica de la Veracruz*, because we arrived on Holy Thursday and disembarked on Holy Saturday, and “rica” for that gentleman who I said previously came up to Cortés and told him to look at the rich lands and he would know how to conduct himself, and what he meant was that Cortés should be captain general. His name was Alonso Hernández de Puertocarrero.

Let us return to our account. The town founded, we named *alcaldes* and *regidores*.<sup>2</sup> The first *alcaldes* were Alonso Hernández Puertocarrero and Francisco de Montejo, and it was because Montejo was not getting along well with Cortés that Cortés, to put him among the higher offices, ordered that he be named *alcalde*. The *regidores* I will not record because naming a few of them is useless, but I will say that the pillory was put in the plaza and a gallows outside the town. We named Pedro de Alvarado

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2. A *regidor* was a member of a municipal council.

captain of expeditions;<sup>3</sup> *maestre de campo* went to Cristóbal de Olid; chief constable to Juan de Escalante; treasurer Gonzalo Mejía; accountant Alonso de Ávila; standard-bearer, to somebody Corral, because Villarroel, who had been standard-bearer, had, I do not know how, made Cortés angry over an Indian woman of Cuba, and he took the post away from him; and the constable of the camp to Ochoa, a Basque, and to Alonso Romero.

They will ask how it is that, in this account, I am not naming the captain Gonzalo de Sandoval, being such a famous captain who was second to Cortés and about whom the emperor our lord heard so much. My answer to this is that he was a youth then, so not much was made of him and of other valiant captains until we saw him come into his own to such a degree that Cortés and all of us soldiers held him in as great esteem as we did Cortés himself. I have to leave the account here, but the chronicler Gómara says that he knows what he writes because it was told to him, but this that I tell here happened just that way, and in all the rest of what he writes they did not give him a proper account for what he says. And I notice something else: So that what he writes may appear to be true, he puts everything in a given case very much backward, for all the good rhetoric he uses in writing.

[XLIII] When those who favored Diego Velázquez saw that we had, in fact, elected Cortés captain general and chief *alcalde*, named the town, the *alcaldes*, and *regidores*, and named Pedro de Alvarado as captain, the chief constable, the *maestre de campo*, and all the others I have said, they were so angry and enraged that they began to create factions and harmful tales, even saying ugly words against Cortés and those of us who had elected him. They said also that, because all the captains and soldiers who were there were not informed of the election, it was not done properly, that Diego Velázquez did not give Cortés such powers, only power to

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3. The term is *entrada*, which has the sense of entering a territory previously unclaimed by Spaniards, doing so for the Spanish Crown to lay claim to it not only for the Crown but also, with confirmation from the Crown, by shares for those who undertake the *entrada*.

trade, and we in Cortés's party had our hands full seeing that they should not become more shameless and we would come to arms. Then Cortés secretly informed Juan de Escalante that we should ask him, Cortés, to make public the instructions he carried from Diego Velázquez, which he then took from his breast and gave to a notary of the king to read. Because Velázquez said in the orders, "When you have traded as much as you can, return," and it was signed by him and endorsed by his secretary, Andrés de Duero, we asked Cortés to order that those orders, and the proclamation given on the island of Cuba, be added to the authority we had already given him; we did this so His Majesty in Spain would know that everything we did was in his royal service and so they could not bring false accusations against us. It was a very good idea because of the way we were being treated in Castile by don Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca, bishop of Burgos and archbishop of Rosano,<sup>4</sup> who we knew for very certain was trying to destroy us.

This done, the same friends and servants of Diego Velázquez again said that electing Cortés without them was not proper, and they did not want to be under his rule but would return immediately to the island of Cuba. Cortés replied that he would not detain anyone by force, and if anyone wanted to ask his permission, he would give it with goodwill, even if he should be left by himself. He calmed some of them down with this, except Juan Velázquez de León, who was a relative of Diego Velázquez, Diego de Ordaz, Escobar, whom we called el Paje, because he had been a servant of Diego Velázquez, Pedro Escudero, and other

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4. Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca, bishop of Burgos and archbishop of Rosano (1451–1524), was one of the most powerful and effective of the Spanish Crown's bureaucrats. He organized the Casa de Contración (House of Trade), which was responsible for collecting the royal fifth, and established the Royal and Supreme Council of the Indies from a subcommittee of the Casa, and that council came to oversee all activities of financial importance in the Americas and Asia. His position gave him significant influence over the exploration and conquest of the Americas. Diego Velázquez had attempted to establish a formal relationship with him through marriage to a niece, which never occurred.

friends of Diego Velázquez. It came to such a pass that some would not obey Cortés at all, and, with our backing, Cortés decided to arrest Juan Velázquez de León, Diego de Ordaz, Escobar el Paje, Pedro Escudero, and others I no longer remember. The orders were given to put them in chains and keep them under guard for several days. As for the rest, we made sure they created no disturbance.

Here the chronicler Gómara in his history writes completely the opposite of what happened, and anyone who looks at his history will see great exaggeration. If they had informed him well, he would say what happened.

[XLIV] Once we had arranged and ordered things as I have said, we agreed that Pedro de Alvarado would go to some interior towns we had been told were close by to see what land it was and to bring back maize and provisions, because in the camp we were in dire need. He took a hundred soldiers, including fifteen crossbowmen and six escopeteros, and more than half of those soldiers were of Diego Velázquez's party. All of us in Cortés's faction stayed with Cortés until the situation was more settled for fear there would be more disturbances and harmful talk and they would rise against him. So Alvarado went to some small towns that were subject to another town called Cotastan, where the language of Culua was spoken, and this name Culua in that land is as if the Romans were speaking of their allies. Thus Culua is the language of all those allied with Mexico and Montezuma, and so throughout this land, when one says Culua, one speaks of vassals and subjects of Mexico, and so it is to be understood. When Pedro de Alvarado arrived at the towns, all had been deserted that very day, and he found men and boys sacrificed in some cus, the walls and altars of their idols covered with blood, and the hearts lying before the idols. They also found the stones on which they had sacrificed the men and boys and the flint knives with which they had opened their chests to pull out their hearts. Pedro de Alvarado said they had found most of those dead bodies without arms and legs and that other Indians said they had taken them to eat, and our soldiers were astonished at such great cruelties. Let us stop

talking about such sacrifices because from there on, in each town, we found nothing but that, and let us return to Pedro de Alvarado, who found those towns well stocked with food and deserted by the Indians that very day, and he could find only two Indians to carry maize for him. So each soldier had to load himself with hens and vegetables. Pedro de Alvarado returned to the camp without doing them any more damage, although he could easily have done so, but Cortés had ordered that it not be as it was in Cozumel.

In the camp we were pleased with the small amount of provisions he brought, because all ills and hardships disappear with food. Here is where the chronicler Gómara says Cortés went inland with four hundred soldiers. He was not well informed, because the first one who went is the one I named here, none other. Let us return to our discussion. As Cortés was very diligent in everything, he tried to establish friendship with the party of Diego Velázquez. By giving gifts of the gold we had collected to some, a gift that melts even stone, and to others, promises, he attracted them to himself; and he released them from the shackles they were in, except for Juan Velázquez de León and Diego de Ordaz, who were in chains in the ships, although a few days later he also released them from the shackles and made very good and true friends of them, and all with gold, which pacifies. With everything now arranged, we decided to go to the fortified town, Quiahuiztlan, and the ships would go to the rock and port opposite that town, about a league distant. Going along the coast, I remember a large fish being killed, which the sea had cast up onto the shore, and we arrived at a river where Veracruz is now settled, and the water was somewhat deep. We crossed in some rough-hewn canoes, which were like troughs, as well as by swimming and on rafts. At that part of the river were some towns subject to the great town of Cempoala, from where the five Indians of the golden lip ornaments came, the ones we called *lopelucios*, who I said came to the sandy beach as messengers to Cortés. We found the houses of idols, the places of sacrifice, the spilt blood, the incense they used for perfuming, other things relating to idols, stones they used for sacrifices, parrot feathers, and many books of their paper folded like Castilian

handkerchiefs, but we did not find a single Indian because they had already fled, for they had not seen men like us, nor horses, and they were afraid.

We spent the night there, and we had nothing for supper. The next day we left the coast and walked inland toward the west, but we did not know the road, and we encountered some large fields they call savannas where some deer were grazing. Pedro de Alvarado charged with his sorrel mare after a deer and gave it a lance wound, but it went into the woods and we could not catch it. Just then, we saw twelve Indians coming who were inhabitants of those settlements where we had slept. They were coming from speaking to their cacique, and they brought hens and maize bread, and they said to Cortés, through our interpreters, that their lord sent those hens to eat and asked that we come to his town, which they signaled was a day's walk, one sun, from there. Cortés thanked and spoke friendly words to them, and we proceeded on and slept in another small town that had also made many sacrifices. Because you will be tired of hearing of so many Indian men and women we found sacrificed in all the towns and roads we encountered, I will continue without saying what was in them, and I will talk instead about how they gave us dinner in that small town, and we learned that the road to Quiahuiztlan passed through Cempoala.

[XLV] Having spent the night in that small town where the twelve Indians of whom I have spoken lodged us, and after becoming well informed about the road we had to take to go to the town at the fortified rock, very early in the morning we sent six of the Indians as messengers to let the caciques of Cempoala know that we were coming to their town and that they should give their approval. The other six Indians stayed behind to guide us. Cortés ordered that the guns, escopeteros, and crossbowmen be very much in order, that scouts stay on the lookout in the field and that the horsemen and all the rest be on the alert. We went along in this way until we were a league from the town, and when we were close to it, twenty Indian chieftains came out to greet us on behalf of their cacique, and they brought some native red pinecones, very fragrant, which they gave with great affection

to Cortés and the horsemen; they told him that their lord was waiting for us in his lodgings, but because he was very fat and heavy, he could not come out to receive us. Cortés thanked them, and they continued on. As we were coming in among the houses, we became aware of a town larger than any we had seen thus far, and we were much amazed by it. It was so lush that it seemed like a garden and so populated with men and women—the streets filled with them as they came out to see us—that we praised God greatly that we had discovered such lands. Our scouts, who were on horseback, had arrived at the great plaza and courtyards where the buildings were, and it seemed as if a few days before they had been whitewashed and polished, which the Indians knew how to do very well. One of the men on horseback thought that the shining white was silver, and he came at full speed to tell Cortés that they had walls of silver, but doña Marina and Aguilar said it would be plaster or lime, and we laughed heartily at his silver and his frenzy, and afterward we always said to him that everything white looked like silver to him.

Let us leave the jest and talk about how we arrived at the lodgings. The fat cacique came out to receive us in the plaza, and I will call him that because he was very fat. He made a great bow to Cortés and perfumed him with incense as is their custom, and Cortés embraced him. They lodged us there in some very good and large buildings, where we all fit. They gave us something to eat and brought some baskets of plums, which were plentiful because they were in season, and bread of maize. As we had arrived hungry and we had not seen so much food as this, we named that town Villaviciosa,<sup>5</sup> and I will call it Seville. Cortés ordered that no soldier should annoy the townspeople nor leave that plaza, and when the fat cacique got word that we had eaten, he sent a message to Cortés that he would like to come to see him. He came with a good many Indian chieftains, all of them wearing large gold lip rings and rich cloaks. Cortés also went out from the building to

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5. Literally, “lush or luxuriant town.”

meet him. With a very great show of affection and friendly words, he embraced him again. Then the fat cacique ordered brought a present of jewels, gold, and cloaks he had readied, and although it was not much and was of little value, he said to Cortés, “*Lope luzio, lope luzio*, accept this with goodwill,” and if he had more, he would have given it to him. I have already said that in the Totonac language they mean, “Lord and great lord” when they say *lope luzio*, etc. Cortés said to the fat cacique, through doña Marina and Aguilar, that he would pay him in good works, that whatever he needed they should tell Cortés, and he would do it for them because we are vassals of so great a lord, the emperor don Carlos, who commands many kingdoms and principalities and sent us to right wrongs, punish the wicked, and command them not to sacrifice more souls. He explained many other things concerning our holy faith.

When the fat cacique heard that, sighing, he complained vigorously of the great Montezuma and his governors, saying that just a short time ago, Montezuma had subjugated him and carried away all his golden jewels, and he has them so oppressed that they dare not do anything but what he orders because he is lord of great cities and lands, vassals and armies of war. Because Cortés realized that at present he could not deal with their complaints, he said he would do something to see that those wrongs were righted, but, because he was going to see his *acales*, the word for “ships” in the Indian language, and set up his residence and headquarters in the town of Quiahuiztlan, he could not look into their complaints until he had established his headquarters. The fat cacique gave a considered answer. The next morning we left Cempoala, and they had readied, to bear loads, more than four hundred Indians, called tamemes in those parts, who carry two *arrobas*<sup>6</sup> on their shoulders as far as five leagues. When we saw so many bearers we were delighted, because those of us who did not have Indians from Cuba always carried our packs on our shoulders, and only

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6. An *arroba* is a measure of weight equal to about twenty-five pounds.

about five or six of them came in the fleet, not as many as Gómara says. Doña Marina and Aguilar told us that when these lands are at peace, the caciques are obliged, without waiting to be asked, to offer tamemes to carry loads. From then on, wherever we went we asked for Indians to carry the loads.

Cortés having taken his leave of the fat cacique, the next day we went on our way and slept at a small deserted town near Quiahuiztlan. The people of Cempoala brought us supper. Here is where the chronicler Gómara says Cortés was in Cempoala many days and arranged the rebellion and league against Montezuma. He was not well informed because, as I have said, we left there the next morning.

[XLVI] The next day at ten, we arrived at the fortified town of Quiahuiztlan, which was among large rocks and very high hills, and if there were resistance, it would be difficult to take. Proceeding in good order and believing there might be war, the artillery went ahead and all of us went up into that stronghold in such a way that, if something were to happen, we were prepared for it. At that time, Alonso de Ávila was captain. As he was arrogant and had a bad disposition, he gave a soldier named Hernando Alonso de Villanueva a blow to his arm with his lance because he was not proceeding in good order, which maimed him, and afterward he was called Hernando Alonso de Villanueva el Manquillo. They will say that I always digress to tell old stories. Let us leave it and say that, going through half that town we found no Indians whatsoever with whom to speak, which surprised us. They had fled from fear that same day when they saw us climbing up to their houses. We saw, standing at the highest point of the stronghold in a plaza next to which they had the cus and large houses of their idols, fifteen Indians with fine cloaks, each with a clay brazier holding some of their incense. They came to where Cortés was and, with incense, perfumed him and those of us soldiers near him, and with deep bows, they told Cortés that he should pardon them for not having come out to see us, that we were very welcome and should rest. They said they had stayed away until they could see what we were because they feared us and the horses,

but they would order the rest of the Indians to return that night to the town. Cortés showed them great affection and told them many things about our holy faith, as we customarily did wherever we went. He told them that we were vassals of our emperor don Carlos, and he gave them some green beads and other little things from Castile. They then brought hens and maize bread.

In the midst of these discussions, they came to tell Cortés that the fat cacique from Cempoala was coming in a litter on the shoulders of many Indian chieftains. When the cacique arrived, he spoke with Cortés, together with the cacique and other chieftains of that town, complaining about Montezuma. He talked about Montezuma's great powers and spoke with such tears and sighs that Cortés and those of us who were present took pity. In addition to telling how Montezuma had subjugated them, he said that each year they demanded many of their sons and daughters for sacrifice and others to serve in their houses and fields. He had many other complaints, so many that I do not remember them anymore. He also said that Montezuma's tax collectors took their wives and daughters from them, if they were beautiful, and raped them. They did the same thing throughout the entire land of the Totonac language, more than thirty towns. Cortés consoled them as much as he could through our interpreters, saying he would help them in every way he could and would put an end to those thefts and wrongs and that the emperor our lord had sent him to these parts for that purpose. They should not have any worries at all, he said, for they would soon see what we would do about it. They took some comfort from these words, but their hearts were not put to rest because of their great fear of the Mexicans.

In the midst of these discussions, some Indians from the same town came in great haste to tell all the caciques speaking with Cortés that five Mexicans, Montezuma's tax collectors, were coming, and when the caciques heard this, their faces went pale and they trembled with fear. They left Cortés alone and went to receive the Mexicans. They promptly decorated a hall with branches, prepared something to eat, and made a lot of chocolate for them, that being their best drink. When the five Indians entered the

town, they came to where we were, because that is where the house of the cacique and our lodgings were, and they passed with such self-assurance and arrogance that they went ahead without speaking to Cortés or any of us. They wore rich embroidered cloaks and loincloths of the same kind (which is the way people wore trousers at that time), and their sleek hair was gathered up as though tied on top of the head, and each had some flowers, smelling them, and other Indians, like servants, carried flyswatters for them. Each had a staff with a hook in his hand, accompanied by many chieftains of other towns of the Totonac language, who did not leave them until taking them to their lodgings and, with great ceremony, giving them something to eat. After they had eaten, they had the fat cacique and the rest of the chieftains summoned and reproached them for having lodged us in their towns, and they asked them what business they had now seeing and speaking to us; their lord Montezuma would not be pleased with that because they should not have sheltered us nor given us gold jewels without his permission. They threatened the fat cacique and other chieftains, saying that they had to supply twenty Indian men and women to appease the gods for the crime they had committed. As this was going on, Cortés asked doña Marina and Jerónimo de Aguilar, our interpreters, why the caciques were agitated when those Indians came and who they were. Doña Marina, who understood very well, told him what had happened. Cortés immediately summoned the fat cacique and all the other chieftains and asked them who those Indians were that they were making such a feast for them. They answered that those Indians were the tax collectors of the great Montezuma, who had come to find out why they had received us without permission of their lord. They were now demanding twenty Indian men and women to sacrifice to their god Huichilobos so that he would give them victory against us because, they said, Montezuma says he wants to take us to be his slaves. Cortés consoled them and said they should not be afraid, that he was there with all of us and would punish the Mexicans.

[XLVII] When Cortés understood what the caciques were saying, he told them he had already said that the king, our lord,

had ordered him to punish evildoers and not to permit sacrifices or robberies, and because those tax collectors came with such a demand, he ordered them immediately bound and kept as prisoners until their lord Montezuma knew the reason why they were coming to rob, to take the Totonac women and children for slaves, and to do other violence. When the caciques heard this, they were frightened by such boldness, ordering that the great Montezuma's messengers be mistreated. They were afraid and did not dare do it. Cortés insisted that they immediately put the tax collectors in shackles, and they did so in such a way that they put them on long poles with collars, as is their custom, so they could not get away from them. One of the tax collectors did not allow himself to be tied, and they beat him. Cortés also ordered all the caciques to give no more tribute or obedience to Montezuma and to announce this in all the towns of their allies and friends. He also ordered that, if there were more such tax collectors in other towns, they should let him know, and he would send for them. That news spread throughout the province because the fat cacique immediately sent messengers to make it known, and the chieftains who had come in the company of those tax collectors also announced it, each immediately breaking away to go to his town to give notice as soon as they saw the Mexicans taken prisoner. Because such marvelous and important things were happening, they said that human men would not have dared to do this, but teules, which is what they called the idols they worshipped. For this reason, from that time on, they called us teules, which is, as I have said, either gods or demons, and when I say teules in this account, where our people are mentioned, you know that it is said of us.

Let us return to talking about the prisoners, whom they wanted to sacrifice, on the advice of all the caciques, so that none of them could inform Mexico. When Cortés heard about it, he ordered them not to kill the prisoners, saying he wanted to keep them, and he put some of our soldiers to watch them. At midnight Cortés sent for those soldiers who were guarding the prisoners and said, "See that you free the two who seem to be the quickest

of mind, and do it in such a way that the Indians of these towns do not detect it," and he ordered them to bring the two Indians to his lodging. When the Indians were before him, he asked them through our interpreters why they were prisoners and from what land they came, pretending he did not know who they were. They replied that the caciques of Cempoala and that town, with the assistance of their followers and ours, had seized them. Cortés replied that he knew nothing of this, and it grieved him, and he ordered that they be given something to eat. He said many friendly things to them and told them to go immediately to tell their lord Montezuma that we all were his great friends and servants, that he had taken off their shackles so nothing else bad would happen to them, that he had the caciques who had taken them prisoner scolded, and that any service of his they might need, he would most willingly provide. They should also say he would order that their three companion Indians, who were being held in fetters, be freed and protected, and that they should go very quickly so they would not be seized again and killed. The two prisoners replied that they were in his debt, but they were afraid they would fall back into the hands of the Totonacs because they had, of necessity, to pass through their lands. Cortés then ordered six seamen to carry the Indians that night in a small boat to about four leagues from there, letting them out in a safe place beyond the boundaries of Cempoala.

When dawn came and the caciques of that town and the fat cacique found two prisoners missing, they wanted very much in earnest to sacrifice the other three, had Cortés not taken them from their custody. Cortés pretended to be angry because the other two had fled, and he ordered a chain brought from the ship, bound the other three with it and ordered them to be carried to the ships, saying he wanted to guard them himself because such little attention to security had been shown with respect to the others. When they had taken the Indians to the ships, he ordered that their chains be removed and, with kind words, he told them he would send them right away to Mexico. Then, all the caciques of Cempoala, of that town and the others of the

Totonac language who were there together, asked Cortés what would become of them, for certainly the powers of Mexico, of the great Montezuma, would come after them, and they would not be able to avoid being killed and destroyed. Cortés, looking cheerful, said that he and his brothers would defend them, and we would kill anyone who bothered them. Then all those towns and caciques promised they would be with us in everything we commanded them to do, and they would assemble their forces against Montezuma and all his allies. Here they pledged obedience to His Majesty before Diego de Godoy, the notary, and they sent to tell the rest of the towns of that province everything that had happened. Because they now gave no tribute at all and the tax collectors did not appear, there was no limit to their happiness over having been freed from that domination. This is what happened and not the account the chronicler Gómara gave of it.

[XLVIII] Having established an alliance and friendship with more than thirty mountain towns called the Totonacs, which at that time rebelled against the great Montezuma, pledged obedience to His Majesty, and said they would serve us, we very quickly decided, with that support, to found the Villa Rica de la Veracruz on some plains half a league from the fortresslike town called Quiahuiztlan, with a street layout, a church, town square, dockyard, and everything suitable to a town; and we built a fortress, hurrying as fast as we could from starting the foundations to finishing it high enough to cover with timber, making recesses, round towers, and outer defensive walls. Cortés was the first to carry earth and stones on his shoulders and dig the foundations, and all the captains and soldiers constantly worked at it, laboring to finish it quickly, some on the foundations, others in making the mud walls, others in carrying water, others in the lime kilns making bricks and tiles, and some searching for food. Others worked on the wood, blacksmiths on the nails, because we had two blacksmiths, and in this way all of us, from the highest to the lowest, kept at it continually, including the Indians who helped us, so the church and houses and most of the fortress were finished quickly.

In the midst of this, it seems that the great Montezuma received word in Mexico about how they had imprisoned his tax collectors and stopped obeying him and how the Totonac towns had rebelled. He was furious at Cortés and all of us, and he ordered a large army of warriors to come to attack the towns that had rebelled and not leave a single person in them alive, and he prepared to come against us with a great force of captaincies. At that instant, the two Indian prisoners freed by Cortés arrived. When Montezuma heard that Cortés had let the prisoners go and sent them to Mexico and received the promises Cortés had sent him, Our Lord God soothed his anger, and he decided to send to ask about us and what we wanted. For this purpose, he sent two youths who were nephews of his, great caciques, in the charge of four old men. With them he sent a gift of gold and cloaks and a message of thanks to Cortés for freeing his servants. On the other hand, he sent a complaint that, with our help, those towns had dared to commit such treason against him, stopped giving him tribute, and renounced their obedience to him. He also said that now, because he was certain we are the ones his ancestors said would come to his lands, and that we must be of his lineage, he did not immediately send to destroy the traitors because we were in their houses. With passing time, however, they would not be able to boast of those treasons.

Cortés accepted the gold and clothes, which were worth more than two thousand pesos. He embraced them and said by way of apology that he and all of us were very much friends of their lord Montezuma, and for that reason he was watching over his three tax collectors. He immediately ordered them brought from the ships and delivered them well dressed and well treated. Cortés also lodged a major complaint with Montezuma, describing how his governor, Pitalpitoque, left the camp one night without saying anything to them. He said that was not acceptable, and he believes and feels certain that the lord Montezuma would not have ordered him to commit such a villainous act. For that reason, he said, we came to those towns where we were, and we have received honor from them. He asked Montezuma, as a kindness, to forgive them

for the disrespect they showed. As for their refusing him tribute, they cannot serve two lords, and in the days we have been there, they have served us in the name of our king and lord. Cortés also said that he and all of us, his brothers, would soon go to see and serve Montezuma, and once we were there, we would attend to everything Montezuma might command. After these and many other discussions, he ordered that blue rhinestones and green beads be given to those youths, who were great caciques, and to the four old men in charge of them, men of importance. He honored them, and there before them, because there were large meadows, Cortés ordered Pedro de Alvarado, whose sorrel mare was very responsive to the reins and a good charger, and other horsemen to gallop and skirmish, which the visitors were delighted to see. Taking their leave, very content with Cortés and all of us, they went to their Mexico.

At that time Cortés's horse died, and he bought or they gave him another named el Arriero, a dark chestnut, which belonged to Ortiz the musician and Bartolomé García the miner. It was one of the best horses that came in the fleet. Let us stop talking about this, and I will describe how those towns of the mountains, our friends, and the town of Cempoala had previously been very fearful of the Mexicans, believing that the great Montezuma was going to send his large armies of warriors to destroy them, but when they saw those relatives of the great Montezuma, who came with the presents I mentioned, offer themselves as servants to Cortés and all of us, they were astonished. Some of the caciques said to others that we certainly were teules because Montezuma was afraid of us, for he sent us gold as presents. If earlier we had a great reputation for being strong and courageous, from then on it was much more.

[XLIX] After the Mexican messengers took their leave, the fat cacique came with many other chieftains, our friends, to tell Cortés that he should go right away to a town called Cingapacinga, two days' walk from Cempoala, about eight or nine leagues, because many Indian warriors of the Culuas, or Mexicans, had come there to destroy their fields and outlying settlements, assaulting

their vassals and otherwise treating them badly. Cortés believed it because they spoke with such emotion. Because those complaints were delivered in such earnest and he had promised them he would help them and would kill the Culuas or any other Indians who offended them, Cortés did not know what to say except that he would go willingly or send some of our soldiers to drive them out. As he was thinking about it, he said, laughing, to certain companions who were with him, "You know, gentlemen, it seems to me that in all these lands we're already famous for our strength and courage, and after what these people saw with respect to Montezuma's tax collectors, they consider us gods, or something like their idols. I've thought that, to make them believe one of us is enough to rout those warrior Indians they say are in the fortified town, their enemies, let's send old Heredia," who was Basque, ugly, with a large beard, a half-scarred face and one eye, lame in one leg, and he was an escopetero. Cortés sent for Heredia and said to him, "Go with these caciques to the river (which was a quarter league from there), and when you arrive, stop to drink and wash your hands and fire a shot with your escopeta, and I'll send someone for you. I'm doing this so that they'll believe we are gods, or have that name and reputation they've given us, and because you are so ill featured, they'll believe you're an idol." Heredia did as he was ordered because he was a very experienced and wise man who had been a soldier in Italy.

Then Cortés sent for the fat cacique and the rest of the chieftains awaiting support and help, and he said to them, "I'm sending my brother here to go with you to kill and throw out all of the Culuas from that town and bring me as prisoners all those who refuse to go." The caciques were elated when they heard this, but they did not know whether to believe it or not. They looked at Cortés to see if any change came across his face, and they believed he told them the truth. Old Heredia went with them carrying his escopeta and was shooting into the air through the forests so that the Indians would hear and see him. The caciques sent ahead to the other towns to let them know they were coming with a teul to kill the Mexicans who were in Cingapacinga. I put this

here as a piece of humor so that you will see Cortés's craftiness. When he believed Heredia must have arrived at the river that he had told him about, he immediately sent for him, and when the caciques and old Heredia had returned, Cortés told the caciques that, because of the goodwill he had toward them, he would go in person, with some of his brothers, to give them that help and to see those lands and fortresses, and he told them to bring him a hundred men as tamemes right away to carry the tepuzques, which are the cannons. They came the next morning. We left that same day with four hundred soldiers, fourteen horses, and the crossbowmen and escopeteros, all of whom were ready. Certain soldiers of the Velázquez party said they did not want to go and Cortés should go with whomever he might like, but they wanted to return to Cuba.

[L] I have already said in the previous chapter that Cortés was going to a town called Cingapacinga and was bringing with him four hundred soldiers and fourteen horsemen and crossbowmen and escopeteros; and they had put on the list to go with us certain soldiers of Diego Velázquez's party. When the leaders<sup>7</sup> came to get the soldiers of Velázquez's party ready to leave right away with their arms and horses, those who had them, they replied haughtily that they did not want to go on any expedition, but instead wanted to return to the farms and estates they had left in Cuba. They said that what they had lost when Cortés took them from their homes was enough, and he had promised them at the sandy beaches that whoever might want to leave would have his permission and a ship and provisions. So seven soldiers were ready to return to Cuba. When Cortés learned this, he sent for them, and when he asked why they were doing such an ugly thing, they replied somewhat angrily that they were amazed that with so few soldiers he wanted to settle where there were known to be thousands of Indians and large settlements, that they were sick

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7. *Cuadrillero* is not just a leader but a person assigned to a small group of men to keep them together.

and fed up with going from place to place, and that they wanted to return to Cuba to their homes and estates. They told him he should give them permission immediately, as he had promised. Cortés replied gently that it was true he promised what they said, but they were not doing the right thing in deserting the flag of their captain. He then ordered them to embark without delay, and he indicated a ship and ordered that they be given cassava, a jar of oil, and other vegetables and provisions from what we had. One of those soldiers, named something Morón, citizen of the town of Bayamo, had a fine golden horse with scarified forefeet. He sold it advantageously to one Juan Ruano in exchange for some properties that Ruano had left in Cuba. When they were about to set sail, all of us, the companions, *alcaldes*, and *regidores* of our Villa Rica, went to demand that Cortés under no circumstances give permission to anyone to leave the country, for that was what was required for the service of Our Lord God and His Majesty, and anyone who requested such permission deserved the penalty of death according to the laws of the military, because such a man would be leaving his captain and flag abandoned in war and danger, especially because, as they themselves said, there were so many towns of warrior Indians. Cortés acted as though he wanted to give permission, but in the end he revoked it; they were left cheated and even put to shame. Morón had sold his horse, and Juan Ruano, who got it, would not return it. All this was ordered by Cortés, and we went on our expedition to Cingapacinga.

## THE CACIQUES AND PAPAS SAW HOW JUST WE WERE

[LI] *When Cortés and his men arrived at Cingapacinga, the people there objected to the Cempoalans coming with them because they were old enemies. They accused the Cempoalans of coming to rob their settlements, and Cortés learned that, in fact, the Cempoalans had begun robbing the Cingapacingans. Because the Cempoalans had lied to Cortés and were coming to sacrifice and rob the people of Cingapacinga, he declared that "they deserved death, and our king and lord, whose vassals we were, did not send us to these parts and lands so they could commit those evil acts, and they should be very careful that something like that did not happen again, because not a man among them would be alive." The caciques of Cempoala brought Cortés everything they had taken, and Cortés ordered them to sleep in the countryside. When the caciques and papas of that and neighboring towns, "saw how just we were . . . ,"* all pledged obedience to the Spanish king. Cortés reconciled the Cempoalans with the people of Cingapacinga, "a friendship that none of them ever broke."

We left then for Cempoala by another road and passed through two towns friendly to the people of Cingapacinga. We were resting, because the sun was very harsh and we were very tired with the weapons on our backs, when a soldier named something de Mora, a native of Ciudad Rodrigo, took two hens from a house belonging to Indians of that town. Cortés, who happened to see it, was so angry over what that soldier did in front of him, taking hens in peaceful towns, that he immediately ordered a rope put

around his neck. They were already hanging him when Pedro de Alvarado, who was next to Cortés, cut the rope with a sword, and the poor soldier was left half-dead. I wanted to include this in my account so that curious readers, and even the priests who now have charge of administering the holy sacraments and doctrines to the natives of these parts, might see that, because that soldier took two hens in a peaceful town, it nearly cost him his life, and so that they now see how they should deal with the Indians and not take their property. This soldier died later in a war in the province of Guatemala on a rugged rocky hill.

Let us return to our account. When we set out for Cempoala from those towns we left in peace, the fat cacique and other chieftains were waiting for us in some huts with food. Although they are Indians, they saw and understood that justice is holy and good and that what Cortés had told them about our coming to make right and abolish tyrannies agreed with what happened on that expedition, and they thought more highly of us than before. We slept there in those huts, and all the caciques accompanied us to the lodgings of their town. They truly did not want us to leave their land because they feared Montezuma might send his warriors against them. They told Cortés that because we were now their friends, they wanted to have us as brothers, and it would therefore be fitting for us to take their daughters and kinswomen to have children. To strengthen the friendships, they brought eight Indian women, all daughters of caciques, and gave Cortés one of those princesses, who was a niece of the fat cacique himself. They gave another, the daughter of another great cacique called Cuesco in their language, to Alonso Hernández Puertocarrero. All eight were dressed in rich native shirts and well adorned in their manner, each with a collar of gold on her neck and gold earrings in her ears. They were accompanied by other Indian women to serve them. When the fat cacique presented them, he said to Cortés, "*Tecle* (which means 'lord' in their language), these seven women are for your captains, and this one, my niece, is for you, and she is the mistress over towns and vassals." Cortés seemed happy to receive them and expressed his gratitude. But, he said, in order to take the women,

as the cacique says we should be brothers, it would be necessary that they not believe in and worship those idols, which have them deceived, and that they not sacrifice any more souls. He said that when he sees those very evil things cast down and that they are not sacrificing, we will have a much firmer brotherhood. Further, those women should become Christians before we receive them, and the people also had to be clean of sodomy, because there were many boys dressed in women's clothing who earned money in that cursed trade. Besides that, every day they sacrificed three or four or five Indians in front of us, offering their hearts to the idols, smearing their blood on the walls, cutting off their legs, arms, and muscles as butchers do in our country, and they eat them like beef that is brought from the butcheries in our country, and I even believe that they sold them retail in the *tianguetz*, which are markets. He said that when these evils are stopped, not only will we be friends but, even more, he would make them lords of other provinces. The caciques, papas, and chieftains all replied that it was not a wise idea to give up their idols and sacrifices, that their gods gave them health, good harvests, and everything they needed. As for the sodomy, they said they would oppose it so that it would not be done any more.

When Cortés and all of us heard that disrespectful response, after having seen such cruelties and obscenities, which I have talked about at other times, we could not bear it. Then Cortés spoke to us about it and reminded us of some excellent and very holy doctrines. He asked how we could do any good if we did not, for the honor of God, make them stop sacrificing to their idols, and, although it might cost us our lives, the idols had to be cast down that very day. He said we should be ready to fight should they come to defend their idols from destruction. Because we were all ready to fight with our arms, as we generally were, Cortés told the caciques that the idols had to be cast down. When they understood that, the fat cacique immediately ordered his other captains to get many warriors ready to defend them. When we were about to ascend a high *cu*, their house of worship, which had many stairs, and I do not remember any more how many there

were, the fat cacique came with other chieftains, very worked up and angry, and they asked Cortés why we wanted to destroy the idols and said that if we dishonored their gods or took those gods away from them, all the people would perish, and we would perish with them. Cortés replied very angrily that he had told them many times not to sacrifice to those evil figures so the idols would not deceive them anymore, and because of this, we were coming to take the idols away from there. He told them to get rid of the idols right away, and if they did not, we would cast them down the stairs ourselves. He told them we would not consider them friends, but mortal enemies, because he had given them good advice but they did not accept it. Further, because he saw that their captaincies had come armed as warriors, he was furious with them and said they would pay for it by losing their lives. When they heard Cortés making those threats, and our interpreter doña Marina knew very well how to explain it to them and even threatened them with the forces of Montezuma who were lying in wait for them every day, they said, out of fear, that they were not worthy of approaching their gods and that if we wanted to cast them down, it would not be with their consent. We could cast them down, they said, or do whatever we wanted with them. They had just said that when more than fifty of us soldiers ascended and cast down those idols, and they came rolling down in pieces. They were like terrifying dragons, as large as calves, and other figures like half men and half large dogs, evil in appearance. When the caciques and papas saw them thus in pieces, they were crying and covered their eyes, and in their Totonac language they asked the idols to pardon them, saying it was no longer in their hands, nor were they to blame, but those teules who cast you down, and they said that they did not attack us from fear of the Mexicans. When that happened, the captaincies of Indian warriors began to attack us with arrows, so we put our hands on the fat cacique, six papas, and other chieftains, and Cortés told them that if they engaged in any warlike rudeness, all of them would be killed. The fat cacique immediately ordered his people to get away from us and not to attack. When Cortés saw them calmed down he made

a speech, about which I will talk further on, and so everything quieted down.

This expedition to Cingapacinga was the first one Cortés made into New Spain, and it was very useful, unlike what the chronicler Gómara says, which is that we killed, seized, and destroyed many thousands of men in that expedition. Curious people who might read this will see how much one story differs from the other; no matter how good his writing style may be in his chronicle, nothing happened as he says.

[LII] When the caciques, papas, and the rest of the chieftains had calmed down, Cortés ordered that they take away the idols we had cast down and that broke into pieces to where they could no longer be seen and burn them. Then eight papas, who had charge of the idols, came out of a building and took the idols, carried them to the very house from which they had come out and burned them. The habit those papas wore were dark robes, like priests' cassocks, and long gowns down to the feet with something like hoods that looked like the ones canons wear, and others wore smaller hoods like the Dominicans. They wore their hair very long, to the waist, some even to their feet, and the hair was covered with caked blood and so very tangled that it could not be pulled apart. Their ears were cut to pieces, the result of sacrifices, and they reeked of brimstone, and they had another very bad odor, like dead meat. From what they said and what we came to understand, those papas were sons of the chieftains and did not have wives, but they engaged in the cursed practice of sodomy, and they fasted certain days. What I saw them eat were certain kernels or seeds of cotton when they were separating the bolls from the seeds, but they may have been eating other things I could not see.

Let us leave the papas and return to Cortés who, through our interpreters doña Marina and Jerónimo de Aguilar, was delivering an excellent talk, telling them that we would now regard them as brothers and assist them in every way we could against Montezuma and his Mexicans, and he had already sent the Mexicans an order not to attack them or demand tribute. Because they would not

have any more idols in those high cus, he would leave them a great lady, who is the mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we believe and whom we worship, so that they, too, could have her as their lady and intercessor. On this and other matters, his talk was so well presented, given the limited time he had, that there was no more to be said, and he told them so many things about our holy faith as well stated as any of the religious today can explain it, that they listened willingly. Then he ordered them to call all the Indian masons in the town and have them bring much lime in order to polish the cus, and he ordered them to remove the crusts of blood in those cus and to polish them very well. The next day the place was plastered and an altar with beautiful cloths was erected. He ordered many flowers of the kind they had in their land, very fragrant, to be brought there as well as many branches, and he ordered them to decorate with branches and to keep the area around the altar clean and swept constantly. To be in charge of it, he instructed four papas to cut their hair, which they wore long as I have said elsewhere, to wear white cloaks and take off the ones they were wearing, to keep themselves always clean, and to serve that holy image of Our Lady by sweeping and decorating with boughs. So that they would take better care of the holy image, he put one of our soldiers who was lame and old, Juan de Torres of Cordoba, to stay there as a hermit and to see that every day the papas did as he had ordered. He ordered our carpenters to make a cross and put it on a column we had recently made and whitewashed very well. The next morning, the father fray Bartolomé de Olmedo said mass at the altar, and at that time instructions were given on how the holy image of Our Lady and the holy cross should be perfumed with the native incense. They were also shown how to make candles from the native wax, and they were ordered to keep those candles always burning before the altar, because until then they had not known how to take advantage of wax.

The most important caciques of that town and others who had gathered were at the mass, and the eight Indian women, who were still under the authority of their fathers and uncles, were brought

there to become Christian. He explained to them that they could no longer sacrifice to nor worship idols, but they had to believe in Our Lord God. He instructed them in many things about our holy faith. They were baptized, and the niece of the fat cacique was named doña Catalina, and she was very ugly. They gave her to Cortés by the hand, and he appeared happy to accept her. The daughter of Cuesco, a great cacique, was given the name doña Francisca. She was very beautiful for an Indian, and Cortés gave her to Alonso Hernández Puertocarrero. I no longer remember the names of the other six, but I know that Cortés distributed them among the soldiers. After this was done, we took our leave of all the caciques and chieftains, and from there on forward they always showed goodwill to us, especially when they saw that Cortés accepted their daughters and took them with us, and with great promises from Cortés that we would help them, we went to our Villa Rica. This is what happened in the town of Cempoala, and nothing else that Gómara might have written about it, nor the other chroniclers, all of which is offensive and deceitful.

[LIII] After we had finished that campaign and the people of Cingapacinga and Cempoala remained friends, and other neighboring towns gave their allegiance to His Majesty, and the idols were destroyed, and the image of Our Lady and the holy cross put in place, and the old soldier in position as a hermit, and everything else I have mentioned, we went to the town and brought with us certain chieftains of Cempoala. We discovered a ship had come that day from the island of Cuba, and its captain was one Francisco de Saucedo, whom we called *el Pulido*,<sup>1</sup> a name we gave him because he took excessive pride in his elegant dress and polish. They said he had been butler to the admiral of Castile and was a native of Medina de Río seco. Luis Marín, a captain in the Mexican expedition, a person of great merit, also came, as well as ten soldiers. Saucedo brought a horse and Luis Marín a mare, as well as news from Cuba that the decrees to trade and settle

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1. "The Refined."

had reached Diego Velázquez from Castile. The friends of Diego Velázquez were overjoyed, especially because they learned that they had brought him a decree naming him adelantado of Cuba.

Having nothing to do in that town except finish making the fort on which we were still working, most of us soldiers told Cortés that he should leave it as it was, as a memorial, ready for roofs and floors, and we had been in that land more than three months already. We said we should go to see what kind of person the great Montezuma was and to search for our living and our fortune. We told him that, before we set out on the road, we should send our respects to His Majesty and give him an account and report of everything that had happened since we left the island of Cuba. It also came up in discussion that we should send to His Majesty all the gold we had acquired both through barter and the presents Montezuma sent us. Cortés replied that it was a good idea and he had already discussed this with certain gentlemen, and because with respect to the gold, there might be some soldiers who would want their shares if it were distributed, little would be left to send. So he put Diego de Ordaz and Francisco de Montejo, who were men of business, in charge of going from soldier to soldier among those they suspected would demand their shares of gold to say these words to them, "Gentlemen, you see that we want to make a present to His Majesty of the gold we've accumulated here, and because it's the first we send from these lands, it ought to be much more. It seems to us that all of us should serve him with our shares. We gentlemen and soldiers whose names are written here below have signed in testimony that we don't want any share of the gold, but rather we're serving His Majesty with it so that he'll grant us favors. He who wants his share won't be denied it. He who wouldn't want it, do what all of us have done, sign here." So all, to a person, signed it. This done, Alonso Hernández Puertocarrero and Francisco de Montejo were named as representatives to go to Castile, because Cortés had already given Montejo more than two thousand pesos to keep him on his side. He ordered the best ship of the entire fleet to be readied, with two pilots, one being Antón de Alaminos, who knew how to go

through the Bahama Channel because he was the first to navigate it. We also readied fifteen sailors, and Cortés gave them plenty of provisions for the trip. This done, we decided to write and make known to His Majesty everything that had happened. Cortés wrote separately, giving, as he told us, an honest report, but we did not see his letter. The town council wrote, together with ten of us soldiers who were in favor of settling the country and raised up Cortés as general, with complete truth and nothing left out of the letter, and I signed it. Besides these letters and reports, all of us captains and soldiers together wrote another letter and report. What was contained in our letter is the following:

[LIV] *This letter, addressed to “His Sacred Catholic Imperial Royal Majesty,” contained three parts. The first was a summary of what had occurred until its writing; the second was a plea to His Majesty to favor them in everything rather than the favorites of don Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca, bishop of Burgos and archbishop of Rosano, who was disposed to grant the lands to someone like Diego Velázquez, because “only four hundred fifty of us soldiers remained to serve God and his royal crown, in very great danger, among a multitude of towns and warlike people and great warriors.” The third part praised Cortés highly and requested that he be named governor. The foregoing, with a list of the gold and other goods Cortés and his company were sending to the emperor, is the content of the first of the letters normally attributed to and included among Cortés’s letters to Emperor Carlos V.*

These letters written and given to our representatives, we strongly recommended to them that they not under any circumstances enter Havana by any route nor go to a farm that Francisco de Montejo had there, at a place called the Marien, a port for ships, for fear that Diego Velázquez might come to know what was going on.

Then, with everything ready for them to embark, the Mercedarian father said mass, commending them to the Holy Spirit that it might guide them. On July 26, 1519, they left San Juan de Ulúa and with good weather arrived in Havana. With

great persistence, Francisco de Montejo called on and appealed to the pilot Alaminos to guide them to his farm, saying that he was going to take on provisions of salt pork and cassava, until he got him to do what he wanted. He went and anchored at his farm, because Puertocarrero was very sick, and he ignored him. The night they arrived, they sent a sailor from the ship with letters and warnings for Diego Velázquez, and we learned that Montejo had ordered him to go with those letters. The sailor went quickly through the island of Cuba, from town to town, making public all I have said, until Diego Velázquez learned of it.

[LV] When Diego Velázquez, governor of Cuba, learned the news from the letters secretly sent to him—and it was said they were from Montejo—as well as from what was said by the sailor, who was present at everything and who had swum from the ship to carry the letters to Velázquez, and when he learned of the large gift of gold we were sending to His Majesty and found out who the ambassadors and representatives were, he broke into a ferocious sweat and said very self-pitying and cursing words against Cortés as well as his secretary Duero and the accountant Amador de Lares, who had counseled him to make Cortés captain general. Immediately he ordered two small ships, fast sailing ships, to be outfitted with all the artillery and soldiers that could be found and with two captains, Gabriel de Rojas and somebody de Guzmán. He ordered them to go to Havana and from there to the Bahama Channel, and that no matter what, they should capture the ship in which our representatives were and all the gold they were taking with them. Very quickly, just as he had ordered, they arrived at the Bahama Channel after a few days of sailing and asked the passing freight vessels whether they had seen a large ship; and they all had news of it and said it was already passing through the Bahama Channel, because they had continuous good weather. After going against the wind between the channel and Havana with those two ships, they did not meet with success and returned to Santiago de Cuba. If Diego Velázquez was miserable before he sent the ships, he was even more distressed when he saw them return in that way. Then his friends advised him to send a complaint to Spain, to the

bishop of Burgos, who was president of the Indies and was doing much for him. He also sent his complaints to the island of Santo Domingo, to the Royal Audiencia that resided there, and to the Jeronymite friars who were acting as governors there, fray Luis de Figueroa, fray Alonso de Santo Domingo, and fray Bernardino de Manzanedo, religious who generally stayed and resided in the Monastery of the Mejorada, two leagues from Medina del Campo; and he sent a ship posthaste to deliver many complaints to them about Cortés and all of us.

When they came to know of our great service, the response the Jeronymite friars gave him was that Cortés and we who were accompanying him in the wars could not be considered guilty, because above all we had turned to our king and lord, and we were sending him such a large gift that its like had not been seen for a long time in our Spain. They said this because at that time and season there was no Peru or any thought of it. Also they sent to tell him that rather than deserving punishment we deserved many favors from His Majesty. Then they sent to Diego Velázquez, to Cuba, a licentiate named Zuazo, to take his *residencia*,<sup>2</sup> or at least he had arrived at the island just a few months before, and the licentiate himself gave an account to the Jeronymite friars. When they brought that response to Diego Velázquez, he became much more distressed. And if he was very fat before, he turned skinny at that time.

Then with great zeal he ordered all the ships that could be found on the island of Cuba to be searched out and soldiers and captains readied; and he tried to send a strong fleet to seize Cortés and all of us. He put such great zeal into it that he himself went personally from town to town and from some settlements to others, and he wrote to every part of the island where he could not go to beg his friends to go on that journey. So in about eleven months or a

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2. The *residencia* was the formal examination and account of the actions and financial dealings of a person holding high office at the behest of the Crown, normally conducted at the end of an official's term, but also, under exceptional circumstances, during his term of service.

year, he gathered eighteen large and small sailing ships and more than thirteen hundred soldiers, among them captains and sailors, because as they saw him so impassioned and shamed, all the most important citizens of Cuba, his relatives as well as those who had Indians, readied themselves to serve him. He sent as captain general of the entire fleet a gentleman named Pánfilo de Narváez, a tall and muscular man, who spoke somewhat loudly, as if in a vault. He was a native of Valladolid and married on the island of Cuba to a woman, already a widow, María de Valenzuela, and he had good towns of Indians, and he was very rich. I will leave him now building and getting his fleet ready, and I will return to talking about our representatives and their good voyage; and because three or four things happened at once, I cannot continue the account and subject about which I am speaking for fear of leaving out what is most important. For this reason, do not find me guilty because I leave something and wander off the course of events to talk about what happens further on.

*Bernal Díaz reports on the activities of the representatives when they arrived at the court in Valladolid. The bishop of Burgos, president of the Royal Council of the Indies, commanded the entire court because the emperor was in Flanders. He “showed such a cross demeanor and ill will” to the representatives that many sharp words passed between them. But others, including Cortés’s father, worked on behalf of Cortés, wrote to the emperor about the gift of gold and jewels, and complained about the bishop. Finally, the king recognized the great contributions of Cortés and, from that time on, held the bishop in less esteem than before.*

[LVII] Four days after our representatives left to go before the emperor our lord, as the hearts of men are of many qualities and thoughts, it seems that some friends and servants of Diego Velázquez, named Pedro Escudero; Juan Cermeño; Gonzalo de Umbría, pilot; Bernadino de Coria, who later became a citizen of Chiapas; father of somebody Centeno; a secular priest named Juan Díaz; and certain seamen who were called Peñates, natives

of Gibrleón,<sup>3</sup> were poorly disposed toward Cortés, some because he did not give them permission to return to Cuba as he had promised them, and others because he did not give them a share of the gold we sent to Castile, the Peñates because he had them whipped in Cozumel when they stole the salt pork from one Barrio. They decided to take a small ship and use it to go to Cuba to give a message to Diego Velázquez, advising him how at Havana, on the farm of Francisco de Montejo, they could seize our representatives with the gold and the messages, for it seems that they were advised by other important people in our camp to go to that farm and had even written Diego Velázquez so he might have time to capture them. So the people I have mentioned had already loaded provisions, which were cassava bread, oil, fish, water, and such other poor items as they could get. When they were about to embark, and it was after midnight, one of them, Bernardino de Coria, seems to have repented of wanting to return to Cuba and informed Cortés of the plot.

When Cortés learned of it and found out how, how many, why they wanted to go, and who was in on the councils and the plots, he ordered that the sails, compass, and rudder be immediately removed from the ship, ordered them taken prisoner, and took their confession. They confessed the truth and denounced others who were with us, which Cortés concealed because of the conditions, which permitted nothing else. By judicial sentence he ordered that Pedro Escudero and Juan Cermeño be hanged, the feet<sup>4</sup> of the pilot Gonzalo de Umbría be cut off, the sailors Peñates whipped, each two hundred lashes, and if Father Juan Díaz were not ordained, he would also have punished him, but he did inspire some fear in him. I remember that when Cortés signed that sentence, he said with great sighs and emotion: “Oh, that

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3. Gibrleón is a town in the Spanish province of Andalusia, not far from the sea; not to be confused with Gibraltar.

4. Further on, Bernal Díaz makes clear that only the pilot's toes were cut off.

I might not know how to write, so as not to sign the deaths of men!" And it seems to me that this feeling is very common among judges who sentence people to death, and they took the quotation from that cruel Nero in the time he showed signs of being a good emperor.

When this sentence was carried out, Cortés went immediately at breakneck speed to Cempoala, which is five leagues from the town, and ordered two hundred of us soldiers and all the horsemen to follow him right away. I remember that Pedro de Alvarado, who three days earlier Cortés had sent with another two hundred soldiers through the towns of the sierra to get things to eat because in our town we had great need of supplies, was also ordered to go to Cempoala so that we could make our arrangements there for our journey to Mexico. So Pedro de Alvarado was not present when the justice of which I have spoken was done.

[LVIII] In Cempoala, during various conversations with Cortés about matters of war and the road that lay before us, those of us who were his friends advised him—but others had opposing opinions—that he not leave a single ship in the port, but immediately scuttle all of them so that no hindrances might remain, so that while we were going inland other people might not, as in the past, rise up. We would also have much help from the shipmasters, pilots, and sailors, about one hundred people, and they would better help us by standing guard and fighting than by staying in port. As I understood, Cortés had already settled this matter about destroying the ships, which we proposed there, but he wanted it to come from us, because if they sued asking that he pay something for the ships, it would have been because of our advice and all of us would be bound to pay for them. Then he ordered Juan de Escalante, who was chief constable and a person of much value, a great friend of Cortés and enemy of Diego Velázquez—because on the island of Cuba he did not give him good Indians—to go immediately to the town and see that all the anchors, cables, sails, and whatever was in the ships that might prove useful be taken from all of them. Then Juan de Escalante was to scuttle all the ships so that nothing was left but

the boats. Further, the pilots, old shipmasters, and sailors who were not fit to fight should stay in the town and, with two fishing nets, have the duty of fishing, for in that port there were always fish, although not many. Juan de Escalante did as he was ordered and soon after came to Cempoala with a captaincy of the seamen, those he brought from the ships, and some of them turned out to be very good soldiers.

This done, Cortés summoned all the caciques of the towns in the hill country that were allied with us and in rebellion against the great Montezuma and told them they were to help those who stayed in Villa Rica finish making the church, fort, and houses. There, in front of them, Cortés took Juan de Escalante by the hand and said to them: "This is my brother," and told them that whatever he might order they should do and that if they had need of protection and help against some Mexican Indians, they should appeal to him and he would come personally to help them. All the caciques offered themselves willingly to do what he ordered. I remember that they then perfumed Juan de Escalante with their incense, although he did not want them to. I have already said he was a very competent person for any post and a friend of Cortés, so Cortés could confidently put him in that town and port as captain. In case Diego Velázquez should send something, there would be resistance.

Here is where the chronicler Gómara says that when Cortés ordered the ships scuttled, he did not dare let the soldiers know that he wanted to go to Mexico in search of the great Montezuma. It did not happen as he says, for are we Spaniards such that we would not go forward but stay in places where we would have neither profit nor wars? This same Gómara says that Pedro de Ircio stayed as captain in Veracruz; they did not inform him well. Juan de Escalante was the one who was captain and chief constable of New Spain, and they had not yet given any post whatsoever to Pedro de Ircio, not even that of company leader.

[LIX] After having openly scuttled the ships—not as the chronicler Gómara says—one morning, after having heard mass, when all of us captains and soldiers were together speaking with

Cortés about military matters, he asked us please to listen to him, and he gave us a talk as follows. He said that we now understood the journey we were undertaking and that, with the help of Our Lord Jesus Christ, we would win all the battles and skirmishes, and that we had to be as ready for it as was necessary, because should we be put to the rout in whatever place, may God not permit it, we would not be able to recover, being so few, and we had no other help nor aid but God's—because we now had no ships to return to Cuba—save our good fighting and strong hearts; and on this he gave many comparisons with heroic deeds of the Romans. We unanimously answered him that we would do as he ordered, that the die of good fortune was cast as Julius Caesar said at the Rubicon, for all our good services were dedicated to God and His Majesty. After this talk, which was very good (certainly with other more honeyed and eloquent words than I put down here), he sent for the fat cacique and reminded him that he had to keep the church and cross very hallowed and clean. He also told him that he was going to leave immediately for Mexico to order Montezuma not to rob or sacrifice, and he had need of two hundred Indian tamemes to carry the artillery. As I have said at another time, they could carry two arrobas on their backs and go five leagues with it. He also asked for fifty chieftains, warriors, to go with us.

*Just as they were about to leave, a message came from Juan de Escalante in Villa Rica that "a ship was plying the coast, that he had made smoke signals and other great signs and had used some white cloths as flags, that he rode his horse with a cape of dark scarlet so that those on the ship would see him, and that it seemed to him that they saw his signals, flags, horse, and cape but did not want to enter the port." Cortés went immediately to Villa Rica and met four Spaniards who had come to take possession of the land for Francisco de Garay, who lived in Jamaica. Garay, with decrees making him adelantado and governor of everything he might discover from the river of San Pedro and San Pablo to the north, had sent the ships. To get the ship to land, Cortés decided to trick the men onboard. He had the four*

*men he had captured take off their clothes and put them on four of his own men. The soldiers waved their capes at the ship and six sailors immediately came in the boat. The four who were wearing the clothes of Garay's men made as though they were washing their hands, hiding their faces. The trick did not work, because one of Cortés's men had to answer a question and Garay's men did not recognize the voice. The ship went on its way without the four men Cortés had first encountered and the two sailors who had come ashore.*

## WE LEFT FOR TLAXCALA

[LXI] Once we had fully considered the departure for Mexico, we sought advice on the road we should take, and the chieftains of Cempoala decided that the best and most advantageous way was through the province of Tlaxcala, because the people there were their friends and mortal enemies of the Mexicans. They had forty chieftains, all warriors, ready to go with us, and they helped us a great deal on that journey; they also gave us two hundred tamemes to carry the artillery. But we poor soldiers did not need tamemes, because at that time we had nothing to carry but our arms—lances, escopetas, crossbows, shields, and all other types of arms—and we slept and marched with them, and for footwear we had hemp sandals, and, as I have said, we were always very ready to fight. We left Cempoala in the middle of August 1519, always in very good order with scouts and certain very fast soldiers in front.

The first day's march took us to a town called Xalapa, and from there to Socochima,<sup>1</sup> well fortified with a difficult approach, and in it were many vines of native grapes. In these towns Cortés told them, with doña Marina and Jerónimo de Aguilar, our interpreters, everything touching our holy faith and how we were vassals of the emperor don Carlos, who had sent us to stop human sacrifices and to keep them from robbing each other, and he told them many things that were appropriate to say. As they were friends of the Cempoala and did not pay tribute to Montezuma,

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1. Xicochimalco.

we found them to be of good will and they gave us something to eat. In each town, we erected a cross, and they were told what it signified and that they should treat it with great reverence. From Socochima we crossed over some high mountains and arrived at another town called Tejutla;<sup>2</sup> and we also found them to be of goodwill, because, like the others, they did not pay tribute to Mexico. From that town we finished climbing up the mountains and entered into an uninhabited area where it was very cold and hailed and rained. That night we had no food, and a wind came off the snowy mountains that were to one side, which made us shiver with cold, because as we had come from the island of Cuba and from Villa Rica, where the entire coast was very warm, and entered into a cold land with nothing to protect us except our armor, we felt the frost, as we were accustomed to a different temperature. From there we went through another pass, where we found some settlements and great adoratorios for worshipping idols, which I have already said were called cus, and they had great piles of firewood for the service of the idols that were in those adoratorios. We still had nothing to eat and the cold was extreme. From there we entered into the land of a town called Zocotlan,<sup>3</sup> and we sent two Indians from Cempoala to tell the cacique we were coming, that they should be pleased at our arrival, and it was subject to Mexico. We continued to move forward, very much on the alert and with good order, because we saw that we were now in a different kind of land.

When we saw the whitened flat roofs [of Zocotlan] and the house of the cacique and the cus and adoratorios, which were very high and plastered, they looked very good, like some towns of our Spain. We gave it the name Castilblanco, because some Portuguese said it was like the town of Castil-Blanco in Portugal, and it is still called that today. When they learned in that town

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2. Tejutla.

3. *Zocotlan* is also known as Zautla and is referred to below as Castilblanco.

from the messengers we sent that we were coming, the cacique and other chieftains came out to receive us near their houses; this cacique was named Olintecle.<sup>4</sup> He took us to some buildings and gave us something to eat, very little and with ill will. After we had eaten, Cortés asked them through our interpreters about their lord Montezuma, and Olintecle talked about the great forces of warriors that Montezuma had in all the provinces subject to him, not to mention the many other armies he had on the frontiers and in neighboring districts. Then he spoke of the great fortress of Mexico and how the houses were built in water, that one could pass from one house to the other only by the bridges they had built or in canoes, and the houses all with flat roofs, and each flat roof, if they put up defenses, was a fortress. He said that to enter the city there were three causeways, and in each causeway four or five openings through which the water passed from one side to the other. Over each opening was a wooden bridge, and by raising any one of them no one could enter Mexico. Then he talked of the great amount of gold, silver, chalchiui stones, and riches that Montezuma had, and he never stopped talking about how great a lord he was, and Cortés and all of us were astonished to hear it. Nevertheless, however much they talked about his great fortress and bridges, since it is the nature of us Spanish soldiers, we still wanted to try our luck, although it seemed to us an impossible venture, given what Olintecle indicated and said. Mexico was truly very much stronger and had greater defensive walls than what he was saying, because it is one thing to have seen the quality and forces of Mexico and another to write about it as I do. He said that Montezuma was such a great lord that he could rule wherever he wanted, and that he did not know whether Montezuma would be happy when he learned of our being in that town and his having lodged us and given us food without his permission.

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4. Olintetl.

*At this point Cortés told Olintecle all the usual things about the holy faith and the evil practices of the Indians. But when he suggested erecting a cross, the father, fray Bartolomé de Olmedo, told him, "It seems to me, sir, that among these peoples it is not the right time to leave a cross in their possession because they are shameless and without fear, and because they are vassals of Montezuma, they might burn it or do some other evil thing. What you have told them is sufficient until they have greater knowledge of our holy faith." They did not erect the cross.*

Let us talk about how we brought with us a very large hound that belonged to Francisco de Lugo, which barked much of the night. It seems that the caciques of that town asked the friends we brought from Cempoala if it was a tiger or lion or something with which we were killing Indians. They replied: "They bring it along so when someone annoys them, it kills them." They also asked what those cannons were that we brought with us and what we did with them. They replied that with stones we put inside them we killed whomever we wanted, and that with the horses, which ran like deer, we could catch anyone we ordered them to. Along with the rest of the chieftains, Olintecle said: "So they must be teules." I have already said they called the idols or their gods or evil things teules. Our friends answered: "Now that you see it, be careful not to do anything to make them angry; they will know it immediately, because they know what you have in your thoughts. These teules are the ones who seized the tribute collectors of your great Montezuma and ordered the people of all the sierras not to give them any tribute, nor the people in our town of Cempoala. They are the ones who cast down our teules from our cus and put their own there, and they have conquered the people of Tabasco and Chanpoton,<sup>5</sup> and they are so good that they have made friendship between us and the people of Cingapacinga. Even more, you must have already seen how the

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5. Here Bernal Díaz is referring to Potonchan.

great Montezuma, although he has such powers, sent them gold and cloaks. Now they have come to this, your town, and I see that you are giving them nothing; go quickly and bring them a gift." So we brought good go-betweens with us, because the people of the town immediately brought four pendants, three necklaces, and some small lizards, all of gold, even though it was very low grade; they also brought four Indian women, who were very good for making bread, and a load of cloths. Cortés received them with goodwill and with great courtesies.

I remember that many piles of human skulls were put in a plaza with many adoratorios, and we could count them because of the order with which they were arranged, and it seems to me that there were more than one hundred thousand, and I say again over one hundred thousand. In another part of the plaza, there was an equal number of fleshless bones, bones of the dead, so that they could not be counted, and they had many heads hung on some beams from one end to the other, and guarding those bones and skulls were three papas, who, as we understood, were in charge of them. We saw more of this when we got further inland, in all the towns it was like this, and also in the area of Tlaxcala. When everything I have said had occurred, we decided to go on our way toward Tlaxcala, because our friends said it was very close, that the boundaries where they had put some boundary stones as signs were near there. About this, we asked the cacique Olintecle which was the best and most level way to go to Mexico, and he said it was through a very large town called Cholula. But the people of Cempoala said to Cortés: "Sir, do not go by way of Cholula, for they are very treacherous, and Montezuma always has his war garrisons there," and that we should go by way of Tlaxcala, where the people are their friends, enemies of the Mexicans. So we decided to take the advice of the people of Cempoala, for God always guided everything. Cortés then requested of Olintecle twenty chieftains, warriors, to go with us, and he immediately gave them to us.

[LXII] We left Castilblanco and went on our way, the scouts always ahead and very much on the alert, and the escopeteros and

crossbowmen in great order as appropriate, the horsemen even more so, and always wearing our armor as we usually did. I do not know why I waste more words on this, because we were so ready, both day and night, that if they gave the alarm ten times, they would find us very ready each time. In this order we arrived at the small town of Xalacingo. There they gave us a necklace of gold, some cloths, and two Indians, and from that town we sent two chieftains of Cempoala to Tlaxcala with a letter and a red felt hat of Flanders, which was the fashion then. Although we understood well that they would not know how to read the letter, we thought that, as they might see the difference in our paper from theirs, they would know it was a message. What we sent to say was that we were coming to their town and that they should give their approval, that we were not coming to make trouble for them but to have them as friends. This was because in that small town they told us that all Tlaxcala was armed and ready for combat against us. Because, as it seemed, they had already received news that we were coming and that we were bringing along many friends from Cempoala, Zocotlan, and other towns through which we had passed, and all these towns were used to giving tribute to Montezuma, the Tlaxcalans were certain we were coming against them. And, as at other times the Mexicans had entered their land with cunning tricks and plundered it, they thought they wanted to do the same now. So as soon as our two messengers arrived with the letter and the hat and began to explain their message, the Tlaxcalans ordered them seized without waiting to hear more. We waited for a response that day and the next, and when it did not come, Cortés spoke with the chieftains of that town and said the appropriate things he normally said about our holy faith, and after giving them many promises that he would help them, he asked them for twenty Indian warrior chieftains to go with us, and they willingly gave them.

Trusting in our good fortune, commending ourselves to God, we left the next day for Tlaxcala. As we were going on our way, our two messengers who had been taken prisoner appeared, and it seems that, since the Indians who were in charge of guarding them

were taken up by war, they became careless, and they escaped from their shackles. They arrived so frightened by what they had seen and heard that they could hardly speak of it, because, according to what they said, when they were prisoners, the Tlaxcalans had threatened them, saying: "Now we are going to kill those you call teules and eat their flesh, and we will see if they are as strong and brave as you proclaim, and we will also eat your flesh, because you come in treachery and with lies from that traitor Montezuma." No matter how much the messengers insisted that we were against the Mexicans and we considered all the Tlaxcalans as brothers, they did not get anywhere with their arguments. When Cortés and all of us heard those arrogant words, and as the Tlaxcalans were prepared for war, although it gave us something to think about, we all said: "Well, if that's how it is, forward, so be it." We commended ourselves to God and continued on, our flag unfurled, carried by our standard-bearer Corral, because the Indians of the small town where we slept told us that for certain the Tlaxcalans would come out on the road to keep us from entering, and the people of Cempoala also told us this. As we went along in this way, we were talking about how the horsemen should charge and return at slack rein<sup>6</sup> with their lances slanting, and three by three so they might support one another; when they broke through the squadrons, they should hold their lances at face level, but they should not stop to give lance thrusts so that the Indians would not get their hands on the lance. Should that happen, should they grab hold of a lance, the horseman would hold on to it with all his strength, bracing it under his arm, and putting spurs to his horse, and with the strength of the horse, he would get it loose or drag the Indian along behind him.

They will ask today why so much concern when we had not yet seen enemy warriors attacking us. To this I reply by saying what Cortés said: "Look, gentlemen companions; you see that we are few. We have always to be as ready and cautious as if not only did

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6. The term Bernal Díaz uses is "*a media rienda*."

we see the enemy coming to fight, but we should imagine that we were already engaged in battle. As it happens many times that they get their hands on the lance, we must be careful in such a case in this and in other things that pertain to war. I've understood well that in fighting we don't need warnings, because I've learned that however well I should say it, you will perform with much greater spirit without them."

In this way we went about two leagues, and we found a very strong fortress built of stone and some kind of mortar so hard that it was necessary to break it apart with iron pickaxes, and made in such a way for defense and offense that it was extremely difficult to take. We stopped to look at it, and Cortés asked the Zocotlan Indians for what purpose that fortress was made in this way. They said that because there was continuous warfare between their lord Montezuma and the Tlaxcalans, the Tlaxcalans had made it strong to defend their towns, because already we were in their land. We rested awhile, and this information and the fortress gave us much to think about. Cortés said: "Gentlemen, let us follow our banner, which is the sign of the holy cross, and with it we will be victorious." And all of us to a person replied that, trusting in our fortune we should go, that God is the true strength.

We began to march in the order I have said. Not very far along, our scouts saw some thirty Indians who were lookouts, with two-handed swords, shields, lances, and feather plumes. The swords are pieces of flint that cut much better than razors, made in a way that they could not be broken nor the blades pulled from their handles, and are as long as broadswords;<sup>7</sup> and the Indians wore their emblems and plumes. When our scouts saw them, they came to warn us. Cortés ordered them to go after the Indians and to try to take some of them without wounding them. Then he sent five other horsemen so that they would be able to assist if there should

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7. The foregoing is Bernal Díaz's description of a *macana*, translated as "war club" from this point on. *Macana* is a Taino term the Spaniards brought with them from the West Indies, whereas the Nahuatl term for this weapon was *macuahuitl*.



Aztec warriors wielding macanas (macahuitl), which are oak swords or clubs fitted with rows of obsidian blades. Aztec warriors used these weapons to slash, inflicting long bleeding wounds, or sever, as when they decapitated a mare Cortés's party brought. *Florentine Codex*.

be an ambush. With our entire army we went at a quick pace and in good order, because the friends we brought with us told us that for sure there would be a great number of warriors waiting in ambush. When the thirty Indians on the lookout saw that the horsemen were coming toward them and motioning to them with their hands, they did not wait until the horsemen reached them and took some of them; but they defended themselves very well, and with their war clubs and lances they struck the horses. When our people, their horses wounded, saw the Indians fight so wildly,

they tried to do what they were obliged to do and killed five of them. In the midst of this, a squadron of more than three thousand Tlaxcalans waiting in ambush came on suddenly and with great fury, and they began to shoot arrows at our horsemen who were now all together, showered arrows and fire-hardened spears on them, and worked marvels with their two-handed swords. In that instant we arrived with our artillery, escopetas, and cross-bows. Little by little the Indians began to turn away, although they stayed a good while fighting in good order.

In that skirmish, four of our men were wounded, and it seems to me that a few days later one of them died of his wounds. As it was late, the Tlaxcalans withdrew and we did not pursue them; they left about seventeen dead, not counting the many wounded. Where those skirmishes took place, the ground was level, and there were many houses with maize fields and stands of maguey plants, from which they make their wine. We slept near a stream, and because there was no oil, we treated our wounds with grease from a fat Indian we had killed there, who was opened. We had a very good dinner of some small dogs they raised, because all the homes were empty and they carried off their goods, and although they carried the little dogs off with them, at night the dogs returned to the houses and there we captured them, and they made very good eating. We were very alert the entire night, with sentries, good patrols, scouts, and the horses saddled and bridled for fear the Tlaxcalans might attack us.

[LXIII/LXIV] *The next day, Cortés and his men set out and came upon two squadrons of warriors numbering about six thousand. His attempts at negotiation failed so he shouted "Santiago, and at them." Although the Spaniards killed and wounded many of the Indians with their guns, more than forty thousand warriors were waiting in ambush with their captain Xicotenga,<sup>8</sup> their devices were white and red because those were Xicotenga's colors. Cortés and his men*

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8. Xicotencatl, and in this instance Xicotencatl el mozo (the younger).

*were overwhelmed by the huge numbers, but “the great mercy of God helped and protected us.”*

While we were in the midst of these bitter fights among those great warriors and their fearful broadswords, it seems that many of the strongest of them decided to join together to get their hands on a horse. They launched an attack and grabbed hold of a very good mare, well-trained in sport and charging, and the horseman who was on her, a good rider named Pedro de Morón. As he and three other horsemen charged, breaking through the squadrons of enemies, because those were their orders so they could assist one another, the Tlaxcalans grabbed hold of his lance so that he could not withdraw it, and others gave him slashes with their broadswords and wounded him badly. Then they slashed the mare, cutting her neck all around, leaving it hanging by the skin; and she was left dead there. If his fellow horsemen had not promptly helped Pedro de Morón, they would have killed him too. Well, maybe we could have helped him with the entire squadron. I say again that, for fear they might destroy us all, we could not go from one spot to another, that we had enough to do to defend ourselves so they would not defeat us, and we were very much in danger. However, we rushed to where the mare was and managed to save Morón and take him away from the Tlaxcalans who were already carrying him away half-dead. We cut the girths of the mare so we would not leave the saddle behind, and there, in that rescue, they wounded ten of our men. It seems to me that our soldiers then killed four Indian captains, for we were marching together closely and did them much damage with our swords, because when that happened, they began to withdraw and took the mare, which they cut into pieces to show in all the towns of Tlaxcala. We learned later that they had offered to their idols the horseshoes, the hat from Flanders, and the two letters we sent them asking for peace. The mare they killed belonged to Juan Sedeño, but because at that time Sedeño had three wounds from the day before, he gave it to Morón, who was a very good rider. Morón died then of the wounds two days later, because I do not remember seeing him anymore.

*Later in the battle Cortés's men killed many Indians, including eight important captains, so the Indians retreated in good order. The next day, Cortés tried again to negotiate through prisoners his men had taken. "Xicotenga's response was that we should go to his town where his father was, where they will make peace by filling themselves with our flesh and honoring their gods with our hearts and blood."*

Then the messengers from Xicotenga informed Cortés fully about the captain Xicotenga and what forces he had with him, and they told him that Xicotenga had many more men than the last time he attacked us, because he brought five captains with him, and each captain brought ten thousand warriors. What they said was that from the faction of Xicotenga, who was blind from age, father of this very captain, came ten thousand, and from another great cacique named Maseescaci<sup>9</sup> another ten thousand, and from the other great chieftain, named Chichimecatecle,<sup>10</sup> as many others, and from another cacique, lord of Topeyanco, named Tecapaneca, another ten thousand, and from another cacique named Guaxobcin, another ten thousand; so in all, there were fifty thousand. They said that they brought out their banner and standard, which was a white bird that looks like an ostrich with its wings outstretched as if ready to fly; each captaincy had its device and livery, because this is how the caciques differentiated themselves from one another, as do the dukes and counts in our Castile. Everything I have said here we took to be true, because some Indians from among those we had taken prisoner, whom we released that day, said the same thing very clearly, although we had not believed it at that time. When we understood that, because we are men and fear death, many of us, even the majority of us, confessed to the Mercedarian father and the secular priest Juan Díaz, who were hearing confessions the whole night; and we commended ourselves to God, that he might protect us from being defeated. This is what we did until the next day.

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9. Maxixcatzin.

10. Chichimecatecuhtli.

[LXV] The next morning, September 5, 1519, we put the horses in order. None of the wounded stayed behind but went out to join the body of soldiers and help us as they could. The crossbowmen were cautioned to use the stores of arrows in a very orderly way, some arming, others shooting, and the escopeteros doing the same, and the men with shield and sword should aim their sword or knife thrusts so that our slashes would go into the entrails so the Indians would not dare come as close as they had the last time. The artillery was well prepared. The horsemen already had notice that they should support one another, their lances held slanting, not stopping to lance except for the faces and eyes, charging and returning at slack rein. No soldier should leave the squadron. Thus, with our banner unfurled and four of our company guarding our standard-bearer Corral, we left camp. We had not gone half of a quarter league when we saw coming into view the fields full of warriors with great plumes and devices and a great din of small trumpets and horns. Here is a good opportunity to write and give an account of what happened in the dangerous and uncertain battle, because a great number of warriors surrounded us on all sides, and it was as though there were some large fields two leagues wide and the same in length, and in the middle of them four hundred men; that is the way it was, the countryside was filled with them, and about four hundred of us, many wounded and ailing. We knew for sure that this time they were coming with the thought that they would not leave one of us alive, except those to be sacrificed to their idols.

Let us return to our battle. When they began to engage us, what a hailstorm of stones from their slings! Then archers, all the ground covered with double-pronged spears that cut through any kind of armor and the entrails where there is no protection! And the men with swords, shields, other arms greater than swords, like broadswords, how they pressed us and with what ferocity they closed in on us, and with what great cries and shouts! Since we took advantage of the great coordination among our artillery, escopetas, and crossbows, we did them a great deal of harm. We gave good sword thrusts to those who came close to us with their

swords and broadswords, so that we made them withdraw, and they did not come as close as they did the last time. The horsemen were so skillful and performed in such a manly way that, after God, who watched over us, they were our fortress.

Then I saw our squadron thrown into some confusion, so the shouts of Cortés and the other captains were of no use in getting us to close ranks. Such a great number of Indians then charged us that it was only miraculously and by pure sword thrusts that we could make them give way, at which time we could regroup. One thing saved our lives, and it was that, as they were many and piled together, the cannons did them great harm; what is more, their captains did not know how to manage things on a battlefield, so all the captains could not bring their men into action at once. Also, as we learned, since the last battle there had been quarrels and rancor between the captain Xicotenga and another captain, son of Chichimecatecle, over what Xicotenga said to him, that he had not fought well in the recent battle, and the son of Chichimecatecle answered that he fought much better than the captain Xicotenga, and he would demonstrate it in man-to-man combat with him. So in this battle, Chichimecatecle and his men would not help Xicotenga; we learned for certain that he had previously called on the captaincy of Guaxocingo not to fight. Besides, since the recent battle, they feared the horses, guns, swords, crossbows, our good fighting, and above all the great mercy of God, which gave us courage to sustain ourselves.

Two captains did not obey Xicotenga, and we had done them great harm, and we had killed many of their men. They concealed all this, because as they were many, when we wounded any one of theirs, they immediately grabbed him and carried him away on their backs, so in this battle, as in the last, we did not see any of their dead. As they were now fighting reluctantly and felt that the captaincies of the two captains of which I spoke would not support them, they began to weaken; and because, as it seemed, we killed an important captain in that battle, perhaps more, they began to retreat in good order, and the horsemen, at slack rein, followed them a short distance, because they were so tired they could not

stay in the saddle. When we saw we were free of that multitude of warriors, we gave great thanks to God.

They killed one of our soldiers there and wounded more than sixty and also wounded all the horses. They gave me two wounds, one in the head with stones and the other in the thigh with an arrow, but they were not enough to keep me from fighting, keeping watch, and helping other soldiers. All the wounded soldiers did the same, and if the wounds were not very dangerous, we had to fight and keep watch with them, because otherwise there were few who were without wounds. Then we went to our camp very satisfied and giving much thanks to God, and we buried the dead in one of those houses they had under the ground so that the Indians would not see that we were mortal, but they might believe we were teules, as they said. We threw a lot of earth on top of this house so they would not smell the bodies, and we treated all the wounds with the grease of the Indian I mentioned other times. Oh what poor treatment we had, not even to have oil or salt to treat them! Something else we lacked, very important, was clothes to protect us, for such a cold wind came from the snowy mountain that it made us shiver, because the lances, escopetas, and crossbows covered us poorly. That night we slept with more tranquility than the last, because we had taken many precautions with scouts, lookouts, watches, and patrols. I have to leave it here and I will talk about what we did the next day. In this battle we took three Indian chieftains.

[LXVI] After the battle I have described and taking in it the three Indian chieftains, our captain Cortés sent them, along with the two others in our camp who had gone other times as messengers, and he ordered them to tell the caciques of Tlaxcala that we begged them to come immediately to make peace and give us passage through their land to Mexico, as we had sent other times to say, and that if they did not come now, we would kill all their people; but because we cared very much for them and wanted to have them as brothers, we would not bother them if they did not give us cause to do so. He spoke many kind words to them to make them our friends. Very willingly, those messengers immediately went to the head town of Tlaxcala and gave the

message to all the caciques named by me before, whom they found gathered together, with many other elders and papas, and they were very sad, as much for the poor outcome of the war as for the death of the captains who were their relatives or sons and who died in the battles, and it is said they did not willingly listen. They decided they would summon all the diviners and papas and others who drew lots, called *tacalnaguas*, who are like witches, and they told them to look through their prophesies, bewitchments, and lots to see what kind of people we were and if, by continually attacking us day and night, they could defeat us; also they wanted to know whether we were teules as the men of Cempoala said, and what things we ate, and they should look into all of this very carefully. When the diviners, witches, and many papas came together and made their prophesies and threw their lots, all the things they usually do, it seems that, in the lots, they found that we were men of flesh and bone, that we ate hens, dogs, bread, and fruit when we had it, that we did not eat the flesh of Indians nor the hearts of those we killed, for, as it seems, the Indian friends we brought from Cempoala made them believe we were teules, that we ate Indian hearts, that the cannons threw flashes of lightning like those that fall from the sky, that the hound was a tiger or lion, and that the horses could catch the Indians when we wanted to kill them; and they told them many other childish things. The worst of all that the papas and diviners told them was that by day we could not be defeated but by night, because at nightfall our strength left us; and the witches told them more, that we were strong and courageous, and that we had all these powers during the day until the sun set, but at nightfall we had no power at all. When the caciques heard that, and they took it as true, they sent to tell their captain general, Xicotenga, so that he would then quickly come one night with great forces to attack us. He, when he learned this, gathered about ten thousand Indians, the bravest they had, and he came to our camp. From three sides, they began to shoot arrows and cast single-pointed spears from straps, and from the fourth side, the men with swords, war clubs, and broadswords attacked suddenly, certain that they would carry some of us off to sacrifice.

Our Lord God caused better, for as secretly as they came, they found us very much ready, because as soon as our scouts and lookouts heard their great din, they came at breakneck speed to give the alarm; and as we were so accustomed to sleep wearing our sandals and armor, the horses saddled and bridled, and every type of weapon at the ready, we resisted them with escopetas, crossbows, and sword thrusts. They quickly turned their backs. As the field was flat and the moon was out, the horsemen followed them a little way, where in the morning we found about twenty of them lying dead and wounded. So they returned with great loss and very regretful for having come at night. I have even heard that because what the papas, fortune-tellers, and witches told them did not turn out well, they sacrificed two of them.

That night they killed one of our Indian friends from Cempoala and wounded two soldiers and a horse, and we captured four of them. When we found ourselves free of that sudden skirmish, we gave thanks to God, buried the friend from Cempoala, treated the wounds and the horse, and we slept in the camp through what was left of the night with great precaution, just as we usually did. When day broke and we saw how all of us had two and three wounds, very tired, others sick and bandaged with rags, Xicotenga always pursuing us, and now we were missing more than forty-five soldiers who had died in the battles or from illnesses and chills, another twelve sick, our captain Cortés also with fevers, and even the Mercedarian father; with the hardship and weight of the armor we always wore on our backs and other misfortunes with chills and lack of salt, which we did not eat and could not find, and, more than this, we were taken up with thinking about what end we would meet in these wars and, were they to end there, what would become of us, where would we go, for we considered the idea of entering Mexico a joke because of their great armies, and we said among ourselves that if the Tlaxcalans, whom our friends from Cempoala had made us believe were peaceful people, had reduced us to such a condition, what would happen when we found ourselves at war with the great powers of Montezuma? Besides this, we did not know about those who were settled in Villa Rica, nor they of us.

As there were among us gentlemen and soldiers, excellent men, brave and of good counsel, Cortés never said or did anything without our very full prior consultation and agreement, and even though the chronicler Gómara might say Cortés did this, he went to one place, he came from another, and so many other things without foundation, and although Cortés might be made of iron, according to the way Gómara tells it in his history, he could not be everywhere. It would have been enough to say that he acted as a good captain. I say this because, after the great favors our Lord gave us in all our deeds, in recent victories and in everything else, it seems that God gave grace and good counsel to us soldiers so that we could advise Cortés how to do everything right. Let us stop praising and speaking of past praise, for it does not do much for our history. Let us talk instead about how we, one and all, encouraged Cortés, telling him to take care of himself, that we were always there, that since with the aid of God we had escaped from such dangerous battles, it was for some good purpose that Our Lord Jesus Christ was pleased to preserve us, and that he should immediately free the prisoners and send them to the great caciques mentioned by me other times to tell them to come in peace, that he will forgive them everything that was done and the death of the mare.

Let us leave this and talk about how doña Marina, even though she was a native woman, had such manly strength and courage that, even though she heard each day that they wanted to kill us and eat our flesh with chiles and had seen us surrounded in the recent battles and saw that now we were all wounded and sick, we never saw weakness in her, but much greater strength than a woman's. Doña Marina and Jerónimo de Aguilar spoke to the messengers we were now sending and told them that the Tlaxcalans should immediately come to make peace, that if they did not come within two days we would go to kill them and destroy their lands, and we would go to seek them in their city. With these bold words, they went to the head town where

Xicotenga the elder<sup>11</sup> and Maseescaci were. Let us leave this and I will say another thing. I have seen that the chronicler Gómara does not write in his history nor make mention of their having killed us or wounded us, nor that we experienced adversities, nor that we suffered with illness, but everything he writes is as though someone were going to weddings, and we found it that way in his writings. Oh how badly they informed him, those who advised him to write it that way! And he has given all of us conquistadors occasion to reflect on what he has written, how it is not so, and he should have considered that, when we saw his history, we were going to tell the truth.

[LXVII] When the messengers we had sent to negotiate peace arrived at Tlaxcala, they found the two most principal caciques, Maseescaci and Xicotenga the elder, father of the captain general also named Xicotenga, in consultation. After they heard the message, they were hesitant for a short while and did not speak, but it pleased God to inspire them to make peace with us. They sent for all the rest of the caciques and captains in their towns and those of a province next to them, called Guaxocingo,<sup>12</sup> who were their friends and confederates. When they were all together in that town, which was the head town, Maseescaci and the old Xicotenga, who were very wise, made a speech, something like this as we later learned, although not these exact words: “Our friends and brothers: You have already seen how many times those teules who are in the country expecting attacks have sent us messengers asking for peace, and they say they are coming to help us and have us as brothers, and likewise you have seen how often they have taken many of our vassals prisoner, and they have not harmed them, and they release them quickly. You see well how we have attacked them three times with all our forces, both by day and by night, but we have not conquered them, and they have killed

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11. Xicotencatl, *el viejo* or *el ciego* (“the elder” or “the blind”); also, later, don Lorenzo de Vargas.

12. Huejotzingo.

many of our men, sons, relatives, and captains in the assault we have made on them. Now again they return asking for peace, and the people of Cempoala who come in their company say they are opponents of Montezuma and his Mexicans, and they say they have ordered the towns of the Totonac sierra and Cempoala not to give him tribute. You will certainly remember that the Mexicans have made war on us every year for more than a hundred years, and you see well that we are as if penned up in our lands, and we do not dare go out to look for salt, so we do not have any to eat, nor even cotton, and we wear few cotton cloaks, for if some of us go out or have gone out to look for it, few return with their lives, because those treacherous Mexicans and their allies kill them and make them slaves. Now our *tacalnaguas* and diviners and papas have told us what they think of these teules, and it is that they are brave and strong. It seems to me that we should try to make friends with them, and if they are not men but teules, in one way or another let us keep full company with them. Four of our chieftains should go immediately and bring them good things to eat, and let us show them love and peace so that they support us and defend us from our enemies, and let us bring them here with us, and let us give them women so we might have relatives from their descendents, for, according to what the ambassadors they sent to negotiate peace say, they bring women with them.”

When all the caciques and chieftains heard this speech, it seemed good to them, and they said it was the right thing, that they should immediately go to make peace, that someone should be sent to let the captain Xicotenga and the rest of the captains with him know they should come home immediately without making any more war, and tell them that we have already made peace; right away they sent messengers about it.

The captain Xicotenga the younger would not listen to the four chieftains and showed great anger and spoke to them with abusive words; he was against peace. He said he had already killed many teules and the mare, that he wanted to attack us another night and finish conquering and killing us. When his father Xicotenga the elder and Maseescaci and the rest of the caciques heard this

response, they were so angry they immediately sent to order the captains and the entire army not to go with Xicotenga to make war on us nor obey anything he ordered, unless it was to make peace; nonetheless, he did not obey. When they saw the disobedience of their captains, they at once sent the same four chieftains they had sent another time to come to our camp and bring provisions and negotiate peace in the name of all Tlaxcala and Guaxocingo; but the four old men, for fear of Xicotenga the younger, did not come at that time.

Because two or three things happened at the same time, both in our camp and in the peace negotiations, and I must necessarily take up what is most to the purpose, I will stop talking about the four Indian chieftains they sent to negotiate peace, who had still not come from fear of Xicotenga.

[LXVIII] As we were not doing anything worth mentioning for two days, it was decided, and we even advised Cortés, that we go one night to attack a town about a league from our camp, to which we had sent asking for peace and had no response, not to harm the people of the town, I mean kill them, nor wound them, nor take them prisoners, but to take food and frighten them or speak to them of peace, depending on how we saw they acted. This town is called Zunpancingo, and it was the head town of many small towns, and the town where we were, Tecuadcinpancingo, where we had our camp, was subject to it, and it was heavily populated all around. One night, at the *modorra*<sup>13</sup> watch, we rose early to go to that town with six of the best horsemen and with the healthiest soldiers and ten crossbowmen and eight escopeteros, with Cortés as our captain, although he had a fever or tertian fevers,<sup>14</sup> and we left the best guard we could in the camp. Two hours before dawn we began to march, and there was such a cold wind that morning coming from the snowy mountain that it made us tremble or shiver, and the horses

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13. The *modorra* was the earliest watch of the day, the watch just at dawn.

14. Tertian fevers occur each third day and are now thought to be a form of malaria.

we brought also felt it greatly, because two of them became colicky and were trembling, which concerned us greatly for fear they might die. Cortés ordered the owners of the horses to take them back to the camp to treat them. As the town was close, we arrived before daybreak. As soon as the natives of the town became aware of us, they fled from their homes, shouting to one another to watch out for the teules, that we were going to kill them, and parents did not even wait for their children. When we saw that, we stopped in a courtyard until it was day so that no harm would come to them.

When some papas who were in some cus and other old chieftains saw we were there without making any trouble at all for them, they came to Cortés and asked him to pardon them for not having gone to our camp in peace nor having brought anything to eat when we had sent for them. The reason was that the captain Xicotenga, who was very close by, sent to the town to say not to give us anything to eat, because that town and many others supplied his camp, and because he had with him the warrior sons of that town and the entire land of Tlaxcala. Cortés told them through our interpreters, doña Marina and Aguilar, who always went with us on every expedition, even at night, that they should not be fearful and that they should go immediately to tell their caciques in the head town to come in peace because war is ruinous for them. He sent these papas because we had not received any response from the other messengers, who, as I mentioned, were four chieftains the caciques of Tlaxcala had sent to negotiate peace. Those papas promptly sought out more than forty hens and cocks and two Indian women to grind maize for tortillas, and they brought them. Cortés thanked them for it and ordered them then to send twenty Indians from that town to our camp, and without any fear at all they went with the provisions and stayed in the camp until the afternoon; they were given little beads, with which they returned to their home very content, and they told their neighbors in all those hamlets in the area that we were good, that we would not offend them. Those papas and elders notified the captain Xicotenga that they had given us food and Indian women, and he greatly reproached them. They then went to the head town to tell the old caciques, and as soon as those old

caciques learned that we had not harmed their people at all, even though we could have killed many of them that night, but sent to ask them for peace, they were pleased and ordered that every day the townspeople should bring us everything we needed. They again ordered the four chieftains, who other times they had charged with negotiating peace, to go to our camp at that moment and bring all the food they ordered. So we returned to our camp with the provisions and the Indian women and were very content.

[LXIX] When we returned from Zunpancingo, as it is called, with the provisions, very content with having left them in peace, we found in the camp groups of men discussing the very great dangers we faced in that war every day. When we arrived, the discussion became more lively, and those who spoke and took part in it most were those who had left their homes and allotments of Indians on the island of Cuba. Up to seven of them, whom I do not want to name here, to save their reputation, met and went to the hut and lodging of Cortés. One of them, who spoke for all, because he expressed himself well and had a good sense of what he was to propose, said, as though counseling Cortés, that he should consider how we were faring, badly wounded, thin and beaten down, and the great hardships we experienced by night with watches, lookouts, patrols, and scouts and fighting both by day and by night, and that by their count, since leaving Cuba, more than fifty-five companions had been lost, and we knew nothing of those whom we had left settled in Villa Rica; that, although God had given us victory in battles and skirmishes since we came from Cuba and had been in that province and had sustained us with his great mercy, we should not tempt him so many times, and that it might turn out worse than Pedro Carbonero;<sup>15</sup> that he had put us in a place no one had expected, and one day or another, we would be sacrificed to idols, which it please God not to permit; that it would

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15. Pedro Carbonero, a mythic Spanish hero, conducted raids into the strongholds of the Moors with little regard for his own life or the lives of his men. He died conducting such raids.

be good to return to our town and the fortress we had built, and we could stay among the towns of the Totonacs, our friends, until we built a ship that could take a message to Diego Velázquez and to other parts and islands to ask them for help and aid; and that now it would be good to have the ships we scuttled, or we might have left at least two of them for a necessity, if it might occur; and that without informing them of this, nor of anything else, on the advice of some people who do not know how to consider matters of fortune, he ordered all of them scuttled, and may it please God that he and those who have given him such advice not have to repent of it; that we were no longer able to endure the burden, much less the immense additional grief; and that we were going along worse than beasts, because after the beasts have done their daily work, they have their packs taken off and are given something to eat and rested, but that we, day and night, always were going along loaded with arms and wearing our sandals.

And they said more: that if he looked in all the histories, those of the Romans, of Alexander, or of the best-known captains the world has had, he would not have dared to wreck the ships, as he had done, and with so few people invade such large populations with so many warriors, so that it appears he will be the author of his own death and all of ours, but he should wish to save his life and ours; and that we should return right away to Villa Rica, for that land was peaceful; that they had not said this until then because they had not found time for it given the many warriors we faced every day from all sides, and although they had not yet returned again, they believed they certainly would return, for Xicotenga, with his great power, had not come after us for the past three days, so he must be gathering men, and we must not wait for another battle like the past ones; and they said other things about the matter.

Cortés, although they spoke to him somewhat arrogantly, because they were proceeding as if they were giving advice, answered them very gently and said that he was well aware of many of the things they had said, and that from what he had seen and believed, in all the world there were no Spaniards stronger, nor having fought with such spirit, nor having endured such excessive

hardships as we, but that had we not gone with arms always on our backs and endured watches and patrols and cold, we would already have been lost, and that it was to save our lives that we had to accept those hardships and others greater. He also said: "Why is it, gentlemen, that we talk about deeds of bravery, when truly Our Lord is pleased to help us? When I think about us surrounded by so many captaincies of enemies and seeing them use their broadswords and coming so close to us, it now horrifies me, especially when they killed the mare with a single slash, how lost and defeated we were, and then I recognized your very great spirit more than ever. Since God delivered us from such great danger, I have hoped he would continue to do so in the future." He said more: "For in all such dangers, you saw no idleness in me, for I was there with you." He was right in saying it, because certainly in all those battles, he was at the front. "I wanted, gentlemen, to remind you, that, as Our Lord has been pleased to protect us, we must have hope that it will be the same in the future, for ever since we entered into this land, we preached in all those towns the holy doctrine as best we were able and tried to destroy their idols. Since we now see that neither the captain Xicotenga nor his captaincies appear, and they don't dare return out of fear because we must have done them much harm in recent battles, and they're not able now to gather their men, having already been defeated three times, I trust in God and his advocate, St. Peter, who intercedes for us, that the war of that province has ended. Now, as you've seen, the people of Cinpancingo<sup>16</sup> bring us things to eat and remain peaceful, and our neighbors are settled here in their houses." He said further that the scuttling of the ships was very well advised and that if he had not called some of them to counsel with him as he had others, it was because of what he experienced on the sandy beach, which he did not want to remind them of now; that the counsel and advice they were giving him now were the same as what they gave him then; that they consider that there are many

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16. Zunpancingo.

gentlemen in the camp who would be very much against what they are now asking and counseling, and it would be better that we should always guide all matters toward God and carry them out in his holy service. "As to what you gentlemen say, that never did any of the most renowned Roman captains undertake such great feats as we, you're right, and in the future, with God's help, they'll say in the histories that will record this much more than they say about the ancients, for, as I've said, everything we do is in the service of God and our great emperor don Carlos. Under his righteous justice and Christianity, we'll be aided by the mercy of God our Lord, and he'll sustain us so that we go from good to better. So, gentlemen, it's certainly not a good thing to take a step backward, for if these people and those we leave behind in peace were to see us turn back, the stones would rise against us, and as now they regard us as gods or idols and call us such, they'd consider us cowardly and weak. As for what you say about staying among the friendly Totonacs, our allies, if they should see us turn back without going to Mexico, they'd rise against us, and the reason would be that, because we stopped them from giving tribute to Montezuma, he'd send his Mexican forces against them to make them pay tribute again, and he'd attack them over it, and he might even order them to attack us, and they, in order not to be destroyed, because they very much fear the Mexicans, would do it. So, where we thought we had friends, there would be enemies. When the great Montezuma learned that we had turned back, what would he say? How would he regard our words and what we said in our messages? That it was all mockery or childish games. So, gentlemen, if one way is bad and the other worse, it's better to stay where we are, where the ground is very flat and all well populated, and this our camp well supplied, sometimes hens and other times dogs. Thanks be to God we are not lacking in things to eat, if we had salt, which is the greatest lack we have at present, and clothes to protect us from the cold. As to what you say, gentlemen, that since we left the island of Cuba, fifty-five soldiers have died from wounds, hunger, cold, illness, and hardship and that we are few and all very wounded and sick, God gives us the strength of

many, because it's an acknowledged fact that wars use up men and horses and that sometimes we eat well, but we didn't come here to rest but to fight when the occasion presented itself. Therefore, I ask you, gentlemen, please, since you are gentlemen and people who, instead of this, should be encouraging those you see showing weakness, that from now on, you stop thinking about the island of Cuba and what you left there and try to do what you've always done as good soldiers, for after God, who is our help and aid, we have to depend on our own strong arms."

When Cortés had given this response, those soldiers repeated their same conversation and said that everything he said was all very well, but that when we left the town we had settled, our intention was, and still is now, to go to Mexico, for it has great fame as so strong a city with such a multitude of warriors. The people of Cempoala said that those Tlaxcalans were peaceful and did not have a reputation like those of Mexico, but we have been so at risk for our lives that if they should battle us again another day, we are now too exhausted to hold fast; and even if they did not attack us, the journey to Mexico seemed to them a terrible thing, and he should be careful what he said and ordered. Cortés answered them somewhat angrily that it was better to die as good men, as the Psalms say, than to live dishonored. Besides what Cortés told them, all the rest of us soldiers who had elected him captain and advised him about scuttling the ships said loudly that he should not worry about people standing around in groups nor listen to such talk, but, with the help of God, with good concerted action, we would be ready to do what is necessary. So all the discussion stopped. It is true that they grumbled about Cortés and cursed him, and even those of us who had advised him and those from Cempoala who brought us this way, and they said other ugly things; but in such times, they were tolerated. In the end, everyone obeyed very well.

I will stop speaking about this, and I will talk about how the old caciques of the head town of Tlaxcala sent messengers again, another time, to their captain general, Xicotenga, to say that without fail he should come right away in peace to see us and bring

us things to eat, because all the caciques and principal chieftains of that land and of Guaxocingo had ordered it; and they also sent to order the captains who were in his company not to obey him in anything at all if he did not go to negotiate peace. This they sent to tell him three times, because they knew for certain he would not obey them; rather Xicotenga had resolved that one night he was going to attack our camp again, because for doing so he had gathered twenty thousand men, and as he was arrogant and very stubborn, now as in the other times, he would not obey.

[LXX] As Xicotenga had a very bad disposition and was obstinate and arrogant, he decided to send us forty Indians with food—hens, bread, and fruit—and four women, old, wretched-looking Indian women, much copal, and many parrot feathers. From the appearance of the Indians who brought these things, we believed they came in peace, but when they arrived at our camp, they perfumed Cortés without doing him the reverence usual among them, and they said: “The captain Xicotenga sent you this so that you can eat. If you are fierce teules as the people of Cempoala say, and if you want sacrifices, take these four women to sacrifice and you can eat their flesh and their hearts. Because we do not know how you do your sacrifices, we have not sacrificed them now in front of you. But if you are men, eat these hens, bread, and fruit, and if you are gentle teules, here we have brought you copal and parrot feathers; make your sacrifice with that.” Cortés answered, with our interpreters, that he had already sent to them to say he desired peace and he had not come to make war. Rather, he had come to beg them and show them on behalf of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the one in whom we believe and whom we worship, and of the emperor don Carlos, whose vassals we are, that they should neither kill nor sacrifice anyone as they usually do; that we are all men of flesh and bone, like them, and not teules, but Christians; that it is not our custom to kill anyone, but that if we wanted to kill, all the times they attacked us day and night gave us many occasions for committing cruelties; and that he gave them thanks for the food they brought there, and he said they should not be foolish as they had been but should come in peace.

It seems that those Indians Xicotenga sent with the food were spies who were to look at our huts, horses, and artillery and see how many of us were in each hut, our comings and goings, everything there was in our camp. They stayed all day and night, and some went with messages to Xicotenga and others arrived. The friends we brought from Cempoala watched and got the idea, for it was not customary for our enemies to be in the camp day and night with no purpose and that it was certain they were spies. They were even more suspicious, because when we went to the little town of Zunpancingo, two old men of that town told the Cempoalans that Xicotenga was prepared with many warriors to attack our camp by night in such a way that they would not be detected. The Cempoalans at that time took it as a hoax or bravado, and because they did not know for certain they had not said anything to Cortés. But doña Marina immediately learned of it and told Cortés. To learn the truth, Cortés ordered that two of the Tlaxcalans, who seemed men of goodwill, be taken aside, and they confessed that they were spies; and two others were taken, and they also said that they were Xicotenga's spies and gave the whole reason why they had come. Cortés ordered them to be set free, and again another two were taken, who said no more no less than the others, and they also said that their captain Xicotenga was waiting for their report in order to attack us that night with all his captaincies. When Cortés learned this, he made it known throughout the whole camp so that we would be very alert, believing they would come as they had planned.

Then he ordered seventeen of those Indian spies seized, and he had the hands of some of them cut off and the thumbs of others, and he sent them to their lord Xicotenga. He said he had carried out that punishment for their audacity in coming that way, and Xicotenga and his men could come whenever they wanted, day or night, that we would be waiting for him there two days, and that if within the two days he did not come, we would go looking for him in his camp; that we would already have gone to attack them and kill them except that we liked them very much, and that they should not be foolish but should come in peace. They say it was at that moment, when Xicotenga was about to set out from his camp

with all his forces to attack us at night as he had planned, that those Indians with the hands and thumbs cut off got there. When he saw his spies coming in that way, he was astonished and asked the reason for it, and they told him everything that had happened. From then on, he lost his spirit and arrogance, and in addition to this, one captain with whom in past battles he had had a partisan conflict had already left his camp with all his men.

[LXXI] While we were in our camp not knowing whether the Indians were going to come in peace, as we very much desired, and we were occupied with cleaning our arms and making bolts for the crossbows, each one doing what was necessary for making war, one of our scouts came at great speed saying that by the main road from Tlaxcala, many Indian men and women were coming with loads, and they were coming straight down the road toward our camp; the other scout, his companion, who was on horseback, was watching to see where they went. Soon, the other companion on horseback came and said that the Indians were coming directly to where we were and that from time to time they were making short stops. Cortés and all of us were delighted with that news because we believed it was about peace, as it was. Cortés ordered that there not be any show of alarm or emotion and that we should be hidden in our huts. Then, from among all those people who were coming with the loads, four chieftains came forward who had authority to negotiate peace, as they had been ordered by the old caciques. Making signs of peace, which was to bow their heads, they came directly to the hut and lodging of Cortés, put a hand on the soil, kissed the ground, gave three bows, burnt their copal, and said that all the caciques of Tlaxcala, their vassals and allies, friends and confederates, were coming to put themselves under the friendship and peace of Cortés and all his brothers, the teules, who were with him; that he should pardon them for not having come out peacefully and for the attacks they had made on us, because they believed and were certain we were friends of Montezuma and his Mexicans, who have been their mortal enemies since ancient times, because they saw that many of his vassals who pay tribute to him came with us and in our company, and they

believed that they were trying to enter their land with deceit and treachery, as was their custom, to steal their children and women, and for this reason they did not believe the messengers we had sent to them; more than this, they said that the first Indians who came out to attack us as we entered into their lands did not do so by their command and counsel, but by that of the *chontales*<sup>17</sup> and Otomis, who were wild people and without reason, and when they saw we were so few, they believed they could capture us and carry us as prisoners to their lords and win thanks from them; that now they come to ask pardon for their boldness, and they brought those provisions and would bring more every day; that we should receive it with the friendliness with which it was sent; and that within two days, the captain Xicotenga would come with other caciques and give a fuller account of the goodwill all of Tlaxcala has for our friendship. After they had finished this speech, they bowed their heads, put their hands on the earth, and kissed the ground.

Then Cortés spoke sternly to them through our interpreters, making as though he was angry. He said there were reasons for not listening to them or being friendly toward them because as soon as we had entered their lands, we sent to ask them for peace and said we would like to help them against their enemies, the Mexicans, but they would not believe it and wanted to kill our ambassadors. Not content with that, they attacked us three times, by day and by night, and they had spied on and watched us; and in the attacks they made on us, we could have killed many of their vassals, but he did not want to. He was sad for those who had died, but they were responsible for it, and he had resolved to go where the old caciques were to attack them, but now, since they came in peace on behalf of that province, he would receive them in the name of our king and lord, and he thanked them for the provisions they brought. He ordered them to go right away to their lords to tell

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17. *Chontales* refers generally to groups indigenous to southern Mexico and modern-day Central America.

them to come or send someone with more power to negotiate peace, and if they did not come, we would go to their town and attack them. He ordered that they be given blue beads to give to their caciques as a sign of peace, and he warned them that when they came to our camp, it must be by day and not by night, because otherwise we would kill them.

Then those four messengers departed and, in some Indian houses somewhat separated from our camp, left the Indian women they brought to make bread, as well as hens, everything for our service, and twenty Indians who brought water and wood, and from then on they brought us plenty to eat. When we saw that, and it seemed to us that it was a genuine peace, we gave much thanks to God. They came just in time, for we were then very weak and weary and discontent with the wars, not knowing where they would lead. In the past chapters, the chronicler Gómara says, first, that Cortés climbed on some rocks and saw the town of Cinpancingo. I say it was so close to our camp that the soldier who wanted to see it and could not do so very clearly must have been completely blind. Also he says that the soldiers tried to mutiny and rebel against him, and he says other things that I do not want to write down because it is to waste words. I say that in the world no captain was obeyed with such respect and punctuality and that such a thought came to no soldier from the time we went inland, unless it was when we were at the sandy beaches, and the words they said to him in the last chapter were by way of advising him and because it seemed to them that they were correct, and not for any other reason, because they always followed him very well and loyally. Whoever sees Gómara's history will believe that what he says is true, to judge by how eloquently he tells it, although it is very much the opposite of what actually happened.

WE ENTERED THIS CITY ON  
THE 23RD OF SEPTEMBER, 1519

[LXXII] As Our Lord God, through his great mercy, was pleased to give us victory in those battles of Tlaxcala, our fame flew through all those territories, and it reached the ears of the great Montezuma in the great city of Mexico; if before they considered us teules, which are their idols, from here on we had an even greater reputation among them as strong warriors. It shocked people all over the land that with there being so few of us and the Tlaxcalans having such great forces, we conquered them, and now they had sent to ask peace from us. So Montezuma, great lord of Mexico, whether as a very benevolent person or because he feared our coming to his city, sent five chieftains of great importance to Tlaxcala and to our camp to welcome us and to say that he took much pleasure in the great victory we had against so many squadrons of opponents. He sent a present, worth about a thousand gold pesos in very rich jewelry, very carefully worked, and twenty loads of fine cotton cloth. He sent to say he would like to be a vassal of our great emperor and it pleased him that we were already close to his city because of the goodwill he had for Cortés and all the teules, his brothers. He said that Cortés should see how much tribute he wanted each year for our great emperor, that he would give it in gold, silver, cloth, and chalchiui stones, provided we not go to Mexico. This was not because he did not welcome us with very goodwill, but because the land was barren and rough, and, if he saw our hardships, it would make him very sad, and, perhaps, he could not remedy them as well as he would like.

Cortés replied to him that he was very grateful for the goodwill he showed, the present he sent, and the offer to give tribute to His Majesty. He begged the messengers not to leave before going to the head town of Tlaxcala, for he would send them off from there so they might see how the war was turning out. He did not want to give his response at once because the day before he had purged himself with some chamomiles from the island of Cuba, which are very good for anyone who knows how to take them.

[LXXIII] While Cortés was talking with Montezuma's ambassadors and wanted to rest because he was ill from fever and purging from the day before, they came to tell him that the captain Xicotenga was coming with many caciques and captains and that they were all clothed in white and red cloaks. Half of each cloak was white and the other red, which was their device and livery. Xicotenga was coming very much in peace, and about fifty chieftains accompanied him. When Xicotenga arrived at Cortés's lodging, he showed Cortés very great respect in his bows and ordered much copal to be burned. Cortés, with great affection, indicated that Xicotenga should sit next to him. Xicotenga told him that he came on behalf of his father, of Maseescaci and all the caciques and governing body of Tlaxcala, to beg him to grant them our friendship; that he came to pledge obedience to our king and lord and to ask pardon for having taken up arms and attacked us; that if they did so, it was because of not knowing who we were, for they were sure we had come on behalf of their enemy Montezuma, and, as many times the Mexicans tend to use craftiness and guile to enter their lands and rob them and plunder, they believed that this is what they were doing now; and that for this reason they endeavored to defend their people and native country and were obliged to fight; that they were very poor, with no gold, silver, precious stones, cotton cloths, or even salt to eat, because Montezuma does not let them go out to look for it; that if their ancestors had had some gold and valuable stones, they had given them to Montezuma when they occasionally made peace and truces so the Mexicans would not destroy them, but this was in times long past. Because at present they had nothing to give,

he should pardon them; their poverty is the reason for it and not lack of goodwill.

He complained a great deal about Montezuma and his allies, all of whom were against them and attacked them, although they had defended themselves very well. Now they wanted to do the same with us but could not; even though they had gathered three times with all their warriors, we were invincible. When they recognized this about us, they wanted to be our friends and vassals of the great lord, the emperor don Carlos, because they were certain that in our company they, their women and children would be protected and defended, and they would not always be in fear of sudden assault by the treacherous Mexicans. He made many other promises concerning themselves and their city.

This Xicotenga was tall, broad shouldered, and well built, and his face was long, somewhat pitted and broad; he was about thirty-five years old and stately in appearance. Cortés thanked him very politely, using friendly words, and said he would accept them as vassals of our king and lord and as our friends. Then Xicotenga begged us to come to his city, because all the caciques, elders, and papas were waiting for us with great joy. Cortés replied that he would come quickly and that he would have gone immediately except that he was busy negotiating with the great Montezuma, but once he had sent off Montezuma's messengers, he would come. Cortés spoke again, somewhat more harshly and sternly, about the attacks they had made on us by day and by night, but, as now nothing could be changed, he would pardon it. He said they should see that the peace we were now offering them would be firm and they would not change their minds, because if they did anything else, he would kill them and destroy their city, and that Xicotenga should not then expect other words of peace, but of war. When Xicotenga and all the chieftains who came with him heard that, they replied to a person that the peace would be steadfast and true and that, as a pledge, they would all stay as hostages. Other conversations took place between Cortés and Xicotenga and most of his chieftains, and they were given some green and blue beads for his father and for him and the rest of

the caciques; and Cortés told them they should say that he would soon come to their city.

The Mexican ambassadors were present at all these conversations and promises, and the peace caused them great concern because they understood well that no good whatsoever would come to them because of it. When Xicotenga had taken his leave, the ambassadors of Montezuma asked Cortés, half laughing, if he believed any of those promises they had made on behalf of all Tlaxcala; that it was all a trick; that we should not believe them; that they were the words of traitors, deceitful; that they said them so that after they had us in their city, in a place where they could safely take us, they would attack and kill us; that we should remember how many times they had come to kill us with all their forces, and as they could not, and they lost many dead and wounded, they now wanted to avenge themselves by asking for a fake peace. Cortés answered them with a very brave expression, saying he did not care in the least whether they should have had such a thought as the Mexicans had said, and even if everything they said was true, he would take satisfaction in punishing them by taking their lives, and that this would be true whether they attacked by day or by night, in the fields or in the city, that it was all the same to him, and the reason he is determined to go there is to see if it is true. Seeing his determination, the ambassadors begged him to stay in our camp for six days, because they wanted to send to their lord Montezuma two of their companions, who would return with a response within that time. Cortés promised to do so, first, because as I have said, he had a fever, and also, even though he appeared not to heed the things those ambassadors said to him, he understood that, if they were true, he had to take them into account until he saw greater certainty of peace.

Because at that time the Tlaxcalans had come in peace, and all along the road by which we came from our Villa Rica de la Veracruz the people were our friends and allies, Cortés wrote to Juan de Escalante, whom he had left in the town to finish building the fort and as captain of some sixty old and sick soldiers who stayed there. In these letters he informed them of the great mercies Our

Lord Jesus Christ had shown us in our victories in the battles and skirmishes since we had entered the province of Tlaxcala, where now the Indians had come for peace, and he asked all of them to give thanks to God for it and to see that they always favor the Totonac towns, our friends. Cortés also asked Juan de Escalante to send right away by courier two jugs of wine he had left buried in a certain marked part of his lodging as well as wafer hosts from those they had brought from the island of Cuba, because we had already finished the ones we brought on this expedition. It is said that in the town they took great pleasure in those letters, and Escalante wrote about what had happened there. Everything came very quickly. At that time, we erected a magnificent, tall cross in our camp; and Cortés ordered the Indians of Cinpancingo and those in the houses near our camp to plaster a place for it with lime and have it beautifully decorated.

Let us return to our new friends, the caciques of Tlaxcala, who, when they saw we were not going to their town, came to our camp with hens and prickly pear fruits, then in season, and each one brought provisions he had in his house and gave it to us with goodwill, without wanting anything at all in return, always begging Cortés to come soon with them to their city. Because we were waiting six days for the Mexicans, as Cortés had promised, he held them off with gentle words. When the time the Mexicans had set had passed, six chieftains, men held in great esteem, came from Mexico and brought an exquisite present sent by the great Montezuma, which was more than three thousand gold pesos worth of rich jewels of various styles and two hundred pieces of cloth, very fine cloaks, covered with feathers and other fancy work. When they presented it, they said to Cortés that their lord Montezuma rejoiced in our good fortune, but he begged him most earnestly on no account to go with the Tlaxcalans to their town, nor to trust them, that they wanted to bring him there to rob him of his gold and cloth because they are so poor that even a good cloak of cotton cloth is beyond them, and that knowing that Montezuma considers us as friends and is sending us the gold, jewels, and cloaks, they would try even harder to rob us. Cortés

happily received that present and said he was grateful and would repay the lord Montezuma with good deeds, that if he sensed that the Tlaxcalans had in their thoughts what Montezuma sent to warn them, he would pay them for it by taking all their lives; but he said he knew with certainty they would not attempt such vile deeds and that he still wanted to go to see what they might do. In the midst of these exchanges, many other messengers came from Tlaxcala, telling Cortés that all the old caciques from the head town of the whole province were coming close to our huts to see Cortés and all of us, to bring us to their city. When Cortés learned this, he begged the Mexican ambassadors to wait three days for the messages to their lord, because he had at present to discuss and attend to the past war and the peace they were now negotiating; and they said they would wait.

[LXXIV] When the old caciques of all Tlaxcala saw that we were not going to their city, they decided to come to us in litters, in hammocks, on men's backs and others walking; they were the caciques already named by me, Maseescaci, Xicotenga the elder, Guaxolingo, Chichimecatecle, and Tecapaneca of Topeyanco. They all arrived at our camp with another large company of chieftains and, with great respect, made three bows to Cortés and all of us, and they burned copal, touched the ground with their hands, and kissed the earth. Xicotenga the elder began to speak to Cortés in this way: "Malinche, Malinche: Many times we have sent to you to plead that you pardon us for having come out to attack you, and we have already given you our reason, which was to defend ourselves from the evil of Montezuma and his great forces, because we believed that you were of his faction and allies, but if we had known what we now know, not only do I say we would go out to greet you on the roads with many provisions, but we also would have swept the roads for you and we would even have gone to the sea for you, where you had your acales (which are ships). Now that you have pardoned us, we come to beg of you, all these caciques and I, that you go right away with us to our city, and there we will share with you everything we have, and we will serve you with our people and property. Please, Malinche,

do not do otherwise, but let us go at once, because we fear that those Mexicans will possibly have told you some of the falsehoods and lies they usually tell about us; do not believe them or listen to them, because they are false in everything, and we understand that it is because of them you have not wanted to go to our city.”

Cortés replied with a cheerful expression and said that he has known well for many years, before we came to these their lands, that they were good people, and for that reason he was astonished when they came out to attack us, and that the Mexicans who were there were awaiting a response for their lord Montezuma. He thanked them very much for what they were saying—that we should go right away to their city—and for the provisions they always brought and for their other courtesies, and he would repay them in good deeds. He said he would already have gone if he had anyone to carry the tepuzques, which are the cannons. When they heard those words, they felt such pleasure that it showed in their faces, and they said: “So for this you have stayed and not told us?” In less than half an hour they brought more than five hundred Indian bearers. Very early the next day we began to march along the road to the head town of Tlaxcala in good order, artillery as well as horsemen, escopeteros, crossbowmen, and all the rest, as we usually did. Montezuma’s messengers had already begged Cortés to let them go with us to see how this came out at Tlaxcala, to dispatch them from there and to put them in his lodging so they would not be dishonored in any way, because, according to what they said, they were afraid of the Tlaxcalans.

Before going any further, I would like to say that in all the towns through which we passed and in others where they knew about us, they called Cortés “Malinche,” and from here on, I will call him this, Malinche, in all the conversations we might have with any Indians in this province as well as the city of Mexico, and I will not call him Cortés except where appropriate. The reason Cortés was given this name is that, as doña Marina our interpreter was always in his company, especially when ambassadors arrived or in discussions with caciques, and she spoke to them in the Mexican language, they called Cortés “Marina’s captain,” and for short they

called him Malinche. This name was also given to one Juan Pérez de Artiaga, a citizen of Puebla, because he always went with doña Marina and Jerónimo de Aguilar, learning the language, and for this reason they called him Juan Pérez Malinche; we first heard that name about two years ago. I wanted to make note of some of this, although there is no reason for it except that it should be understood from now on that when the name "Malinche" is used, it means "Cortés." I also want to say that, from the time we entered the land of Tlaxcala until we went to their city, twenty-four days had passed; so we entered the city on September 23, 1519.

[LXXV] When the caciques saw that our baggage was on its way to their city, they immediately went on ahead to make sure everything would be ready to receive us and to have the lodgings adorned with boughs. When we were within a quarter of a league of the city, the same caciques who had gone ahead came out to greet us, and they brought their sons and nephews and many leading people, each kin group, faction, and party as a unit; in Tlaxcala, there were four parties, not counting that of Tecapaneca, lord of Topeyanco, which makes five. Also the people came from all the places that were subject to them and wore their different liveries, which, although they were of maguey fiber because they could not obtain any cotton, were very delicate, with good embroidery and painting. Then came the papas from throughout the province, and there were many of them because of the great adoratorios they had, which, as I have said, they call *cus*, where they have their idols and make their sacrifices. Those papas brought fire pans with burning coals and, with their incense, perfumed all of us. Some wore very long robes like surplices, which were white and had hoods, like those the canons wear, their hair very long and tangled so it could not be separated without being cut, full of blood coming from their ears, which they had cut in sacrifice that day. When they saw us, they lowered their heads as if in humility, and they wore their fingernails very long. We heard it said that those papas were seen as devout men of very good lives.

Many chieftains came near Cortés, accompanying him, and when we entered the town, there was no room in the streets and on

the roofs because so many Indian men and women came out to see us with very happy faces. They brought us about twenty bouquets of native flowers of different colors and sweet smelling, and they gave them to Cortés and the rest of the soldiers who looked like captains to them, especially those on horseback. When we arrived at some fine courtyards where the lodgings were, Xicotenga the elder and Maseescaci immediately took Cortés by the hand and led him to the lodgings, and there they had ready for each of us some small beds of mats and cloths of maguey fiber, in their fashion. They also lodged the friends we brought from Cempoala and Zocotlan near us. Cortés ordered that the messengers of the great Montezuma be put next to his lodging.

Even though we were in a land where we saw clearly that the people were of goodwill and very peaceful, we did not forget about being well prepared, as was usual with us. It seems that a captain of ours, to whom fell the watch when scouts, lookouts, and sentries were to be posted, said to Cortés, "It seems, sir, that they're very peaceful; we don't have need of so many guards nor to be as cautious as we usually are." Cortés said: "Look, gentlemen, I, too, can see well what you've said, but it's good practice that we be on the alert, and although they may be very good people, we mustn't have faith in their peacefulness, but act as if they were going to attack and we see them coming against us, for many captains have been defeated because of overconfidence and carelessness. We, especially, must be very alert as we're so few and because the great Montezuma sent to warn us, even though it might be false and not true." Let us stop talking about such exchanges and the order we kept on our watches and guards and return to talking about how Xicotenga the elder and Maseescaci, who were great caciques, became annoyed with Cortés and said through our interpreters: "Malinche, either you consider us enemies, or you show in actions that you do not have confidence in us and in the peace you have given us and we you, and we say this because we see how you keep watch and came along the roads on the alert as you did when you were coming against our squadrons. This we believe you do, Malinche, because of the falsehoods and evil things the Mexicans

have secretly told you to put you on bad terms with us. Be sure you do not believe them, for now you are here and we will give you everything you want, even ourselves and our children, and we will die for you; for that reason you can ask for hostages at your will." Cortés and all of us were astonished at the pleasantness and kindness with which they said this. Cortés answered that it is what he had believed and he had no need of hostages, that seeing their goodwill was enough; as for being on the alert, we always did so as a matter of custom, and he should not take it badly; for all the promises they gave us, he was grateful and would repay them in the time to come. With these conversations over, other chieftains came with large provisions of hens, maize bread, prickly pear fruit, and other types of vegetables that the land provided, and they supplied the camp very fully. In the twenty days we were there, there was always more than enough; and we entered this city, as I said, on the 23rd of September, 1519.

[LXXVI] The next morning Cortés ordered that an altar be put up so that mass could be said, because we now had wine and wafer hosts. The secular priest Juan Díaz said mass because the Mercedarian father was feverish and very weak, and Maseescaci, the elder Xicotenga, and other caciques were present. When the mass was finished, Cortés went into his lodging, and with him some of us soldiers who usually accompanied him, and also the two old caciques. Xicotenga said they wanted to bring him a present, and Cortés showed them much affection and told them to bring it whenever they wanted. At once they spread out some mats with a cloth on top, and they brought six or seven small pieces of gold and stones of little value and some loads of maguey fiber cloth, which were all very poor, not worth twenty pesos, and when they gave it to him, those caciques said laughing, "Malinche: We understand well that, as what we are giving to you is little, you will not receive it with goodwill; we have already sent to tell you that we are poor and we do not have gold or riches, and the reason is the treachery and wickedness of the Mexicans and Montezuma, who is now lord, who have taken from us everything we once had as the price for peace and truces we asked from them

so they would not attack on us. Do not regard this gift as of small value, but accept it with goodwill as something from friends and servants, which we will be to you.” Then, separately, they also brought a great deal of food. Cortés accepted it with joy, and he told them he valued it more, because it was from their hands and because of the goodwill with which they gave it, than if others brought them a house full of grains of gold, and that he accepts it as such, and he showed them much affection.

It seems that all the caciques had agreed among themselves to give us, from among their daughters and nieces, the most beautiful maidens to marry. The elder Xicotenga said: “Malinche, so you might know more clearly the good we want for you and that we desire to please you in everything, we want to give our daughters to be your wives and have children because we want to have you as brothers, for you are so good, strong, and courageous. I have a very beautiful daughter, and she has not been married; I want her for you.” Likewise, Maseescaci and all the rest of the caciques said they would bring their daughters and that we should accept them as wives, and they said many other words and made other promises, and all day both Maseescaci and Xicotenga stayed close to Cortés. As he was blind from age, Xicotenga, with his hand, felt Cortés on his head, beard, and face and ran his hands over all his body. Cortés replied to them regarding the women that he and all of us were very grateful and that we would repay them in good deeds as time went on. The Mercedarian father was present there, and Cortés said to him: “Father, it seems to me that this will be a good time to try to get these caciques to give up their idols and not to sacrifice; they’ll do whatever we order them because of the fear they have of the Mexicans.” The friar said: “Sir, that’s all very well, but let’s leave it until they bring the daughters, and then we’ll have an occasion to talk about it. You’ll say that you don’t want to accept the women until they promise not to sacrifice any longer; if that works, good; if not, we’ll do what we’re obliged to do.” So it was left for the next day.

[LXXVII] The next day the same old caciques came and brought five beautiful young Indian maidens with them, and for

Indians they were very good-looking and nicely adorned, and for each Indian woman they brought another Indian girl as her servant, and all were daughters of caciques. Xicotenga said to Cortés: "Malinche, this is my daughter; she has not been married and is a maiden, take her for yourself." He gave her to him by the hand and said he should give the others to the captains. Cortés thanked him, and with a pleasant expression said that he accepted them and took them as their own, but at present they should stay with their parents. The same caciques asked why we did not take them now. Cortés replied, "Because I want first to do what is ordered by Our Lord God, in whom we believe and whom we worship, and what the king our lord sent us to do"—which was to have them remove their idols and see that they no longer sacrifice or kill people, nor do the other evil and filthy things they have the custom of doing—"and believe in what we believe, which is one true God alone. . . ."

He told them many other things about our holy faith, and truly they were very well explained, because doña Marina and Aguilar, our interpreters, were already so expert with it, that they made them understand it very well. They said that if they wanted to be our brothers and have a true friendship with us so that we would take their daughters more willingly to have them, as they say, for wives, that they should leave their evil idols right away and believe in and worship Our Lord God. Their reply to this was to say: "Malinche, we have already understood you before now, and we truly believe that that God of yours and that great lady are very good; but look, you have only just now come to these our houses; as time goes on we will understand more clearly your beliefs, and we will see how they are and we will do what is best. How can you want us to leave our teules, whom our ancestors have considered as gods for many years and have worshipped and sacrificed to them? If we, who are old men, might want to do it to satisfy you, what will all our papas and the inhabitants of our province, who are young people and children say, except to rise up against us? Especially as the papas have already spoken with the greatest of our teules, and they replied that we should not forget them in sacrifices of men and

in everything we were accustomed to do before; otherwise, they would destroy this whole province with famines, pestilence, and wars.” Thus, they spoke and gave as a response that we should not speak any more about that matter because they were not going to stop sacrificing even if they were killed for it. When we heard that response, which they gave in such earnest and without fear, the Mercedarian father, a learned man and theologian, said: “Sir, don’t try to press them hard on this any more, because it’s not right for us to make them Christians by force, and I wouldn’t want you to do what we did in Cempoala, throwing down their idols, until they have knowledge of our holy faith. What use is it now to take their idols from one *cu* and *adoratorio* if they immediately bring them to others? It’s better that they continue hearing our admonitions, which are holy and good, so that they recognize going forward the good advice we give them.” Also three gentlemen, who were Juan Velázquez de León and Francisco de Lugo,<sup>1</sup> spoke to Cortés and said: “What the father says is right, and with what you’ve done, you’ve fulfilled your duty; don’t touch on the matter with these *caciques* anymore.” And so it was done.

With pleas, we ordered them immediately to clear out a newly built *cu* nearby, take away some idols, plaster it, and clean it in order to put a cross and an image of Our Lady there, which they did right away. In it mass was said, those *cacicas* were baptized, and the name of doña Luisa was given to the blind Xicotenga’s daughter. Cortés took her by the hand and gave her to Pedro de Alvarado, and he said to Xicotenga that the one to whom he gave her was his brother and his captain and that he should give it his approval because she would be very well treated by him; and Xicotenga was content. The daughter or niece of Maseescaci was given the name doña Elvira, and she was very beautiful, and it seems to me that Cortés gave her to Juan Velázquez de León; the rest were given baptismal names, all with doña, and Cortés gave them to Gonzalo de Sandoval, Cristóbal de Olid, and Alonso de

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1. Bernal Díaz omits mention of Pedro de Alvarado here.

Ávila. When this was done, Cortés told them why two crosses were put up, and it was because their idols feared them and that wherever we set up a camp or slept, we put them in the roads, and they were very content with all this.

Before going forward, I would like to say about that cacica, doña Luisa, daughter of Xicotenga, who was given to Pedro de Alvarado, that when they gave her to him, all the greater part of Tlaxcala paid reverence to her, gave her presents, and regarded her as their mistress; from her, Pedro de Alvarado, while he was still unmarried, had a son named don Pedro and a daughter named doña Leonor, now the wife of don Francisco de la Cueva, a fine gentleman and cousin of the Duke of Albuquerque, who has had by her four or five sons, very fine gentlemen. This lady, doña Leonor, is an excellent lady—as daughter of such a father after all, knight commander of Santiago, adelantado and governor of Guatemala, and it is he who went to Peru with a great fleet, and through her relation to Xicotenga, the great lord of Tlaxcala.

[LXXVIII] Cortés took those caciques aside and questioned them in very great detail about the affairs of Mexico. Xicotenga, as he was the best informed and a great lord, began the conversation about it, and from time to time Maseescaci, also a great lord, helped him. He said that Montezuma had such great forces of warriors that when he wanted to take a large town or raid a province, he could put one hundred fifty thousand men in the field, and they knew this well from the experience of past wars and hostilities they had had with them for more than a hundred years. Cortés said to them, “Well, with as many warriors as you say came down on you, how is it they never finished conquering you?” They replied that, although the Mexicans sometimes defeated and killed them and carried off many of their vassals to be sacrificed, many of the enemy also were on the field dead and others taken prisoner; and the Mexicans did not come so secretly that they did not really get some news of it, and when they knew of it they readied all their forces, and with the help of the people from Guaxocingo, they defended themselves and did damage to the Mexicans. As all the provinces and towns Montezuma had plundered and subjected to

his rule were on very bad terms with the Mexicans, and because the Mexicans forced some of them to fight, they did not willingly do so; rather, the Tlaxcalans received warnings from those very men, and for this reason they defended their lands the best they could. The greatest continuous trouble came to them from a very large city one day's walk from there, called Cholula, whose people were very treacherous. Montezuma secretly put his captaincies there, and as they were close by, they had attacked by night.

Maseescaci said more: that Montezuma had posted garrisons of many warriors in all the provinces besides the many he could send out from the city, and that all those provinces paid him tribute of gold, silver, feathers, stones, clothing of cotton cloth, Indian men and women for sacrifice and others for servants; that he is such a great lord that everything he wants he has and that he has filled the house where he lives with riches and stones and chalchuiis, which he has robbed and taken by force from those who would not give them to him willingly, and that all the riches of the country were in his power. Then they told of the great many servants in his house, and it would never end if I were to tell it all here. They told also of the many women he possessed and how he married some of them off. They told us about everything.

Then they spoke of how well fortified his city was, about the lake, the depth of the water, the causeways through which one had to enter this city, the wooden bridges on each causeway and how one enters and leaves through a narrow opening on each bridge, and how if any one of them was raised, one could become isolated between bridge and bridge and not be able to enter the city; how all the greater part of the city is settled within the lake and one cannot pass from house to house except by drawbridges and canoes, and all the houses have flat roofs and on the flat roofs they have made a type of defensive protection, and they can fight from them; and the way the city is provided with fresh water from a spring called Chapultepec, about a half league from the city; the water goes through some structures and arrives at a place where they carry it in canoes to sell in the streets. Then they told us about their arms, which were spears with two prongs that they

threw with spear-throwers, which will pass through every kind of armor, and many good bowmen, and others with flint-tipped lances that have a fathom-long blade made in such a way that they cut better than razors, and shields, cotton armor, many slingers with heavy round stones, other very good and long lances, and two-handed swords, razor sharp. They brought us paintings on two large maguey fiber cloths of the battles they had had with them and their way of fighting.

As our captain and all of us were already informed about everything those caciques were saying, he stopped the discussion and engaged them in another deeper one, and it was how they had come to settle that land, from where they had come, and why, with the two lands so close to each other, they were so different from and enemies of the Mexicans. They said their ancestors had told them that, in times past, men and women were settled there among them who were very tall in body with large bones, who, because they were very wicked and evil in their ways, they fought and killed, and those who stayed died. So that we might see what large and tall bodies they had, they brought a bone from one of them, and it was very thick, the height of a man of reasonable stature, and that was the leg bone from the knee to the hip. I measured myself against it, and it was as tall as I, although I am of reasonable size. They brought other pieces of bones like the first, but they were already eaten away and dissolved by the earth. We were all astonished to see those bones, and we were certain there had been giants in this land. Our captain Cortés said it would be good to send that great bone to Castile so His Majesty might see it, so we sent it with the first representatives who went there. Also those same caciques said they knew from their ancestors that one of their idols, to whom they were greatly devoted, had told them that men would come from far-off lands where the sun rises to subjugate and rule them, that if we were those men they would be happy about it, for we are strong, courageous, and good. When they were discussing the peace, they were reminded of what their idols had said, and for that reason they gave us their daughters, to make us relatives who would defend them from the Mexicans. When they finished their

speech, we were all astonished, and we asked ourselves if they could be speaking the truth. Then our captain Cortés answered them and said that certainly we came from the direction where the sun rises, and that our lord the king sent us for this reason, to make them our brothers because he had heard of them, that he prayed to God to give us grace so that by our hands and intercession they would be saved. And we all said amen.

The gentlemen who should read this will be tired of hearing speeches and talks by us to the Tlaxcalans and by them to us. I would like to finish now, but of necessity I have to spend time on other things we experienced with them, and it is that the volcano near Guaxocingo was throwing much fire during the time we were in Tlaxcala, more fire than it usually threw, about which our captain Cortés and all of us marveled as we had not seen such a thing. A captain of ours, Diego de Ordaz, desired to go to see what it was and asked permission of our general to climb it, which permission he gave him and even, in fact, ordered him to do it. He took with him two of our soldiers and certain chieftains of Guaxocingo. The chieftains he took frightened him by telling him that as soon as one was halfway up Popocatepeque,<sup>2</sup> for so they called that volcano, one could not bear the trembling of the earth and flames and stones and ash that flew out of it, and that they would not dare to ascend beyond where there were some cus of idols that they call the teules of Popocatepeque. Nevertheless, Diego de Ordaz with his two companions continued to the top, but the Indians in their company stayed below and did not dare go up. It seems, according to what Ordaz and the two soldiers later said, that as they were going up, the volcano started to throw out great blazes of fire and half-burned stones, but light ones, and much ash, and that the whole range and mountain where the volcano sits trembled, and that they stayed for an hour without taking another step forward, at which time they sensed that the outburst had passed, and it was not throwing out so much ash or smoke. They went up to the

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2. Popocatepetl.

mouth, which was very round and wide, a quarter of a league in width, and from there could be seen the great city of Mexico, the entire lake and all the towns settled in it.

This volcano is about twelve or thirteen leagues from Mexico. After having seen everything, Ordaz, very joyful and astonished at having seen Mexico and its cities, returned to Tlaxcala with his companions, and the Indians of Guaxocingo and Tlaxcala considered it very daring. When he told it to the captain Cortés and all of us, we were astonished by it, as in that time we had not seen or heard of such a thing like now, when we know what it is, and many Spaniards and even Franciscan friars have climbed to the top of the crater. When Diego de Ordaz went to Castile, he asked His Majesty for the volcano as a device on his coat of arms, and his nephew Ordaz, who lives in Puebla, now has it that way. Since then, for the whole time we have been in this land, we have never seen it throw so much fire or make so much noise as that first time, and there were even several years that it threw no fire until the year 1539 when it threw out very great flames, stones, and ash.

Let us stop speaking about the volcano, for now that we know what it is and we have seen other volcanoes, like those of Nicaragua and Guatemala, we could have kept quiet about those of Guaxocingo and not put them in the story. In this town of Tlaxcala, we found wooden houses made of latticework, full of Indian men and women whom they kept imprisoned there and fed until they were fat enough to be sacrificed and eaten. We broke open and destroyed the prisons so the prisoners could leave, but those poor Indians did not dare go anywhere but stayed there with us, and so they escaped with their lives. From then on, in all the towns we entered, the first thing our captain ordered was to break open those prisons and set the prisoners free; they had them commonly in all these lands. When Cortés and all of us saw that great cruelty, he scolded the caciques of Tlaxcala very angrily, and they promised that from then on they would not kill or eat any Indians in that way. I ask, what use are all those promises when as soon as we turned our heads, they committed the same cruelties.

## OUR ROAD WAS THROUGH CHOLULA

[LXXIX] Our captain, realizing we had been resting seventeen days in Tlaxcala and were hearing about the great riches of Montezuma and his thriving city, resolved to consult all of us captains and soldiers who he felt had a strong will to go forward, and it was decided that our departure would be very soon. There were many dissenting discussions about this course in the camp because some soldiers said it was frightening for us to enter so strong a city, we being so few in number, and they talked about the great forces of Montezuma. Cortés replied that it was too late now to do anything else because our goal and battle cry had always been to see Montezuma, so counsel otherwise was now useless. Those in opposition, seeing that he said this with such determination, and sensing that many of us soldiers supported Cortés very willingly by shouting, “Go right on ahead!” dropped their opposition. The ones involved in this talk of opposition were the ones who had property in Cuba, but I and the other poor soldiers had always offered our souls to God, who created them, and our bodies to wounds and hardships, even to death in the service of Our Lord God and His Majesty.

Then Xicotenga and Maseescaci, lords of Tlaxcala, seeing that in fact we were going to go to Mexico, had great sorrow in their souls and were always with Cortés warning him not to take that course of action and not to trust Montezuma in the slightest, nor any other Mexican, and not to believe his great bows nor his so humble words filled with politeness nor even all the presents he had sent nor any of his other promises; all were treacherous, and in an hour they would turn around and take back what they had

given, and he must be very much on his guard against them night and day, because they were very sure that when we were most careless they would attack us, and when we were fighting with them we should not leave those we could kill with their lives: the young people, so they could not take up arms; the old people, so they could not give counsel, and they gave us other such advice. Our captain told them he was very grateful for their good advice and showed them much affection through promises he made and gifts he gave to the old Xicotenga and Maseescaci and most of the other caciques. He gave them a large part of the fine cloaks Montezuma had given him, and he told them that it would be good to make peace between them and the Mexicans so that they might have a friendship and get salt and cotton and other merchandise. Xicotenga replied that peace was out of the question, that their hostility had always been deeply rooted in their hearts, that the Mexicans were such that, under the pretext of peace, they will be more treacherous, because they never tell the truth in anything they promise, and that he should not bother speaking anymore about these matters; instead, they again begged him to guard himself very well from falling into the hands of such evil people.

We spoke about the road we should take to Mexico, because Montezuma's ambassadors who were with us, who were going as guides, said that the best and most level road was through the city of Cholula, where we would be well taken care of because they were vassals of the great Montezuma, and to all of us it seemed good advice to go by that city; however, when the caciques of Tlaxcala learned that we were going to go where the Mexicans were directing us, they were very sad and again said that in any case we should go by Guaxocingo where their relatives and our friends were and not by Cholula, for in Cholula Montezuma always kept his double dealings hidden. However much they talked to and counseled us not to enter that city, our captain, with our very fully discussed advice, was still resolved to go through Cholula. For one thing, everyone said it was a large town with many towers and high, large cus, set down on a beautiful plain that truly

looked from afar at that time like our Valladolid in Old Castile. For another reason, it was an area near large settlements, and we would have many provisions and have our friends the Tlaxcalans close at hand. Our intention was to stay there until we saw how we could go to Mexico without having a war, because the great power of the Mexicans was to be feared; unless Our Lord God first extended us his divine hand and mercy, with which he always helped us and gave us strength, we could not enter Mexico.

After many discussions and resolutions, our road was through Cholula. Cortés then ordered that messengers go to ask the people of Cholula why, being so close, they did not come to visit and pay us the respect due us as messengers of such a great king and lord as the one who sent us to notify them of their salvation. He asked that all the caciques and papas of that city come immediately to see us and pledge their loyalty to our king and lord; if not, he would consider them to have bad intentions. While he was saying this and other things appropriate for a message to them about this matter, they came to let Cortés know that the great Montezuma was sending four ambassadors with presents of gold; never, from what we had seen, did he send a message without a present of gold and cloth, because they consider it an insult to send messages if they do not send presents with them.

[LXXX] While Cortés was discussing our departure and matters of war with all of us and the caciques of Tlaxcala, they came to tell him that the four ambassadors from Montezuma, all chieftains, had arrived in that town and were bringing presents. Cortés ordered them to be called, and when they arrived where he was, they paid great respect to him and to all us soldiers who were there, and they presented Montezuma's gift of rich golden jewels made into many kinds of objects, well worth two thousand pesos, and ten loads of cloaks with very fine featherwork. Cortés accepted the gifts with a pleased expression. Those ambassadors then said, on behalf of their lord Montezuma, that he was very much astonished at our being so many days among those poor and uncivilized people who are not even good as slaves because they are so evil, treacherous, and thieving; that when we were

most careless by day or night, they would kill us in order to rob us. He begged us to go right away to his city where he would share everything he had, and although it would not be as much as we deserved or he desired, and although all the food that entered into his city had to be carried, he would order us to be provisioned as best he could. Montezuma did this to get us out of Tlaxcala because he knew we had made friendships with the Tlaxcalans and to perfect the friendship the Tlaxcalans had given their daughters to Malinche; the Mexicans understood well that no good could come to them from any of our alliances. For this reason, they baited us with gold and presents so that we would go to their lands or at least so that we would leave Tlaxcala. Let us return to talking about the ambassadors, whom the people of Tlaxcala knew well; they told our captain that all of them were lords of towns and vassals whom Montezuma sent to negotiate matters of great importance. Cortés gave the messengers much thanks with great friendly gestures and signs of affection; he gave them as an answer that he would go very soon to see the lord Montezuma, and he begged them to stay some days there with us.

*At that time, Cortés sent two captains, Pedro de Alvarado and Bernaldino Vázquez de Tapia, to see and speak with the great Montezuma and scout out the city of Mexico, its armies and fortress. They were accompanied by some of Montezuma's ambassadors. When they were already on the road, Cortés had a change of heart because of the general discontent and recalled them. The ambassadors gave an account of this incident to Montezuma, describing Pedro de Alvarado and giving him the name of Tonatio, which, according to Bernal Díaz, "means the sun or the child of the sun, and so they called him from then on," continuing on to say, "Pedro de Alvarado had a very strong and nimble body, good features and presence, and in his face as in his speech, in everything, he was well favored, so that it seemed he was always laughing."*

[LXXXI] I have already said in the last chapter how our captain sent messengers to Cholula so they would come to

see us at Tlaxcala. The caciques of that city, when they learned what Cortés ordered them to do, thought it best to send four Indians of little standing to make excuses for them and to say that because they were ill they could not come; they did not bring provisions or anything else, but dryly gave that response. When those messengers arrived, the caciques of Tlaxcala were present, and they said to our captain that the Cholulans sent those Indians to make a mockery of him and all of us, for they were *maceguales*, people of low status. So Cortés immediately sent them back with four Indians of Cempoala, warning the Cholulans that chieftains should come within three days, for Cholula was only five leagues from there, and that if they did not come he would consider them rebels. He said that when they came, he would tell them things that would be well advised for the salvation of their souls and good principles for their way of life, and we would have them as friends and brothers as are the Tlaxcalans, their neighbors, but that if they resolved otherwise and did not want our friendship, we would not for that reason try to displease and annoy them. When the caciques heard that message, they replied that they were not coming to Tlaxcala because the Tlaxcalans were their enemies, and they knew that the Tlaxcalans had said many bad things about them and their lord Montezuma. They said that we should come to their city and leave the boundaries of Tlaxcala, and that if they did not act as they should, we could consider them exactly as we had sent to say they were. When our captain saw that the excuse they gave was very just, we decided to go there. When the caciques of Tlaxcala saw that we were so determined to leave for Cholula, they said to Cortés: "So you want to believe the Mexicans and not us, who are your friends. We have already told you many times to watch out for the people of Cholula and the power of Mexico. So that you can have better support from us, we have readied ten thousand warriors who will go in your company." Cortés thanked them very much, but consulting with all of us decided it would not be good to bring so many warriors to a land where we wanted to find friends, but it would be good to take a

thousand, and he asked them for that many and said that the rest should stay in their homes.

[LXXXII] *When they set out on the road for Cholula, they were welcomed by messengers, chieftains, sent by the caciques of Cholula. Bernal Díaz observed that "most of them wore cotton cloths made like Moorish tunics, like those the Zapotecan Indians wear." The chieftains objected to the armed Tlaxcalans coming to their city. When Cortés saw they were right to object, he sent Pedro de Alvarado and Cristóbal de Olid to ask the Tlaxcalans to stay outside the city. Cortés then asked the chieftains to pledge loyalty to the king, and they did so, "but not before a notary."*

[LXXXIII] The Cholulans had received us very ceremoniously and certainly with goodwill, except that as was found out afterward, Montezuma sent to order his ambassadors who were with us to arrange with the Cholulans that, together with a squadron of twenty thousand men Montezuma had sent, they should be ready, when the Mexicans entered the city, for all of them to attack us night or day, seize us, and carry those of us they could, bound, to Mexico. He sent them great promises, much jewelry and clothing, and a golden drum, and he told the papas of that city they were to take twenty of us to make sacrifices to their idols. With everything arranged, and when the warriors Montezuma sent were in some huts and thickets about a half league from Cholula and others already inside, in the houses, all of them ready with their arms, defenses put up on the rooftops, pits, and barricades in the streets so the horses could not run, and some houses already filled with long poles, leather collars, and ropes with which they were to bind and carry us to Mexico, Our Lord God did better, so that everything turned out the opposite for them.

Let us leave this now and return to talking about how, when they lodged us, they fed us very well the first two days, but although they seemed peaceful, we continued always to be very much at the ready because of our good custom of doing so. On the third day, they neither gave us anything to eat nor did any

cacique or papa appear, and if any Indians came to see us, they were at a distance and did not come to us but were laughing as though mocking us. When our captain saw that, he told doña Marina and Aguilar, our interpreters, to tell the ambassadors of the great Montezuma who were there to order the caciques to bring some food, but what they brought was water and wood; and some old men who brought it said there was no more maize. That same day, other ambassadors from Montezuma came and joined those who were with us, and they said to Cortés very shamelessly that their lord sent them to say that we should not go to his city because he had nothing to give us to eat and that they wanted to return right away to Mexico with a response. When Cortés understood that, and he thought poorly of their speech, he said very blandly to the ambassadors that he was surprised a great lord like Montezuma would have so many changes of mind, and he begged them not to go to Mexico because the next day he wanted to leave to see Montezuma and do whatever he might order, and it seems to me that he gave them some strings of beads. The ambassadors said that, yes, they would stay.

This done, our captain ordered us to come together, and he said to us: "I see there is something very wrong with these people; let's be very much on the alert in case some mischief is going on with them." Then he sent for the principal cacique, and I do not remember his name now, to come or send some other chieftains; the cacique replied that he was ill and could not come. When our captain heard that, he ordered us to bring to his lodgings two of the many papas from the great cu near our lodgings, using persuasive arguments. We brought two of them without doing them disrespect, and Cortés ordered that each one of them be given a chalchiui, which are very much valued among them, like emeralds, and he asked them with kindly words why the cacique and chieftains and all the rest of the papas were afraid, that he had sent for them and they did not want to come. It seems that one of those papas was very important among them, something like a bishop, for he had charge or command over all the rest of the cus of that city, and they held him in great respect. He said that they,

the papas, had no fear of us; that if the cacique and chieftains did not want to come, he would go himself to summon them, and that when he spoke to them, he believed they would do as he wanted and come. Then Cortés said that he should go ahead but that his companion should wait there until he returned. That papa went and summoned the cacique and chieftains, and soon they came with him to Cortés's lodging. He asked them through our interpreters why they were afraid and why they had not given us anything to eat; that if they were having difficulties with our being in their city, the next morning we would leave for Mexico to see and speak to the lord Montezuma; that they should have tamemes ready to carry the baggage and tepuzques, which are the cannons, and also that they should bring food right away. The cacique was so fearful he hardly managed to speak and said they would go look for the food, but that their lord Montezuma had sent to order them not to give us food, nor did he want us to go on from there.

In the midst of these discussions, three people from Cempoala, our friends, came in and secretly said to Cortés that they had found, close to where we were lodged, holes dug in the streets covered over with wood and earth on top, which, if one did not look carefully, could not be seen, that they removed the earth from on top of one hole and it was filled with very sharp stakes to kill the horses if they charged, that the rooftops were filled with stones and adobe brick defenses, and that they were certainly not for a good purpose, because they also found barricades of thick wood in another street. At that moment there arrived eight of the Tlaxcalan Indians we had left outside the city, who did not enter Cholula, and they said to Cortés: "Be careful, Malinche, for there is something wrong in this city; we know that this night they have sacrificed to their idol, the one for war, seven people, five of them children, so that it will give them victory against you, and also we have seen that they are removing all the baggage and women and children." When Cortés heard that, he immediately sent the Tlaxcalans to their captains to let them know to be ready if we sent for them. He spoke again to the cacique and papas and chieftains of Cholula, saying they

should not be afraid nor be upset, and they should think about the loyalty they had pledged and they should not break it, that if they did he would punish them for it. He reminded them that we had already said we wanted to set out in the morning and he had need of two thousand warriors from that city to go with us, like the Tlaxcalans had given us, because they will be necessary on the roads. They told him, yes, they would provide them and asked permission to go then to get them ready. They left very content because they believed that, with the warriors they were going to give us and with Montezuma's captaincies in the thickets and huts, we could not escape death or capture because the horses would not be able to charge and because of certain defenses and barricades, which they now advised those in the garrison to make in such a way that there would be only a narrow lane, through which we could not pass; they told the Mexicans that the next day we were going to leave and they should all be very much prepared, because they would give us two thousand warriors and, when we were going along off our guard, between the two forces they would make their captures there, and they could bind us; they were certain of this because they had made sacrifices to their war idols and had been promised victory.

Let us stop speaking about this, which they thought was a certainty, and return to our captain, who wanted to know in detail everything about the agreement and what was happening. He told doña Marina to take more chalchuis to the two papas who had spoken first, for they were not afraid, and to tell them with kindly words that Malinche wanted to talk to them again, and that she should bring them with her. Doña Marina went and spoke to them in that way she knew so well how to do, and with the gifts they came with her right away. Cortés told them they should speak the truth about what they knew, for they were priests of the idols and chieftains who should not lie; he told them that what they said would not be revealed in any way whatsoever because the next day we were going to leave, and he would give them a great deal of cloth. They said the truth was that their lord Montezuma knew we were coming to that city, and each day he was of many minds;

he could not definitely decide what to do. Sometimes he ordered them to do us much honor and guide us to his city if we went there, and other times he sent to say that it was not his will that we go to Mexico. They said that now recently his Tezcatepuca and his Huichilobos, for whom they had great devotion, had counseled him that they should kill us there in Cholula or carry us bound to Mexico, that the day before he had sent twenty thousand warriors, half of them already here inside the city and the other half nearby in some ravines. They said they had already been informed we were going to go tomorrow and about the barricades they had ordered erected, the two thousand warriors that were to be given to us, and how they had already made an agreement that twenty of us were to be sacrificed to the idols of Cholula. Cortés ordered that these papas be given very highly decorated cloaks and begged them not to talk about all of this, for if they revealed it, we would kill them on our return from Mexico. He told them we wanted to go early in the morning and that they should have all the caciques come then so that he might speak to them.

That night Cortés took counsel about what we should do, because he had with him extraordinary men with good advice; but as such things often go, some said it would be best to change the route and go by Guaxocingo; others said we should try to make peace in whatever way we could, and we should return to Tlaxcala; others of us gave an opinion that if we allowed those treacheries to pass without punishment, then wherever we went others would treat us worse, and because we were there in that great town with plenty of provisions, we should attack them, because they would feel it more in their homes than in the country, and we should get the Tlaxcalans ready right away so that they might join in; and to everyone this last advice seemed right. This is how it happened: Because Cortés had said we were going to leave the next day, we should make as though we were packing up our things, which were little enough, and in some large, high-walled courtyards there where we were lodged, we should attack the Indian warriors, for that is what they deserved. As for the ambassadors of Montezuma, we should conceal what we were doing and tell them that the

evil Cholulans had wanted to do something treacherous and cast the blame for it on their lord Montezuma and on them, as his ambassadors, but we did not believe he ordered any such thing. We begged them to stay in their lodging and not have any more conversation with the people of that city so that they would give us no reason to think they were joining in these treacheries and so they might go with us to Mexico as guides. They replied that neither they nor their lord Montezuma knew anything at all about what we were telling them, and although they did not like it, we put guards over them so they would not leave without permission and so Montezuma would not know we knew he was the one who ordered it to be done.

That night we were very much ready and fully armed, the horses saddled and bridled, with many sentries and patrols, but this is what we were always accustomed to do, because we were very certain that all the captaincies, Mexican as well as Cholulan, would attack us that night.

An old Indian woman, wife of a cacique, because she knew the agreement and trap they had set up, came secretly to doña Marina, our interpreter. She had seen that doña Marina was young, good-looking, and rich, so she spoke to her and counseled her to come with her to her house if she wanted to escape with her life, because it was certain that night or the next day they were going to kill all of us; the great Montezuma had already ordered and arranged that, between the combined forces of that city and the Mexicans, none of us would stay alive except those to be carried to Mexico. Because she knew this and from the compassion she had for doña Marina, she said she had come to tell her that she should gather all her belongings and come with her to her house, and that there she would marry her to her son, brother of another young man who accompanied the old woman. When doña Marina heard this, and in everything she was very sharp witted, she said to the old woman: "Oh mother, how much I thank you for what you have told me! I would go with you now except that I have no one here whom I can trust to carry my clothes and golden jewels, which are many. For your life, mother,

wait here a little while, you and your son, and tonight we will go, but now you see that these teules are on watch and will hear us." The old woman believed what doña Marina said to her and stayed there talking with her, and doña Marina asked her how they were going to kill us and how and when and where the arrangement was made. The old woman told her neither more nor less than what the two papas had said. Doña Marina replied: "Well, that affair being so secret, how did you come to know about it?" She said her husband had told her about it; he was a captain of one of the parties of that city and, because he is a captain, he was now with the warriors in his charge, arranging for them to join with the squadrons of the great Montezuma in the ravines, and she believed they would be together waiting for us when we left, and there they would kill all of us. She had known of the plan for three days, because her husband had received a gilded drum from Mexico, and Montezuma had also sent rich cloaks and golden jewels to the other three captains so they would carry us bound to their lord Montezuma. When she heard it, doña Marina deceived the old woman and said: "Oh, how I rejoice in knowing that your son, to whom you want to marry me, is an important person. We have been talking a great deal; I do not want them to notice us. For that reason, mother, stay here; I will begin to bring my possessions, because I will not be able to remove them all, and you and your son, my brother, will take care of them, and then we will be able to go!" The old woman believed it all. The old woman sat down to rest with her son. Doña Marina went immediately to the captain and told him everything that happened with the Indian woman, whom Cortés immediately ordered to be brought before him. He questioned her about the treasons and agreements; and she told him no more and no less than the papas. He posted a guard over her so she would not leave.

When dawn broke, it was something to see the haste with which the caciques and papas brought in the warriors, bursting with laughter and delighted, as if they had already caught us in their trap and nets! They brought more Indian warriors than we had asked for, and they did not fit in the courtyards, even as large as they are,

and still today, in memory of the past, they are not destroyed. As early as it was in the morning when the Cholulans came with the warriors, we were already very prepared for what had to be done. The soldiers with swords and shields were posted at the gate of the great courtyard so as not to let any of the armed Indians leave, and our captain was on horseback accompanied by many soldiers as his guard. When he saw how early the caciques and papas and warriors had come, he said: "How much these traitors want to see us in the ravines so they can gorge themselves on our flesh; but Our Lord will do better for us!" He asked for the two papas who had given away the secret, and they told him the papas were at the gate of the courtyard with the other caciques who were about to come in. Cortés ordered Aguilar, our interpreter, to tell them to go to their homes, that we did not have any need of them now; he did this because they had done us a good deed and should not receive harm for it, so in this way they would not be killed by us. As Cortés was on horseback and doña Marina near him, he asked the caciques why they wanted to kill us the night before when we had done them no harm and whether we had done or said something to make them deal in treasons, other than warn them about the things that we told people in all the towns through which we had come, namely, that they should not be evil, nor sacrifice men, nor worship their idols, nor eat the flesh of their neighbors, that they should not practice sodomy, and that they should have a good way of life, and things touching on our holy faith, all this without compelling them in anything. Why, then, did they now recently prepare many long and stout poles and collars and many ropes in a house near the great cu, and why for three days have they made barricades and holes in the streets and defense works on the rooftops, and why have they taken their children and women and goods from the city? He said their ill will had been very obvious, and they could not conceal their treacheries; they had not even given us anything to eat, and as a mockery they brought water and wood and said there was no maize. He said he knew well that they had many captaincies of warriors in some ravines near there, with many other warriors who had joined them this night to do

the treachery they had arranged, believing that we were going to go by that route to Mexico. So as payment for our coming to have them as brothers and tell them what Our Lord God and the king order, they wanted to kill us and eat our flesh and had already prepared the pots with salt and *aji*<sup>1</sup> and tomatoes. If they wanted to do this, it would have been better to attack us in the fields like brave and good warriors, as their neighbors the Tlaxcalans had done. He knew for very certain everything they had planned in that city and even that they promised their idol, advocate of war, that they were going to sacrifice twenty of us before the idol, and that three nights ago, they sacrificed seven Indians so the idol would give them victory, which it promised, but as the idol is evil and false, it neither has nor had power against us, and all this wickedness and treachery that they arranged and put into place would now fall back onto them.

Doña Marina said all this to them and made them understand it very well. When the papas, caciques, and captains heard it, they said that all of it was true, just as he said it, but that they were not to blame for it, because Montezuma's ambassadors had arranged it by order of their lord. Then Cortés told them that the royal laws mandate that such treasons as those cannot go unpunished, and that they must die for their crime. Then he ordered an escopeta to be fired, which was the signal we had prepared for that purpose, and they were given a blow they will remember forever because we killed many of them, so the promises of their false idols did them no good. Not two hours passed before our friends the Tlaxcalans, whom we had left in the field, arrived, and they fought very fiercely in the streets, where the Cholulans had many captaincies and were defending the streets so we would not enter, but they were soon routed. The Tlaxcalans went through the city plundering and taking captives, and we could not stop them. The

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1. The term *aji* comes from the Antilles, used at first for the Mexican chili. In Peru the local chilis are called *aji* to this day. Bernal Díaz is wavering between the Antillean word and the Nahuatl word, which would finally win out in Mexico.

next day, other captaincies came from other Tlaxcalan towns, and they did great damage, because they were on very bad terms with the people of Cholula. When Cortés and the rest of us saw that, out of pity we stopped the Tlaxcalans from doing more harm. Cortés ordered Cristóbal de Olid to bring him all the captains of Tlaxcala so he could speak with them, and they did not delay in coming. He ordered them to gather all their men and stay in the field, and they did so, and only the Cempoalans stayed with us.

Just then, certain papas and caciques of Cholula—but from other districts of the town, who were not part of the treachery according to what they said, and as it is such a large city, it had separate factions and parties—begged Cortés and all of us to pardon the offense of the treacheries that had been planned against us, for the traitors had paid with their lives. Then came the two papas, our friends, who had disclosed the secret to us as well as the wife of the captain, the old woman who wanted to be doña Marina's mother-in-law, and they all begged Cortés for pardon. When they said that to him, Cortés feigned great anger and ordered the ambassadors of Montezuma, who were detained in our company, to be called, and he said that, although that whole city deserved to be razed, out of respect for their lord Montezuma, whose vassals they were, he would pardon them, but that from now on they must be good, and that should what happened in the past occur another time, they would die for it. Then he had the caciques of Tlaxcala who were in the field summoned, and he told them to return the men and women whom they had captured, that the damage they had done was enough. Although the Tlaxcalans did not want to return their prisoners, and they said the Cholulans deserved much more harm because of the treacheries they had constantly received from that city, at Cortés's order they returned many people, but they were very rich from this time, with gold, cloaks, cotton, salt, and slaves. Besides this, Cortés made them friends with the people of Cholula, and from what I have since seen and understood, they never broke that friendship. He also ordered all the Cholulan papas and caciques to bring the people back and to hold tianguetz and markets, and

they should not be afraid, for no trouble would come to them. They replied that, within five days, they would have the whole city repopulated, because at that time most of the people who lived there had gone into hiding. They also said it was necessary for Cortés to name a cacique for them, because the one who formerly ruled them was among those who died in the courtyard. Cortés then asked to whom the caciqueship properly came, and they said it was his brother, whom he immediately appointed as governor until something different should be ordered.

That city is built on a plain in an area and place where there were many nearby towns, namely Tepeaca, Tlaxcala, Chalco, Tecamachalco, Guaxocingo, and many others which, as there are so many of them, I will not name here. It is a land of much maize and other vegetables, and much ají, and all full of maguey, from which they make their wine. In that city they make very good earthenware, red and black and white, with various painting, and supply Mexico and all the neighboring provinces with it, as, let us say, Talavera or Plasencia do in Castile.

At that time, that city had many high towers, which were cus and adoratorios where their idols were, especially the great cu, which was higher than the one in Mexico, although the one in Mexico was very magnificent and high, and there were other courtyards for service of the cus. According to what we understood, there was there a very large idol whose name I do not remember; but among them, there was great devotion to it, and people came from many places to sacrifice to it and to make something like *novenas*,<sup>2</sup> and they made offerings to it from what property they had. I remember when we entered that city, that when we saw such high white towers, it seemed to us like our own Valladolid.

Let us stop talking about the city and all that happened in it, and let us talk about the squadrons the great Montezuma had sent, which were already stationed in the wooded ravines near

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2. A devotion in the Catholic church of nine days and dedicated to a specific intent.

Cholula, and they had made barricades and narrow passages so that the horses could not charge, as was planned; as soon as they learned what had happened, they returned in a hurry to Mexico and told Montezuma how it had all happened. As fast as they went, he had already received the news from the two chieftains who were with us and went to him in haste. We learned for certain that, when Montezuma heard the news, he felt great grief and anger and at once sacrificed some Indians to his idol Huichilobos, whom they consider their god of war, so that the god might tell him what our coming to Mexico would lead to, or whether he should permit us to enter the city. We even learned that he was confined for two days in his devotions and sacrifices, together with ten papas, the most important, and that he had a response from those idols; they counseled him to send messengers to deny his involvement in what had happened at Cholula and to say that with demonstrations of peace, he would let us enter Mexico, but that once we were inside, by taking away food and water or raising any of the bridges, they would kill us, and that if he attacked us, in one day none of us would be alive. Then he could make his sacrifices to Huichilobos, who gave him this response, as well as to Tezcatepuca, whom they considered the god of the inferno. They could have their fill of our thighs and legs and arms, and the snakes and serpents and tigers they kept in some wooden cages, as I will talk about later on in its time and place, could have their fill of our entrails and bodies and everything that was left of us.

This affair and punishment of Cholula became known in all the provinces of New Spain. If before we had a reputation for bravery and they called us *teules*—for they had heard of the wars of Potonchan, Tabasco, Cingapacinga, and Tlaxcala—from that time on, they regarded us as diviners, and they said they could not keep us from finding out any bad thing they were planning against us, and for this reason they showed us goodwill. I believe now that curious readers will be tired of hearing the story of Cholula; I wish I had already finished writing about it, but I cannot leave out calling to mind the cages of thick beams we found in the city that were filled with Indian men and boys for fattening so they could

be sacrificed and their flesh eaten. We broke open those cages, and Cortés ordered the Indians who were prisoners in them to go to their native regions, and with threats, he ordered the caciques, captains, and papas of that city not to keep any more Indians in that way nor eat human flesh, and so they promised it; but what use were those promises they never kept.

Let us look ahead and talk about how these were the great cruelties about which the lord bishop of Chiapa, fray Bartolomé de las Casas, writes and about which he never stops talking. He asserts that for no reason whatsoever, only for our amusement and because we wanted to, we imposed that punishment, and in his book he even says it in such a way that whoever did not see it or know about it would believe that it and other cruelties about which he writes are true; but they were exactly the opposite and did not happen as he describes it.<sup>3</sup> Let the religious of the Order of St. Dominic read with care what he has written in his book, and they will find it to be very different, the one from the other. I also wish to say that some good Franciscan religious, who were the first friars His Majesty sent to this New Spain after Mexico was won, went to Cholula to learn and inquire how and in what way that punishment happened and why, and the inquiry they made was with the papas and elders of that city themselves; after fully informing themselves, they found it to be neither more nor less than what I write in this narrative and not as the bishop says. Because of the squadrons and captaincies that the Mexican and Cholulan warriors had and the earthen fences and defenses, our lives were in great danger, and if we had not imposed that punishment, and to our misfortune they had killed us there, this New Spain would not have been conquered so quickly, nor would another fleet have dared come, and if it did come, they would still be worshiping their idols. I have heard a Franciscan friar of

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3. See Bartolomé de las Casas, *An Account, Much Abbreviated, of the Destruction of the Indies*, ed. Franklin W. Knight, trans. Andrew Hurley (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2003), 30–38.

good life, fray Toribio Motolinía, say that if that punishment could have been avoided and they had not given any cause for it, it would have been better; but because it had been imposed, it was good, because all the Indians of the provinces of New Spain could see and know that those idols and all the rest of them are evil and deceitful. Seeing that what had been promised turned out the opposite, that they lost the devotion the people had previously given them, they did not sacrifice to them from then on, nor did people come on pilgrimage from other parts as they used to. From that time, they did not take care of the idol, and they removed it from the high cu where it was, and either they hid it or destroyed it so it never appeared again, and in its place they had put another idol.

## THE GREAT MONTEZUMA STEPPED OUT OF THE LITTER

[LXXXIV] As fourteen days had passed since we had come to Cholula, and we had nothing more to do there, and we saw that the city was full of people and they were holding markets, and we had established friendship between the Cholulans and the Tlaxcalans, and we had erected a cross and admonished them regarding our holy faith, and we saw that the great Montezuma was sending spies secretly to our camp to find out and inquire what our intention was and whether we were going to go on to his city—because he managed to know everything very fully from his two ambassadors who were in our company—our captain determined to consult with certain captains and some soldiers he knew were well disposed toward him, because, besides being very brave, they gave good advice, and he never did anything without first getting our opinion. It was agreed that we should send to tell the great Montezuma gently and kindly that, in order to carry out what our king and lord sent us to do in these parts, we had crossed many seas and distant lands only to see him and tell him certain things that will be very useful to him once he has understood them; that when we were making our way to his city, his ambassadors guided us through Cholula, whose people they said were his vassals; for two days, the first two after our entrance, they received us very well, but on the next day they had ordered a betrayal with the intention of killing us; but because we are men who have a quality such that any conduct or treatment or evil they might want to use against us could not be hidden from us without our knowing

it at once, we punished some who wanted to carry out this deed; but because Cortés knew they were Montezuma's subjects, having respect for his person and for our great friendship, he refrained from destroying and killing all those who were part of the treason. The worst of it is that the papas and caciques said it was on Montezuma's advice and order and that of his ambassadors that they intended to do it; but we never believed that such a great lord as he would give such an order, especially having put himself forward as our friend; and we had inferred from his character that, even if his idols had put such an evil thought into his head as attacking us, that it would be in the open, but it was all the same to us whether he fought in the open or in a populated area, whether by day or night, we would kill those who thought of doing such a thing; but because we considered him a great friend and wanted to see and talk to him, we were leaving right away for his city to tell him more fully what the king our lord ordered. When Montezuma heard this message and understood that we did not put all the blame on him for the affair at Cholula, we heard that he once again entered with his papas into fasting and sacrificing to their idols to learn if the idols would make clear whether or not he should allow us into his city and if they would command him once more as they had the other time. The answer it again gave him was, like the first, that he should, in fact, let us enter, and that within the city he could kill us at will; and his captains and papas also counseled him that if he obstructed our entry, we would attack him in his subject towns, having as friends, as we had, the Tlaxcalans and all the Totonacs of the mountains as well as other towns that had accepted our friendship; and to prevent these evils, a better and sounder advice is what his Huichilobos had given him.

[LXXXV] After much reflection, Montezuma sent six chieftains with a present of gold and jewels in a great variety of shapes that was judged to be worth more than two thousand pesos, and he also sent some loads of very fine cloaks with decorations of the highest quality. When those chieftains came before Cortés with the presents, they kissed the ground with their hands and with great respect, as is the custom among them: "Malinche, our lord,

the great Montezuma sends you this present and asks that you accept it along with the great affection he has for you and for all your brothers, and he is very sorrowful about the offense the Cholulans gave you, and he wishes you had made them feel your punishment more, because they are evil and deceitful for wanting to blame him and his ambassadors for the wickedness they did. We should be very certain he was our friend, and we should go to his city whenever we would like, for he wanted to honor us greatly as very courageous people and messengers of such a great king as you say he is. However, because he had nothing to give us to eat, for all provisions have to be brought to the city by carriers, as the city is in the lake, he would not be able to do this as fully as he would like, but he would endeavor to do us all the honor he could, and he has ordered that the towns through which we must pass give us what we need." He said many other complimentary things. When Cortés understood them through our interpreters, he accepted that present with demonstrations of affection and embraced the messengers and ordered them to be given certain twisted, cut rhinestones. All our captains and soldiers were delighted by such good news, his ordering us to come to his city, for from day to day most of us soldiers had been wanting it, especially those of us who had not left anything on the island of Cuba and had come twice on expeditions of discovery before this one with Cortés.

Let us leave this subject and talk about how the captain gave them a good and very affectionate response and ordered that three messengers who had come with the present stay with us as guides and the other three return with the response to their lord and to advise him that we were on the way. When the chief caciques of Tlaxcala, Xicotenga the elder and blind and Maseescaci, understood that we were going, it weighed heavily on their souls. They sent to tell Cortés that they had already told him many times he should be careful what he did and keep from entering such a strong city, where there were so many fortifications and such a multitude of warriors, because one day or another they would attack us. They feared that we would not get out with our lives, and because of the goodwill they had for us, they wanted to send

ten thousand men with brave captains to go with us, with provisions for the road. Cortés thanked them very much for their goodwill but told them it was not right to enter Mexico with such an abundance of warriors, especially because they were so hostile to each other, and he had need only of a thousand men to carry the tepuzques and baggage and to fix some of the roads.

They immediately sent us the thousand Indians, very well prepared. Just as we were ready to set out, the caciques and all the most principal warriors we had brought from Cempoala, who journeyed in our company and served us very well and loyally, came to Cortés and said they wanted to return to Cempoala, that they would not proceed from Cholula to Mexico because they felt certain that, if they went there, they and we were going to die, that the great Montezuma would order them killed because they were leading chiefs of Cempoala, who had ceased being loyal to Montezuma in not giving him tribute and imprisoning his tribute collectors at the time of the rebellion I described earlier in this narrative. When Cortés saw the great urgency with which they asked for permission, he answered them through doña Marina and Aguilar that they should not have any fear at all that they would suffer anything bad or harmful, for because they would be going in our company, who would dare to annoy them or us? He begged them to change their minds and stay with us; he promised he would make them rich. But no matter how much Cortés begged them to stay, and doña Marina said it very affectionately, they never wanted to stay but rather to return home. When Cortés saw that, he said: "God forbid that we should use force to take along these Indians who have served us so well." He ordered many loads of rich cloaks brought to him and he distributed them to everyone, and he also sent to the fat cacique, our friend, lord of Cempoala, two loads of cloaks for himself and for his nephew, Cuesco, who was the other great cacique. He wrote to the deputy, Juan de Escalante, whom we had left there as captain and who at that time was chief constable, everything that had happened to us, how we were on our way to Mexico, that he should look out very well for all the citizens and keep a good watch, that he should

always be on the alert day and night, that he should finish building the fort, that he should help the natives of those towns against the Mexicans and not let any of the soldiers with him annoy the native people. This letter written and the Cempoalans having left, we set out on our journey, very much on the alert.

[LXXXVI] We set out from Cholula in good order, as we customarily did, the scouts on horseback reconnoitering the countryside, some very nimble-footed soldiers accompanying them so if there were some bad passes or some obstacle they could help one another, our cannons very much ready, escopeteros and crossbowmen and horsemen going three by three so they could help one another, and all the rest of the soldiers in good order. I do not know why I remind people of this so much, except that in writing about matters of war, by necessity we must give an account of it so that one can see how we always went with our eyes peeled.<sup>1</sup> Marching in this way, we arrived that day at a group of huts in a hilly place, which is inhabited by people from Guaxocingo, and I think they are called the huts of Iscalpan,<sup>2</sup> about four leagues from Cholula. Soon the caciques and papas of the towns of Guaxocingo, which were close by, came to that place, and they were friends and allies of the Tlaxcalans; and also people came from other small towns that were settled on the lower slopes of the volcano near their borders. They brought us provisions and a present of golden jewels of little value, and they asked Cortés to accept that present and not to consider how small it was, but the goodwill with which they gave it. They advised him not to go to Mexico, which was a very strong city with many warriors, that we would be running a great risk. But if we were going to go, when we had climbed beyond that mountain pass there were two very wide roads; the one led to a town called Chalco, the other

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1. The Spanish expression is “with our beards on our shoulders,” that is, looking from side to side.

2. Calpan.

to another town called Tamancaico,<sup>3</sup> both subject to Mexico. One road was well swept and cleared so that we would take it, but they had blocked up the other road by cutting down many thick trees and large pines so the horses could not pass, nor could we pass forward through it. A little way down the mountain, along the road that had been cleared, thinking that we were going to take that one, they had cut away a piece of the mountain and made defenses and barricades, and certain squadrons of Mexicans were waiting there in the pass to kill us. Therefore, the people of Guaxocingo counseled us not to go by the road that was cleared, but by the road with the obstructing trees. They said they would send with us many men to clear it, and as the Tlaxcalans were going with us, all of them together would clear the trees, and that road came out at Tamancaico. Cortés accepted the present from them with much affection and thanked them for the advice they had given him, but he said that with God's help, he would not give up continuing his journey, although he would go by the way they advised him. Then early the next morning we began to march, and it was nearly midday when we arrived at the top of the sierra, where we found the roads no more and no less than the Guaxocingans had said. We stopped there a while and even began thinking about the squadrons of Mexicans on the cutaway mountainside where the barricades were.

Cortés summoned the ambassadors of the great Montezuma and asked them how it was that those two roads were in that condition, one very clean and swept and the other with newly cut trees. They replied that it was so we would go by the clean road, which comes out at a city called Chalco, where the people would give us a good reception because it belonged to their lord Montezuma; they had felled those trees and blocked the other road so we would not go by it, because there were bad passes on it and it went in a somewhat roundabout way to Mexico and came out at another town that is not as large as Chalco. Cortés

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3. Tlamancaico.

said he wanted to go by the road that was blocked. We began to ascend the mountain in good order, our friends moving aside the large and thick trees; we passed them with great difficulty, and some of them are still by the side of the road even today. As we ascended higher, it began to snow, and snow covered the ground; we descended the mountain and went to sleep at a group of houses that were like lodgings or inns where Indian merchants stayed. We had a very good dinner, then in tremendous cold, we posted our watches, patrols, sentinels, and even scouts.

The next day we set out on our journey, and at the hour of high mass we arrived at a town I have already said is called Tamanalco, where they received us well, and we did not lack for food. When the other towns heard of our arrival, people soon came from Chalco and joined with the people of Tamanalco, Chimaluacan,<sup>4</sup> Mecameca,<sup>5</sup> and Acacingo,<sup>6</sup> where the canoes are, for it is their port, and other small towns whose names I no longer remember. All of them together brought a present of gold, two loads of cloth, and eight Indian women, and the gold must have been worth more than one hundred fifty pesos. They said: "Malinche, accept these presents that we give you and consider us from here on your friends." Cortés accepted them with great affection, and he promised them he would help them with everything they needed. When he saw them together, he said to the Mercedarian father that he should admonish them in the things touching our holy faith, that they should give up their idols, and he told them all the things we usually said in the other towns we had come through, and to all of it they replied that it was very well said and that they would see about it in the future. He also explained to them the great power of the emperor our lord and told them that he sent us to these parts to put a stop to wrongs and robberies. When they heard that, all those towns I have named, secretly, so that

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4. Chimalhuacan.

5. Amecameca.

6. Acatzingo.

the Mexican ambassadors would not hear, made great complaints about Montezuma and his tribute collectors, saying they robbed them of whatever they had, and if their wives and daughters were beautiful, violated them in front of them and their husbands and took them away; they made the men work as if they were slaves, making them carry pine lumber and stones in canoes or over the land and firewood and maize and many other services, like sowing maize, and they took their lands for the service of their idols. They made many other complaints that, as it happened now many years ago, I do not remember. Cortés consoled them with the kindly words he knew well how to say through doña Marina, but he told them that he could not at this time become involved in doing justice for them; they must endure it, but he would free them from that rule.

He secretly ordered that two chieftains go with four of our Tlaxcalan friends to observe the cleared road that the people of Guaxocingo told us we should not go by, in order to see what barricades and defense ditches there were and whether there were any squadrons of warriors there. The caciques answered: "Malinche, there is no need to go observe, because everything is now very level and repaired, but you should know that six days ago, there were many warriors at a bad pass there that they had cut into the hill so that you could not pass. About the great Montezuma, we have learned that his Huichilobos, who is their god of war, advised them to let you pass, but when you have entered Mexico they will kill you. Therefore, it seems to us that you should stay here with us, and we will share what we have with you, and you should not go to Mexico, for we know for certain that, as it is strong and with many warriors, they will not leave you with your lives." Cortés told them with a cheerful expression that neither the Mexicans nor any other nations had the power to kill us, only Our Lord God in whom we believe, and so that they might see that, we were going to make Montezuma himself and all his caciques and papas understand what our God orders, and he wanted to leave right away. He asked them to give him twenty chieftains to go in our company, and he would

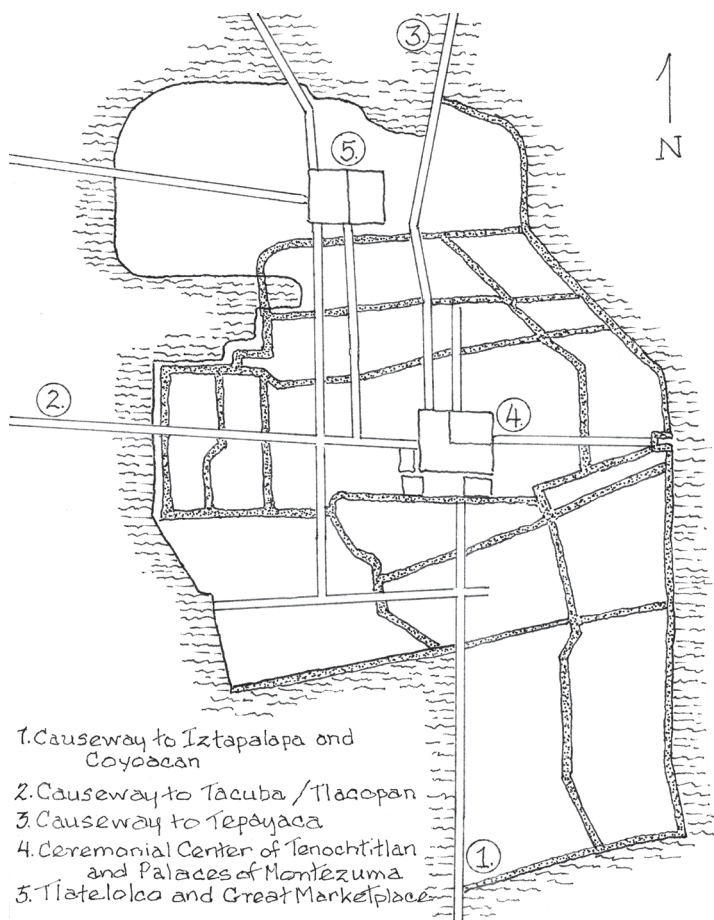
do much for them and do justice for them as soon as he arrived in Mexico, so that neither Montezuma nor his tribute collectors would commit the excesses nor do the violence they have said the Mexicans do to them. With cheerful faces all the people of those towns named by me gave good responses, and they brought us the twenty Indians.

[LXXXVII] Just as we were about to start out on our journey to Mexico, four Mexican chieftains sent by Montezuma came before Cortés and brought a present of gold and cloth. After paying their respects in the customary way, they said: "Malinche, our lord the great Montezuma sends you this present and says he is very saddened by the hardship you have endured in coming from such distant lands to see him, and he has already sent another time to tell you he will give you much gold, silver, and chalchuius as tribute for your emperor and for you and the other teules whom you bring with you, but you should not come to Mexico. Now he asks you again as a favor that you not go on from here, but that you return to where you came from, that he promises to send to you at the port a great quantity of gold, silver, and rich stones for your king, and he will give you four loads of gold for yourself and a load for each of your brothers. As for going to Mexico, your entry is out the question, for all his vassals have risen in arms so as not to let you enter; besides this, there is no road, except a very narrow one, nor provisions to feed you." He gave many other arguments about the difficulties so that we would not go on from there. Cortés, with much affection, embraced the messengers, although he regretted the message, and he accepted the present, and I do not now remember how much it was worth, but as far as I could see and understand, Montezuma never failed to send gold, little or much, when he sent messengers.

Returning to our story, Cortés replied that he marveled that the lord Montezuma, having given himself out as our friend and being such a great lord, was so changeable; sometimes he says one thing and other times he sends to order the opposite. As for what he said about giving gold to our lord the emperor and to us, he is thankful for it and for what he sent now, that he will

repay him in good deeds as time goes on. But he wonders if it will seem right to Montezuma that, with our being so close to his city, it would be good to turn back from the road without doing what our lord ordered us to do? If the lord Montezuma had sent his messengers and ambassadors to some great prince such as himself, and if, when they arrived close to his home, those messengers returned without speaking to that prince and telling him what they were going to say, what favors would Montezuma show them when they came into his presence with such a message? Would he not rather take them for cowards of little worth? This is what our lord the emperor would do with us. So in one way or another, we were going to enter Montezuma's city, and from then on, he should send no more excuses on that subject, because he, Cortés, was going to see him and talk with him and explain the whole purpose for which we had come, and he was going to do this with him personally and privately. After he had understood it, if our presence in the city did not seem good to him, we would return from where we came. As for what he said about having only very little food and that we could not live from it, we are men who can get by with very little to eat, and we were already on the road to his city; he should approve of our coming.

As soon as the messengers had been sent off, we began our journey to Mexico. As the people of Guaxocingo and Chalco had said and advised us that Montezuma had held conversations with his idols and papas about whether he should let us enter Mexico or whether he should attack us, and all his papas answered that his Huichilobos said he should let us enter, that he would be able to kill us there; and as we are men and feared death, we never stopped thinking about it; and as that land is very heavily populated, we were always making short marches and commending ourselves to God and his blessed mother, Our Lady, and discussing how and in what way we might enter the city, and we held the great hope in our hearts that, because Our Lord Jesus Christ had protected us from all past dangers, he would also protect us from the power of Mexico.



## Tenochtitlan 1519

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Tenochtitlan 1519. This schematic drawing is of Tenochtitlan at the time the Spaniards first sighted it. The image shows the three major causeways leading into the city from Iztapalapa and Coyoacan to the south, Tacuba to the west, and Tepayaca to the north. The causeways were wide enough to accommodate ten horses abreast according to Bernal Díaz. A series of canals, used to move water from one part of the surrounding lake to another and for canoe and pirogue transportation through the city, ran under the causeways, which were bridged over them. The bridges could be taken up when necessary for the defense of the city.

We went to spend the night in a town called Ixtapalatengo, where half the houses are in the water and the other half on solid ground, where there is a little mountain, and now there is a roadside inn, and there we had a good supper. Let us return to the great Montezuma, who, when his messengers arrived and he heard the response Cortés sent him, immediately decided to send one of his nephews, Cacamatzin, lord of Texcoco,<sup>7</sup> with great pomp to welcome Cortés and all of us. As we always customarily posted watches and scouts, one of our scouts came to advise us that a great number of Mexicans were coming peacefully by the road, and it appeared they were coming dressed in rich cloaks. When this happened, it was very early in the morning, and we wanted to set out, but Cortés told us to stay in our lodging until we could see what was happening. At that moment came four chieftains who bowed low to Cortés, and they told him that near there Cacamatzin, great lord of Texcoco, nephew of the great Montezuma, was coming, and he requested as a favor that we wait until he arrived. Soon Cacamatzin arrived with the greatest pomp and grandeur we had ever seen in any Mexican lord, for he came in a very rich litter, worked in green feathers, much silver, and other rich clusters of precious stones set in ornamental raised tree designs worked in the finest gold. Eight chieftains carried the litter on their shoulders, all of them, according to what they said, were lords of towns. When they had come near the lodging where Cortés was, they helped Cacamatzin from the litter, swept the ground for him, and removed the straw where he was going to pass, and when they came before our captain they made the greatest bows and Cacamatzin said to him: "Malinche, we have come here, I and these lords, to serve you and give you everything you might need for yourself and your companions and to lead you to your homes, which is our city, for so our lord the great Montezuma has ordered us, and he asks that you pardon him for not coming himself; he did not come because he is ill, not for lack of very goodwill that he has for you."

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7. Bernal Díaz uses both "Tezcuco" and "Texcoco."

When our captain and all of us beheld such grandeur and majesty as those caciques showed, especially the nephew of Montezuma, we were greatly impressed and discussed among ourselves what, if that cacique brings such lavishness, the great Montezuma would do. When Cacamatzin had delivered his speech, Cortés embraced him and showered him and all the rest of the chieftains with many friendly words. He gave him three stones called margaritas, which sparkle with many colors from within, and to the other chieftains he gave blue rhinestones, and he thanked them and asked when he could repay the lord Montezuma for the favors he does for us every day. The discussions over, we set out right away, and as those caciques I have talked about brought many people with them, and as many other people came out to see us from the neighboring towns, all the roads were filled.

The next morning we arrived at a broad causeway, and we headed for Iztapalapa. When we saw so many cities and towns built in the water, and other great towns on dry land, and that causeway so straight and level as it went to Mexico, we were amazed. We said it looked like the enchanted things they tell of in the book of Amadís<sup>8</sup> because of the great towers and cus and buildings that are in the water, all built of stonemasonry. Some of our soldiers even asked if what we saw was not a dream, and it is not to be wondered at that I write here in this way, because there is so much to ponder that I do not know how to describe it: seeing things never heard of nor even dreamed of as we were seeing; when we arrived near Iztapalapa, seeing the grandeur of the other caciques who came out to receive us, Coadlavaca,<sup>9</sup> the lord of that town, and the lord of Coyoacan,<sup>10</sup> both very close relatives of Montezuma; and when we entered that town of

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8. *Amadis of Gaul* was the tale of a knight-errant popular in Spain during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

9. Bernal Díaz uses three names, “Coadlavaca,” “Cuedlavaca,” and “Coadlavac,” for the leader now commonly known and referred to as Cuitlahuac.

10. Also Cuyuacan.

Iztapalapa, seeing the palace where we were lodged, how large and well built it was, of very fine stonework, and the wood from cedar and other fine-smelling trees, with great courtyards and rooms, things wonderful to see, covered with decorated cotton awnings. After having looked carefully at all that, we went to the orchard and garden, which was such a wonderful thing to see and to pass through that I never grew tired of experiencing the variety of trees and the scent each one had, the terraces full of roses and flowers, the many fruit trees and native rose gardens, a pond of fresh water, and something else worth seeing: that, through an opening they had made, large canoes could enter the garden from the lake without landing, everything very whitened and bright with all kinds of stone and pictures on it that gave much to ponder, and birds of many kinds and species that came into the pond. I say again that I was there looking at it, and I believed that never in the world had lands like these been discovered, because at that time there was no Peru, nor any idea of it. Now all this is fallen down, ruined; there is nothing.

Let us go on, and I will talk about how the caciques of that city and those of Coyoacan brought a present of gold that was worth more than two thousand pesos, and Cortés gave them much thanks for it and showed them great affection, and he explained to them through our interpreters things touching on our holy faith, and made known to them the great power of our lord the emperor. Because there were many other conversations, I will not talk about them, but I will say that at that time, this was a very large town, with half the houses on land and the other half in the water, but now, at this time, it is all dry and they plant where there used to be a lake. It has changed so much, that if one had not seen it then, one would say that it was not possible that what was covered with water is now planted in maize.

[LXXXVIII] The next morning, we left Iztapalapa, accompanied by those great caciques I mentioned earlier; we went forward along our causeway, which is eight paces in width and goes so straight to the city of Mexico that it seems to me it does not bend in the slightest. Although it is very broad, it was so completely crowded

with people that there was not room for all of them, some of them entering Mexico, others coming out, and the Indians who were coming to see us, and we could not pass by all those many who came, and the towers and cus were filled with people as were canoes from all parts of the lake. It was not surprising, because they had never seen horses nor men like us. Seeing such wonderful things, we did not know what to say or whether what appeared before us was real. On one side, on the land, were great cities, and in the lake many more, and we saw it all filled with canoes, and on the causeway many bridges at intervals, and in front of us was the great city of Mexico; and we, we did not number even four hundred soldiers, and we remembered very well the discussions and warnings of the people of Guaxocingo, Tlaxcala, and Tamancaico, and the many other warnings that had been given us, that we should be careful about entering Mexico, that they were going to kill us as soon as they had us inside. Let the curious readers consider whether what I am writing here has in it much to ponder; what men have there been in the world who would have had such daring?

Let us go on. We were going along our causeway; when we arrived where another small causeway separates off and goes to Coyoacan, another city with something like towers that were their adoratorios, many chieftains and caciques came wearing very rich cloaks with a style of liveries differentiating some caciques from others, and the causeways were full of them. The great Montezuma sent those caciques ahead to receive us, so when they arrived before Cortés, they said in their language that we were very welcome, and as a sign of peace they touched the ground with their hand and kissed the earth with the same hand. There we stopped for a good while, and from there Cacamatzin, lord of Texcoco, the lord of Iztapalapa, the lord of Tacuba, and the lord of Coyoacan went forward to meet the great Montezuma, who was arriving in a rich litter accompanied by other great lords and caciques who had vassals.

When we came near Mexico, where there were other small towers, the great Montezuma stepped out of the litter, and the great caciques supported him by the arm under a wonderfully

rich canopy the color of green feathers with great gold handwork, much silver, many pearls and chalchiui stones, hanging from a kind of embroidered edge; there was much to look at in it. The great Montezuma was very richly attired after his manner, and he was wearing footwear like sandals, for this is what they call what they wear on their feet, the soles of gold and, on the upper part, clusters of very precious stones. The four lords who supported his arms wore a rich type of clothing after their manner, which seems to have been kept ready for them on the road so that they might enter with their lord, for they were not wearing those cloaks when they came to receive us. Besides those four lords, four other great caciques came, who supported the canopy over their heads, and many other lords, who went before the great Montezuma sweeping the ground on which he would tread, and they spread cloths so that he would not step on the earth. None of those lords, not even in thought, looked at him in the face but kept their eyes lowered in great respect, except those four relatives and nephews of his who supported his arms. When Cortés was told and he saw and understood that the great Montezuma was coming, he dismounted from his horse, and when he was close to Montezuma, they showed each other great respect. Montezuma welcomed him, and our Cortés replied with doña Marina that he hoped he was in very good health; and it seems to me that Cortés, through doña Marina, who was next to Cortés, offered Montezuma his right hand; Montezuma did not take it, but he gave his own hand to Cortés. Then Cortés brought out a necklace he had in hand, made of some glass stones called margaritas, which sparkled with many colors from within, and it came strung on some cords of gold with musk so that it would give off a good scent. He put it around the neck of the great Montezuma, and when he had done so, he was going to embrace him, but those great lords who were with Montezuma held his arm to keep Cortés from doing it, because they consider that contempt.

Then Cortés through the interpreter doña Marina told him that his heart now rejoiced having seen so great a prince, that he took it as a great kindness that he had come in person to receive him and

the favors he continually does for him. Then Montezuma said to him other very polite words and ordered two of his nephews who supported his arms, the lord of Texcoco and the lord of Coyoacan, to show us to our lodgings, and Montezuma with his two other relatives, Coadlavaca and the lord of Tacuba, who accompanied him, returned to the city, and those great companies of caciques and chieftains who had accompanied him also returned with him. As they turned back with their lord, we were watching how they all went with their eyes fixed on the ground, not looking at him, keeping close to the wall and accompanying him with great respect. In that way, we had room to enter by the streets of Mexico without so much difficulty.

I want to talk about the multitude of men, women, and boys in the streets, on the rooftops and in canoes in those canals, who came to look at us. It was something to note, for now that I am writing, everything comes before my eyes as if it were yesterday when this happened. Considering the matter, it is a great favor Our Lord Jesus Christ did us in giving us the grace and courage to dare enter such a city and for having saved me from many dangers of death, as you will see further on. I give him much thanks for it and for giving me time enough to write about it, although not as fully as is suitable and as the subject requires. Let us leave the words, for deeds are the real testimony for what I say here and elsewhere. Let us return to our entry into Mexico. They took us to lodge in a large house with lodgings for all of us, which had belonged to the father of the great Montezuma, Axayaca,<sup>11</sup> where, at that time, Montezuma had his great adoratorio of idols and a very secret chamber of golden figures and jewels, which was the treasure he had inherited from his father Axayaca, and he never touched it. Also they took us to lodge in that house because, as they called us teules and regarded us as such, we should be among the idols or teules they kept there. Be it for one reason or be it for another, there is where they took us, where they had great

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11. Axayacatl.

courtrooms and halls covered with canopies of native cloth for our captain and rush mats with small canopies for each one of us. There are no better beds, however great the lord might be, because they do not use them; and all those palaces, very bright, whitened, swept, and decorated with branches.

When we arrived and entered into a large courtyard, the great Montezuma, who was waiting there for our captain, took him at once by the hand and led him into the lodging and hall where he was to stay, which he had very richly adorned for him after their manner, and he had ready a very rich necklace of gold in the shape of crustaceans, a very marvelous work, and Montezuma himself put it around the neck of our captain Cortés, and the great honor he did Cortés gave his captains much to be amazed at. After Montezuma had put the necklace on him, Cortés thanked him through our interpreters, and Montezuma said: “Malinche, you are in your home, you and your brothers; rest.” Then he went to his palace, which was not very far away, and we divided our lodgings by captaincies, our artillery aimed in a suitable direction, and the order we were to keep very carefully discussed and we, both those on horseback and soldiers, were to be very much on the alert. They had a sumptuous meal ready for us, according to their use and custom, which we ate at once. This was our fortunate and bold entry into the great city Tenochtitlan, Mexico, on the eighth day of November in the year of Our Savior Jesus Christ 1519. Thanks to Our Lord Jesus Christ for all of it, and if I have not expressed other things that I should have said, may you all pardon me, for I do not know better how to express it even now.

[LXXXIX] When the great Montezuma had eaten and he learned that our captain and all of us had done the same some time ago, he came with the greatest pomp to our lodging with numerous chieftains, all his relatives. When they told Cortés Montezuma was coming, he went out to the middle of the hall to receive him, and Montezuma took him by the hand; they brought some seats made according to their usage, very rich and worked with many designs in gold. Montezuma told our captain to be

seated, and both of them sat down, each on his own seat. Then Montezuma began a very good speech, saying he was delighted to have in his home and kingdom such courageous gentlemen as were the captain Cortés and all of us. He said that two years ago, he had news of another captain who came to Chanpoton, and also last year they brought him news of another captain who came with four ships. He said he had always desired to see them, and now that he had us with him, he would serve us and give us of everything he had, that truly it must be certain we are the men his ancestors, many years past, had said would come from where the sun rose to rule over these lands; we must certainly be the ones because we had fought so bravely in the affairs of Potonchan, Tabasco, and with the Tlaxcalans; they had brought him lifelike pictures of all the battles.

Cortés answered him through our interpreters, who were always with him, especially doña Marina, and said to him that neither he nor all of us knew how to repay him for the great favors we received every day. He said it certainly was true that we came from where the sun rises, and we are vassals and servants of a great lord called the emperor don Carlos, who has many and great princes subject to him. Having news of Montezuma and of what a great lord he is, our emperor sent us to these parts to see him and to beg that he and all his vassals become Christians as is our emperor and all of us, so that their souls will be saved. Later on, he said, he will explain to him further how and in what way this would be done, how we worship only one true God, who he is, and he will hear many other good things, as had his ambassadors Tendile, Pitalpitoque, and Quintalbor when we were on the sandy beaches.

At the end of this speech, the great Montezuma had ready very rich golden jewels of many forms that he gave to our captain, and likewise to each one of our captains he gave small things of gold and three loads of cloaks with rich featherwork. With great cheerfulness, he gave each soldier two loads of cloaks, and in everything he seemed to be a great lord. When these things had been distributed, he asked Cortés if we were all brothers

and vassals of our great emperor. Cortés said that, yes, we were brothers in affection and friendship, and we were very important people and servants of our great king and lord. Because other polite discussions passed between Montezuma and Cortés, and because this was the first time he came to visit us, and in order not to be wearisome to him, they stopped their talks.

Montezuma had ordered his stewards that, according to our custom and usage, we should be provided with everything, maize and grinding stones and Indian women to make bread, and hens and fruit, and much grass for the horses. Montezuma took leave of our captain with great courtesy and of all of us, and we went out with him as far as the street. Cortés ordered us not to go very far from the lodgings for now until we knew better what was advisable.

[XC] The next day Cortés decided to go to Montezuma's palace, but first he sent to find out what he was doing and to let him know we were coming. He brought with him four captains, Pedro de Alvarado, Juan Velázquez de León, Diego de Ordaz, and Gonzalo de Sandoval, and also five of us soldiers went. When Montezuma learned we were coming, he came out to the middle of the hall to receive us, accompanied by many of his nephews, because other lords neither entered where Montezuma was nor communicated with him if it was not for important business. Showing great respect to Cortés and Cortés to him, they took each other by the hand, and where his dais was, Montezuma had Cortés sit at his right hand and had us all sit in seats that he ordered brought there. Cortés began to make a speech through our interpreters, doña Marina and Aguilar, saying that he and all of us were rested and now that he has come to see and speak to so great a lord as Montezuma, he has completed the journey and fulfilled the command that our great king and lord ordered. But most of what he had come to tell him on behalf of Our Lord God is what Montezuma has already heard from his ambassadors Tendile, Pitalpitoque, and Quintalbor, when he did us the favor of sending us the moon and golden sun at the sandy beach; for we told them then that we were Christians and worshipped one

true God only, whose name is Jesus Christ, who suffered passion and death in order to save us. We told them, when they asked us why we worshipped a cross, that it was the sign of another cross where Our Lord God was crucified for our salvation, and that this passion and death he suffered was to save the entire human race, which was lost. He said that this our God rose on the third day and is now in heaven, and it is he who made the sky and the earth, the sea and the sand, and he created everything in the world, and he gives rain and dew, and nothing happens in the world without his holy will. He said that we believe in and worship him, but that what they consider gods are not gods, but devils, which are very evil things, and if their faces are bad, their deeds are worse, and let them consider how evil and of little worth those idols are, for wherever we set up crosses, as his ambassadors saw, the idols dared not appear before them for fear of them, and as time went on, they would see. What he now requested from him as a favor is that he pay careful attention to the words that he was going to say to him.

Then he told him very well and clearly about the creation of the world, how we are all brothers, children of the same father and mother, named Adam and Eve, how our great emperor as such a brother, grieving for the eternal damnation of so many souls, such as those their idols carry off to hell where they burn in live flames, sent us so that once he had heard these things, he would remedy them and not adore those idols nor sacrifice more Indian men and women, for we are all brothers, nor tolerate sodomies and robberies. He also told him that as time went on our king and lord would send some men who live among us in a very holy way, better than we do, so they can explain it all to him, because at present we came only to notify him of it. So he asked him as a favor that he do it and carry it out. Because it seemed that Montezuma wanted to reply, Cortés stopped the speech, and said to all of us who were with him: "With this we've fulfilled our obligation, for it's the first admonition."

Montezuma replied: "Lord Malinche, even before now, I have understood very well the talks and speeches that you gave to my

three servants at the sandy beach, about the three gods and the cross and all the things you have preached in the towns you have come through. We have not replied to you about them because from the beginning we have worshipped our own gods here and consider them very good. So must yours be, and do not bother yourself any more at present with speaking to us about them. About the creation of the world, so we have believed for a very long time, and for this reason we are very sure you are the ones our ancestors told us would come from where the sun rises. As for your great king, I am in his debt and will give him of what I have because, as I have already said another time, I had news two years ago of captains who came with ships from where you came, and they said they were servants of that great king of yours, and I would like to know if you all are one and the same." Cortés told him that yes, we were all brothers and servants of our emperor, and that they had come to see the route and seas and ports in order to know them very well so that we could come, as we have. Montezuma was speaking about the expeditions of Francisco de Córdoba and Grijalva, when we came the first time to discover. He said that since then he had thought of meeting some of those men who came in order to have them in his kingdoms and cities to honor them, and that since his gods had fulfilled his great desires and now we were in his home, which can be called our own, we should relax and take our rest, that there we would be well served. He said that, if on occasion he sent to say we should not enter his city, it was not of his will, but because his vassals were afraid, for they told him that we threw out rays of lightning and thunderbolts and killed many Indians with the horses, that we were fierce teules and other childish things. But now that he has seen us and that we are of flesh and bone and very rational, and he knows that we are very courageous, he holds us in much higher esteem than he did from what they had told him, and he would share with us what he had. Cortés and all of us replied that we gave him great thanks for such abundant goodwill.

Then Montezuma said laughing, because he was very joyful in his way of speaking as a great lord: "Malinche, I know well that

those Tlaxcalans with whom you have such great friendship have told you that I am like a god or teul and that everything in my house is gold, silver, and precious stones. I know well that, as you are a man of understanding, you do not believe it and that you take it as a joke. Look now, Lord Malinche, you see my body of flesh and bone like yours, my house and palace of stone and wood and lime. For being a great king, yes I am, and as for having riches from my ancestors, indeed I do, but not the nonsense and lies they have told you. You also take it as a joke, as I take your thunder and lightning.” Cortés answered him, also laughing, and said that opponents and enemies always say bad and untruthful things about those for whom they have ill will, and that he has known well that he could not hope to see another more magnificent lord in these lands, and that not without reason is he so well known to our emperor.

In the midst of these discussions, Montezuma secretly ordered his nephew, a great cacique who was in his company, to order his stewards to bring certain pieces of gold that it appears were set aside to give to Cortés, and ten loads of fine cloth, which he distributed: the gold and cloaks among Cortés and the four captains, and to each of us soldiers, two necklaces of gold, each necklace worth ten pesos, and two loads of cloaks. All the gold he gave was worth more than a thousand pesos, and he gave it with joyfulness and the air of the great and worthy lord. Because it was past midday, and so as not to be troublesome, Cortés said to him: “Lord Montezuma, you always have the custom of putting us more and more in your debt by doing us favors every day; now it is time for your lordship to eat.” Montezuma replied that rather, in having come to visit him, we had given him favors. Thus we took our leave with great courtesy, and we went to our lodgings. As we walked along, we were discussing the good manner and breeding Montezuma had in everything and how we should show him much honor in everything, removing our quilted caps whenever we passed before him, and so we did.

[XCI] The great Montezuma was about forty years old, of goodly stature and well proportioned, slender and not fleshy, not

very dark in color, but the appropriate shade for an Indian. He did not wear his hair very long, but long enough to cover his ears, his beard small and sparse, dark, well shaped, his face somewhat long and cheerful, nice looking eyes, and in his demeanor his looks could show affection on the one hand, and, when necessary, sternness. He was very neat and clean; he bathed once every day in the afternoon. He had many women as concubines, daughters of lords, because he had two great cacicas as his legitimate wives, and when he lay with them, it was so much in private that no one managed to find out about it except some of those who served him. He was free of sodomy. The cloaks and other clothing he put on one day he would not put on again for three or four days. In other halls close to his own, he had more than two hundred chieftains in his guard, and not all of these could speak with him, but a very few, and when they went to speak to him, they had to take off their rich cloaks and put on others of little value, but they had to be clean, and they had to enter barefoot, with their eyes downward, fixed on the ground, and not look him in the face. They made three bows before they reached him, at that time saying, "Lord, my lord, my great lord," before they came up to him. When they made the report for which they had come, he dismissed them with few words. In taking their leave, they did not turn their backs to him, but kept their faces and eyes lowered toward the ground and toward where he was, not turning their backs until they left the hall.

I noticed another thing: When other great lords came from far-off lands regarding disputes or business, when they reached the lodgings of the great Montezuma, they had to come barefoot and with poor cloaks, and they could not enter directly into the palace but had to walk around a little on one side of the palace door, because to enter directly and hastily was considered disrespectful.

As for eating, his cooks prepared him more than thirty different dishes, which they made according to their style and custom, and they put them over small earthen fire pots so they would not get cold, and for what the great Montezuma was going to eat, they prepared more than three hundred plates, and more than a

thousand for the guard. When he was going to eat, Montezuma would sometimes go out with his chieftains and stewards, and they would point out to him which dish was best and from what birds and other things it was prepared, and as they advised him, so he would eat, but it was very few times that he went out to see it, and only as an amusement. I have heard said that they used to cook the flesh of boys of a very young age for him, but, as he had such a variety of dishes made of so many things, we did not notice if it was human flesh or other things, because daily they cooked hens, cocks with wattles, pheasants, native partridges, quail, tame and wild ducks, deer, native pork, reed birds, pigeons, hares and rabbits, and many sorts of birds and things that are bred in this country, and they are so numerous that I cannot finish naming them so quickly. So we paid no attention to it. But I know with certainty that after our captain reprimanded him for sacrificing and eating human flesh, he ordered that from then on, they should not prepare him such food.

Let us stop talking about this and go back to the way things were served to him. It was in this way: If it was cold, they made a large fire of live coals of a firewood made from the bark of trees that did not give off smoke; the scent of the bark from which they made that fire was very fragrant, and so that it would not give off more heat than he wanted, they put in front of it a kind of board worked with gold and other figures of idols. He sat on a low seat, rich and soft, and the table, also low, was made in the same way as the seats. They put on it their white tablecloths and some rather long napkins of the same material. Four very beautiful and clean women brought him water for his hands in deep water jugs, which they call *xicales*,<sup>12</sup> and below them they put something like plates to catch the water, and they gave him his towels, and two other women brought him tortillas as bread. As soon as he began to eat, they put a kind of wooden door painted completely with gold in front of him so that no one would see him eat, and the four

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12. *Xicales* are gourd vessels.

women then stood aside. At his sides were four great elderly lords, with whom Montezuma from time to time conversed and asked about things. As a great favor, he gave to each one of these elders a plate of what he liked the best, and they said that those elders were his very close relatives, counselors and judges of lawsuits, and the dishes of food that Montezuma gave them they ate standing up with much respect, without looking at his face the whole time. He was served on Cholula earthenware, some red and some black.

While he was eating, the men of his guard, who were in the halls near that of Montezuma, were not even to think of making any disturbance or speaking out loud. They brought him fruit of all the different kinds they have in that land, but he only ate very little of it from time to time. They brought him, in some fine golden cups, a certain drink made from pure cacao; they said it was for going to have relations with his women, and we paid no attention to it at that time; but what I did see was that they brought more than fifty large pitchers of good cacao with its froth and he drank of that, and the women served this drink to him with great respect. Sometimes at meal time, there were some hunchback Indians, very ugly, small of body, their bodies broken almost in half, who were jesters among them, and other Indians who must have been fools, who told him witty things, and others who sang and danced for him because Montezuma was very fond of pleasure and song; and he ordered that they be given what was left of the food and jugs of cacao. The same four women removed the tablecloths, and gave him water for his hands again, and they did it with much respect. Montezuma talked to those four old chieftains about matters of interest; and they took their leave of him with the great reverence they had for him, and he stayed there resting.

After the great Montezuma had eaten, all the men of his guard and many of his house servants ate, and it seems to me that they brought more than a thousand plates of those foods I have described; then more than two thousand jugs of cacao with its froth, as it is made among Mexicans, and an infinite amount of fruit. So with his women and servants and bread makers and

cacao makers, what enormous expenses he had! Let us stop talking about the expense and food of his house, and let us speak about these stewards and treasurers and the stores and pantries and of those who had charge of the houses where the maize was kept. I say there was so much that, to describe each thing by itself, I would not know where I would even begin, but we were astonished at the great order and abundance there was in everything. I go on to say, for I had forgotten it, but it is good to go back to tell about it, that when Montezuma was at the table eating, as I have described, two other very graceful women served him tortillas kneaded with eggs and other substantial things, and the tortillas were very white, and they brought them on plates covered with clean napkins; they also brought him another type of bread like long rolls made and kneaded with other kinds of substantial things, and pachol bread, which is how they say it in this land, a sort of wafer. They also put on the table three small tubes painted and gilded all over, and inside they had liquid amber mixed with an herb that is called tobacco, and when he finished eating, after they had danced and sung for him and the table was cleared, he breathed the smoke from one of those small tubes, but very little, and with that he fell asleep.

Let us stop talking about the service at table and return to our account. I remember that, at that time, his chief steward was a great cacique to whom we gave the name Tapia, and he kept the accounts of all the income they brought to Montezuma in his books, which were made of paper, which is called amal, and he had a large house filled with them. Let us stop speaking about the books and accounts, because that goes outside our story, and let us talk about how Montezuma had two houses filled with all types of arms.

*Here Bernal Díaz describes in detail the various arms and then proceeds to discuss the many different types of birds in the bird house.*

Let us leave this and go on to another large house where they had many idols, and they said that they were their fierce

gods. With them, every type of dangerous beast, tigers and two types of lion, animals like wolves, which in this land are called jackals, and foxes, and other smaller beasts, and all these meat-eating beasts they fed with flesh, and most of them they bred in that house, and they fed them deer, hens, little dogs, and other things they hunted; I have even heard it said that they fed them the bodies of Indians they sacrificed. It is in this way: You will already have heard me talk about how, when they sacrificed some poor Indian, they sawed open the chest with some knives of flint, and they pulled out the beating heart and blood and offered it to their idols in whose name they made that sacrifice; then they cut off the thighs and arms and ate them at fiestas and banquets, and the head they attached to some beams, and the body of the sacrificed person was not eaten but was given to these fierce animals.

Then they also had in that cursed house many vipers and poisonous snakes that carry on their tails something that sounds like bells; these are the worst vipers of all, and they kept them in jars and in great earthen vessels, and in them many feathers. There they laid their eggs and raised their young vipers; and to eat they gave them the bodies of the Indians they sacrificed and other meat of dogs from among those they bred. We even learned for certain that, when they drove us out of Mexico and killed more than eight hundred fifty of our soldiers, they fed their fierce animals and snakes for many days on the dead bodies, as I will discuss in its time and place. These snakes and beasts were dedicated to those fierce idols so they stayed in their company. Let me mention the infernal noise when the tigers and lions roared and the jackals and foxes howled and the serpents hissed; it was frightful to hear and seemed like hell.

Let us speak of the great craftsmen they had for each craft they practiced. Let us begin with lapidaries and workers in gold and silver and all molded work that even the great silversmiths in our Spain had to take it seriously, and of these there were a great many excellent ones in a town a league from Mexico called

Escapuzalco.<sup>13</sup> Then, to work precious stones and chalchiuís, which are like emeralds, there were many other great masters. Let us go on to the great craftsmen who do featherwork, and painters and sculptors, very sublime, who from what we can see of their work today, we would have had high regard for what they did then; for there are three Indians now in the city of Mexico, Marcos de Aquino, Juan de la Cruz, and el Crespillo, so superior in their work as sculptors and painters that, if they had lived in the time of that ancient and famous Apelles, or Michael Angelo, or Berruguete<sup>14</sup> of our times, they would be put in the same company. Let us proceed to the Indian women who were weavers and embroiderers, who made such a quantity of fine clothing with very great featherwork; they brought most of it daily from towns and a province on the north coast near Veracruz, called Cotastan, very close to San Juan de Ulúa, where we disembarked when we came with Cortés. In the house of the great Montezuma, all the daughters of lords he had for concubines always wove very fine things, and there were many other daughters of inhabitants of Mexico who were in something like a house of seclusion and almost resembled nuns, and they also did weaving, all of featherwork. These nuns had their homes near the great cu of Huichilobos, and because of their devotion to it and to an idol of a woman they said was their advocate for marriage, their parents put them in that order until they got married, and they were only taken out of there to get married. Let us go on and talk about the great number of dancers and whirlers, others who walked on stilts, others who flew through the air when they danced, and others who seemed like clowns, and these were to give Montezuma pleasure. I say that he had a district of these people who did nothing else. Let us go on and speak of the workmen he had as stonemasons, masons, and carpenters, all of whom

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13. Azcapotzalco.

14. Apelles of Kos was a fourth-century BCE Greek painter; Michelangelo (1475–1564) was an Italian painter, sculptor, architect, and engineer; and Alonso González de Berruguete (1488–1561) was a Spanish painter, sculptor, and architect.

occupied themselves with the construction of his houses; I may add that he had as many as he wanted.

Let us not forget the gardens of flowers and sweet-smelling trees and the many kinds he had of them, their arrangement and the walkways, the ponds, and reservoir of fresh water, how the water comes in at one end and goes out by the other, the baths he had within, the variety of small birds that nested in the branches. The medicinal and other useful herbs he had there were something to see, and for all of this many gardeners, and everything made of masonry and well whitened with lime, baths as well as walks, and other private rooms and apartments like summer houses and also places where they danced and sang. There was as much to see in these gardens as everywhere else, and we could not tire of seeing his great power. As follows from the above, he had masters of every trade practiced among them, and great numbers of all of them. As I am tired of writing about this subject and the curious readers will be more so, I will stop talking about it.

## TO SECURE OUR LIVES, WE SHOULD SEIZE MONTEZUMA

[XCII] As we had now been in Mexico four days, and neither the captain nor any of us had left the lodgings except to go to Montezuma's houses and gardens, Cortés said to us that it would be good to go to the large plaza and see the great adoratorio of their Huichilobos, that he wanted to send to tell the great Montezuma and ask for his approval. For that purpose, he sent as messenger Jerónimo de Aguilar and doña Marina, and with them one of our captain's small pages, Orteguilla, who now understood something of the language. When Montezuma learned this, he sent to say that we were welcome to go, but on the other hand, he feared we might do some dishonor to his idols, so he decided to go with us in person with many of his chieftains. He came out of his palace in his rich litter and went half the distance; near some adoratorios, he stepped out of his litter, because he considered it a great dishonor to his idols to go as far as their house and adoratorio in that way. Great chieftains took him by the arm with their arms; lords of vassals went before him carrying two staffs like scepters held on high, which was the sign that the great Montezuma was coming there. When he went in his litter, he carried a wand, half-gold and half-wood, held up like a staff of justice. Thus he went and ascended his great cu accompanied by many papas, and he began to perfume and perform other ceremonies to Huichilobos.

Let us leave Montezuma, who had already gone ahead, as I have said, and return to Cortés and our captains and soldiers, who, as was customary, were armed night and day, and as Montezuma

was used to seeing us armed when we went to see him, he did not look at it as anything new. I say this because our captain and all the rest who had horses went to Tlatelolco on horseback, and most of our soldiers went fully at the ready. Many caciques whom Montezuma had sent accompanied us. When we arrived at the market in the large plaza, Tlatelolco, as we had not seen such a thing, we were astonished at the multitude of people and quantity of merchandise and at the good order and control they had everywhere. The chieftains who were with us went along showing it to us. Each type of merchandise was by itself and had its place fixed and marked out. Let us begin with the merchants of gold, silver, rich stones, featherworks, cloths, embroidered goods, and other merchandise, including men and women Indian slaves; I say that they brought as many of them to sell in that great plaza as the Portuguese bring blacks from Guinea, and they brought them tied to long poles with collars around their necks so they could not flee, and others they left loose. Then there were other merchants who sold coarse clothing, raw cotton, and articles of twisted yarn, and cacao vendors, and in this way there were as many types of merchandise as there are in all of New Spain, arranged in the way it is in my region, which is Medina del Campo, where the fairs are held, and each type of merchandise has a street for itself; so they were in this great plaza, and those who sold cloaks of maguey fiber, ropes, and sandals, which are the shoes they wear and make from the same plant; and from the same tree, they make very sweet cooked roots and other sweet things. All were in one part of the market in their designated place. In another part were skins of tigers, lions, otters, jackals, deer and other animals, badgers and mountain cats, some tanned and others untanned, and other types of articles and merchandise.

Let us go on and talk about those who sold beans and sage and other vegetables and herbs in another part. Let us go to those who sold hens, roosters with wattles, rabbits, hares, deer, and large ducks, small dogs, and other things of that sort in their part of the marketplace. Let us talk about the fruiterers, of the women who sold cooked food, corn pudding, and tripe, also in

their own part. Then every sort of pottery, made in a thousand ways, from great earthen vessels to small jugs, which were also in a place by themselves; also those who sold honey and honey paste and other delicacies like nut paste. Then those who sold wood, boards, cradles and beams, and blocks and benches, all in their own part. Let us go to those who sold firewood, *ocote*, and other things of this nature. I want also to mention that, speaking apologetically, they also sold many canoes filled with human excrement, which they kept in the creeks near the marketplace, and this was for making salt or tanning skins, for without it they say that they are not well made. I have understood well that some gentlemen will laugh at this, but I say that it is so; and I say moreover that customarily on all the roads they had places of reeds or straw or grass, so that those who passed could not see through them; there they placed themselves when they needed to purge their intestines, so that even that filth would not be lost. Why do I waste so many words on what they sell in that great marketplace, because I will never finish if I tell everything in detail, but there was paper, which in this country is called *amal*, and some reeds with the scent of liquid amber, filled with tobacco, and other yellow ointments and things of that sort they sold in a place of their own; and they sold much seed under the arcades that were in that great marketplace. There were many sellers of herbs and goods of other types; and they had there a building where they judged, three judges and others like executive *alguaciles* who examined the merchandise. I have forgotten the salt and those who made flint blades, and how they extracted them from the stone itself. Then fisherwomen and others who sold some small cakes that they made from a sort of ooze they get from that great lake, and it curdles, and they make bread from it that has a flavor something like cheese; and they sold axes of bronze and copper and tin, and some gourds and some jugs painted all over, made of wood.

I would like to have finished talking about all the things that were sold there, because there was so much and of such different types, but in order to see and inquire about all of that, as the great market was full of so many people, all of it surrounded

by arcades, it would not be possible to see everything in two days. We went to the great cu, and when we were nearing its large courtyards, before leaving the marketplace itself, there were many other merchants, who, according to what they said, were those who had gold to sell as they extracted it from the mines. The gold was put in some thin quills of the native geese, and white, so that the gold would appear through from the outside; by the length and thickness of the quills they kept their account in transactions of how many cloaks they were worth, or how many *xiquipiles* of cacao, or how many slaves, or how much of anything else they were exchanging them for.

So we left the great marketplace without looking at it again, and we went to the large courtyards and walls where the great cu is; before arriving at it, there was a great series of courts that seemed to me larger than the plaza in Salamanca, with two walls of masonry surrounding it, and the court itself paved with large white flagstones, very smooth, and where there were no such stones, it was whitened and polished, everything very clean, so that no dust or straw could be found in all of it. When we arrived near the great cu, before we had climbed a single step, the great Montezuma sent from above, where he was making sacrifices, six papas and two chieftains to accompany our captain. They went to take him by the arms to help him, as they helped their lord Montezuma, ascend the stairs, which numbered one hundred fourteen, believing he would become tired, but Cortés would not let them come near him. After they had climbed to the top of the great cu, on a small plaza at the top, they had something like platforms and on them some large stones where they put the poor Indians to sacrifice, and there was a large image like a dragon and other evil figures and much blood that had been shed that day.

When we arrived, Montezuma came out of an adoratorio where his cursed idols were, which was at the summit of the great cu, and two papas came with him; showing much respect to Cortés and all of us, he said: "You will be tired, Lord Malinche, from climbing this our great temple." Cortés said to him

through our interpreters, who were with us, that nothing made him or the rest of us tired. Then Montezuma took Cortés by the hand and told him to look at his great city and all the rest of the cities that were in the water and the many other towns around the same lake on the land; and he said that if Cortés had not had a good view of his great marketplace, from there he could see it much better. So we were looking at it, because that great and accursed temple was so high that it commanded the entire view, and from there we saw the three causeways that entered into Mexico, that of Iztapalapa, which was the one through which we entered four days before, that of Tacuba, through which we fled the night of our great defeat when Coadlavaca, the new lord, drove us from the city, as I will discuss later on, and that of Tepeaquilla.<sup>1</sup> We saw the fresh water that came from Chapultepec, which supplied the city, and on those three causeways the bridges that were built at certain intervals, through which the water from the lake flowed from one side to the other; and we saw on that great lake such a multitude of canoes, some bringing provisions and others merchandise and other cargo. We saw that in that whole great city and all the other cities built in the water, one could not pass from one house to another except by some wooden drawbridges or canoes; and we saw in those cities cus and adoratorios like towers and fortresses, all gleaming white, which was a wonderful thing to see, and the houses with flat roofs, and on the causeways other small towers and adoratorios, which were like fortresses. After having looked carefully and considered everything we had seen, we turned to look at the great marketplace and the multitude of people in it, some buying and others selling, and the murmur and hum of the voices and words spoken there carried more than a league. Among us were soldiers who had been in many parts of the world, in Constantinople and in all of Italy and Rome, and they

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1. Tepeaquilla refers to Tepeyacac (later Tepeyac), which later became the site of the chapel, now the basilica of Guadalupe.

said that a marketplace so well laid out, with such order and size and full of so many people, they had never seen before.

Let us leave this and return to our captain, who said to fray Bartolomé de Olmedo, who was there: "It seems to me, Father, that it would be good if we sound out Montezuma as to whether he'd let us build our church here." The father said that it would be good if successful, but it seemed to him it was not appropriate to speak about it at that time, that he could not see Montezuma agreeing to such a thing. Then our Cortés said to Montezuma through doña Marina, the interpreter: "Your grace is a very great lord and worthy of much more. We have rejoiced at seeing your cities. What we ask as a favor, since we are here in this temple of yours, is that you show us your gods and teules." Montezuma said that first he would speak with his chief papas. Then when he had spoken to them, he said we should enter a small tower and apartment like a hall, where there were two objects like altars with very rich planking on the top of the roof, and at each altar two figures, like giants, with very tall bodies and very fat. The first, which was on the right hand, they said was the figure of Huichilobos, their god of war, and he had a very wide face and countenance with deformed and terrifying eyes. The whole of his body was covered with precious stonework, gold, pearls, and seed pearls, held on with glue they make in this country from some sort of root, and all the body and head was covered with it, the body encircled by great snakes made of gold and clusters of stones, and in one hand he held a bow and in the other some arrows. Another small idol, which they said was his page, was there next to him holding a short lance and a shield, very rich with gold and precious stonework. Huichilobos had around his neck some faces of Indians and other things like their hearts, the latter of gold, some of them of silver, with many blue precious stones. There were some fire pans with incense, which is their copal, and in them were burning three hearts from Indians who had been sacrificed that day; they had made the sacrifice with smoke and copal. All the walls of that adoratorio were bathed and black with crusts of blood, and likewise the floor, and it all had a terrible

smell. Then we saw on the other side, on the left hand, the other great figure, the same height as Huichilobos, and he had a face like a bear, eyes that shone made of their mirrors, which they call *tezcal*, and the body had rich stones glued on it like Huichilobos, because, according to what they said, the two were brothers, and this Tezcatepuca was the god of the inferno, who had charge of the souls of the Mexicans; his body was encircled with some figures like small devils with tails like snakes, and on the walls so many crusts of blood and the floor all bathed in it that in the slaughterhouses of Castile there was not such a stench. They had offered it five hearts from the sacrifices of that day, and in the highest part of the cu was another recess, the wood very richly worked, and another figure like a half man, half lizard, all covered with rich stones and half-cloaked. They said that the body of this figure was full of all the seeds to be found in the whole world, and they said he was the god of sowing and fruit; I do not remember his name, and everything was covered with blood, walls as well as altar, and there was such a stench that we could hardly wait to get outside. They had there an exceedingly large drum, and when they beat it, its sound was so sad and, as they say, like an instrument of hell, and one could hear it more than two leagues from there; they said that the skins of that drum were from very large snakes.

In that small place they had many diabolical things to see, bugles and trumpets and knives, and many hearts of Indians they had burned and used to perfume those idols of theirs, and everything clotted with blood. There was so much of it that I curse it all; and as it smelled so much like a slaughterhouse, we could not wait to get away from such a bad stench and worse sight. Half laughing, our captains said to Montezuma through our interpreter: "Lord Montezuma: I do not see how such a great lord and wise man as your grace has not come to the conclusion that your idols are not gods, but evil things called devils. So that your grace might come to know this, and all your papas might see it clearly, do me a favor: Grant that on the top of this tower, we might put a cross, and in one part of these adoratorios where your Huichilobos and Tezcatepuca are, we will have a space apart where

we might put an image of Our Lady (which image Montezuma had already seen), and you will see by the fear these idols have of it that they have you deceived.” Montezuma replied half angrily, and the two papas with him showed signs of upset, and he said: “Lord Malinche, if I had believed that you were going to say such dishonorable things as you have, I would not have shown you my gods. We consider them to be very good, for they give us health, rain, good plantings, and victories and whatever we want; and we must worship them and sacrifice to them. What I beg of you is that you not say any more words dishonoring them.” When our captain heard that and saw him so agitated, he did not talk about it anymore, but with a cheerful face said to him: “It is now time for your grace and us to go.” Montezuma replied that it was good, but that before he left he had to pray and make a certain sacrifice to make up for the great *tatacul*, which means a great mistake that he had committed in allowing us to ascend his great *cu* and see his gods and for the dishonor we did them in speaking badly of them. Cortés said to him: “Since that is the way it is, please pardon me.”

Then we went down the stairs, and as there were one hundred fourteen of them and some of our soldiers were suffering from sores,<sup>2</sup> their thighs hurt them as they went down. I will stop talking about their adoratorio and will say how the surroundings seemed to me and what they were like, and if I do not talk about them as accurately as I should, do not be surprised, because at that time I had other thoughts to attend to regarding what we had on our hands with respect to military matters and in what my captain ordered me, not in telling stories. Let us return to the subject. It seems to me that the distance around the great *cu* would be six very large lots as they are assigned in this land. From the bottom to the top, where the little tower and their idols were, it narrowed; in the middle of the high *cu* up to its highest point are five recesses like low defensive walls, but open, without bulwarks. Because

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2. Bernal Díaz uses *bubas*, a term that here refers to sores associated with syphilis.

many cus are painted on the banners of the conquistadors and on one I have, anyone who has seen any of them could infer what they look like from the outside. But what I saw and understood, and there was a tradition of it, in those times when they founded that great cu, all the inhabitants of that city had put gold, silver, seed pearls, and rich stones as offerings in its foundation, and they bathed it with the blood of many Indians they had taken in the wars and sacrificed and every type or variety of seed they had in all the land so their idols might give them victories, riches, and much food. Some of my very curious readers will ask how we could come to know that they threw gold, silver, rich chalchiui stones, and seeds in the foundations of that great cu and watered them with the human blood of the Indians they sacrificed when it was more than a thousand years since it was built and made. To this I respond that, after we conquered that strong and great city and apportioned the lots, we proposed that we should build the church of our patron and guide, señor Santiago, on that great cu, and a great part of the site of the high cu of Huichilobos fell to the holy church as its lot; when they opened the foundations in order to strengthen them, they found much gold, silver, chalchiuis, pearls, seed pearls, and other stones. Similarly, a citizen of Mexico, who was assigned another part of the same lot, found the same things. The officials of His Majesty's treasury demanded them for His Majesty, saying they came to him by right, and there was a lawsuit about it, but I do not remember what happened except that they were informed by the caciques and chieftains of Mexico and by Guatemuz,<sup>3</sup> who was alive then, and they said it was true that all the inhabitants of Mexico of that time threw those jewels and all the rest into the foundation. So they had noted it in their books and pictures of ancient things, and for this reason those riches were left for the building of the holy church of señor Santiago.

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3. Bernal Díaz uses Guatemuz to designate the Aztec successor to Montezuma and Coadlavaca (Cuitlahuac) now commonly known as Cuauhtemoc.

Let us leave this and speak of the great and magnificent courtyards that were in front of Huichilobos, where now the church of señor Santiago is, which is called Tlatelolco, because it used to be called that. I have already said there were two walls of stonemasonry before entering, the courtyard was paved with white stones like flagstones, plastered all over, burnished and clean, and it was as large and broad as the plaza of Salamanca. A little way away from the great cu was another small tower that was also a house of idols, or pure inferno, because it had at the opening of the one gate a very frightening mouth like those they paint, which they say are like those in the infernos with the mouth open and great fangs to swallow souls. There were also some figures of devils and bodies of serpents close to the door, and a little way away was a place of sacrifice, all very bloody and black with smoke and crusts of blood; and there were many great pots and pitchers and earthenware jars inside the house filled with water, for it was there they cooked the flesh of the poor Indians they sacrificed and the papas ate, because also near the place of sacrifice were many large knives and some chopping blocks like those on which they cut meat in the butcher shops. Behind that accursed house, well away from it, were some huge piles of firewood, and not very far off a large pool of water, which fills and empties, for the water comes to it through a covered conduit, part of what comes into the city from Chapultepec. I always called that house the house of hell.

Let us go on from the courtyard to another cu where the great Mexican lords were buried, which also had many other idols, all covered with blood and smoke, and there were other doorways and figures from hell. Near that cu was another one full of skulls and large bones arranged with great order, which one could look at but not count because there were many, the skulls by themselves and the bones in other piles. Other idols were there, and in each house or cu or temple I have mentioned were papas with their long robes of black cloth and long hoods also, like those of the Dominicans, which were also a little like those of the canons, hair very long and matted so it could not be separated or untangled, and most of them bled their ears as a sacrifice, so in their hair

much blood. Let us go on. There were other cus a little way away from where the skulls were, which had idols and places of sacrifice with other evil paintings, and they said those idols were gods for the marriages of men. I do not want to spend any more time talking about idols, but I will say only that all around that great court were many houses, not high, where the papas and other Indians who had charge of the idols lodged and resided, and they also had another very large pool or pond of water, very clean, at one side of the great cu. It was dedicated solely to the service of Huichilobos and Tezcatepuca, and the water entered that pool through covered pipes that came from Chapultepec.

Close by were other large lodgings something like convents, where many daughters of Mexican inhabitants were sheltered like nuns until they married; two figures of idols like women, who were advocates in the marriages of women, stood there, and to them those women made sacrifices and held festivities so they would give them good husbands. I have talked for a long time about this great cu of Tlatelolco and its courtyards, for I say it was the greatest temple in all Mexico, although there were many that were most magnificent, and for every four or five parishes or districts they had a temple and its idols. Because there were many and I do not know the number of them all, I will go on to say that in Cholula, the great adoratorio was higher than that of Mexico because it had one hundred twenty stairs and, according to what they said, they considered the idol of Cholula good and went there on pilgrimage from all parts of New Spain to win pardon, and for this reason they made such a magnificent cu for it. It was of a different form from the Mexican, although there, too, the courtyards were very large and with two walls. Also I say that the cu of the city of Texcoco was very high, with one hundred seventeen steps, and the courtyards broad and fine but made in a different form from the others. One laughable thing is that each province had its idols, and those of one province or city were of no use to the others, and thus they had infinite idols and made sacrifices to all of them. After our captain and all of us were tired of walking and seeing such a diversity of idols and

their sacrifices, we returned to our lodgings, always accompanied by many chieftains and caciques whom Montezuma sent with us.

[XCIII] When our captain Cortés and the Mercedarian friar saw that Montezuma was unwilling to allow us to put a cross or build a church in the cu of Huichilobos, and because ever since we entered that city of Mexico, when mass was said we had to make an altar on tables and then take it apart again, we decided to ask the stewards of the great Montezuma for masons so that we could make a church in our lodgings; the stewards said they would tell Montezuma. Our captain also sent to tell him this through doña Marina and Aguilar and his page, Orteguilla, who already understood something of the language, and Montezuma soon gave his permission and ordered that we be given all supplies necessary. In two days, we had our church built and the holy cross put before the lodgings, and there mass was said every day until the wine was gone. As Cortés, other captains, and the friar were ill during the wars of Tlaxcala, they had made the wine we had for masses go too quickly; but after the wine was gone, we were still in the church on our knees each day praying before the altar and images, for one thing because we were obliged to do it as Christians and as a good habit, and for another so that Montezuma and all his captains should see us on our knees in front of the cross, especially when we prayed the Ave Maria, so they might be inclined to it.

When we were all in those lodgings, as we were of such character that we inquired into and wanted to know everything, while we were looking for where the best and most suitable place was for the altar, two of our soldiers, one of them was a finish carpenter named Alonso Yáñez, saw on a wall signs that there had been a door there which was closed up, very well plastered and burnished. As there was talk, and we had been told that Montezuma had the treasure of his father, Axayaca, in that lodging, we suspected it would be in that room, which had been closed and plastered over just a few days before. Yáñez told Juan Velázquez de León and Francisco de Lugo, who were captains, also relatives of mine, and Alonso Yáñez kept company with them as their servant, and those captains told Cortés, so the door was secretly opened. When it was

open, Cortés with certain captains went inside first, and they saw such a number of jewels, plate and ingots of gold, and chalchiui stones and other great riches, they were beside themselves and did not know what to say about such wealth. Soon all the other captains and soldiers learned of it, and we very secretly went to see it; and when I saw it, I say that I was astonished, and as in that time I was young and had never in my life seen riches like those, I was sure that there could not be the like anywhere in the world. All our captains and soldiers decided that we would not even think of touching any of it, but that the stones should be put again in the doorway, and it should be closed and plastered as we had found it, and that we should not speak of it so that Montezuma should not hear about it until another time.

Let us leave this about the riches and say that, as we had such brave captains and soldiers and of such good counsel and judgment, and primarily as we were very certain Our Lord Jesus Christ put his divine hand on all our affairs, four of our captains took Cortés aside in the church together with twelve soldiers in whom he had confidence and confided, and I was one of them; we asked him to look at the net and trap we were in, the great strength of that city, the bridges and causeways, the words of warning they gave us in all the towns through which we had come that Huichilobos had advised Montezuma to let us enter his city and they would kill us there; we said he should understand that the hearts of men are very changeable, especially among the Indians, and he should not have confidence in the goodwill and kindness Montezuma was showing us, because from one hour to the next he would change when he felt like attacking, and if he should stop our food or water or raise any bridge, we would not be able to fend for ourselves; and we told him to look at the great number of Indian warriors Montezuma had as his guard, and what could we do to attack them or defend ourselves, because all the houses were in the water? How could our friends the Tlaxcalans enter to help us?

Since all this we were telling him was something to think about, he should right away seize Montezuma if we wanted to secure our lives, and that it should not wait another day. He should consider

that all the gold Montezuma gave us and what we had seen in the treasury of his father, Axayaca, and all the food we were eating would turn into arsenic in our body, that neither day nor night could we rest nor sleep with this thought, and that if any of our soldiers told him anything other than this, they would be like senseless beasts drawn to the sweetness of the gold, not seeing death staring them in the face. When Cortés heard this, he said: "Don't believe, gentlemen, that I'm asleep or that I don't have the same concern; I'm sure you must have felt it in me; but, what power do we have to be so bold as to seize such a great lord in his own palace with his guards and warriors? What means can be found to try to put it into effect without his giving the alarm to his warriors and their attacking us immediately?"

Our captains, Juan Velázquez de León, Diego de Ordaz, Gonzalo de Sandoval, and Pedro de Alvarado, replied that, with the right words, we could draw him out from his hall and bring him to our lodgings and tell him he must be our prisoner, that if he became agitated or cried out, he would pay with his person, that if Cortés did not want to do this at once, he should give them permission and they would get it under way, that between the two great dangers in which we found ourselves, the thing that was best and most to the purpose was to take him and not wait for them to attack us, for if he began, what way out would we have? Also some of us soldiers told him it seemed to us that the stewards of Montezuma who served us provisions were insolent and did not bring us as much as in the first days. Also two Tlaxcalan Indians, our friends, said secretly to Jerónimo de Aguilar, our interpreter, that it did not seem that the Mexicans had goodwill toward us during the last two days. We were discussing for a good hour whether we should seize him or not and how we could do it. This last advice suited our captain. One way or another we were going to take him prisoner, but we left it for the next day. All that night we were praying to God to direct our plan to his holy service.

After these discussions, the next morning, two Tlaxcalan Indians came very secretly with some letters from Villa Rica. What they contained was that Juan de Escalante, who stayed there

as chief constable, was killed, and six soldiers with him, in a battle the Mexicans waged against him, and they also killed his horse and many Totonac Indians he had in his company, and that all the towns of the sierra and Cempoala and its subject towns were stirred up and would not bring food nor serve in the fort. They did not know what to do, for earlier the Indians had considered them teules, but now that they had seen this rout, they had become savage, both the Totonacs and the Mexicans, and they considered the Spaniards as nothing, nor did they know how to remedy the situation. When we heard that news, God knows what sorrow we all had. It was the first rout we had in New Spain. Let the curious reader consider how adverse fortune comes with the turning of the wheel. Anyone who had seen us enter that city with such a solemn and triumphant reception, and had considered us rich with what Montezuma had given every day both to the captain and to us, and had seen the house described by me filled with gold and how they considered us teules, which are idols, and that we won all our battles—and now for such great misfortune to have come to us that they did not hold us in the same esteem as before, but considered us men who could be conquered, and to have felt how insolent they were to us! At the end of more discussion, it was agreed that that same day, one way or another, Montezuma would be seized or we would all die doing it. So that the readers may see this battle of Juan de Escalante and how they killed him, the six soldiers, the horse, and the Totonac friends he had with him, I want to describe it here before I talk about the seizing of Montezuma in order not to leave anything out, because it must be clearly understood.

[XCIV] *As Bernal Díaz said, "It happened this way": Juan de Escalante, captain and constable general of New Spain in Villa Rica, had been ordered by Cortés to assist the towns in the area with everything they might need. The garrison Montezuma kept near Tuzapan, one of many he had in all the provinces, demanded tribute of Indian men and women and provisions from some of these towns. The towns refused, and the Mexican captains threatened to*

*destroy those towns and take the people off as captives, saying that Montezuma had ordered this. These Totonac friends came to Juan de Escalante and complained. The Mexicans ignored Juan de Escalante's order to them not to annoy or rob the towns; and he sent threatening messages. In the battle that ensued, the Totonacs, terrified by the large number of Mexican warriors, fled at the first engagement and left Juan de Escalante fighting with the Mexicans.*

In those skirmishes and attacks, the Mexicans carried off a soldier, whose name was Argüello, a native of León; he had a very large head with a black curly beard, and he was very sturdy in appearance, young and very strong. They wounded Escalante and six other soldiers very badly, and they killed his horse. He returned to Villa Rica, and within three days he and the other soldiers had died.

This is how the affair at Almería happened, not like the account of Gómara, who says in his history that Pedro de Ircio went to settle Pánuco with certain soldiers. I do not know how, with what understanding, it was possible for so elegant a chronicler to write such a thing, because counting all the soldiers with Cortés in Mexico, we did not number four hundred, most of them wounded in the battles of Tlaxcala and Tabasco, and we did not even have the numbers to post a good guard, much less send people to populate Pánuco. He says further that Pedro de Ircio went as captain, and even in that time he was not a captain, nor even a squad leader, nor did they give him any post, nor did they even notice him, and he stayed with us in Mexico. The same chronicler also says many other things about the imprisonment of Montezuma. I do not understand his writing, and I have to wonder at what he wrote in his history, for there must have been conquistadors alive from that time who would tell him when they read it: "This did not happen like that. In this other matter, he is saying whatever he pleases."

I will return to our subject and talk about how the Mexican captains, after having the battle with Juan de Escalante, sent to tell Montezuma about it and even presented him the head of

Argüello, who seems to have died of his wounds on the road, for they had carried him off alive. We learned that Montezuma, when they showed the head to him, as it was robust and large and had a full curly beard, was terrified and fearful to look at it and ordered them not to offer it to any *cu* in Mexico but to other idols in other towns. Montezuma asked his captains how, because they were thousands of warriors, they did not conquer so few *teules*. They replied that neither their spears nor arrows nor good fighting was any use to them, that they could not make them retreat, because a great *tequēcihuata*<sup>4</sup> of Castile appeared before them, and that lady frightened the Mexicans and said words to her *teules* that encouraged them. Then Montezuma believed that the great lady was Saint Mary, who we had told him was our advocate, whose image with her precious son in her arms we had earlier given to Montezuma. However, I did not see all this because I was in Mexico, but some conquistadors who were there said it, and please God that it should be so. Certainly all of us soldiers who came with Cortés believed it very much, and it is true that the divine compassion of Our Lady, the Virgin Mary, was always with us, for which I give her much thanks. I will now go on to talk about what happened regarding the seizure of Montezuma.

[XCV] As we had decided the day before to seize Montezuma, we spent the whole night in prayer, begging God that it would happen in such a way that it would redound to his holy service, and the next morning we agreed on how to do it. Cortés took with him five captains, who were Pedro de Alvarado, Gonzalo de Sandoval, Juan Velázquez de León, Francisco de Lugo, and Alonso de Ávila, and I, and our interpreters, doña Marina and Aguilar; he ordered all of us to be very much on the alert and the horsemen to have their horses saddled and bridled. As for our arms, there is no need for me to call them to mind because always, day and night, we were armed and wearing our sandals on our feet, which at that time was our footwear, and whenever we went to speak

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4. *Tequēcihuata* means “lady,” referring here to the Virgin Mary.

with Montezuma, he always saw us armed in that way; I say this because when Cortés went with the five captains and all had their arms with them, Montezuma did not take it as anything new, nor did it disturb him. When all of us were ready, our captain sent to Montezuma to let him know we were coming to his palace, for we customarily did this, so he would not be disturbed seeing us suddenly arrive. Montezuma understood more or less that Cortés would be coming angry about the affair at Almería, but he thought nothing of it and told him to come and he would be welcome. When Cortés entered, after paying his usual respects, he said to him through our interpreters: "Lord Montezuma, I am astonished that you, such a valiant prince, having given yourself out as our friend, should order your captains who are on the coast, near Tuzapan, to take up arms against my Spaniards, to have the audacity to rob the towns that are in the keeping and under the protection of our king and lord, demanding Indian men and women from them to sacrifice, and to kill a Spaniard, my brother, and a horse." He did not speak of the captain nor the six soldiers who died as soon as they arrived at Villa Rica, because Montezuma did not yet know of it nor did the Indian captains who had attacked them. Cortés also told him: "And because you were such a friend, I ordered my captains to serve and assist you in every possible way, but your grace, on the contrary, has not done this for us. Also in the matter of Cholula, your captains with a great number of warriors had arranged at your orders to kill us. I overlooked it at the time because of my great regard for you, but now your vassals and captains have become insolent and have secret discussions, stating that you want us killed. I do not want to start a war or destroy this city for these reasons. Everything will be forgiven if right away silently and without making any disturbance, you come with us to our lodgings; you will be served there and looked after very well, as if in your own house. But if you make a disturbance or call out, these captains of mine will immediately kill you; I brought them for no other purpose."

When Montezuma heard this, he was terrified and stunned, and he replied that he had never ordered them to take up arms

against us, that he would send immediately for his captains so that the truth would be known, and he would punish them. In that instant, he took from his arm and wrist the sign and seal of Huichilobos, which is what he did when he ordered something serious and important so that it would be carried out, and it would be carried out at once. As for going as a prisoner and leaving his palace against his will, he said he was not a person who could be ordered to do such a thing, and it was not his desire to go. Cortés replied with very good arguments, and Montezuma replied with better ones about why he should not have to leave his house, so that more than half an hour was spent in these discussions. When Juan Velázquez de León and the rest of the captains saw that time was being wasted over this matter and they were in a great hurry to have him removed from his house and taken prisoner, they spoke to Cortés somewhat agitated and said: "What are you doing with all these words? Either we take him prisoner, or we stab him. So, tell him again that if he cries out or makes a disturbance, we will kill him, because it is better that we now secure our lives or lose them."

As Juan Velázquez said this with a loud and somewhat terrifying voice, because that was his way of speaking, and Montezuma saw that our captains were angry, he asked doña Marina what they were saying with those loud words. Because doña Marina was very shrewd, she said to him: "Lord Montezuma, what I counsel you is that you go right away with them to their lodging without making any noise, for I know that they will pay you much honor as the great lord you are; otherwise you will be left dead here, but in their lodgings you will learn the truth." Then Montezuma said to Cortés: "Lord Malinche, granted that if that is the way you want it, I have a legitimate son and two legitimate daughters. Take them as hostages and do not insult me in this way. What will my chieftains say if they see me taken off as a prisoner?" Cortés told him again that he had to go with us personally, and there was nothing else to be done. After many arguments, he said he would go willingly. Then Cortés and our captains spoke many friendly words to him and requested as a favor that he not be

angry and that he tell his captains and the men of his guard that he was going of his own will because he had had discussions with his idol Huichilobos and the papas who served him and it was better for his health and safety to be with us. Then, his rich litter was brought, in which he usually went out with all his captains accompanying him. He went to our lodging, where we put guards and watchmen over him. Cortés and all of us provided for him all the services and pleasures we could, as best we could, and we used no shackles at all on him.

Soon all the great Mexican chieftains and his nephews came to see and talk with him to learn the reason for his imprisonment and whether he ordered them to attack us. Montezuma told them he was content to be there with us for some days, by his own will not by force, that if he wanted something he would tell them, and that neither they nor the city should be alarmed, nor should they be worried about it, because his Huichilobos approved of his being there, and certain papas who knew about it told him this, for they had spoken with the idol about it. In this way, as I have told it, the capture of the great Montezuma took place. There, where he was staying, he had his service, his women, and his baths in which he bathed himself, and twenty great lords, counselors, and captains were always in his company, and he adjusted to being a prisoner without showing any emotion, and ambassadors from distant lands came there with their disputes, and they brought him his tribute, and he carried on his important business.

*Here Bernal Díaz again describes the formalities associated with visits to Montezuma.*

I will stop talking at present about this imprisonment, and let us talk about how the messengers whom Montezuma sent with his sign and seal to summon the captains who killed our soldiers brought them before him as prisoners. What he said to them I do not know, but he sent them to Cortés for judgment. Their testimony was taken in Montezuma's absence, and they confessed that what I have stated before was true, that their lord had ordered

them to attack and collect tributes, and that if some teules should come to their defense, they should attack them or kill them too. When Cortés heard this testimony, he sent to inform Montezuma how they condemned him in this matter; Montezuma excused himself as best he could. Our captain sent to say that he believed the testimony, and although Montezuma deserved punishment according to the command of our king that the person who orders anyone to kill others, whether guilty or not, shall die for it, he was so fond of Montezuma and wished him so well, that even should he be guilty, before he would make Montezuma pay for it, Cortés would pay the penalty himself. Despite all this he sent to tell him, Montezuma was fearful. Without wasting any more arguments, Cortés sentenced those captains to death, ordering that they be burned in front of Montezuma's palace; so that there would be no problems until they were burned, he ordered fetters put on Montezuma himself. When they put the fetters on, Montezuma groaned, and if he was fearful before, he was much more so then.

After the burning was over, Cortés went with five of our captains to his lodging and personally took the fetters off. He spoke such kind words that Montezuma's anger soon went away, because our Cortés told him that, not only did he consider him a brother, but much more; that as he was lord and king of so many towns and provinces, if he could, as time went on, he, Cortés, would make Montezuma lord of more lands, those he has not been able to conquer, that did not obey him, and that if he wanted to go to his palace, he gave him permission to do so. Cortés said this through our interpreters, and while Cortés was saying it, it seemed that tears came to Montezuma's eyes. He replied with great courtesy that he was very thankful. But he understood well that everything Cortés said was just words, and that for now, perhaps it was better for him to be there as a prisoner, because, as his chieftains were many and his nephews and relatives came every day to say it would be good to attack us and remove him from prison, as soon as they saw him outside, they might persuade him to do just that. He did not want to see turmoil in his city, but if he did not do their will, perhaps they would want to raise up another

lord, and he was removing those thoughts from their minds by saying that his god Huichilobos had sent to say that he should remain a prisoner. From what we understood, and it is very likely, Cortés had told Aguilar to tell Montezuma secretly that, although Malinche wanted to order him freed from prison, the rest of our captains and soldiers did not want that. When he heard it, Cortés threw his arms around him and embraced him and said: "It's not in vain, Lord Montezuma, that I care as much for you as I do for myself."

Then Montezuma asked Cortés for a Spanish page named Orteguilla who was serving him, who already knew the language and who was very useful both to Montezuma and to us because, through this page, Montezuma asked and learned much about things of Castile, and we about what his captains said to him, and truly the page was so attentive that Montezuma liked him very much. Let us stop speaking about how Montezuma was now quite pleased with the great flattery and services and with conversation he had with all of us; whenever we passed before him, even if it was Cortés, we took off our quilted caps or helmets, for we were always armed, and he was very polite to us and honored us all.

I will give the names of Montezuma's captains who had been condemned to be burned. The principal one was named Quetzalpopoca,<sup>5</sup> and the others were named, one of them Coate and the other Quiavit; I do not remember the name of the other, and it does not matter much knowing these names. When this punishment became known in all the provinces of New Spain, they were very fearful, and the towns of the coast where they had killed our soldiers returned again to serve the settlers who stayed in Villa Rica very well. The curious readers who are reading this must consider what great deeds we did then: wrecking our ships; daring to enter such a strong city, having had so many warnings that they would kill us once they had us inside; having the audacity to seize the great Montezuma, king of that land, in his own large city and

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5. Cuauhpopoca.

his own palace, when he had such a great number of warriors in his guard; and then daring to burn his captains before his palace, putting him in fetters while justice was being done.

Many times, now that I am old, I stop to consider the heroic things we did in that time, and it seems to me that I see them there before me, and I say that we ourselves did not do our deeds, but they were all guided by God. For what men have there been in the world who, numbering four hundred soldiers (and we did not even reach that number) dared enter a city as strong as Mexico, which is larger than Venice and more than fifteen hundred leagues distant from our Castile, and seize so great a lord and execute his captains before him? There is much to ponder in this, but not dryly as I have told it.

## ALL MEN GENERALLY DESIRE GOLD

[XCVI] After Quetzalpopoca and his captains had been executed and the great Montezuma had been soothed, our captain decided to send to Villa Rica as its deputy governor a soldier named Alonso de Grado.

*Cortés charged Alonso de Grado to “look after the settlers and to honor them, not to annoy our Indian friends nor take anything from them by force, that he should send at once the two thick chains he had ordered the two blacksmiths who stayed in that town to make from the iron and anchors they had removed from the ships we had destroyed, and that he should hurry in finishing the fortress by putting in the woodwork and covering the roof.” Not only did Alonso de Grado fail to follow orders, he also “wanted to be served like a great lord,” demanding gold, jewels, and beautiful Indian women, eating well, gambling, and not paying any attention to the fortress. Worst of all, he called on his friends and others to arrange for Diego Velázquez or his captains to join him and offered them the land. Cortés learned of this and sent Gonzalo de Sandoval, who had become chief constable with the death of Juan de Escalante to take over in Villa Rica; and Sandoval brought Pedro de Ircio with him. Sandoval soon sent Alonso de Grado as a prisoner to Mexico with Indians guarding him, as Cortés had ordered him to do. Cortés ordered Alonso de Grado to be held prisoner in newly made wooden stocks. Bernal Díaz remembered “that the wood of those stocks smelled like garlic or onion.” After two days, Cortés set Alonso de Grado free and began to favor him, but not by giving him commands or in matters of war.*

I do not want to forget to bring to mind here how, when Cortés had sent Gonzalo de Sandoval to Villa Rica as lieutenant, captain, and chief constable, he had ordered him, as soon as he arrived, to send two blacksmiths with all their equipment, bellows and tools, much iron from the ships we had destroyed, and the two great iron chains that were already made, and that he should send him sails and tackle, pitch and tow, a sailor's compass, and anything else to make two brigantines to sail on the lake of Mexico. Sandoval sent him that at once, carrying out his orders very well.

[XCVII] As our captain Cortés was very diligent in everything, and seeing that Montezuma was a prisoner and fearing he might become distressed with being shut in and confined, Cortés tried every day, after having prayed (for then we had no wine to say mass), to go pay court to him. He went with four captains, particularly Pedro de Alvarado, Juan Velázquez de León, and Diego de Ordaz, and he asked Montezuma with much respect how he was and told him he should issue his orders, that everything would be done and that he should not be distressed by his imprisonment. Montezuma answered that, rather, he was pleased to be a prisoner, and this because our gods gave us power to keep him prisoner, or his Huichilobos allowed it, and from one conversation to another, they gave him to understand more fully the things of our holy faith and the great power of the emperor our lord. Also sometimes Montezuma played *totoloque* with Cortés, which is a game played with little smooth pellets they had made of gold for that game, and they tossed the pellets some distance at some small ingots, also of gold, and in five tries they won or lost certain pieces of gold or rich jewelry they had staked. I remember that Pedro de Alvarado was keeping score for Cortés, and for the great Montezuma one of his nephews, a great lord, and Pedro de Alvarado always scored a point more than Cortés made. When Montezuma saw it, he said, jestingly and laughing, that he did not like Tonatio keeping score for Cortés, for so they called Pedro de Alvarado, because he made so much *ixoxol* when he kept score, which means in their language that he lied, that he always put one mark too many. Cortés and all of us soldiers who were on guard at that time could not keep from

laughing at what the great Montezuma said. They will ask now why we laughed at that word. It is because Pedro de Alvarado, although he was handsome in body and with a fine manner, had the bad habit of talking too much, and as we knew he was that way, we laughed so much for that. And I will return to the game.

If Cortés won, he gave the jewels to those nephews and favorites of Montezuma who served him, and if Montezuma won, he divided them among those of us soldiers who stood guard over him, and even beyond what he gave us from the game, he never failed every day to give us presents of gold and clothing, both to us and the captain of the guard, who at that time was Juan Velázquez de León, who in every way showed himself to be a friend to Montezuma. I also remember that there was on watch a very tall soldier, in good health and very strong, whose name was somebody de Trujillo, and he was a seaman; when it was his turn for the night watch, he had such poor judgment that, speaking here with respect for the gentleman readers, he did some indecent things, which Montezuma heard, and as Montezuma was king of these lands and so worthy, he took it as bad breeding and disrespect that Trujillo would do such things in his hearing without consideration for his person. He asked his page, Orteguilla, who that badly mannered and dirty man was, and Orteguilla said that he was a man who spent his time on the sea and knew nothing about politeness and good breeding. He also explained to him about the social rank of each one of us soldiers there, who was a gentleman and who not, and he was always telling Montezuma many things he wanted to know. Let us return to our soldier, Trujillo. As soon as it was day, Montezuma ordered him summoned and asked him why he acted that way, lacking consideration for his person, not giving him the respect he was owed. He begged him not to do such a thing again, and he ordered him given a golden jewel that was worth five pesos. Trujillo paid no attention to what Montezuma said to him and the next night he made that sound again, believing Montezuma would give him something else, but Montezuma let Juan Velázquez, captain of the guard, know about it; the captain

immediately removed Trujillo so that he would not be on watch anymore, and they reprimanded him with rough words.

It also happened that another soldier, Pero López, a great crossbowman, a man who did not express himself very well, was in good health and stood watch on Montezuma, and over the question of whether it was time for him to take the night watch, he had words with a squad leader and said: "The hell with this dog, from constantly watching him I have bad stomach pains to the point of death!" Montezuma heard what he said and it weighed heavily on him. When Cortés came to pay him court, he heard about it and was so very angry that, although Pero López was a very good soldier, Cortés ordered him to be whipped in our lodgings; from that time on, all the soldiers who came on guard did their watch in silence and with good manners. However, it was not necessary to order many of us who watched him about the courtesy we had to show the great cacique; he knew all of us well and knew our names and even our social ranks, and he was so kind that he gave jewels to all of us, and to some cloaks and beautiful Indian women.

As I was a young man at that time, and whenever I was standing guard on Montezuma or passed in front of him I took off my quilted cap with great respect, and also the page Orteguilla had told him I had come twice on expeditions to discover this New Spain before Cortés, I asked Orteguilla to request of Montezuma that he do me the favor of giving me a very pretty Indian woman. When Montezuma heard this, he ordered me called, and he said to me: "Bernal Díaz del Castillo, they have told me that you have *motolinea*<sup>1</sup> of clothing and gold, but I will order today that you be given a fine young girl; treat her very well, for she is the daughter of a chieftain, and they will also give you gold and cloaks." I answered him with much respect that I kissed his hands for such a great favor and wished God our Lord might make him prosper. It seems he asked the page what I had answered, and Orteguilla told him

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1. *Motolinea* means "a poverty or lack of something."

the response; and he reported to me that Montezuma said to him: "Bernal Díaz seems to me to be of noble temperament."

*The woman Montezuma gave Bernal Díaz was one of Montezuma's companions, doña Francisca. Bernal Díaz also gives some details regarding Montezuma's daily activities, summing up with "So he passed his life, sometimes laughing, sometimes thinking about his imprisonment."*

I want to state here, although it has nothing to do with our story, because some curious people have asked me why, when there were so few of us, Cortés ordered that the soldier I mentioned be whipped merely because he called Montezuma a dog, and not even in his presence, so that the Indians would take note of it. To this I say that, in that time, all of us, even Cortés himself, when we passed before the great Montezuma, paid him respect by taking off our quilted caps, and he was so good and so considerate that he did us all great honor; besides, as king of New Spain here, his person and temperament merited it, and beyond that, if one considers well the situation our lives were in, with a simple command from him to his vassals to release him from his imprisonment and attack us immediately, seeing his presence and royal generosity, they would do it. And we saw that he constantly had many lords accompanying him and many other lords coming from far-off lands who paid great court to him, and the great number of people to whom he continually gave things to eat and drink, neither more nor less than when he was not imprisoned; considering all of this, Cortés was very upset when he heard that the soldier had said such a thing about him, and as he was angry at it, he immediately ordered the punishment that I have said, and it was well deserved. Let us go on and talk about how, in that moment, there arrived from Villa Rica Indians loaded with the two thick iron chains that Cortés had ordered the blacksmiths to make; they also brought all the things necessary for the brigantines, as I have said, and as soon as it arrived, Montezuma was informed of it.

[XCVIII] As the materials had arrived for building the two brigantines, Cortés immediately went to tell the great Montezuma that he wanted to make two small ships so we could amuse ourselves on the lake, and that he should send his carpenters to cut the wood, and they would go with our master shipwrights, Martín López and one Andrés Núñez. The oak wood was about four leagues distant, so it was soon brought and framed. As there were many Indian carpenters, the brigantines were soon built, caulked, tarred, their rigging set and sails cut to their right size and measure, an awning for each brigantine; and they came out as good and fast as if it had taken a month to frame them because Martín López was an extraordinary master, and it was he who made the thirteen brigantines to aid in winning Mexico, as I will discuss further on, and he was a good soldier in war.

Let us put this aside, and I will talk about how Montezuma said to Cortés that he wanted to go out to his temples to make sacrifices and fulfill his devotions as he was obligated to do for his gods and so that his captains and chieftains could see it, especially certain nephews who came to him every day and said they wanted to free him and attack us. Cortés told him he should be careful not to do anything for which he might lose his life; in case there might be some misbehavior or he ordered his captains or papas to free him or to attack us, he was sending captains and soldiers so they would immediately stab him to death if they sensed anything new in his bearing. He would be welcome to go, but he must not sacrifice anyone, which was a great sin against our true God, who was the one about whom we had preached to him, and our altars were there and the image of Our Lady before whom he could pray. Montezuma said he would not sacrifice a single soul, and he went in his rich litter, with great pomp, accompanied by many great caciques as he usually did, preceded by his insignia, which was like a staff or rod, the sign that his royal person was coming there, as they do for the viceroys of this New Spain. Four of our captains went with him to guard him, Juan Velázquez de León, Pedro de Alvarado, Alonso de Ávila, and Francisco de Lugo, with

a hundred and fifty soldiers, and the Mercedarian father also went with us to stop him if he should sacrifice men.

So we went to the cu of Huichilobos, and when we were coming close to that accursed adoratorio, Montezuma ordered them to take him from his litter, and he was put on the shoulders of his nephews and other caciques until he arrived at the adoratorio. When we arrived at the foot of the steps leading up to the adoratorio, many papas were waiting to help him go up. Four Indians had already been sacrificed the night before, and in spite of what our captain said to him and the Mercedarian father trying to keep him from it, nothing was of use, because he was going to kill men and boys to make his sacrifice, and we could do nothing at that time with him except look the other way, because Mexico and other great cities were in great turmoil because of the nephews of Montezuma, as I will tell later on. After he had made his sacrifices, and he did not delay much in making them, we returned with him to our lodgings and he was very happy; to the soldiers who went with him, he gave gifts of golden jewels.

[XCIX] When the two brigantines were finished and launched in the water and all their rigging and masts ready, with the royal and imperial banners and sailors ready to sail them, they went out in them with oars and sails, and they sailed very well. When Montezuma heard about it, he said to Cortés that he wanted to go hunting on a rugged rock in the lake that was reserved so no one dared enter to hunt, no matter how important he might be, under pain of death. Cortés told him they were welcome to go, but that he must take heed of what he had told him before when he went to his idols, that to upset anything was more than his life was worth; and he said Montezuma could go in those brigantines, which were better sailing than the canoes or pirogues, no matter how large they might be. Montezuma was pleased to go in the swiftest brigantine, and he took many lords and chieftains with him. The other brigantine was filled with caciques and a son of Montezuma, and he instructed his huntsmen to go in canoes and pirogues.

Cortés ordered Juan Velázquez de León, captain of the guard, and Pedro de Alvarado and Cristóbal de Olid to go with him,

and Alonso de Ávila, with two hundred soldiers, and they should note the great responsibility he was giving them, looking after the great Montezuma. As all these captains I have named were careful, they put in the brigantines all the soldiers I have said, four bronze guns with all the powder we had, and our artillerymen, Mesa and Arvenga. An awning with many trappings was put up against the weather, and Montezuma and his chieftains went in under it. As at that time there was a very fresh breeze and the sailors were delighted to please Montezuma and make him content, they worked the sails so they were flying along, and the canoes in which the huntsmen and chieftains came were left very far behind in spite of their many rowers. Montezuma was delighted and said that this working of the sails and rowers together was a great skill. He arrived at the rugged rock, which was not very far, and he killed all the game he wanted, deer, hares, and rabbits, and he returned to the city very content. When we arrived near Mexico, Pedro de Alvarado, Juan Velázquez de León, and the other captains ordered the cannon to be discharged, which delighted Montezuma a great deal. As we saw him so generous and kind, we treated him with the respect that the kings of these lands receive, and he did the same for us. If I were to tell you all his attributes as a great lord and the respect and service that all the lords of New Spain and the other provinces paid him, I would never come to an end; there was nothing he ordered them to bring to him, even though it might be flying, that was not brought to him immediately. I say this because one day, three of our captains and some of us soldiers were with the great Montezuma, and by chance a hawk swooped down through the corridor into some rooms like galleries after a quail, for near the house and palace where Montezuma was imprisoned were some tame pigeons and quails; the Indian steward who had charge of sweeping the buildings kept them there to breed them for display. When the hawk swooped and carried off its prey, some of our captains saw it, and one of them, Francisco de Saucedo, el Pulido, who was chief butler to the Admiral of Castile, said: "Oh, what a fine hawk, what prey he caught and how well he flies!" The rest of us soldiers replied that it was very good and that there were in

these lands many good birds of prey for hawking. Montezuma was watching what we were saying, and he asked his page, Orteguilla, about our conversation; and Orteguilla replied that those captains were saying that the hawk that came in to hunt was very good, that if we had another good one like it, we would teach it to come to the hand, and that in the open when they released it at some bird, even if it was rather large, it would kill it. Then Montezuma said: "Then I will order now that they take that same hawk, and we will see if you can tame it and hunt with it."

All of us there took off our quilted caps to thank him. Then he ordered his hunters of fowl summoned, and he told them to bring him that same hawk; they showed such skill in taking it that, by the hour of the Ave Maria, they came with the same hawk and gave it to Francisco de Saucedo; and he taught it using a decoy. Because soon other things happened to us that were more important than the hunt, I will stop talking about it here. I have told it because he was such a great prince that, not only did they bring him tribute from nearly all over New Spain, and not only was he lord over so many lands and very well obeyed in all of them, but even when he was a prisoner, his vassals trembled before him, and he even had the birds captured that fly through the air. Let us set this aside and talk about how adverse fortune turns its wheel from time to time. At this time, the nephews and relatives of the great Montezuma had called together many other caciques throughout the country to attack us, free Montezuma, and raise some of them up as kings of Mexico.

[C] When Cacamatzin, lord of Texcoco, which is, after Mexico, the largest and most important city in New Spain, learned that for many days his uncle Montezuma had been a prisoner and that we were taking control in every way we could, and he also learned that we had opened the place where the treasure of his grandfather, Axayaca, was, but that we had not taken any of it, before we could take it, he decided to call together all the lords of Texcoco, his vassals; the lord of Coyoacan, his cousin and nephew of Montezuma; the lord of Tacuba; the lord of Iztapalapa; and

another very great cacique, lord of Matalcingo,<sup>2</sup> all of whom were Montezuma's close relatives. They even said that the kingship and rule of Mexico came by right to the lord of Matalcingo, and this cacique was known among the Indians for being personally very brave.

*Cacamatzin arranged that on a certain day they would come with all their forces to attack Cortés and his men, but the lords of Matalcingo and Cacamatzin were arguing over who would have the lordship of Mexico. Cortés sent a message to Cacamatzin to cease stirring up war, to which Cacamatzin responded hostilely. Cortés asked Montezuma to summon Cacamatzin secretly so they could seize him and keep him in their power. With Montezuma in Mexico was a brother of Cacamatzin, described by Bernal Díaz as “a young man of good temperament who had fled from his own brother so he would not kill him”; after Cacamatzin he was heir to the kingdom of Texcoco. Cortés's idea was that Montezuma should raise the younger brother as lord of Texcoco and take the lordship away from Cacamatzin. Montezuma sent to Cacamatzin, assuring him that he was content with his imprisonment and could be free if he wanted, and for this reason Cacamatzin should have friendship with Cortés and his brothers. In the end, Cacamatzin sent a message to his uncle, saying that the great Montezuma should be “ashamed of sending for him to come into friendship with those who have done such harm and dishonor in taking him prisoner.”*

To sum up, he sent to say that he would come in spite of us and his uncle, to speak to us and kill us. When the great Montezuma heard that brazen reply, he was very angry, and in that very hour he summoned six of his most important captains and gave them his seal and also certain golden jewels and ordered them to go right away to Texcoco and show that seal of his secretly to certain captains and relatives who were on very bad terms with

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2. Matlazingo.

Cacamatzin because of his arrogance. He told them to seize him and those who were advising him and bring them before him at once. When those captains left, and in Texcoco they understood what Montezuma ordered, and because Cacamatzin was disliked, he was taken prisoner in his own palace while he was discussing matters of war with those confederates of his. They also brought five other prisoners with him. As that city is on the great lake, they prepared a large pirogue with awnings and put Cacamatzin in it with the rest, and with a great number of rowers, they brought them to Mexico.

When they had disembarked, they put him in his rich litter like the king he was, and with great respect they carried him to Montezuma. It seems that, when he was speaking with his uncle, he was even more brazen than before, and Montezuma found out about the agreements he was making, that he would raise himself to lord of Mexico, which he learned more completely from the other prisoners they had brought, and if he was angry with his nephew before, he was now even more so. He promptly sent him to our captain to be held prisoner, and he ordered the other prisoners to be set free. Cortés immediately went to the palace and buildings of Montezuma and thanked him for such a great favor, and it was arranged that the youth who was in the great Montezuma's company, who also was his nephew, brother of Cacamatzin, should be raised to king of Texcoco. I have already said that he had retreated there so that Cacamatzin might not kill him, and he was also the next heir to the kingdom of Texcoco. In order to do this solemnly and with the consent of the entire city, Montezuma ordered that all the most principal leaders of the entire province come before him, and after discussing the matter fully, they raised him to king and lord of that great city, and he was named don Carlos.

This done, when the caciques and petty kings, nephews of the great Montezuma, the lord of Coyoacan, lord of Iztapalapa, and the one of Tacuba, saw and heard of the imprisonment of Cacamatzin and learned that the great Montezuma had known that they entered into the conspiracy to take his kingdom away

from him and give it to Cacamatzin, they were frightened and did not come to pay court to him as they usually did. With the consent of Cortés, who persuaded and convinced Montezuma to order them seized, within a week they were all prisoners on the thick chain, and our captain and all of us rejoiced not a little. Let the curious reader consider how our lives were going, with them trying to kill us every day and eat our flesh, but the great mercy of God was always with us and helped us, and that good Montezuma gave a good turn to all our affairs.

Let him consider what a great lord he was who, although captive, was so well obeyed. For now, with everything peaceful and those lords imprisoned, our Cortés with the other captains and the Mercedarian friar were always paying court to him, and in every way they could, they gave him much pleasure and joked with him, not in any disrespectful way, and I say that neither Cortés nor any captain sat down until Montezuma ordered them given his rich seats and told them to sit down, and in this he was so considerate that we all felt great affection for him. Because truly he was a great lord in everything we saw him do. Returning to our discussion, they sometimes explained to him things touching on our holy faith, and the friar told him these things through the page Orteguilla, and it seemed that some of the arguments now were entering his heart, for he was listening to them with closer attention than at first. They also explained to him the great power of the emperor our lord and how many great lords from distant lands became his vassals and obeyed him, and they told him many other things that he enjoyed hearing; at other times Cortés played totoloques with him, and in this way we always paid court to him. He, as he was never stingy, gave us golden jewels or cloaks every day.

[CI] When the captain Cortés saw that those petty kings named by me were now prisoners and all the cities peaceful, he said to Montezuma that twice, before we entered into Mexico, Montezuma had sent to tell him that he wanted to pay tribute to His Majesty, and now that he has understood the great power of our king and lord and that they pay tribute and taxes to him from many lands and many great kings are his subjects, it will be

fitting that he and all his vassals pledge him obedience, because that is what is done by custom; first one pledges obedience and then taxes and tributes. Montezuma said he would gather all his vassals together and speak about it. In ten days, most of the great caciques of that area came together, but the cacique most closely related to Montezuma did not come. I have already said he was reported to be very strong and courageous, and he seemed very much to be so in his presence, body, limbs, and appearance. He acted somewhat without thinking, and he was at that time in one of his towns called Tula, and according to what they said, after Montezuma was dead, the kingdom of Mexico would come to this cacique. When they called him, he replied that he did not want to come nor to pay tribute, that even with what he made from his provinces, he could not maintain himself. This response made Montezuma angry, and he immediately sent some captains to take him prisoner, but as he was a great lord and had many relatives, he had warning of it and went into the interior of his province where they were not able to get to him.

I must leave this now, and I will talk about how, in the discussion Montezuma had with all the caciques of the whole land whom he had called together, after he had made a speech to them without Cortés or any of us present except Orteguilla the page, he told them they should consider how, from many years past, they knew for certain, from what their ancestors had told them and what was noted in their books of records, that from where the sun rises, people would come who would rule these lands, and that at that time the rule and kingdom of the Mexicans would end. He had understood, from what his gods had told him, that we were the ones, and the papas had asked his Huichilobos about it and they had made sacrifices, but the idols were not responding as they usually did. All that Huichilobos had given them to understand as a response is what he had said to them other times, and they were not to ask him again, so they were given to believe that we should pledge loyalty to the king of Castile, whose vassals these teules said they were. As at present it did not matter, as time went on we would see if we had another better response from our gods;

as time shows us, so will we do. "What I command and beg of you is that all of us, with goodwill at the present, give and contribute with some sign of vassalage, and I will soon tell you what is most suitable for us, and because at this moment I am being pressed hard by Malinche for it, no one should refuse. Consider that in the eighteen years I have been your lord, you have always been very loyal to me, and I have enriched you and extended your lands and given you commands and property; if now at present our gods permit me to be held captive, it would not have happened except that, as I have told you many times, my great Huichilobos has ordered it." When they heard this speech, all of them said as a response that they would do as he ordered, and they said it with many tears and sighs, and Montezuma with many more. Then he sent a chieftain to say that the following day they would pledge their obedience and vassalage to His Majesty, which was on . . . of the month . . . 1519.<sup>3</sup> Montezuma then spoke again to his caciques about the matter, and with Cortés, our captains, many soldiers, and Pero Hernández, secretary to Cortés, present, they pledged their obedience to His Majesty, and they showed much sadness, and Montezuma could not keep back the tears. We had such affection for him and he was so kind, that for us to see him weep softened our own eyes, and one soldier wept as much as Montezuma. Such was the affection we had for him.

I have to leave it here, but I will say that Cortés and the Mercedarian friar, who was very knowing, were in Montezuma's palace trying to cheer him up and convince him to give up his idols.

[CII] When Cortés and the other captains were paying court to the great Montezuma, among other discussions he had through our interpreters doña Marina, Jerónimo de Aguilar, and Orteguilla, he asked where the mines were, in which rivers, and how and in what manner they collected the gold they brought him in grains, for he wanted to send two of our soldiers, great miners, to see it. Montezuma said there were three places, but they usually

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3. The spacing here appears as in the original text.

brought the most gold from a province called Zacatula, which is on the south coast about a ten or twelve days' walk from that city. They collect it in some xicales, in which they wash away the earth so that some small grains of gold remain after the washing. At the present time, they also bring it from another province called Tustepeque, near where we disembarked, which is on the north coast, and they collect it from two rivers. Near that province are other good mines in a land not subject to him, where the people are the Chinantecas and Zapotecas, who do not obey his rule, but if Cortés wanted to send his soldiers, he would provide chieftains to go with them.

Cortés thanked him for this and immediately dispatched a pilot named Gonzalo de Umbría with two other soldiers, miners, to the mines at Zacatula. This Gonzalo de Umbría was the one whose feet Cortés ordered cut off when he hanged Pedro de Escudero and Juan Cermeño and whipped the Peñates because they were taking off with the ship in San Juan de Ulúa. Let us stop talking about what was past and speak about how they went with Umbría, and Cortés gave them a limit of forty days to go and return. He dispatched, to see the mines of the north coast, a captain named Pizarro, a young man of about twenty-five years, and Cortés treated this Pizarro like a relative. At that time, there was no talk of Peru, nor were any Pizarros mentioned in this land. He went with four soldiers who were miners, and he had a time limit of forty days to go and return because it was about eighty leagues from Mexico, and four Mexican chieftains also went.

Let us return to talking about how the great Montezuma gave our captain a maguey fiber cloth with all the rivers and bays on the north coast from Pánuco to Tabasco, which is about one hundred forty leagues, painted and indicated very true to nature, and on it was marked the river of Guazacualco. We already knew, from when we came on our voyage of discovery with Grijalva, all the ports and bays that were indicated on the cloth Montezuma gave him except the river of Guazacualco, which they said was very powerful and deep, so Cortés decided to send to see what it was like and to take soundings of the harbor and its entrance. As one

of our captains, Diego de Ordaz, was a very knowledgeable and brave man, he told the captain that he wanted to go see that river, what lands it had and what sort of people were there, and that Cortés should give him men, Indian chieftains, to go with him. Cortés at first refused because he was a man of good counsel and he wanted to keep him in his company, but so as not to displease him, he gave him permission to go. Montezuma told Ordaz that his rule did not extend to the people of Guazacualco, who were fearless, that he should be careful what he did, that if anything happened to him they should not blame Montezuma, that before arriving at that province he would come upon the garrisons of warriors Montezuma had at the border, and that if he had need of them, he should take them with him. He did him many other courtesies. Cortés and Diego de Ordaz gave Montezuma their thanks, and so Ordaz left with two of our soldiers and other chieftains that Montezuma gave him.

Here is where the chronicler Francisco López de Gómara says that Juan Velázquez went with one hundred soldiers to settle Guazacualco, and that Pedro de Ircio had gone to settle Pánuco. Because I am already tired of noting where the chronicler goes outside what happened, I will stop speaking of it, and I will talk about what each of the captains Cortés sent did and how they came with samples of gold.

*Cortés sent three separate groups to those three locations named by Montezuma. All returned with gold and accounts of how it was collected. One took soundings on the river of Guazacualco to determine whether it would provide a safe harbor for ships.*

[CIV] Well, as the captain Diego de Ordaz and the soldiers named by me brought samples of gold and a report that all the land was rich, Cortés, on the advice of Ordaz and the other captains and soldiers, decided to speak to Montezuma and demand that all the caciques and towns of the land pay tribute to His Majesty, and that he himself, as the great lord, also should give of his treasure. Montezuma replied that he would send to all the towns to ask

for gold but that many of them did not have it; rather they had jewels of little value they had received from their ancestors. He immediately sent chieftains off to places where there were mines, and he ordered that each town should give so many ingots of fine gold the size and thickness of the ones they were used to paying him as tribute, and they carried two ingots as samples. From other places they brought only small jewels of little value. He also sent to the province where that very close relative of his, who would not obey him, was cacique, which was about twelve leagues from Mexico. The response the messengers brought was that he did not want to give gold nor obey Montezuma, that he, too, was lord of Mexico and that the dominion came to him as much as to Montezuma himself who was asking him for tribute. When Montezuma learned this, he was so angry that he immediately sent his sign and seal with some loyal captains with orders to bring him as a prisoner. When the relative came into his presence, he spoke to Montezuma very disrespectfully, with no fear, or with great courage; they said that he had periods of madness, for he seemed to be acting without thinking. Cortés came to know all this, and he sent to ask Montezuma as a favor to send the relative to him, that he wanted to put a guard over him, because, according to what they told him, Montezuma had ordered him to be killed. When the relative was brought to Cortés, he spoke to him very affectionately and said he should not act like such a madman against his lord, and he wanted to set him free. When Montezuma learned this, he said they should not free him, but sentence him to the great chain like the other petty kings already named by me.

Let us talk about how, within twenty days, all the chieftains to whom Montezuma had sent to collect tributes of gold arrived, and as they did so, Montezuma summoned Cortés, our captains, and certain of us soldiers he knew, who were of the guard, and he spoke these formal words, or others like them: "I want you to know, Lord Malinche and gentlemen captains and soldiers, that I am in the debt of your great king, and I have goodwill toward him, both for being such a great lord and for having sent from such far-off lands to learn about me. What has most struck me is

that he must be the one who is to rule over us, according to what our ancestors have said, and even according to what our gods have given us to understand by the answers we have from them. Take this gold that has been collected; because it was done hurriedly, no more was brought. What I have prepared for the emperor is the entire treasure I received from my father, which is in your possession and lodging. I know well that when you came here, you opened that apartment and saw it all, and you then closed it up again as it was before. When you send it to him, tell him in your amales and letters: 'This your true vassal Montezuma sends you.' I also will give you some very rich stones, which are chalchuius, that you may send to him in my name, and which are not to be given to anyone else but your great lord; each stone is worth two loads of gold. I also wish to send him three blowguns with their pouches and pellet molds, for they have such work in clusters of jewels that he will be pleased to see them, and also I wish to give him of what I have, although it is little, because most of the gold and jewels I had I have given to you from time to time."

When Cortés and all of us heard that, we were astonished at the great goodness and generosity of the great Montezuma, and with much respect, all of us took off our quilted caps and told him we were grateful to him. With affectionate words, Cortés promised him that we would write to His Majesty about the magnificence and generosity of the gold he gave us in his own royal name. After we had other polite conversations, Montezuma immediately sent for his stewards to deliver the entire treasure of gold and riches that were in that apartment that was plastered over. Looking it over and taking off all the ornamentation and things it was set in took three days; even three of Montezuma's goldsmiths came from a town called Escapuzalco to take it apart and undo it. I say there was so much, that after it was taken apart, there were three piles of gold and by weight it was more than six hundred thousand pesos, as I shall tell further on, without the silver and many other riches, and I do not count in this the ingots and plates of gold and the gold in grains from the mines. It was melted down by the Indian goldsmiths, and they made broad bars of it, the width of each bar

measuring three fingers of the hand. When it was melted down and made into bars, they brought another present separately, which the great Montezuma had said he would give, and it was a thing of great wonder, so much gold, and the richness of the other jewels he brought, for some of the chalchui stones were so rich that, among the caciques themselves, they were worth a great quantity of gold. Then the three blowguns with their pellet molds and their settings of jewels and pearls and the pictures in feathers of little birds filled with seed pearls and other birds, all were of great value. Let us stop speaking about feathers and plumes and the many other rich things, for I will never finish bringing them to mind.

Let us now talk about how all the gold of which I have spoken was marked with a branding iron that had been ordered made by Cortés and the officials of the king he had appointed with the consent of all of us in the name of His Majesty until His Majesty should order differently. At this time, these men were Gonzalo Mejía and Alonso de Ávila, accountant. The stamp was the royal coat of arms like the one on a real and the size of a *tostón*.<sup>4</sup> This brand was not put on the rich jewels, which it seemed to us should not be taken apart. Then to weigh all these bars of gold and silver and the jewels that were not taken apart, we had neither marked weights nor scales. It seemed to Cortés and those same officials of His Majesty's Treasury that it would be wise to make some iron weights of about an arroba and others of half an arroba, of two pounds, one pound, half a pound, four ounces, and other ounce weights; this is not so that it would come out exact, but within half an ounce in each load weighed.

After the weight was taken, the officials of the king said that there was in gold, both in what was made into bars and in the grains from the mines and in the ingots and jewels, more than six hundred thousand pesos, not counting the silver and many other

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4. A *tostón* was a Mexican silver coin of the period worth one-half peso, the equivalent of four reals.

jewels on which they had not yet put a value. Some soldiers said there was more. Nothing was left to do but take out the royal fifth and give each captain and soldier our shares, and also, for those who stayed in the port of Villa Rica, theirs, but it seems that Cortés tried not to divide it up so quickly until there was more gold, good weights, and a proper account of what it came to. However, most of us soldiers and captains said that it should be divided up at once, because we had seen that when the treasure of Montezuma was taken apart, there was much more gold in the piles that I have mentioned, and a third of it was missing, which they had taken and hidden for Cortés, for the captains, and the Mercedarian friar, and it kept getting smaller. After much discussion, what was left was weighed, and they found more than six hundred thousand pesos, not counting the jewels and ingots, and the next day they were going to give out the shares.

[CV] First, the royal fifth was taken out, then Cortés said they should take out another fifth like His Majesty's for him, for we had promised it to him at the sandy beach when we chose him as captain general and chief justice. Then, after this, he said he had borne certain costs for the fleet on the island of Cuba that they should take out of the pile; and in addition to this, they should set aside from the same pile the expense Diego Velázquez had for the ships we scuttled, for we all agreed to it; and after this, for the representatives who went to Castile; and besides this, for those who stayed in Villa Rica, who were seventy citizens, and for the horse that died, and for Juan Sedeño's mare the Tlaxcalans killed with a slash; then for the Mercedarian father and the secular priest Juan Díaz, and the captains, and those who brought horses, double shares, and escopeteros and crossbowmen the same, and other tricks, so that very little remained for each share, and because it was so little, many soldiers did not want to accept it, and Cortés was left with it all, for at that time we could not do anything but be quiet, because to ask for justice was useless. Other soldiers took their shares of one hundred pesos and shouted for the rest, and Cortés, to satisfy them, secretly gave to one and another as though giving favors, and with the

soothing words he said to them, they put up with it. Then let us go to the shares that were left for those at Villa Rica, which he ordered sent to Tlaxcala to be kept there. As it was badly divided, so it ended, as I will say later at the right time.

At that time, many of our captains ordered the goldsmiths of the great Montezuma to make very large chains of gold. Cortés also ordered many jewels and a great table service to be made. Some of our soldiers had their hands so full that now many gold ingots, marked and unmarked, circulated and jewels with many different types of workmanship. Heavy gambling went on with some playing cards made from drum skins by one Pedro Valenciano, which were as well made and painted as the real ones, and this was the way we were.

Let us stop talking about the gold and the bad way it was divided and the worse way it was spent, and I will talk about what happened to a soldier named something de Cárdenas. It seems that this soldier was a pilot and seaman, a native of Triana or around there, and the poor man had in his home country a wife and children, and as happened with many of us, he must have been poor. So he had come to seek his livelihood in order to return to his wife and children. As he had seen such riches and gold in plates and in grains from the mines, in ingots and cast bars, and when it was divided up and he saw that they only gave him a hundred pesos, he became ill from thinking about it and from sadness. One of his friends, as he saw him every day so pensive and ill, went to see him and asked him why he was like that, sighing so much from time to time; the pilot Cárdenas, the one who was ill, replied: "Oh! Curse it all! Don't I have a right to be ill, seeing that Cortés is taking all the gold for himself, and like a king he takes the fifth, and he has taken out for his horse that died and for the ships of Diego Velázquez and for many other underhanded claims? And that my wife and children should die of hunger, though I could have helped them when the representatives went with our letters, but we gave them all the gold and silver we had gotten till then!" This friend replied: "What gold did you have to send them?" And Cárdenas said: "If Cortés had given me my share, what is due me, my wife and children could

sustain themselves with it and even have something left over; see what frauds he committed, making us sign that we were serving His Majesty with our shares, then taking more than six thousand pesos out of the gold for his father Martín Cortés, besides what he hid. But I and the other poor men who were fighting night and day, as you've seen, in the past wars of Tabasco and Tlaxcala, Cingapacinga and Cholula, and now to be in such great danger as we are, each day looking death in the eye if they should rise up in this city. This so Cortés can make off with all the gold and take a fifth like a king." He said other things, that we should not have let him take out such a fifth, nor to have so many kings, only His Majesty.

His companion replied and said: "Well, these worries are killing you, and now you see that everything the caciques and Montezuma bring is consumed by this one under his chin, by that one in his pocket, by another under his arm, and that all of it goes where Cortés wants, he and our captains, who even carry off all the food. So let go of those thoughts and pray to God that we don't lose our lives in this city." They ended their conversation, but Cortés came to know of it. As they told him that there were many soldiers unhappy with their shares of gold and what had been stolen from the pile, he decided to make a speech to everybody with very honeyed words. In it he said that all he had was for us, and he did not want the fifth, but only the share that came to him as captain general, and whoever had need of anything, he would give it to him, and the gold we had gathered was just a bit of air; that we should observe the great cities here and rich mines; that we would all be lords of them and very prosperous and rich. He put forward other arguments, very well expressed, which he knew well to do. In addition to this, he secretly gave golden jewels to certain soldiers, and to others he made great promises; and he ordered that the provisions the stewards of Montezuma brought be divided among all the soldiers exactly as they were to him. In addition to this, he called Cárdenas aside, flattered him with words and promised him that he would send him to Castile to his wife and children in the first ships, and he gave him three hundred pesos, so he was happy with that.

[CVI] All men generally desire gold, and the more they have the more they want. So it happened that many known pieces of gold were missing from the piles, and Juan Velázquez de León at that time had the Indians of Escapuzalco, who were all goldsmiths of the great Montezuma, make great chains of gold and other pieces of plate for his table service. Gonzalo Mejía, who was treasurer, secretly told him to give it all to him, for the royal fifth had not been taken from it and they were known to be from that treasure Montezuma had given. Juan Velázquez de León, who was a great favorite of Cortés, said that he was not going to give up anything at all, that he had not taken anything from what was collected nor from anyone else except what Cortés had given him before the bars were made. Gonzalo Mejía replied that what Cortés had hidden and taken from his companions was enough, but nonetheless, as treasurer, he required much gold, for which the royal fifth had not been paid. With one word leading to another, they lost control and drew their swords, and if we had not quieted them down very quickly, both might have ended their lives there, because they were people of much substance and valiant men with arms, and they both came out of it wounded, each twice.

When Cortés heard about this, he ordered them to be arrested and each put on a thick chain, and it seems that, according to what many soldiers said, Cortés spoke secretly to Juan Velázquez de León, saying that because he was very much his friend, he should stay a prisoner on the same chain for two days, and that he would remove Gonzalo Mejía from fetters as he was treasurer. Cortés did this so that all of us captains and soldiers might see that he was just, and although Juan Velázquez was a very close friend of Cortés, he kept him prisoner. Other things happened with regard to Gonzalo Mejía, who spoke to Cortés about the large amount of gold that was missing and that all the soldiers were complaining to him about it because he was not demanding it from Cortés himself, for he was treasurer. Because this is a long story, I will stop relating it, but I will talk about how Juan Velázquez de León was a prisoner on a thick chain in a hall near Montezuma's lodging and how Juan Velázquez was a man with a very large body

and strong limbs, so when he passed through the hall, he dragged the chain along and it made a great noise. Montezuma heard it and asked his page, Orteguilla, whom Cortés had as prisoner in chains; the page told him that it was Juan Velázquez, the one who used to keep guard over his person, because at that time he was no longer in charge of the guard, but Cristóbal de Olid was. He asked what the reason was, and the page told him it was because of some missing gold.

That same day Cortés went to pay court to Montezuma. After the usual courtesies and remarks that passed between them, Montezuma asked Cortés why he was holding Juan Velázquez prisoner, seeing that he was such a good and courageous captain, because Montezuma knew all of us well, even our social ranks. Cortés told him, half laughing, that it was because he was *tabalilo*, which means mad, and, because they did not give him much gold, he wanted to go to Montezuma's towns and cities to demand it from the caciques, and so that he would not kill any of them, Cortés was keeping him prisoner. Montezuma replied that, as a favor, he would like Juan Velázquez to be released and that he would send him to look for more gold and would give him some of his own. Cortés acted as though he was reluctant to release him, but in the end he said that, yes, he would do it to please Montezuma. It seems to me that he sentenced him to be banished from the camp and go to a town called Cholula with Montezuma's messengers to demand gold. First, he made Juan Velázquez and Gonzalo Mejía friends; and I saw that within six days he returned from completing his banishment, and he returned with more gold, and from then on Gonzalo Mejía and Cortés did not get along well. I have called this to mind here, although it goes outside of our story, so that you can see that Cortés, under the pretext of doing justice so that we should all fear him, was very crafty.

[CVII] Many other times I have said how Cortés and all of us tried to please and serve Montezuma and pay court to him. One day Montezuma said: "See, Malinche, how much I love you, for I want to give you one of my daughters, who is very beautiful, so that you can marry her and have her as your legitimate wife."

Cortés raised his hat in thanks and said that it was a great favor Montezuma was doing for him, but he was married and had a wife, and among us we cannot have more than one wife. He said he would hold her in the esteem that the daughter of a great lord deserves, but first he desired that she become Christian like other women who are daughters of lords. Montezuma approved of it and continued to show his usual goodwill. But from one day to the next, Montezuma did not stop his sacrifices and killing people in them; and Cortés tried to dissuade him from it, but it was no use at all. So he took counsel with our captains about what we could do in the situation, because he did not dare put an end to it for fear of stirring up the city and the papas in the service of Huichilobos. The advice our captains and soldiers gave him was to pretend he was going to go throw down the idols from the high cu of Huichilobos, and if we saw that they were getting ready to defend it or that they were going to make a disturbance, he should ask permission to put an altar in a large part of the great cu and put a crucifix and an image of Our Lady on it.

When this was decided, Cortés went to the palace where Montezuma was imprisoned, and he brought with him seven captains and soldiers. He said to Montezuma: "Sir, I have asked your lordship many times not to sacrifice any more souls to those gods of yours who have you deceived, but you have not stopped, so I am letting you know, sir, that all my companions and these captains who are with me are coming to beg you as a favor to give us permission to remove the idols, and we will put Our Lady Saint Mary and a cross there, but if you do not give us permission now, they will go to remove them, and I would not like them to kill any papas." When Montezuma heard those words and saw that the captains were somewhat disturbed, he said: "Oh, Malinche, how much you want to bring this entire city to ruin! Because our gods will be very angry with us, I do not even know what will come of your lives. What I beg of you is that for the present you hold back, and I will send for all the papas and see their response." When Cortés heard that, he made a gesture that he wanted to speak very privately to Montezuma, and he did not want our

captains, whom he brought in his company, to be present; so he ordered them to go out and leave him there alone. When they had left the hall, Cortés said to Montezuma that, to keep this from becoming known and causing a disturbance and the papas taking offense at their idols being thrown down, he would speak with our captains, saying such a thing should not be done, provided that in an apartment of the great cu they might make an altar on which to put the image of Our Lady and a cross, and that as time went on, they would see how good and advantageous they are for their souls and to give them health, good plantings, and prosperity.

Montezuma, although with sighs and a very sad expression, said he would speak with the papas; and after many discussions about it, it was done on the . . . day of the month of . . . , 1519.<sup>5</sup> Our altar was set up, away from the accursed idols, as well as the image of Our Lady and a cross, and with great devotion, all of us giving thanks to God, the Mercedarian father sang mass, and the secular priest Juan Díaz and many of our soldiers assisted him at the mass. Our captain ordered an old soldier to stand guard over it, and he begged Montezuma to order the papas not to touch it, except to sweep, burn incense, keep wax candles burning night and day, and decorate it with boughs and flowers.

[CVIII] As always, we were constantly subjected to surprises of such a kind that they would have ended our lives if Our Lord God had not helped us. Just when we had put the image of Our Lady and the cross on the altar we made in the great cu and the Holy Gospel was proclaimed and mass said, it seems that Huichilobos and Tezcatepuca spoke with the papas and told them they wanted to leave their province for they had been so badly treated by the teules, and they did not want to be where those figures and the cross were, nor would they stay there if we were not killed. They said that was their response and no other should be expected, and they should tell this to Montezuma and all his captains so they might immediately start a war and kill us.

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5. The original text had only blank spaces here.

The idol also told them to consider that all the gold they used to keep to honor the idols had been broken up by the teules and made into bars, and that they should consider how we were making ourselves masters of the land and that we had imprisoned five great caciques, and they said other wicked things to draw them into making war on us. So Cortés and all of us would know about this, the great Montezuma sent for Cortés, saying he wanted to speak to him about some very important things. The page Orteguilla came and said that Montezuma was very upset and sad and, during that night and part of the day, many papas and important captains had been with him, and they had spoken privately so he could not understand. When Cortés heard that, he went immediately to the palace where Montezuma was staying and took with him Cristóbal de Olid, who was captain of the guard, and other captains and doña Marina and Jerónimo de Aguilar. After they paid much respect to him, Montezuma said: "Oh, Malinche and gentlemen captains, how upset I am about the response and order our teules have given to our papas and to me and all my captains, which is that we attack, kill you, and drive you back across the sea. What I have concluded from that, and as it seems best to me, is that before they start the war, you should leave this city and none of you stay here, and, Malinche, I say that you should do this no matter what, for it is advisable for you. If not, they will kill you, and consider that it is a question of your lives."

Cortés and our captains were very concerned and even agitated, but it was not surprising with something so new and urgent, putting our lives in great danger that instant, as they so resolutely warned us. Cortés thanked him for the warning and said that, at the present time, two things bothered him: there were no ships in which to leave, for he had ordered the ones we brought with us to be broken up, and the other, that Montezuma absolutely had to come with us so that our great emperor could see him, so he asked him as a favor that he restrain the papas and captains until three ships could be built on the sandy beach; for them it would be more advantageous, for if they began the war, all of

them would be killed in it. He said more: so that Montezuma might see that we were immediately going to do what he said, he asked that Montezuma order his carpenters to go with two of our soldiers, who were great master shipbuilders, to cut wood near the sandy beach. Montezuma was even sadder than before because Cortés told him he would have to come with us to appear before the emperor, but he said he would provide the carpenters, and they should go immediately, and there should be no more talk, but deeds, and that meanwhile he would order the papas and captains not to stir up disturbances in the city, and he would order that their idol Huichilobos be appeased with sacrifices, but not by killing humans.

After this very noisy discussion, Cortés and the captains took leave of Montezuma, and we were all in the greatest distress, awaiting the time they would start the war. Then Cortés summoned Martín López, the shipbuilder, and Andrés Núñez, and, after discussing the capacity of the three ships to be built, he ordered them, with the Indian carpenters the great Montezuma gave him, to begin the work of making them and getting them ready immediately, because in Villa Rica they had all that was required of iron and blacksmiths, rigging, tow, caulkers, and pitch. So they went out and cut the wood on the coast near Villa Rica, and with their calculations and template, they began with all haste to build the ships. What Cortés told Martín López about it I do not know, and I say this because in his history the chronicler Gómara says that Cortés ordered López to make a show of building them, as a hoax, so that Montezuma would learn of it. I defer to what those people say, who thanks be to God are living in this time; but very privately Martín López told me that he truly and speedily built them, and thus he left them in a shipyard, three ships.

Let us leave him building the ships and talk about how we all wandered around the great city, very pensive, fearing that at any time they might attack us, and our *naborías* from Tlaxcala and doña Marina also told the captain the same thing, and Orteguilla, Montezuma's page, was always crying, and all of us very much on the alert with good guards on Montezuma. There is no need to

say so many times that we are always on the alert, because neither by day nor night did we ever take off our armor, gorgets, and leggings, and we slept in them. And now they will ask where we slept, what our beds were made of, nothing but a little straw and a mat, and anyone with a little cover put it underneath him, and we slept with our footgear and armor, all types of arms at the ready, the horses saddled and bridled all day long, and everyone so fully ready that, when the alarm was sounded, we were as if already posted and waiting for that moment. Then a watch posted every night, and there was not a soldier who did not keep watch.

I say another thing and not to boast about it: I got so accustomed to going about armed and sleeping as I have described, that after New Spain was conquered I had the habit of going to sleep dressed and without a bed, and I slept better than on mattresses. Now when I go to the towns of my encomienda, I do not carry a bed, and if sometimes I do carry one, it is not because I want to, but because of some gentlemen who are there with me so that they might not think I do not carry a bed because I lack a good one, but in truth I always lie on it dressed. And I say another thing: I can only sleep a short time in the night; I have to get up to look at the sky and the stars, and I have to walk around a little in the night air, and this without putting anything on my head, neither a cap nor a cloth, and thanks be to God it does me no harm because I have done it habitually. I have said this so you may know how we true conquistadors went about and how we were so accustomed to arms and being on watch.

## PÁNFILO DE NARVÁEZ WAS COMING BY SEA

[CIX] Let us go back a little bit in our story, so that what I will now say might be well understood. I have already said in the chapter that speaks of it how Diego Velázquez, governor of Cuba, knew that we had sent our representatives to His Majesty with all the gold we had collected, the sun and the moon, many diverse jewels, gold in grains taken from the mines, and many other things of great value, but that we had not sent Velázquez anything at all. He also learned that don Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca, bishop of Burgos and archbishop of Rosano, who at that time was president of the Indies and commanded it all very absolutely because His Majesty was in Flanders, had treated our representatives very badly. They say that this same bishop sent from Castile, at that time, much assistance to Diego Velázquez and advice and orders that he should send to have us arrested and that from Castile he would give him all assistance for doing so.

Diego Velázquez, with that great assistance, assembled a fleet of nineteen ships and fourteen hundred soldiers, and they brought more than twenty guns, much powder, every sort of provision of stones and balls, two artillerymen (the captain of the artillery was named Rodrigo Martín), eighty horsemen, ninety crossbowmen, and seventy escopeteros. Although he was very fat and heavy, Diego Velázquez himself, personally, went from town to town in Cuba provisioning the fleet and appealing to the citizens who had Indians as well as to relatives and friends to go with Pánfilo de Narváez to take Cortés and all of us prisoner or,

at least, not to leave any of us alive. He went about so incensed with anger and so diligently that he went as far as Guaniguanico, which is more than sixty leagues beyond Havana. When he was going around this way before his fleet set out, it seems that the Royal Audiencia of Santo Domingo and the Jeronymite friars, who were acting as the governors, came to hear about it, for licentiate Zuazo, who had come to Cuba to carry out a review of Diego Velázquez's time in office, advised and told them about it from that island.

When the Royal Audiencia heard this—and they remembered the many good and loyal services we did for God and His Majesty, that we had sent our representatives to our king and lord with great presents, that Diego Velázquez had neither right nor authority to go with a fleet to take vengeance on us, but he should ask for it in accord with the law, and that if he came with the fleet it would be a great hindrance to our conquest—they decided to send a licentiate named Lucas Vásquez de Ayllón, who was a judge<sup>1</sup> of the same Royal Audiencia, to stop Diego Velázquez's fleet and not let it sail, and in this connection they set very great penalties. That judge came to Cuba and performed the acts and protestations as he was ordered by the Royal Audiencia so that Velázquez would not carry out his plan, but no matter how many punishments and injunctions he imposed and made, they were of no use at all, because as Diego Velázquez was so favored by the bishop of Burgos and had spent everything he had in gathering that army of war against us, he did not care a snap of the fingers for all the injunctions they put on him, but he blustered all the more. When the judge saw that, he himself went with Narváez to make peace and to bring about agreements between Cortés and Narváez. Other soldiers said that he came with the intention of helping us, but that if he could not do so, to take the land himself for His Majesty, as judge, and in this way he came as far as the port of San Juan de Ulúa.

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1. The word in the original is *oidor*.

[CX] As Pánfilo de Narváez was coming by sea with his entire fleet, nineteen ships in all, it appears that near the mountains of San Martín he caught a north wind, which on that coast is a crosswind, and during the night he lost a small ship that became beached; coming in her as captain was a gentleman named Cristóbal de Morante, a native of Medina del Campo, and some of the men drowned. The rest of the fleet came to San Juan de Ulúa. When word spread about that great fleet, which can be called great for having been put together on the island of Cuba, the soldiers whom Cortés had sent to look for mines heard the news, and the three of them, Cervantes the jester, Escalona, and Alonso Hernández Carretero, came to the ships of Narváez. When they were onboard the ships of Narváez, it is said that they raised their hands to God who delivered them from the hands of Cortés and from the great city of Mexico, where every day they awaited their death. When they had eaten with Narváez and drunk wine and were filled with drink, they kept saying to each other in front of the general himself: "See how it's better here drinking good wine than being a captive in the custody of Cortés, who night and day made such slaves of us that we didn't dare speak, waiting one day to the next to look death in the eye." Cervantes, as he was a buffoon, even said, under the pretext of being witty: "Oh, Narváez, Narváez, how fortunate you are to have come here at such a time! For that traitor Cortés has gathered more than seven hundred thousand gold pesos, and all the soldiers are very unhappy with him because he has taken much of the gold that came to them as their shares, and they don't want to accept what he's giving them."

So those soldiers who had run away from us, as they were base and vulgar, told Narváez more than he wanted to know. They also told him as information that eight leagues from there a town called Villa Rica de la Veracruz was settled and that its captain was one Gonzalo de Sandoval with seventy soldiers, all old and sick, and that if he sent some soldiers there they would surrender at once, and they said many other things.

Let us leave these discussions and talk about how the great Montezuma soon came to know that the ships with many captains

and soldiers were anchored there in the port, and he secretly sent some of his chieftains, without Cortés knowing about it, and ordered that those Spaniards be given food, gold, and cloth and that the nearest towns provide them with food. Narváez sent a message to Montezuma saying many insulting and discourteous things about Cortés and all of us, that we were bad men, thieves, who came fleeing from Castile without permission of our king and lord, and that when the king our lord heard that we were in these lands and of the bad things we did and the robberies we committed and that we had taken Montezuma prisoner, to prevent so much damage, he ordered Narváez to go at once with all those ships, soldiers, and horses to free Montezuma from his imprisonment and to kill Cortés and all of us, as evil men, or take us prisoner and send us to Castile in the same ships, and when we arrived he would order us killed; and he sent to tell him much more foolishness. The interpreters who explained all of this to the Indians were the three soldiers who ran away from us, who already knew the language, and in addition to these discussions, Narváez also sent some gifts, certain things from Castile. When Montezuma heard all this, he was very content with the news, because, as they told him he had so many ships, horses, guns, escopeteros, and crossbowmen, and there were thirteen hundred soldiers or more, he believed they would take us prisoner. Besides this, when his chieftains saw our three soldiers with Narváez and saw that they said many bad things about Cortés, they took as truth everything Narváez sent to say.

They brought a picture of the whole fleet painted on some cloths, very lifelike. Then Montezuma sent him much more gold and cloaks and ordered all the towns in the area to bring them a lot to eat; and for three days Montezuma knew this, and Cortés knew nothing about it at all. One day, our captain went to see Montezuma and pay court to him, and after they exchanged the usual courtesies, it seemed to the captain Cortés that Montezuma was very happy and had a pleasant expression, and he asked him how he felt. Montezuma replied that he was better. Also when Montezuma saw that he came to visit twice in one day, he feared

that Cortés knew about the ships, and to beat him to it and so that he would not be suspicious, he said to him: “Malinche, just now messengers have come to me to tell me that in the port where you landed, eighteen more ships and many men and horses have come, and they have brought me all of it painted on some cloths. Because you visited me two times today, I thought you must be coming to give me this news; so now you will not need to make more ships. Because you did not tell me this, on the one hand, I was angry with you for keeping it secret from me, and on the other I was delighted, because your brothers have come so that all of you can go to Castile, and there need be no more discussion.”

When Cortés heard about the ships and saw the painting on the cloth, he rejoiced greatly and said: “Thank God, who at the best time provides.” For us soldiers the joy was so great that we could not be quiet, and from happiness the horsemen skirmished around and we shot off guns. Cortés was very pensive because he understood well that the fleet was sent by the governor Diego Velázquez against him and all of us, and as he was very wise, he communicated what he felt about it to all of us captains and soldiers, and with great gifts of gold to us and promises to make us rich, he persuaded us to stay with him. He did not know who was coming as captain, but we were very happy with the news and with the extra gold he had given us as a favor, as if he gave it from his property and not from what was supposed to be our share. It was great help and aid that Our Lord Jesus Christ sent to us.

[CXI] *At this point a back-and-forth exchange began among the camps of Narváez, Villa Rica, and Cortés. Narváez sent a secular priest named Guevara and two witnesses, including the notary Vergara, to order Gonzalo de Sandoval in Villa Rica to give himself up immediately to Narváez, but Sandoval refused and ordered his soldiers to take the three to Mexico as prisoners. Bernal Díaz reports, “He had hardly said the words when many Indians who worked in the fort seized them in net hammocks like sinful souls and carried them off on their backs. In four days, they drew near to Mexico with them, because they traveled night and day with Indians in relays, and*

*they were frightened when they saw so many cities and towns that brought them food; some would leave them and go on their way while others then carried them. It is said they were wondering whether it was all witchcraft or a dream.” Cortés received them with affection and gifts and won them over. On their return to Narváez’s camp, they spoke highly of Cortés. At the same time, Cortés sent affectionate letters to Narváez, asking him not to stir up the land, and letters containing golden jewels to the secretary Andrés de Duero and the judge Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón; he asked the Mercedarian father to follow the letters to the camp of Narváez with other gifts to give to his friends there. Narváez and one of his captains, Salvatierra the inspector, reacted badly to Cortés’s letters and remained hostile to him; Salvatierra even said “he would roast Cortés’s ears and eat one of them.” Shortly thereafter, the Mercedarian father arrived with the gold and confidential letters, which he distributed. Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón, there by order of the Royal Audiencia, favored Cortés’s claims, and Narváez began to believe that the judge was sowing discord in his camp, so “he seized the king’s judge and sent him in a ship as a prisoner.” The judge convinced the captain of the ship to take him to the island of Santo Domingo where he reported his bad treatment to the Royal Audiencia. The king, in Flanders, heard from Cortés’s representatives that Diego Velázquez and Narváez had sent the fleet without his royal permission and imprisoned a judge. This did Narváez and Velázquez a great deal of damage in later lawsuits they filed against Cortés.*

[CXIV] As soon as Narváez had sent the judge of the Royal Audiencia of Santo Domingo off as a prisoner, he went with all his baggage and munitions and supplies of war to establish a camp in a town called Cempoala, which was well populated at that time. The first thing he did was take by force from the fat cacique, for so we called him, all the cloaks, embroidered cloth, and gold Cortés had given him to keep before we left for Tlaxcala. He also took from him the Indian women the caciques of that town had given us, but whom we left in the houses of their fathers because they were the daughters of lords and too delicate to go

to war. That done, the fat cacique told Narváez many times he must not take anything Cortés had left in his charge, because if Cortés knew anything had been taken, he would kill Narváez for it. He also complained to Narváez himself about the many evil things and robberies his men committed in that town and told him that when Malinche and his men were there, they had not taken anything at all, and that he was good and just, both he and all the teules he brought. He said Narváez should give him back his Indian women, gold, and cloaks right away, and if he did not, he would send a complaint to Malinche. When they heard that, they made fun of what he said, and the auditor Salvatierra, the one who spoke most boastingly, said to his other friends and to Narváez himself: "Didn't you hear what fear all these caciques have of this little nobody Cortés?" I say they should consider how good it is not to speak evil of what is good, for I am telling the truth, that when we attacked Narváez, one of the biggest cowards of all was Salvatierra, not because he lacked size and strength, but because he was totally graceless, except with his tongue. They said he was a native of a town near Burgos.

Let us stop speaking about him and state how Narváez sent to notify our captain and all of us with some decrees, which they said were copies of originals he brought from the governor Diego Velázquez, that he was to be captain. He sent them by a notary named somebody de Mata to give us formal notification of them, and this Mata was a crossbowman, and, afterward, as time went on, was a citizen of Puebla; he sent with him four soldiers, people of rank, to be witnesses. Let us leave him here, Narváez as well as the notary he sent, until their time has come, and let us return to Cortés, who was receiving letters and warnings every day, both from the camp of Narváez and from the captain Gonzalo de Sandoval, who stayed in Villa Rica and who let Cortés know that he had there with him five soldiers, very important people, relatives and friends of licentiate Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón, whom Narváez had sent off as a prisoner, and they had left the camp of Narváez. The reason they gave for coming was that, because Narváez had no respect for a judge of the king, he would have even

less respect for those who were his relatives. From these soldiers, Sandoval learned a great deal about everything that had happened and that Narváez had done, and he learned that Narváez said he was going to go searching for us in Mexico to punish us.

Let us move on and talk about how Cortés took the counsel and advice of all of us whom he was accustomed to having as friends, and it was decided that it was the right time, without waiting any longer, to go against Narváez and that Pedro de Alvarado should stay in Mexico guarding Montezuma with all the soldiers who were not inclined to go on that expedition, also so that the people we suspected were friends of Diego Velázquez would stay there.

At that time, before Narváez came, Cortés had sent to Tlaxcala for a large amount of maize, because for lack of rain, the plantings in the land of Mexico were bad, and as we had many naborías from Tlaxcala, we had need of maize. So they brought maize, hens, and other provisions, which we left with Pedro de Alvarado. We even made some barricades and fortifications for him with some military supplies, bronze guns, all the powder we had, and fourteen escopeteros, eight crossbowmen, and five horses, and we left eighty soldiers in all with him. The great Montezuma saw that we were planning to go against Narváez, and although Cortés went to see him every day and paid court to him, he never let Montezuma know he was aware that he was helping Narváez and sending him gold and cloaks and ordering provisions of food for him. Over several conversations, Montezuma asked Cortés where he was going, why he had that equipment and those defenses and fortifications made and why we were all going around so stirred up.

[CXV] While Cortés and the great Montezuma were conversing, as they usually did, Montezuma said to Cortés: “Señor Malinche, I see all your captains and soldiers going about so upset, and I have also noticed that you only come to visit me from time to time, and Orteguilla the page tells me you are going to go against your brothers who came in the ships and you will leave Tonatio here to guard me; do me the favor of letting me know if I can help you in anything, and I will do it with very

goodwill. Also, señor Malinche, I would not want any misfortune to come to you because you have so few teules and those who came have five times as many, but they say they are Christians, like you, and servants of your emperor, and they have images and set up crosses and say mass to them, and they say and announce that you are men who came fleeing from your king and that they are coming to seize you and kill you; I do not understand all of you, so take care with what you are doing." Cortés answered him with seeming cheerfulness and said to him through doña Marina and Jerónimo de Aguilar, our interpreters, that if he had not told him about it, it was because he cared very much for him and did not want to cause him sorrow because of our leaving, for he was certain that Montezuma had goodwill toward them. As for saying that all of us are vassals and servants of our great emperor, it is true, they are Christians like we are, but in what they say about our coming fleeing our king and lord, that is not so, because the king our lord sent us to see him, Montezuma, and tell him, in his royal name, everything they have been saying. As for what they say about Narváez bringing many soldiers, ninety horses, many guns and powder, that we are few, and that they are coming to seize us, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we believe, and Our Lady Saint Mary will give us more strength and courage than them, for they are evil people and come with evil intent. As our emperor has many kingdoms and domains, there is great diversity of people in them, some very courageous and others more so. We are from the interior of old Castile and are called Castilians, and that captain who is in Cempoala and the men he brings with him are from another province called Biscay, and they are called Biscayans, who speak like the Otomis near Mexico, and he would see how we would take them prisoner. Our leaving should not cause him regret; we would soon return in victory. What he now begged him as a favor is that he stay quietly with his brother Tonatio, for thus they called Pedro de Alvarado, and his eighty soldiers, and that after they leave that city, there be no disturbance. He must not allow his captains and papas to do anything or after we return, those who revolted would have to

pay with their lives, and that everything Tonatio needs by way of supplies should be given to him.

There Cortés embraced Montezuma twice, and Montezuma likewise embraced Cortés. Doña Marina, because she was very experienced, cunningly spoke of our leaving in a way that brought on sadness in Montezuma. Then he offered to do everything Cortés had requested and even promised to send five thousand warriors to assist us. Cortés thanked him for it, but he knew well that he would not send them, and he told him that he needed nothing more than the assistance of God, first of all, and of his companions. He also said that Montezuma should see that the image of Our Lady and the cross were kept decorated with boughs and with wax candles burning night and day, and that they should not allow any papa to do otherwise, because in so doing he would understand Montezuma to be a good friend. After they embraced once more, Cortés asked Montezuma to pardon him for not being able to stay longer, because he had to deal with the departure. Then he spoke to Pedro de Alvarado and all the soldiers staying with him, and he charged them to do everything they could to keep the great Montezuma from escaping, and they should obey Pedro de Alvarado; he promised that, with the help of our Lord, he would make them all rich.

The secular priest Juan Díaz stayed there with them and did not go with us, nor did other suspect men. We embraced one another, and without bringing Indian women or servants but traveling lightly, we set our daily marches toward Cholula. On the road, Cortés sent to Tlaxcala to beg our friends Xicotenga and Maseescaci to send us immediately five thousand warriors. They sent to say that if they were to fight against Indians like themselves, they would certainly do it and much more, but against teules like us, and against horses, cannons, and crossbows, they did not want to; but they sent us ten loads of hens.

Cortés also wrote to Sandoval that he should immediately join us with all his soldiers, that we were going to some towns about twelve leagues from Cempoala, called Tanpaniquita and Mitlanguita, which are now in the encomienda of Pedro Moreno

Medrano, who lives in Puebla. He wrote that he should be very careful that Narváez not take him prisoner nor get his hands on him or any of his soldiers. Then going along in the way I have said, with great readiness to fight if we should run into the men of Narváez or Narváez himself, our scouts on the lookout and two of our soldiers, great runners, much trusted people, always a day's march ahead and not on the direct road, but in places where horses could not go, to find out and inquire of the Indians about Narváez's men. Then our scouts, as they were on the lookout, saw one Alonso de Mata, the one they said was a notary, coming to present the papers or copies of the decrees, and the four Spaniards who came with him as witnesses. Then two of our soldiers on horseback came to give us notice, and the other two scouts were in discussions with Alonso de Mata and the four witnesses. At this moment, we quickened our steps and lengthened our pace. When they came near us, they made deep bows to Cortés and all of us. Cortés dismounted from his horse and found out what they came for, that Alonso de Mata wanted to present the official decrees he was carrying. Cortés asked him if he was a notary of the king, and he said he was. Then Cortés ordered him to show his title, saying that if he brought it, he should read the decrees, and that he would do what he considered to be service to God and His Majesty; but if he had not brought his title, he should not read those papers, and also he had to see His Majesty's originals. So Mata, somewhat taken aback because he was not a notary of His Majesty, and those who came with him, did not know what to say. Cortés ordered that they be given something to eat; we were stopping there for that reason. He told them that we were going to some towns near the camp of Narváez called Tanpaniquita, and that he could send there to find what his captain ordered.

Cortés has such patience that he never said a bad word about Narváez; separately he spoke with them and took their hands and gave them some gold, and soon they went back to their Narváez saying good things about Cortés and all of us. As many of our soldiers at that time, for show, wore jewels of gold on their arms and chains and collars of gold around their necks, and those

who came to present the papers saw them, they said marvelous things about us in Cempoala; there were many in the camp of Narváez, important people, who wanted to come and make peace and negotiate with Cortés after they saw all of us so rich. So we arrived at Tanpaniquita, and the next day the captain Sandoval arrived with his soldiers, about sixty of them, because he left the rest, old and sick, in some towns of our Indian friends, called Papalote, so they could give them food. Five soldiers, relatives and friends of Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón, who had fled the camp of Narváez, also came with him; they came to kiss the hands of Cortés, and he received them very well, with much happiness.

Then Sandoval told Cortés what happened to them with the furious priest Guevara, Vergara, and the others and how he ordered them to be taken as prisoners to Mexico. He also told how he had sent two soldiers from the town made up like Indians, wearing *masteles*<sup>2</sup> and cloaks like real Indians, to the camp of Narváez; as they were naturally dark, Sandoval said they did not look like Spaniards, but real Indians, and each carried a small load of plums on his back, for this was the season for plums. This happened when Narváez was at the sandy beaches before they moved to the town of Cempoala, and they went to the hut of the fierce Salvatierra, and he gave them a string of yellow beads for the plums. After they had sold him the plums, Salvatierra, believing they were Indians, ordered them to go for grass for his horse. They went to a small river that was near the shelters and gathered some small loads of grass. They returned with the grass at the hour of the Ave Maria, and they stayed in the huts until night fell, squatting like Indians. They watched and listened to what certain soldiers who came to pay respects to and keep company with Salvatierra said about Narváez. Salvatierra said to them: "Oh! What a good time for us to have come, for that traitor Cortés has collected more than seven hundred thousand pesos of gold, and we'll all be rich, and as for the soldiers and captains he's bringing with him, it can

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2. *Masteles* are loin cloths.

only be that they have much gold.” And they said other things of that kind. When it was very dark, our two soldiers who were made up as Indians quietly left the shelters and went where they had the horse, and with the bridle that was nearby and the saddle, they saddled and bridled the horse and rode off on it. On the road to the town they came upon another horse hobbled near the stream, and they also took it. Cortés asked Sandoval where these horses were, and Sandoval said he had left them in the town of Papalote where the ill men were staying, because the way he and his companions had come was very broken up with high mountains and the horses could not pass, but he had come that way so as not to run into Narváez’s men. When Cortés learned it was Salvatierra’s horse, he was most delighted, and he said: “Now he’ll bluster even more when he finds it missing.” Let us return to Salvatierra, who, as we later learned from many of Narváez’s soldiers, when he woke up and did not find the two Indians who came to sell him the plums, nor his horse, nor the saddle and bridle, he said things that made them laugh, because he soon learned that it was Spaniards from among Cortés’s men who had taken the horses. From that time on, they kept watch. Let us go back to our subject. Afterward Cortés and all of our captains and soldiers were discussing how and in what way we should attack the camp of Narváez.

[CXVI] As all of us were now together in that town, we decided that we should send, with the Mercedarian father, another letter written to Narváez, which would say in just these words or others very much like them, after politely expressing great respect: That we had rejoiced at his arrival and had believed that with his noble person, we would do great service to God and His Majesty, but that he had not replied to us at all, rather called us traitors, although we were very loyal servants of the king; that he has stirred up the whole land with messages he sent to Montezuma; that Cortés had sent to him to request that he choose the province in whichever part of the land he would like to stay with his people, or that he should advance, and we would go to other lands and perform the great services we are obligated to do for His Majesty; that we had begged him as a favor, if he brought decrees from His Majesty, that he send

the originals for us to see and determine whether they came with the royal signature, and see what they contained so that we could, with our breasts to the ground, obey them; however, he neither did one thing nor the other but called us bad words and stirred up the land; that we begged him and requested on behalf of God and the king our lord that within three days he send and present by a notary of His Majesty the official messages that he brought, and that we would fulfill, as ordered by our king and lord, everything he might order in the royal decrees; that for that purpose, we have come to the town of Panguenequita<sup>3</sup> to be closer to his camp; that if he has not brought the decrees and wants to return to Cuba, he should return and not stir up the land any more with threats; we solemnly declared that if he did anything else, we would go against him, seize him, and send him as a prisoner to our king and lord, because without his royal permission, he has come to attack us and disturb all the cities; and that all the evils and deaths and fires and damage that happened because of this would be his responsibility and not ours. This was written now as informal correspondence,<sup>4</sup> because no notary of His Majesty dared to go to present it for fear Narváez would treat him with great disrespect as had happened with a judge of His Majesty. Where was ever seen such insolence, sending him away as a prisoner? Cortés wrote that, besides what he has already said, as captain general and chief constable of New Spain, he had an obligation to the honor and justice of our king to punish that great dishonor and crime, and so he cites and summons him for it and will demand it, using the processes of justice, for it is the crime *lege magestatis*<sup>5</sup> that he has committed. Finally, he makes God the witness of what he is now saying.

Cortés also sent to tell Narváez that he must immediately return to the fat cacique the cloaks, cloth, and golden jewels

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3. Panganequita

4. The term is *carta mensiva*.

5. This means "any crime against the person, dignity, or condition of the king or Crown." The Latin term is *laesae majestatis*.

he had taken from him by force, and also the daughters of the lords whose parents had given them to us, and he must order his soldiers not to rob the Indians of that town nor any others. After expressing his courtesies, Cortés signed, as did our captains and some soldiers, and my signature was on it. Then a soldier named Bartolomé de Usagre went with the friar, because he was the brother of the artilleryman Usagre who was in charge of the artillery of Narváez.

[CXVII] I will not waste any more words repeating how the Mercedarian friar arrived at Narváez's camp because he did what Cortés ordered, which was to call together certain gentlemen from among Narváez's men and the artilleryman Rodrigo Martín and Usagre, who also had charge of the guns. To better attract Usagre, his brother went with gold ingots, which he secretly gave to him. The friar also distributed all the gold as Cortés had ordered him, and he told Andrés de Duero to come soon to our camp to meet with Cortés; and in addition to this, the friar went to see and speak to Narváez and present himself to be his great servant.

While this was going on, Narváez's men had great suspicions about what our friar was going around doing, and they counseled Narváez to seize him at once, and that is what he wanted to do. When Andrés de Duero learned of this, however—and he was secretary to Diego Velázquez, and he and Narváez considered themselves relatives because Duero was from Tudela de Duero and Narváez was also from the land of Valladolid, or from Valladolid itself, and Duero was very highly respected and preeminent throughout the expedition—he went to Narváez and told him that they had said he was going to seize the Mercedarian friar, messenger, and ambassador of Cortés; but that he should consider that, although there might be suspicions that the friar was saying some things in favor of Cortés, it was not wise to seize him, because it was clear how many honors and gifts Cortés was giving to all Narváez's people who went to visit him; that the friar had spoken with Narváez since coming there, and what he sensed about him was that he desired that he and the other gentlemen from Cortés's camp come to serve Narváez, and that all would

be friends; that he consider how kindly Cortés speaks to the messengers that Narváez has sent, that nothing comes from either his mouth or the mouths of those with him except to speak of him as the lord captain Narváez; that it would be mean-spirited to seize a religious; that Usagre the artilleryman, whose brother came with the friar to see him, should invite the friar to dine and to get out of him what it is that all Cortés's people want.

With those and other pleasant words, Andrés de Duero calmed Narváez; and immediately after this happened, he secretly told the friar what had taken place. Narváez sent at once for the friar, and when the friar came, Narváez paid him much respect; and the friar, half laughing, for he was very prudent and clever, implored Narváez to come aside with him secretly. Narváez went strolling with him through a courtyard and the friar said to him: "I've understood very well that you wanted to have me seized. Well, I want you to know, sir, that you have no better nor greater servant in your camp than I, and you can be certain that many gentlemen and captains among Cortés's men would like to see him already in your hands, and so I believe that we'll all come. To lure Cortés to take further false steps, they've had him write a nonsensical letter signed by the soldiers, which they gave me to deliver to you. I haven't wanted to show it to you, because I came for talks, and I wanted to throw it in a river because of the rubbish it contains; and the captains and soldiers of Cortés did this to confuse him." Narváez said he should give it to him, and the friar said he had left it in his lodging and would go for it; so he took his leave to go for the letter. In the meantime, the blustering Salvatierra came to the lodging of Narváez, and the friar quickly called Duero to go immediately to the house of Narváez for the presentation of the letter. Duero already knew well about it, as did other captains of Narváez who had shown themselves to favor Cortés, because the friar carried the letter with him, but he wanted many in that camp to come together and hear it. When the friar came with the letter, he gave it to Narváez himself and said: "Don't be astonished at it, sir, because he already is going about raving, and it is certain that if you speak

to him with kindness, he'll give himself up right away to you along with all the men he brings with him."

Let us leave the arguments of the friar, which were very good, and talk about how the soldiers and captains told Narváez to read the letter, and when they heard it, it is said that Narváez and Salvatierra were furious. The rest laughed as though making fun of it. Then Andrés de Duero said: "I don't see now how this can be, and I don't understand it, because this religious has told me that Cortés and all his men will give themselves up to you, and now to write such ravings." Then, in a spirit of helpfulness, an Agustín Bermúdez, who was a captain and chief constable of Narváez's camp, said: "Certainly also I've learned from this Mercedarian friar in strictest confidence that if we were to send good mediators, Cortés himself would come to meet with you, to give himself up with his soldiers. It'll be good to send the auditor Salvatierra and señor Andrés de Duero to his camp, for it's not very far, or I'll go with them." He said this deliberately to see what Salvatierra would say. Narváez immediately said Andrés de Duero and Salvatierra should go. Salvatierra answered that he was feeling ill and would not go to see a traitor. The friar said to him: "Señor Auditor, it's good to have moderation, for you can be assured you'll have him as a prisoner before many days."

With the departure of Andrés de Duero agreed upon, it seems that Narváez, very much in secret, discussed with Duero himself and with three captains that they should arrange with Cortés to meet at some houses and outlying settlements of Indians that were between the camp of Narváez and ours, and that there would be agreements about where we were to go with Cortés to settle and divide jurisdictions. In the meeting, Narváez would seize him, and for this Narváez had already spoken with twenty soldiers who were his friends. The friar found out about this at once, as did Andrés de Duero, and they warned Cortés about it all. Let us leave the friar in the camp of Narváez, where he had already made himself a very good friend and relative of Salvatierra, because the friar was from Olmedo and Salvatierra from Burgos, and he ate with him. Let us say of Andrés de Duero that he was getting ready to go to

our camp and bring with him our soldier, Bartolomé de Usagre, so that Narváez could not learn from him what was going on.

[CXVIII] Let us go back somewhat from what I have already said to talk about what else happened. When Cortés had news of the fleet that Narváez was bringing, he immediately dispatched a soldier who had been in Italy, very skillful with all kinds of arms and especially at using a pike, and he sent him to a province where they are called the Chinantecas, near where our soldiers were who went to look for mines, because the people of that province were very hostile to the Mexicans and a few days before had become our friends. As arms they used very long lances, longer than our Castilian types of lances, with two fathoms of flint and knives. Cortés sent to beg them to bring three hundred of them right away to wherever he might be and to remove the knives from them; as they had much copper, they should make two lance heads for each one. The soldier took the pattern for the lance heads.

They immediately searched for lances and made the lance heads, because in the whole province at that time there were four or five towns, not counting many outlying settlements, where they collected lances and made lance heads that were much more perfect than those we sent to order from them. Cortés also ordered our soldier, named Tovilla, to ask them for two thousand warriors and to come with them by the Feast of the Holy Spirit to the town of Panguenequita, or he should ask where we were, and that the two thousand men should bring lances. The soldier asked for them as he was told, and the caciques said they would come with the warriors. The soldier soon came with about two hundred warriors who brought the lances. Another soldier of ours named Barrientos stayed behind to come with the rest of the Indian warriors, and this Barrientos was at the hamlet and mines they had discovered, and there it was arranged that he would come to our camp in the way I have said, because it was a ten-or twelve-league walk from one place to the other. When our soldier Tovilla came with the lances, they were extremely good, and there it was arranged that the soldier instructed and taught us how to use them and how to behave with horsemen.

When we had made our muster and list and record of all the soldiers and captains of our army, we found two hundred sixty-six, counting the drummer and fifer but not the friar, as well as five horsemen, two small cannons, a few crossbowmen, and fewer escopeteros; and what we had in mind for fighting with Narváez were the pikes, and they were very good. Let us stop talking about the muster and lances, and I will say how Andrés de Duero, whom Narváez sent to our camp, arrived and brought with him our soldier Usagre and two Indians, *naborías* from Cuba.

[CXIX] I have to go very far back now to talk about the past. I have already said in Chapter XIX, very far back, that when we were in Santiago de Cuba, Cortés arranged with Andrés de Duero and an accountant of the king named Amador de Lares, who were great friends of Diego Velázquez, and Duero was his secretary, that they should negotiate with Diego Velázquez to make Cortés captain general to go with this fleet, and that Cortés would divide with them all the gold, silver, and jewels that might fall to his share. As at that time Andrés de Duero saw his partner Cortés so rich and powerful, under the pretext of coming to make peace and to favor Narváez, he intended to demand his share in the partnership; the other partner, Amador de Lares, was already dead. As Cortés was cunning and crafty, he not only promised to give him great wealth but also command over the entire expedition, neither more nor less than he himself had, and that after New Spain was conquered, Cortés would give him as many towns as he himself had, provided that Duero make an agreement with Agustín Bermúdez, chief constable of Narváez's camp, and with other gentlemen I am not naming here, that together they make sure to lead Narváez astray so he would not come out with his life and honor and he would be defeated; when Narváez was killed or taken prisoner and his fleet wrecked, they would be left as masters and would divide the gold and towns of New Spain. The better to attract Duero and bind him to what I have said, Cortés loaded his two Indians from Cuba with gold. As it appeared, Duero made a promise to him, and Agustín Bermúdez had previously made a promise to him by signed letters. Cortés also sent ingots and

jewels of gold to Bermúdez, to a secular priest named Juan de León and to another, Guevara, who was the one Narváez sent first, and to other friends of his, and he wrote what seemed to him suitable so they would help him in everything.

Andrés de Duero was in our camp from the day he arrived until after dinner the next day, which was the Feast of the Holy Spirit, and he ate with Cortés and spoke secretly with him for a while, and when they had eaten, Duero took his leave of all of us, captains as well as soldiers. When he was on horseback, he went once more to where Cortés was and said: "What are your orders, sir, for I am about to leave?" Cortés replied: "That you go with God, sir, and see, señor Andrés de Duero, that what we have discussed is well arranged. If not, by my conscience, for that is the way Cortés swore, within three days I will be there in your camp with all my companions, and the first one I will throw my lance at will be you if anything is contrary to what we have discussed." Duero laughed and said: "I will not fail in anything concerning serving you." Then he left, and when he arrived at his camp, it is said he told Narváez that he felt Cortés and all those of us with him were very willing to go over to him.

Let us stop talking about this matter of Duero, and I will say how Cortés right away summoned one of our captains, Juan Velázquez de León, a person of great importance and friend of Cortés, also a very close relative of the governor of Cuba, Diego Velázquez. We had always believed Cortés had attracted and bound Juan Velázquez de León to himself, luring him with great gifts and promises that he would give him command in New Spain and make him his equal, because Juan Velázquez always showed himself to be a great servant and true friend of Cortés. When he had come before Cortés and paid his respects, he said to him: "What do you order sir?" As Cortés sometimes spoke in a very honeyed way, with a smile on his lips, he said half laughing: "What made me summon you, señor Juan Velázquez is that Andrés de Duero has told me what Narváez says, and there's a rumor throughout his camp that if you go there, I would be undone and defeated, because they believe that you'd take up

cause with Narváez. For this reason I've decided, by my life, if you really care for me, you'll go now on your good gray mare and take all the gold, and the *fanfarrona* (which was a very heavy chain of gold) and other small things I'll give you, to give there on my behalf to whomever I tell you. You'll carry your fanfarrona, which weighs a lot, on one shoulder, and you'll wear another chain that weighs more than that encircling you twice, and then you'll see how Narváez loves you. When you come back, señor Diego de Ordaz will soon go too, for they desire to see him in their camp as he was steward of Diego Velázquez."

Juan Velázquez said he would do what Cortés ordered but that he would not carry his gold and chains with him, only what Cortés might give him to give to whomever he might order, because wherever he might be, he was always ready to give him greater service than any gold or diamonds might buy. "So I've believed," said Cortés, "and with this confidence, sir, I send you, but if you do not take all your gold and jewels as I order you, I don't want you to go." Juan Velázquez replied: "Whatever you order, sir, will be done." But he did not want to take his jewels. Then Cortés spoke to him secretly, and he set out at once and took in his company one of Cortés's squires to serve him, whose name was Juan del Río. Let us leave this departure of Juan Velázquez, whom they said that Cortés sent to divert Narváez's attention, and let us return to talking about what happened in our camp, where within two hours of when Juan Velázquez left, Cortés ordered the drummer Canillas, for so our drummer was called, to beat the drum, and Benito de Beger, our fifer, to play his tambor,<sup>6</sup> and he ordered Gonzalo de Sandoval, who was captain and chief constable, to summon all the soldiers, and we began to march at the double in the direction of Cempoala.

As we were going along our way, two native pigs were killed that had their navels on their backs, and many soldiers said it was

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6. A tambor is a small half drum that normally hangs around the fifer's neck; usually, the fifer plays both instruments at the same time.

a sign of victory. We slept on the side of a hill near a small river, our scouts ahead and lookouts and patrols. When dawn broke, we went straight ahead on our way until noon and rested by a river where Villa Rica de la Veracruz<sup>7</sup> now is, where boats unload the merchandise that comes from Castile, because at that time there were some houses of Indians and groves of trees near the river. As in that land the sun is very strong, we rested, for as I have said, we were carrying our arms and pikes.

[CXX] I have already told how Cortés sent Juan Velázquez de León and the squire to Cempoala to see what Narváez, who had such a great desire to have him in his company, wanted of him. So, when they left our camp, Juan Velázquez made such speed on the way that he was at Cempoala by dawn and dismounted at the house of the fat cacique, because Juan del Río did not have a horse, and from there they went by foot to the lodgings of Narváez. Then, as the Indians recognized Juan Velázquez de León, they rejoiced to see him and spoke to him, and they called out to some soldiers of Narváez, who were lodged in the house of the fat cacique, that this person was Juan Velázquez de León, Malinche's captain. When the soldiers heard this, they went running to demand a reward from Narváez for bringing the good news that Juan Velázquez de León had come. When Narváez learned so unexpectedly of his coming, and before Juan Velázquez arrived at his lodgings, Narváez went out to receive him in the street, accompanied by some soldiers, where Juan Velázquez and Narváez met and paid great respect to each other. Narváez embraced Juan Velázquez and had him sit on a chair near him, for immediately they had brought chairs and seats, and he asked Juan Velázquez why he did not dismount at his lodging, and he ordered his servants to go for the horse and baggage, if he brought some, so that he might be lodged in his house and stables. Juan Velázquez said that he would have to go back at once, that he had only come to pay his respects to Narváez

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7. The reference is to the third site of the city, not to the site founded by Cortés and his men.

and to everyone in his camp and to see if he could arrange an agreement that he and Cortés might have peace and friendship. Then they say that Narváez, having taken Juan Velázquez aside, very angrily began to ask him how he could say such words to him, to make friends and peace with a traitor who rose against his cousin Diego Velázquez with the fleet! Juan Velázquez replied that Cortés was not a traitor, but a faithful servant of His Majesty, and that to appeal to our king and lord, as he had done, should not be considered treason, and he begged Narváez not to speak such words in front of him. Then Narváez, with great promises, attempted to persuade Juan Velázquez to stay with him and to arrange with Cortés's people to come immediately to submit to him, promising him with an oath that he, Juan Velázquez, would be the most preeminent captain in his camp and second person in his command. Juan Velázquez replied that it would be greater treason to leave the captain to whom he had sworn obedience in war and abandon him, knowing that everything he has done in New Spain has been in the service of God our Lord and of His Majesty, and that we would not fail to have recourse to Cortés as Cortés had recourse to our king and lord, and he begged Narváez not to speak to him anymore about it.

At that time all the leading captains in the camp of Narváez had come to see Juan Velázquez, and they embraced him with great courtesy because Juan Velázquez was very courtly, well built, robust, of good presence and face, and with a very shapely beard, and he wore a very large golden chain thrown over his shoulder and with two turns under his arm; it became him well, a dashing and fine captain. Let us leave the good appearance of Juan Velázquez and how all the captains of Narváez were admiring him; even our Mercedarian father came to see and speak privately to him, as did Andrés de Duero and the chief constable Bermúdez.

It seems that at that time certain captains of Narváez, named Gamarra, one Juan Juste, one Juan Bono de Quexo,<sup>8</sup> a Biscayan,

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8. The modern version of the name is "Quejo."

and Salvatierra the blusterer, advised Narváez that he should immediately seize Juan Velázquez because he seemed to be speaking very freely in favor of Cortés. Narváez had already secretly ordered his captains and constables to take him prisoner. Agustín Bermúdez, Andrés de Duero, our Mercedarian friar, a secular priest named Juan de León and others who had professed friendship for Cortés heard about it and said to Narváez that they were astonished at his wanting to order Juan Velázquez de León seized; for what could Cortés do against him, even if he had in his company a hundred other Juan Velázquezes. They said he should consider the honor and respect that Cortés paid to all who have gone to his camp and how he goes out to receive them and gives them all gold and jewels and other things like cloths and flyswatters, and they return loaded like bees to their beehive. They said that he could have arrested Andrés de Duero, the secular priest Guevara, Anaya, Vergara the notary, Alonso de Mata, and others who came to his camp, but he did not do so. Instead, as they had said before, he honored them very much, and it would be better for him also to speak to Juan Velázquez again with much courtesy and invite him to dine. This seemed like good advice to Narváez, and he again spoke to Juan Velázquez with very kind words so that he might be a mediator through whom Cortés would give himself up to him with all of us, and he invited him to dinner. Juan Velázquez replied that he would do what he could in that case, but that he saw Cortés as very obstinate and stubborn in the matter and that it would be better that they divide the provinces and that Narváez should choose the land he most wanted.

Juan Velázquez said this to pacify him. While these discussions were going on, the Mercedarian friar got the ear of Narváez and said to him, as the favorite and advisor he had already become: "Sir, you should order a muster of all your artillery, horsemen, escopeteros, crossbowmen, and soldiers so that Juan Velázquez de León and the squire Juan del Río might see it and Cortés might fear your power and people and may come to your grace, even if he does not want to." This the friar said to him as a way of seeming to be his very great servant and friend and to make him

work all the horsemen and soldiers in his camp. So, because of what our friar said, he had muster held before Juan Velázquez de León and Juan del Río, with our religious present. When it was finished, Juan Velázquez said to Narváez: "Sir, you bring with you a great force; may God increase it." Then Narváez said: "So, sir, you will see that if I had wanted to go against Cortés, I should have taken him prisoner and all of you who are with him." Juan Velázquez replied and said: "Sir, consider him as taken and us soldiers who are with him as well, but we will know well how to defend ourselves." So the conversation ended.

The next day Juan Velázquez was invited to dinner, and dining with Narváez was a nephew of Diego Velázquez, governor of Cuba, who was also a captain of Narváez. While they were eating, the discussion dealt with how Cortés was not surrendering to Narváez and of the letter and injunctions he sent to him. One thing led to another, and the nephew of Diego Velázquez, who also was called Diego Velázquez, lost control, and he said Cortés and all of us with him were traitors because we did not come to submit to Narváez. When Juan Velázquez heard this, he rose up from his chair, and with great respect, he said: "Captain Narváez, sir, I've already begged you not to allow such words as these to be said of Cortés nor any of us who are with him, because it's truly wrong to speak badly of us who have served His Majesty so loyally." Diego Velázquez replied that his words were well spoken, that Juan Velázquez was defending a traitor and traitors so he must be one himself, and that he was not a good Velázquez. Juan Velázquez, putting his hand on his sword, said that Diego Velázquez was lying, that he was a better gentleman than Diego Velázquez and a good Velázquez, better than him or his uncle, and that he would let him know it if the señor captain Narváez would give him permission. As many captains were there, both of Narváez and some friends of Cortés, they put themselves between the two, for in fact Juan Velázquez was going to give him a sword thrust; they counseled Narváez that he should immediately order Juan Velázquez to leave the camp along with the friar and Juan del Río, because they felt they were doing no good there.

Without further delay, the captains and Narváez ordered Juan Velázquez, the friar, and Juan del Río to go, and they, who could hardly wait to get to our camp, set off. It is said that Juan Velázquez, riding his good mare and wearing his coat of mail as he always did, and with his helmet and great golden chain, went to take leave of Narváez. There with Narváez was the young man Diego Velázquez, he of the brawl, and Juan Velázquez asked Narváez: "What do you order for our camp, sir?" Narváez replied, very angrily, that he should go and that it would have been better had he not come. The young man Diego Velázquez spoke threatening words to Juan Velázquez. Putting his hand on his beard, Juan Velázquez de León replied: "By this beard, before many days let me see if your courage equals your talk." As six or seven from Narváez's camp, who had already decided for Cortés, came with Juan Velázquez to take their leave of him, they say they pretended to be very angry and said to him: "Go and don't bother to speak anymore, for your words are very insolent and deserving of punishment." So they took their leave, and going quickly on their horses, they headed for our camp, because Juan Velázquez had been warned that Narváez wanted to seize them and was readying many horsemen to go after them.

Coming along on their way, they met us at a river I have said is now near Veracruz. We were at that river taking a rest because the heat in that country is very powerful, and, as we traveled with all our arms on our back, each of us with a pike, we were tired. In that instant, one of our scouts came to inform Cortés that he saw coming at a quick pace two or three people on horseback. We immediately assumed it would be our ambassadors, Juan Velázquez de León, the friar, and Juan del Río. When they arrived, what rejoicing and happiness there was among us! And Cortés, how many friendly and courteous words he spoke to Juan Velázquez and our friar! And he was right because they were very good servants to him.

Then Juan Velázquez told step-by-step everything I have already said happened to them with Narváez and how he secretly gave the chains, ingots, and jewels of gold to the people Cortés

had designated. Then to hear about our friar. As he was so merry a person, he knew very well how to act out the way he had pretended to be so much a servant of Narváez, and how, to make a mockery of him, he counseled Narváez to hold a muster and bring out his artillery, and with what astuteness and cunning he gave him the letter. Then he told what happened to him with Salvatierra and how he pretended to be a relative, although the friar was from Olmedo and Salvatierra from beyond Burgos,<sup>9</sup> and of the boasts Salvatierra made about what he would do and what would happen when he seized Cortés and all of us, and he even complained to him about the soldiers who had stolen his horse and that of the other captain. All of us were delighted to hear this as if we were going to a wedding and fiesta, but we knew that the next day we had to go into battles, and we were going to win or die in them, we being two hundred and sixty-six soldiers and those of Narváez five times more.

Let us return to our story. We all then marched for Cempoala and went to sleep at a small stream about a league from Cempoala, where at that time there was a bridge and where now there is a cattle ranch. I will leave it here and tell what happened in the camp of Narváez after Juan Velázquez, the friar, and Juan del Río left. Then I will again tell what we did in our camp, because at the very same instant two or three things happened, and I must necessarily leave out some to tell what is most appropriate for our story.

[CXXI] It seemed that when Juan Velázquez, the friar, and Juan del Río left, Narváez's captains said to him that there was a sense in his camp that Cortés had sent many gold jewels and that he had friends in the camp itself and that it would be good to be very well prepared and warn all the soldiers to be ready with their arms and horses. Besides this, the fat cacique feared Cortés because he had allowed Narváez to take the cloaks, gold, and Indians that he,

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9. With this remark, Bernal Díaz is making the point that the two men were from parts of Spain too distant from one another by standards of the day for them to make claims of affinity.

the fat cacique, received from Cortés; and he always had lookouts watching us wherever we slept and by whatever road we came, because Narváez had ordered him by force to do it. When he knew we were approaching Cempoala, the fat cacique said to Narváez: "What are you doing that you are so careless? Do you think that Malinche and the teules he is bringing with him are the same as you are? Well, I tell you that when you are not expecting it, he will be here, and he will kill you." Although they made fun of those words the fat cacique said to them, they did not fail to get ready, and the first thing they did was to proclaim war against us with fire and sword and open plunder. A soldier named el Galleguillo, who came fleeing from the camp of Narváez—or Andrés de Duero sent him—informed Cortés about the proclamation and other things we needed to know.

Let us return to Narváez, who then ordered all the artillery, horsemen, escopeteros, crossbowmen, and soldiers taken out to a field about a quarter of a league from Cempoala to wait for us and not to let any of us escape death or capture. As it rained a great deal that day, Narváez's men were already sick of waiting for us in the rain, and as they were not used to rain and hardships and his captains did not think very much of us, those captains let him know they would return to their lodgings; that it was an affront to be there as they were waiting for two or three little men, as they said we were; that he should put his artillery, eighteen large guns, in front of their lodgings; that forty of the horsemen should be waiting all night on the road by which we had to come to Cempoala; that he should have at the ford of the river, where we would have to come, his lookouts, who should be good horsemen and foot soldiers and fast runners to carry messages; and that in the courtyards of the lodgings of Narváez twenty horsemen should be on patrol the entire night.

This agreement they presented to him was to persuade him to return to the lodgings. His captains also said to him: "What then, sir, do you take Cortés for, that he'd dare, with his three cats, come to this camp based on what this fat Indian says? Don't believe it, sir, but rather that he's made this uproar and show of coming so

that you might arrive at a better agreement with him.” In this way, Narváez returned to his camp, and after his return he promised publicly that he would give two thousand pesos to whoever might kill Cortés or Gonzalo de Sandoval. He at once posted lookouts at the river, a Gonzalo Carrasco, who lives now in Puebla, and the other named somebody Hurtado, and the watchword, countersign, and secret signal that he gave for when they were battling against us in his camp was to be: “Santa María, Santa María!” In addition to this arrangement, Narváez ordered that many soldiers, including escopeteros, crossbowmen, and others with halberds, sleep in his lodging, and he ordered as many others to be in the lodgings of the auditor Salvatierra, Gamarra, and Juan Bono.

[CXXII] When we arrived at the little stream with some good meadows about a league from Cempoala, after having sent out our trustworthy scouts, our captain Cortés, on horseback, summoned us, captains as well as all the soldiers. When he saw us together, he asked us please to be quiet, and he began a speech in such a beautiful style, with words so well-spoken that it was certainly more delightful and filled with promises than I will know how to write it here. In it, he reminded us of everything that happened to us from when we left the island of Cuba until that time, and he said to us:

“You know well, gentlemen, that Diego Velázquez, governor of Cuba, chose me as captain general, not because there weren’t among you many who were worthy of it. You know that you believed that we were coming to settle, for so it was published and proclaimed, but, as you’ve seen, he was sending us to trade. You know what we went through about my wanting to return to the island of Cuba to give an account to Diego Velázquez of the charge he gave me, in accordance with his instructions, but you ordered and persuaded me to settle this land in the name of His Majesty, and, thanks to our Lord, we’ve settled it, and it was a very wise thing to do. In addition, you made me your captain general and chief justice of the settlement until His Majesty might be pleased to order differently. As I’ve already said, among some of you there were discussions about returning to Cuba, but I don’t want to go

into it further, for, so to speak, it happened yesterday, and our staying was holy and good, for we have done a great service to God and His Majesty, and that much is clear. You already know what we promised in our letters to His Majesty after having given him an account and report of all our deeds, which didn't leave out a thing, that this land is, so far as we've seen and known of it, four times larger than Castile, with great towns, very rich in gold and mines, with other provinces nearby; how we sent to beg His Majesty that he not give the governorship of it nor any other kind of authority over it to anyone at all (because we believed and knew for certain that the bishop of Burgos, don Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca, who was at that time president of the Indies and had great authority, would ask His Majesty for it for Diego Velázquez or some relative or friend of the bishop himself). Because this land is such and so good that it would be appropriate for an *infante*<sup>10</sup> or great lord, we decided not to give it to anyone until His Majesty hears our representatives and we see his royal signature. Seeing it, we would, in all humility, do what he's pleased to order. With those letters you know we sent and served His Majesty with all the gold, silver, jewels, and everything we'd gotten."

He went on: "You will remember, gentlemen, how many times we've arrived at the point of death in our wars and battles. Then, bring to mind how accustomed we are to hardships, rain, wind, and sometimes hunger, always carrying our weapons on our backs and sleeping on the ground, whether it's snowing or raining, and if we look at it, our skin is already weather-beaten from our hardships! I don't want to talk anymore about our fifty companions they've killed in the wars, nor of all of you bandaged in rags and maimed from wounds which are still not healed. Then I'd like to remind you of the hardships we had at sea, the battles of Tabasco and, those who were present in them, the affairs of Almería and Cingapacinga, and how many times on the mountains and

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10. The title and rank given to a king's sons who are not heirs to the throne.

roads they tried to take our lives; then in the battles of Tlaxcala, to what extreme they pushed us and how they treated us. Then in the affair of Cholula, they even had ready the cooking pots so they could eat our bodies. Then at the ascent of the mountain passes, you will not have forgotten the forces Montezuma had so as not to leave any of us alive, and you saw clearly the roads all full of felled trees; then the dangers of the entry into and stay in the great city of Mexico. How many times have we looked death in the face? Who will be able to count them? Then look at those of you who have come twice before I did, one time with Francisco Hernández de Córdoba and the other with Juan de Grijalva, the hardships, hunger, and thirst experienced, wounds and deaths of many soldiers in discovering these lands, and all that you have spent of your property in those two voyages.”

He said he did not want to tell other things he should speak of in detail, for there would not be time to finish the discussion; it was late and night was coming. He said more: “Let us say further, gentlemen, Pánfilo de Narváez is coming against us with great fury and desires to get his hands on us; he hadn’t yet disembarked before he was calling us traitors and evil people, and he sent a message to the great Montezuma, not the words of a wise captain but an agitator. Beyond that, he had the audacity to arrest a judge of His Majesty, and for this crime alone he deserves to be very fully punished. You will have already heard how he’s proclaimed war in his camp against us, with free plundering as if we were Moors.” Then, after having said this, Cortés began to praise us and our courage in past wars and battles, saying that we were fighting then to save our lives, but that now we had to fight with all our strength for life and honor, for they are coming to seize us, throw us from our homes and steal our property. Beyond that, we do not yet know if Narváez brings decrees from our king and lord or only pronouncements of the bishop of Burgos, our opponent.

He said that if we should fall into the hands of Narváez, which God forbid, all our services we have done for God first and His Majesty will become disservices, and they will bring lawsuits against us, saying that we have killed and robbed and destroyed the

land, whereas they are the robbers and agitators and do disservice to our king and lord. They will say they have served him; and he said we could see with our own eyes everything he had said, and as good gentlemen, we are obligated to favor His Majesty's honor and our own and our homes and property. With this intention he left Mexico, having confidence in God and in us, that he put everything first in the hands of God and after that in ours, and let us see how it seems to us.

Then all of us as one answered him, together with Juan Velázquez de León, Francisco de Lugo, and other captains, that he should feel certain that, with the help of God, we would conquer or die trying; and he should be careful that they not convince him with personal gain because if he should do anything improper, we would stab him. Then, as he saw our strong will, he rejoiced greatly and said that he had come in that confidence. Then he made us many offers and promises that we would all be very rich and powerful. When this was done, he again asked us please to maintain silence, saying that in wars and battles, prudence and knowledge were more necessary to conquer the enemy fully than excessive boldness, and because he knew of our great bravery, and that in order to win honor each one of us would want to push forward first to meet the enemy, we should put ourselves in order and companies. As the first thing we had to do was take their artillery, eighteen guns positioned before the lodgings of Narváez, Cortés ordered that a relative of his named Pizarro should go as captain. Pizarro was a swift young man, and Cortés assigned him sixty young soldiers, and I was among them. He ordered that, after taking the artillery, we should all go to the lodging of Narváez, which was on a very high cu, and to seize Narváez he designated as captain Gonzalo de Sandoval with another sixty companions; as Sandoval was chief constable, Cortés gave him an order which said: "Gonzalo de Sandoval, chief constable of this New Spain for His Majesty, I order you to seize Pánfilo de Narváez, and if he should resist, kill him, for so the service of God and the king our lord requires, inasmuch as Narváez has done many disservices to God and His Majesty and arrested a judge. Given in this camp,

and signed Hernando Cortés, countersigned by his secretary, Pero Hernández.” After giving the order, he promised that to the first soldier who laid a hand on Narváez he would give three thousand pesos, to the second two thousand, and to the third a thousand, and he said that what he promised was just a tip so we might well see the wealth that was within our grasp.

He then designated Juan Velázquez de León to seize the youth Diego Velázquez with whom he had had the quarrel, and he gave him another sixty soldiers; likewise he designated Diego de Ordaz to seize Salvatierra and gave him another sixty soldiers, for those two captains were in their fortress and high cus. With another twenty soldiers, Cortés himself, for emergencies, was to go where there was most need, and what he had in mind was to be present at the seizure of Narváez and Salvatierra. Once the lists were given to the captains, Cortés said: “I know well that Narváez’s men are, in all, four times more than we; but they’re not accustomed to arms, and as the greater part of them are on bad terms with their captain and many sick, we’ll take them by surprise. I have had the belief that God will give us victory, that they will not persist much in their defense because we’ll do them more good than their Narváez. So, then, gentlemen, because our lives and honor depend, after God, on your courage and your strong arms, I have no other favors to ask of you and nothing more to remind you, except that this is the touchstone of our honor and fame forever onward, and it’s worth more to die as good men than to live dishonored.” Because at that time it was raining and it was late, he said no more.

Something I have thought about since is that never did he say to us: I have made such and such an agreement in the camp, or that so and so or so and so is on our side, or anything of that kind, but only that we should fight like brave men. Not telling us he had friends in the camp of Narváez was the act of a very astute captain, because for that reason we would not fail to fight like very courageous men and would have no hope in them, but only, after God, in our own great courage. Let us leave this and talk about how each one of our captains was with his designated soldiers

telling them how and in what way we had to fight and giving one another courage. Then my captain Pizarro, with whom we were to take the artillery—which was the matter of greatest danger for we had to be the first to break through to the guns—also said with much courage how we were to enter and lower our pikes to the on-guard position until we had the artillery in our power; and as soon as we had taken it, our artillerymen, Mesa, the Sicilian, Usagre, and Arvenga, should attack the people in the lodging of Salvatierra with those same guns and the balls that were ready to be discharged.

Also I want to talk about the great need we had of arms, that for a breastplate or headpiece or helmet or iron chin guard we would that night have given whatever they asked for it and all we had already gained. Then, secretly, they told us the battle cry we had to use while doing battle, which was Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit! They said that this is usually kept secret in the wars so they can recognize and call each other by the battle cry opponents and the others would not know. Narváez's men had as their battle cry and shout, Santa Maria, Santa Maria! With all of this done, as I was a great friend and supporter of the captain Sandoval, he begged me that night as a favor that after we had taken the artillery, if I was still alive, I would always be with him and follow him, and I promised him I would and so I did.

Let us talk now about what we were doing for a while in the night, preparing and thinking about what lay ahead of us, for we had nothing at all for our supper; our scouts left right away, and lookouts and the watch were posted. They put another soldier and me as watch, and before long a scout came to ask me whether I had heard something, and I said no. Then a squad leader came and said that Galleguillo, who had come from the camp of Narváez, had disappeared, that he was a spy sent by Narváez, and that Cortés ordered us to march on the road to Cempoala right away. We heard our fifer play and our drummer beat, and the captains prepared their soldiers and we began to march. Galleguillo was found sleeping under some cloaks, for as it was raining and the poor man was not accustomed to being wet or cold, he went there

to sleep. Then, going along at our fast pace, without playing the fife or beating the drum, the captains cautioning their soldiers, we began to march. With our scouts reconnoitering the land, we arrived at the river where the lookouts of Narváez were, who I already said were named Gonzalo Carrasco and Hurtado, and they were off their guard so we had time to seize Carrasco, and the other went shouting to the camp of Narváez: "To arms, to arms, Cortés is coming!"

I remember that when we crossed that river, as it was raining, it had become somewhat deep and the stones somewhat slippery, and the pikes and our arms hindered us greatly. I also remember that when Carrasco was seized, he said to Cortés in a loud voice: "Look out, señor Cortés, don't go there, for I swear that Narváez is waiting for you in the field with his whole army." Cortés gave him to his secretary Pero Hernández to guard. As we saw that Hurtado went to give warning, we did not delay at all. Rather Hurtado's shouting and giving the warning, "To arms, to arms!" Narváez calling to his captains, and we lowering our pikes to the ready and closing in on the artillery all happened at once. Their artillerymen had time only to fire four guns; some of the balls passed overhead, but one of them killed three of our companions. Then in that instant, all our captains arrived, our fifer and drummer sounding the call to arms, but as many of Narváez's men were on horseback, our men were delayed somewhat by them, but they brought down six or seven of them. We who had taken the artillery did not dare abandon the guns because Narváez was shooting at us with crossbows and escopetas from his lodging, and he wounded seven of our men. At that moment, the captain Sandoval arrived and rushed up the steps, and in spite of the strong resistance Narváez put up with his crossbows, escopetas, with halberds and lances, the captain Sandoval and his soldiers still ascended. Then, as soon as we soldiers saw that we had captured the artillery, that there was no one to defend it, we turned it over to our artillerymen, and the captain Pizarro and many of us went to help Sandoval, for Narváez's men made them back down two steps in retreat, but with our arrival they again climbed up. We were fighting for

some time with our pikes, which were long, and when I least expected it, we heard Narváez shouting: "Holy Mary, protect me, for they've killed me and put out one of my eyes!" When we heard that, we immediately shouted: "Victory, victory for those of the name of the Holy Spirit, for Narváez is dead! Victory, victory for Cortés, for Narváez is dead!" But for all this, we could not enter the cu where they were until one Martín López, he of the brigantines, because he was tall, set fire to the thatch on the high cu, and all Narváez's men came tumbling down the steps. Then we seized Narváez, and the first who had his hands on him was Pero Sánchez Farfán; I gave him to Sandoval and the other captains with him, who were still shouting and crying: "Long live the king, long live the king, and in his royal name Cortés, Cortés! Victory, victory, for Narváez is dead!"

Let us leave this combat; let us go to Cortés and the rest of the captains who were each still battling with the captains of Narváez, who had not yet given up despite the shots the artillerymen shot at them, our shouts and the death of Narváez, because they were in very high cus. As Cortés was very shrewd, he immediately ordered it proclaimed that all of Narváez's men should come at once to submit themselves beneath the banner of His Majesty and Cortés, in his royal name, on pain of death. Even with all this, the men of Diego Velázquez the younger did not give themselves up nor those of Salvatierra, because they were in very high cus, which could not be entered until Gonzalo de Sandoval went with half of us who were with him; with that, the guns and the proclamations, we entered where they were, and so Salvatierra and those with him were taken as well as Diego Velázquez the younger. Then Sandoval came with all of us who had gone to seize Narváez to put him in a safer place. After Cortés, Juan Velázquez, and Ordaz had taken as prisoners Salvatierra, the young Diego Velázquez, Gamarra, Juan Juste, Juan Bono the Biscayan, and other important people, Cortés came unrecognized, accompanied by our captains, to where we had Narváez. With the heat, which was great, loaded with his arms, going from one place to another, calling to our soldiers and giving proclamations, he became very sweaty and

tired, such that he was out of breath. He spoke to Sandoval twice, but he did not succeed in saying what he wanted because of the trouble he was having, but somewhat relieved, he said: "Hey, stop! What about Narváez? What about Narváez?" Sandoval said: "Here he is, here he is, and very well guarded." And Cortés, still out of breath, spoke again: "Take care, my son Sandoval, that you don't leave him, you and your companions, so he doesn't escape from you, while I go to take care of other things, and see to it that those captains captured with him are guarded carefully."

Then he went and made other proclamations, that, under pain of death, all the men of Narváez should come right that minute to surrender under the flag of His Majesty, and in his royal name Hernando Cortés, his captain general and chief justice, and that none of them should carry any arms, but all should give them up and turn them over to our constables. All this was at night, for it had not yet dawned, and it still rained from time to time; then the moon came out, but when we had arrived there it was very dark and it was raining. The darkness helped, however, for as it was so dark, there were many fireflies, which give light at night, and the men of Narváez believed they were the matches of the escopetas.

Let us leave this and move ahead. As Narváez was very badly wounded and had lost an eye, he asked permission from Sandoval that the surgeon he had brought in his fleet, Master Juan, might take care of his eye and the other captains who were wounded, and Sandoval gave permission. While they were being tended to, Cortés came close by, disguised so they would not recognize him, to see Narváez being treated. They said quietly to Narváez that Cortés was there; and as they said it to him, Narváez said: "Señor captain Cortés, you must consider this a great victory that you've had over me, taking me prisoner." Cortés replied to him that he gave great thanks to God for giving him the victory and for his courageous gentlemen and companions who had part in it, but taking him prisoner and defeating the man who had the audacity to arrest a judge of His Majesty was one of the least important things he had done in New Spain. As soon as he had said this, he left, and said nothing more to Narváez, but he ordered Sandoval to post

very good guards on Narváez and not to leave, keeping responsible people with him. We had already put two pairs of shackles on him, and we carried him to a building and posted soldiers to guard him. Sandoval selected me as one of them and privately ordered me not to allow any of Narváez's men to speak with him until it was daytime and Cortés could put him in a safer place.

Let us leave this and talk about how Narváez had sent forty horsemen to wait for us on the road when we were on our way to his camp, and we knew that they were still going about in the country. We feared they would come to attack us to take from us their captains and Narváez himself, whom we had as prisoners, so we stayed very much on the alert. Cortés decided to send and beg them as a favor to come to the camp, with great promises that he made to all. To bring them, he sent Cristóbal de Olid, our *maestre de campo*, and Diego de Ordaz, and they went on some horses we took from Narváez's men, for our horsemen did not bring any of their horses, which were still tied up in a little wood near Cempoala. We did not bring horses but brought only pikes, swords, shields, and daggers. They went to the countryside with one of Narváez's soldiers, who showed them the track by which they had gone; they came upon them, and, in short, spoke so many words of offering and promises on behalf of Cortés that they brought them over to him. Certain gentlemen among them felt inclined toward Cortés, and before they arrived at our camp, which was in broad daylight, and without Cortés or any of us saying anything to the drummers that Narváez brought, they began to beat their kettledrums and drums and play their fifes, calling out: "Long live, long live the pride of the Romans, who, being so few, have conquered Narváez and his soldiers!" And a black named Guidela, a very witty jester Narváez had brought, shouted out: "Look, the Romans never did such a heroic deed." However much we told them to be quiet and not to beat their drums, they would not obey until Cortés sent to arrest the kettledrummer, who was half crazy and was named Tapia.

At this moment Cristóbal de Olid and Diego de Ordaz came, and they brought the horsemen I have mentioned, and among

them came Andrés de Duero and Agustín Bermúdez and many other friends of our captain. When they arrived, they went to pay respects to Cortés, who was seated on an armchair wearing a long orange-colored robe with his armor beneath it, accompanied by us. Well, to see the graciousness with which he spoke to and embraced them and the complimentary words he said to them was something to see, and how cheerful he was, and he had good reason, seeing himself, at that point, such a lord and so powerful. So, as they paid their respects, each went to his lodgings.

Let us now speak of the dead and wounded of that night. The standard-bearer of Narváez, something de Fuentes, who was a gentleman from Seville, died; another of Narváez's captains, named Rojas, a native of Old Castile, also died; two others of Narváez's men died; one of the three soldiers who had been with us and had gone over to Narváez died, Alonso García Carretero; and many of Narváez's men were wounded. Four of our men also died, and there were more wounded, and the fat cacique was also wounded, because when he learned that we were coming near to Cempoala, he took refuge in the lodging of Narváez, and they wounded him there. Cortés immediately ordered that he be well tended and put him in his house so he would not be bothered. Then Cervantes the crazy and Escalonilla, who had been among us but went over to Narváez, did not come out of it well either, for Escalona<sup>11</sup> was badly wounded and Cervantes soundly beaten, and I have already said that the carter died. Let us go to those in the lodging of Salvatierra, the very fierce one, of whom his soldiers said that in all their lives they never saw a more worthless man nor one more afraid of death. When he heard the alarm sounded, and when we said: "Victory, victory, for Narváez is dead!" they say he said he was very sick to his stomach and he was not good for anything. I have told this because of his threats and blustering. Some of his company were also wounded. Let us speak of the

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11. Escalonilla and Escalona are the same person. The diminutive in the first instance indicates that he was young, a boy.

lodging of Diego Velázquez and other captains who were with him, and they also were wounded. Our captain Juan Velázquez de León seized Diego Velázquez, the one with whom he had had the quarrel while he was eating with Narváez, and he brought him to his lodgings and ordered his wounds to be well tended to and himself accorded much honor. Now I have given an account of everything that happened in our battle.

[CXXIII] Cortés had sent a message to the towns of Chinanta,<sup>12</sup> from where they had brought the lances and pikes, that two thousand Indians should come to help us with their lances, which are much longer than ours; they came that very day, but somewhat late, after Narváez was a prisoner. The caciques of those same towns came as their captains, and one of our soldiers, Barrientos, who had stayed in Chinanta for that purpose. They entered Cempoala in good order, two by two, carrying their very long lances of good thickness and on them a fathom of flint knives that cut like razors. Each Indian carried a shield like a *pavesina*,<sup>13</sup> their banners unfurled, with many plumes and drums and little trumpets, and between each two lancers, a bowman. Crying out and whistling, they shouted: "Long live the king! Long live the king our lord and Hernando Cortés in his royal name!" They made their entrance so magnificently that it was a thing to behold. They were fifteen hundred, but it seemed from the manner and good order with which they came in that there were three thousand. When Narváez's men saw them they were astonished, and it is said that they said among themselves that if those people had taken them in the center or entered with us, how could they have stopped them? Cortés spoke to the Indian captains very affectionately, thanking them for coming; he gave them beads of Castile; he ordered them to return immediately to their towns and not to harm any of the other towns on the road, and he sent the same Barrientos back with them.

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12. Chinantla.

13. *Pavesina* seems to be a smaller version of the *paves*, a thin oblong shield that goes all up and down the body.

## ALVARADO WAS BESIEGED AND MEXICO WAS IN REVOLT

[CXXIV] When Pánfilo de Narváez was entirely defeated, he and his captains taken prisoner, and all the rest disarmed, Cortés ordered the captain Francisco de Lugo to go to the port where Narváez's fleet was, which was eighteen ships, and to order all the ships' pilots and masters to come to Cempoala. He said they should remove the sails, rudders, and compasses so that Narváez's men would not carry the news to Diego Velázquez in Cuba. If they did not obey, he was to take them prisoner. Francisco de Lugo took with him two of our soldiers, who had been seamen, to help him. Cortés also ordered that right away they send to him one Sancho de Barahona, whom Narváez had held prisoner with two other soldiers. This Barahona later was a citizen of Guatemala, a rich man, and I remember that when he came before Cortés, he was very sick and thin, and Cortés ordered that he be treated with honor.

Let us return to the masters and pilots, who came to pay their respects to Cortés. He made them swear they would not leave his command and would obey him in whatever he ordered. Then he put as admiral and captain of the sea over them one Pedro Caballero, who had been master of one of Narváez's ships, a person Cortés trusted very much, to whom they say he first gave some good gold ingots. He ordered him not to let any ship leave from that port to go anywhere, and he ordered all the rest of the masters, pilots, and sailors to obey him. He said that if Diego Velázquez should send more ships from Cuba, because

he had warning that there were two ships ready to come, that he should have the means and prudence, should they come, to take the captain prisoner, and that he remove the rudder, sails, and compasses, until Cortés should order otherwise, which Pedro Caballero did.

Let us now leave the ships and the secure port and talk about what was arranged between our camp and Narváez's people. Right away the order was given that Juan Velázquez de León should go to conquer and settle the area of Pánuco, and for that Cortés assigned him one hundred twenty soldiers. One hundred were to be Narváez's men and twenty of ours mixed in with them because they had more experience in war. They were also to take two ships so they might explore the coast above the Pánuco River. Also to Diego de Ordaz he gave a captaincy of another one hundred twenty soldiers to settle the area around Guazacualco, and the hundred were to come from Narváez's men and the twenty from ours in the same way as with Juan Velázquez de León. He was to take two ships to send from the river of Guazacualco to the island of Jamaica for livestock: mares, calves, pigs, sheep, and Castilian hens and goats to reproduce on the land, because the province of Guazacualco was good for that. Then, so those captains could go with their soldiers, all carrying their arms, Cortés ordered that they be given the arms they had and all the captains of Narváez who were prisoners be freed except Narváez and Salvatierra, who said he had a stomach ailment. Well, in order to give them all arms, as some of our soldiers had already taken horses and swords and other things from them, Cortés ordered that they give them back, and because they refused to give them back, there were certain angry discussions. We soldiers said we had a clear right to them and that we would not give them back, because in the camp of Narváez they had proclaimed war against us with free plundering, and they came to us with the intention of seizing us and taking everything we had, and though we were great servants of His Majesty, they called us traitors, so we would not give them anything. Cortés still insisted that we give them back, and as he was captain general, we had to do what he ordered. I gave them

a horse I had already hidden, saddled and bridled, two swords, three poniards, and a dagger; and many other of our soldiers also gave up horses and arms.

As Alonso de Ávila was a captain and a person who dared to say to Cortés whatever he thought advisable, he and the Mercedarian father together spoke privately to Cortés and said that it seemed he wanted to imitate Alexander of Macedon, who, after he and his solders had accomplished some great feat, wanted to give more honor and favors to those he conquered than to his captains and soldiers who had done the conquering. They said this to him because of what they observed during those days we were there after Narváez was made a prisoner, namely that he gave all the golden jewels the Indians had presented to Cortés and all the provisions to the captains of Narváez, forgetting about us as if he did not know us. It was a very great ingratitude after we had put him in his present condition. To this Cortés replied that everything he had, both his person and his property, was for us, but that at present the only thing he could do was to honor Narváez's men with gifts, words, and promises, so that, as they were many and we few, they might not rise against us and against him and kill him. To this Alonso de Ávila replied in somewhat arrogant words, so Cortés told him that whoever did not want to follow him did not have to, that women in Castile have given and still give birth to soldiers. Alonso de Ávila said, with very arrogant and disrespectful words, that it was true that they bore soldiers and captains and governors, and we deserved that he say that. As things stood at that time, the only thing Cortés could do was keep quiet and attract Alonso de Ávila to himself with gifts and promises. As Cortés knew him to be very bold, and Cortés was always fearful that one day or another Ávila might do something against his interests, he looked the other way. From that time on, he always sent him on very important business, and so he went to the island of Santo Domingo and afterward to Spain when we sent the personal inheritance and treasure of the great Montezuma.

Let us return now to Narváez and a black man he brought covered with smallpox, which was a very black thing for New

Spain, for it was the reason the entire land was infected and filled with it, from which there was great mortality. According to what the Indians said, they had never had such a disease, and as they did not know it, they bathed themselves very often, and for this reason a great number of them died. So as black as was the fate of Narváez, darker was the death of so many people who were not yet Christians.

Let us leave all this now and tell how the citizens of Villa Rica, who had stayed behind to settle and did not go to Mexico, demanded of Cortés the shares of gold that were coming to them. They said to Cortés that even though he had ordered them to stay there in that port and town, they were also serving God and the king there like those who went to Mexico, for they were involved in guarding the land and making the fort; some of them had also been present in the affair of Almería and were still not healed of their wounds, and all the rest were present at the seizing of Narváez, and they should be given their shares. Cortés, seeing that what they said was very just, said that two leading men, citizens of that town, men with power of attorney for all of them, should go to where he had it set aside, and he would give it to them. It seems to me he told them that it was kept in Tlaxcala, but I do not remember this well. So right away they dispatched two citizens from that town for the gold and the shares, and the leading man was named Juan de Alcántara the elder.

Let us stop speaking about this, and later on we will talk about what happened to Alcántara and the gold. Let us talk about how adverse fortune suddenly turns its wheel, and sadness follows prosperity and pleasures; it happens that at this moment news came that Mexico was in revolt, that Pedro de Alvarado was besieged in his fortress and lodging, that they had set fire in two places to the fortress itself, that they had killed seven soldiers, and that many others were wounded, and he sent to ask for help with great urgency and haste. This news two Tlaxcalans brought without any letter at all, but soon a letter came with other Tlaxcalans whom Pedro de Alvarado sent, which said the same thing. When we heard such terrible news, God knows how much it upset us, and

by forced marches we began to go in the direction of Mexico. Narváez and Salvatierra remained prisoners in Villa Rica, and it seems to me that Rodrigo Rangel stayed there as deputy governor and captain charged with guarding Narváez and giving protection to many of Narváez's men who were ill.

Also in this moment, just as we were ready to leave, four great chieftains came, whom the great Montezuma sent to Cortés to complain about Pedro de Alvarado. What they said, tears streaming from their eyes, was that Pedro de Alvarado came out of his building with all the soldiers Cortés left with him, and with no cause at all fell on their chieftains and caciques who were dancing and celebrating a fiesta to their idols Huichilobos and Tezcatepuca, with permission that Pedro de Alvarado gave for it. They said he killed and wounded many of them, and in order to defend themselves they killed six of his soldiers. Cortés replied to the messengers in a surly manner that he would go to Mexico and make everything right. So they went off with that response to Montezuma; and it is said that he took this very badly and was angry at it. Also Cortés immediately sent off letters to Pedro de Alvarado in which he told him to take care that Montezuma not escape and that we were coming by forced marches, and he informed him of the victory we had against Narváez, about which the great Montezuma already knew.

[CXXV] As I recall, when the news arrived that Pedro de Alvarado was besieged and Mexico had revolted,<sup>1</sup> the captaincies that had been given to Juan Velázquez de León and Diego de Ordaz to settle Pánuco and Guazacualco were cancelled, so neither of them left and everyone went with us. Then Cortés spoke to Narváez's men, saying he was sorry they would not come with us of their own goodwill to help with the relief effort, and he

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1. The claim that the Mexicans were in revolt, or had rebelled, rests on the Spaniards' belief that Montezuma, on behalf of the Mexican people, had declared fealty to the Spanish crown and they were therefore subject to it and its proper representatives, which Cortés declared and represented himself to be.

beseeked them to set aside past hatreds over what had happened with Narváez, offering to make them rich and give them posts. Because they had come to seek a living, he said, and were in a land where they could serve God and His Majesty and become rich, their chance was now. He spoke to them so skillfully that, to the last man, they all offered to go with us. Had they known the strength of Mexico, however, it is certain none of them would have gone. We were soon on our way, moving very rapidly until we reached Tlaxcala. There we learned that Montezuma and his captains had continued attacking Pedro de Alvarado, killing seven of his soldiers and burning his lodgings, until they found out how we had routed Narváez. But when they found out about our victory, they stopped attacking him. We also learned that Alvarado and his men were exhausted from lack of food and water; Montezuma had never ordered that food be given to them. Indians of Tlaxcala brought this news the very moment we arrived there.

Cortés then ordered a review of the men, and he counted more than thirteen hundred soldiers, including ours and Narváez's, and more than ninety-six men with horses, eighty crossbowmen, and an equal number of escopeteros, which seemed to Cortés to be enough men to allow us to enter Mexico very safely; besides this, in Tlaxcala the caciques gave us two thousand Indian warriors. We then went rapidly to Texcoco, a large city, where they paid us no honor at all, nor did any lord appear; on the contrary, everything was abandoned and in bad shape. We arrived in Mexico on St. John's Day, June 1520. Neither caciques nor leaders nor any Indians we knew appeared in the streets; rather, all the houses were empty. When we arrived at the lodgings where we used to stay, the great Montezuma came out to the courtyard to speak to Cortés and embrace him, to welcome him and talk about his victory over Narváez. But because Cortés was arriving victorious, he did not want to listen, and Montezuma went into his lodging, very sad and pensive.

After we were all lodged where we had been before we left Mexico to deal with Narváez, and Narváez's men were lodged

elsewhere, we saw and spoke with Pedro de Alvarado and the soldiers who had stayed with him. They told us about the attacks the Mexicans had made on them and the difficulty in which it put them, and we reported on our victory over Narváez.

Cortés tried to learn what caused Mexico to rise up, because we had clearly understood that Montezuma was saddened by the uprising and concerned that it might appear to have pleased him or to have been undertaken on his advice. Many of the soldiers who had been with Pedro de Alvarado in those critical times said that if Montezuma had been involved, they might all have been killed, but that Montezuma calmed his people so they would stop the war. What Pedro de Alvarado told Cortés about the case was that the Mexicans wanted to liberate Montezuma, and Huichilobos ordered it because we had put the image of Our Lady, the Holy Virgin Mary, and the cross in his house. Pedro de Alvarado also said that many Indians had come to remove the holy image from the altar where we had put it but could not. The Indians, seeing that as a great miracle, told Montezuma about it. Montezuma ordered them to leave it in the same place and on the same altar and not to do otherwise. So they left it.

Pedro de Alvarado went on to say that the Mexicans believed it would be good to kill him and his soldiers and free the great Montezuma before all Narváez's men and ours could return to Mexico and, afterward, not leave a single one of Narváez's men or ours alive. They believed this because the message from Narváez telling Montezuma that Narváez was coming to release him and seize us turned out not to be true. Besides, Cortés had told Montezuma that when we had ships we would embark and leave the land completely but, in fact, we did not go, and everything was just words, and now Montezuma has seen many more teules arriving. All the more, the Mexicans had been certain that Narváez and his men would defeat us, which did not happen. When Pedro de Alvarado said all this and gave his excuses to Cortés, Cortés again asked him why he had attacked the Mexicans while they were dancing and celebrating. Pedro de Alvarado answered that he knew with certainty that when they finished their celebrations,

dances, and sacrifices to their Huichilobos and Tezcatepuca, they would come to attack us as they had agreed among themselves. He said that he learned all this from a papa, two chieftains, and other Mexicans.

Cortés said to him, “Well, they’ve told me that they asked you for permission to do their *areito* and dances.” Pedro de Alvarado said this was true, but he did it to catch them off guard; and he went ahead and attacked them so they would be fearful and not come to attack him. When Cortés heard this, he said very angrily that it was badly done and a crazy thing to do, that he wished to God Montezuma had been freed and that he, Cortés, had not had to hear such a thing. And he left Pedro de Alvarado and said nothing more to him about it. Pedro de Alvarado also said that when he went against them in that war, he ordered that a cannon, loaded with one ball and much shot, be fired, and because many squadrons of Indians were coming to burn their lodgings, he went out to fight them, and he ordered the cannon to be fired but it did not go off. He attacked the squadrons of Indians that were attacking him, and many Indians charged while he and his troops were withdrawing to the stronghold and building. Then, without fire having been put to the cannon, it went off and killed many Indians; had that not happened, the enemy would have killed them all. They did carry off two of his soldiers alive. Another thing Pedro de Alvarado said—and this is the only thing other soldiers reported, because only Pedro de Alvarado told the rest of the stories—is that they did not have water to drink, and they dug in the courtyard, made a well, and extracted drinking water, even though all around the water was salty. In all, Our Lord God did us many favors, and about what happened with the water, I say that there was in Mexico a fountain that often, indeed most of the time, provided rather good drinking water. I know these and other things because I have heard them from people of faith and belief who were with Pedro de Alvarado when that happened.

[CXXVI] It seems that, on the way to Mexico, Cortés had boasted to Narváz’s captains of the great respect and command accorded to him, of how the Indians would come out to greet

him on the road, hold celebrations, and give him gold, of how in Mexico he commanded the great Montezuma as absolutely as he commanded all his captains, and of how they would give him presents of gold as they were used to doing; but now, seeing that everything was very much the opposite of his expectations, that in Texcoco they had not welcomed us, nor even given us anything to eat except bad food and leftovers, and that everything was going from bad to worse, and no chieftains were there with whom to speak, and he found everything in bad shape, that it was the same when he came to Mexico, that they were not holding the tianguetz but it was abandoned, and having heard from Pedro de Alvarado about the disorderly way he attacked the Mexicans, Cortés became very angry and irritable with the many Spanish men he brought with him and very sad and sulky. At this very moment the great Montezuma sent two of his chieftains to beg Cortés to come see him because he wanted to speak with him. Cortés's reply was: "The hell with the dog, when he will not even hold a tianguetz nor order any food to be given to us."<sup>2</sup> When our captains, Juan Velázquez de León, Cristóbal de Olid, Alonzo de Ávila, and Francisco de Lugo, heard Cortés say that, they said: "Sir, temper your anger and look how much good and honor this king of these lands has done us, this king who is so good that, if not for him, we would already be dead and they would have eaten us, and look how he has even given you his daughters."

When Cortés heard this, he was even more indignant at their words, as they seemed to be a scolding, and he said: "What courtesy should I show a dog who has been dealing secretly with Narváez, and who you now see doesn't even give us anything to eat?" And his captains said, "It seems to us that you must do this, and it's good advice." Because Cortés had so many Spaniards there

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2. *Perro* (meaning "dog") was one of the primary and strongest insult words in the Spanish of the time. It had been used relative to the Moors and Jews in Spain and carried over to the indigenous people of the New World, where it was often used to diminish the stature of indigenous people of high rank.

in Mexico, both ours and those of Narváez, he did not care about anything, and spoke so angrily and rudely to the chieftains. So he spoke to the chieftains again, saying they should tell their lord Montezuma to order immediately that the tianguetz and market be held. If this was not done, Montezuma would see what would happen. The chieftains clearly understood the insulting words that Cortés said about their lord and even the scolding that our captains gave Cortés about it, because they knew the captains well as the ones who used to guard their lord, and they knew that these men were great servants of their Montezuma. As far as they understood everything, they told Montezuma about it. Then from anger, or perhaps because the Mexicans had already agreed to attack us, not even a quarter of an hour later a soldier came in great haste, very badly wounded, from a town near Mexico called Tacuba. He had been bringing some Indian women who belonged to Cortés, one of them a daughter of Montezuma; it seems, when we went to deal with Narváez, Cortés had left them in the care of the lord of Tacuba because they were that lord's relatives. The soldier said that the entire city and road by which he came was filled with warriors with all types of arms, that they took from him the Indian women he was bringing and wounded him in two places, that they had seized him and if he had not gotten loose, they were going to put him in a canoe and carry him off to be sacrificed, and they destroyed a bridge.

When Cortés and some of us heard that, we were certainly very sorry because we were very well aware, those of us who were used to fighting Indians, of the great multitude they normally gathered together, and that however well we might fight, even if we now had more soldiers, we were going to be at great risk for our lives and hunger and hardships, especially because we were in so strong a city. Let us move on and talk about how Cortés immediately ordered a captain named Diego de Ordaz to go with four hundred soldiers, most of the crossbowmen and escopeteros, and some horsemen, to see what it was that the wounded soldier who brought us the news was talking about. If he saw that he could pacify the Indians without war and disturbance, he should

do so. When Diego de Ordaz went with his four hundred soldiers as he was ordered, he had barely arrived at the middle of the street that he was going along when so many squadrons of Mexican warriors came out at him, and so many others were on the roofs of the houses, and they assaulted him so fiercely that they killed eighteen of his soldiers in the first attack and all the rest were wounded. They even wounded Diego de Ordaz himself. He could not advance one step but had to return little by little to the building, and in the retreat the Indians killed another good soldier named Lezcano, who had performed acts of great bravery with his broadsword.

*With great effort and loss of men, Diego de Ordaz managed to return to the lodgings, which the Mexicans were already attacking fiercely. Cortés led his men out the next morning to engage the Mexicans but was driven back to the lodgings, to which the Mexicans had meanwhile set fire. Cortés's men were able to quell these fires only by smothering them with dirt. As Bernal Díaz says, "They truly believed they would burn us alive."*

I do not know why I describe this attack in so lukewarm a way, because some three or four soldiers there with us, who had been in Italy, swore many times to God that they had never seen such fierce wars in any they had experienced among Christians and against the artillery of the king of France, nor of the great Turk; nor had they seen men like those Indians closing ranks with such spirit, and they said many other things and they gave reasons for them, as you will see later. We retreated to our lodgings with extraordinary difficulty, many squadrons of warriors still on us with great cries and whistling and little trumpets and drums, calling us scoundrels and worthless, saying that we retreated because we did not dare engage them the entire day in battle.

That day they killed another ten or twelve soldiers, and all of us returned badly wounded. That night we agreed that in two days as many of the soldiers in the camp as were fit would go out with four tower-like engines made of wood, very strong. Twenty-five men

could go in each, and each engine had little windows and holes for the cannons; escopeteros and crossbowmen would go inside as well, and close by them other soldiers, escopeteros, crossbowmen, the cannons and all the rest, and the horsemen were to launch some assaults. Having made this agreement, we did not go out to fight that day because we were busy with the work and with fortifying the many breaches the Indians had made in the walls. I do not know how to describe those great squadrons of warriors that came to attack our lodgings, not just in ten or twelve places but in more than twenty, because we were spread out among them all and many other places as well; and while we were repairing and fortifying our lodgings, as I said, many other squadrons tried to enter them, and neither cannons nor crossbows nor escopetas nor many assaults and sword thrusts could force them back. They said not one of us would survive the day and that they would sacrifice our hearts and blood to their gods and gorge themselves in celebration on our legs and arms and throw our bodies to the tigers and lions and vipers and snakes, which they had caged so that they might gorge themselves on our bodies, and, to that effect, they had ordered two days ago that the animals and snakes not be fed; they also said that we would have no pleasure from our gold, nor from all the cloaks; and they told the Tlaxcalans who were with us that they would put them in cages to fatten up, and little by little their bodies would be used for sacrifices. They also said very ardently that we should give them their great lord Montezuma, and they said other things as well. Likewise, by night, there were always many whistles and screams and showers of spears, stones, and arrows.

At daybreak, having commended ourselves to God, we left our lodgings with our towers, which, it seems to me are called *buros* and mantelets in other places where I have been in war and where such things were necessary. The cannons, escopetas, and crossbows were in front, and the horsemen were making charges, but, as I have said, although we were killing many enemies, doing so did not make them turn their backs; rather, if they fought very bravely the past two days, they were far more powerful and had greater

strength and numbers this day. Nevertheless, we determined, even if it cost all of us our lives, to go with our towers and engines as far as the great cu of Huichilobos. I will not describe at length the great battles they fought from a fortified house, nor will I tell how they wounded the horses, from which we were not getting any use anyway because, although the horsemen charged the squadrons to disperse them, the Indians hurled so many arrows, spears, and rocks at them that, no matter how well armored they were, they could not hold their own; and if they overtook the Mexicans, the Mexicans let themselves fall safely into the canals and lakes where they had constructed other defenses to block the horsemen, and many other Indians with very long lances were there to finish killing them. Nothing they tried was any use.

Going aside to burn or destroy a house was futile, because all the houses were in the water, and between houses there was a drawbridge; to swim across was very dangerous because on the rooftops the Mexicans had so many stones and rocks and defenses that attempting it was a lost cause. Besides, in some houses where we did set fire, it took an entire day for a single house to burn, and the fire could not spread from one house to another because, for one thing, the houses were separated by water, and for another, they had roof terraces. Thus, the hardships in risking ourselves to do that were in vain. So we went up to the great cu of their idols. Suddenly, more than four thousand Mexicans ascended it, not counting other groups that were already there with large lances and stones and spears, and they took defensive positions, holding off our ascent for some time. Neither the towers nor the cannons nor the crossbows nor the escopetas were enough, nor were the horsemen because, although they wanted to charge, the whole courtyard was paved with large flagstones, which caused the horses to lose their footing. The Mexicans were resisting our advance from the steps of their high cu, and we had so many enemies on either side, and although our cannons carried off ten or fifteen of them and we killed many others with sword thrusts and assaults, so many charged that we could not climb the high cu against them. But with great order we persisted in the attack,

leaving the towers behind because they had already fallen apart, and we climbed to the top. Here Cortés showed himself to be very courageous, as he always was. What a fight and fierce battle we had here! It was something to behold, all of us streaming with blood and covered with wounds, others dead; Our Lord wanted us to reach that place where we used to have the image of Our Lady, but we did not find it, and later we learned that the great Montezuma was devoted to her and ordered her to be kept in safety. We set fire to their idols, and a good part of the hall of the idols Huichilobos and Tezcatepuca burned. The Tlaxcalans helped us a great deal at that time. That done, as some of us were fighting and others setting fires, it was something to see the papas and more than three or four thousand Indians, all chieftains who, as we were coming down, made us tumble six or even ten steps at a time, and many other squadrons were in the parapets and recesses of the great cu, hurling so many spears and arrows at us that we were unable to face all the squadrons at the same time. So we decided to return to our lodgings with much difficulty and risk to ourselves, the towers destroyed and everyone wounded, sixteen dead, the Indians always pressing in on us, and other squadrons at our rear. No matter how clearly I describe it here, I do not know how to express its importance to anyone who did not see us.

I have not even spoken of the Mexican squadrons attacking our lodgings while we were going to the great cu. We also took two of the chief papas in this battle, whom Cortés ordered us to take along with us under good security. Many times among the Mexicans and Tlaxcalans I have seen paintings of this battle and the ascent we made of the great cu, which they regard as very heroic. Although they portray all of us as badly wounded, streaming blood, with many dead, many of their pictures show us setting fire to the cu, even with so many warriors guarding it, both in the parapets and recesses, and many other Indians filling the ground in the courtyards and on the sides, and with our towers having fallen apart, how was it possible for us to have climbed it?

That night we spent caring for the wounded, burying the dead, preparing to go out to fight the next day, reinforcing and adding

defenses to the walls the Indians had knocked down and to other breaches they had made, and in consulting how and in what way we could fight without enduring so much damage and death; but in all our discussions, we did not arrive at any solution. I want also to mention the curses that Narváez's men hurled at Cortés and the words they spoke, which renounced him and the land and even Diego Velázquez, who had sent them there when they had been very comfortable in their homes on the island of Cuba. They had been mad and senseless to have come.

Let us return to our conversation. We decided to ask for peace to leave Mexico. At daybreak, many more squadrons of warriors came, and indeed they surrounded our lodgings on all sides, and if they hurled many stones and arrows before, this day they came more densely and with greater yells and whistles; and other squadrons from other sides tried to enter, against whom neither cannons nor escopetas were of use even though they did great damage. Seeing all this, Cortés decided that the great Montezuma should speak to the Mexicans from a rooftop and tell them they should stop their warring, that we would like to leave their city. When the great Montezuma was told this on behalf of Cortés, they say he said with great grief: "What does Malinche want from me now, for I do not want to live or to listen to him, for because of him my fate has brought me to such a state." He refused to come, and they say he said that he did not want to see or hear Cortés anymore, or his false words, or promises and lies. Then the Mercedarian father and Cristóbal de Olid went and spoke to Montezuma with much respect and very affectionate words. Montezuma said: "I do not believe I will be able to do anything useful to end this war, for they have already raised up another lord and have proposed not to let you leave here alive; and so I believe that all of you will have to die."

Let us return to the great battles they were waging against us. Montezuma took a position at the parapet of a rooftop with many of our soldiers guarding him, and he began to speak in very affectionate words, saying they should stop the war and we would leave Mexico. Many Mexican chieftains and leaders

recognized him and ordered their men to be quiet and not to hurl spears or stones or arrows; and four of them came closer so that Montezuma could speak to them, and, weeping, they said to him: "Oh Lord, our great Lord, how sorry we are for your misfortune and the harm to you, your children, and relatives! We now inform you that we have already elevated one of your relatives as our lord." The speaker gave his name, which was Coadlavaca, lord of Iztapalapa; it was not Guatemuz, who became lord later. They also said that they were going to finish the war, that they had promised their idols not to end it until all of us were dead, and that they begged Huichilobos and Tezcatepuca each day to keep him, Montezuma, free and safe from our power. They also said that should it turn out as they wanted, they would not fail to hold him in even greater esteem than before as their lord, and they asked that he pardon them. They had barely finished this speech when, at that moment, the Mexicans hurled so many stones and spears that he was hit by three stones, one in the head, another on the arm, and another on the leg. Our men who were surrounding him had neglected for one moment to protect him because they noticed that while he was speaking with the Mexicans, they were not attacking. Although they begged him to care for himself and to eat something and said good words about it to him, he would not, and, when we least expected it, they came to tell us he was dead. Cortés cried for him, as did all our captains and soldiers, and there were those among us who knew and dealt with him who were as tearful as if he were our father, and we should not wonder at this, seeing how good he was. They said that he had reigned for seventeen years, that he was the best king there had ever been in Mexico, and that he had won in three personal challenges he had met over the lands he subdued.

[CXXVII] I have already told of the sadness we felt when we saw that Montezuma had died, and we thought badly of the Mercedarian friar who was always with him for not being able to convince Montezuma to become Christian; but he gave as his reason that he did not believe Montezuma would die of those wounds, except that he should have ordered them to give

Montezuma something to deaden the pain. In short, not to talk more about it, Cortés ordered a papa and a chieftain from among the prisoners to be freed so they could go tell the cacique named Coadlavaca, whom the Mexicans had raised up as lord, and his captains that the great Montezuma was dead, that they had seen him die and of the way he had died from wounds his own people had given him, that they should say how very sorry we all were about it, that they should bury him as the great king he was, that they should raise up as king Montezuma's cousin, who was with us, because the inheritance belonged to him or to Montezuma's other sons, that the one they had raised up as lord did not come by it rightfully, and that they should negotiate a peace so we could leave Mexico. If they did not do that, Cortés said, now that Montezuma was dead, for whom we had respect and for whose sake we had not destroyed their city, we would come out to attack them, burn all their houses, and do them much harm. So they could see that Montezuma was dead, Cortés ordered six Mexicans, high chieftains, and the rest of the papas we were holding as prisoners to carry him on their shoulders, deliver him to the Mexican captains, tell them what Montezuma commanded at the time of his death, and tell them that the ones who carried Montezuma on their shoulders had been present at his death. They told Coadlavaca the entire truth, that Montezuma's own people killed him with three blows from stones. When the Mexicans saw him dead, they made a very great lament, and we heard clearly their crying and wailing for him. But even with all of this, their great, continuous battering of us did not stop. They were on us with spears and stones and arrows, and they came on yet more forcefully, with greater fury, and they said to us: "Now you will truly pay for the death of our king and lord and the dishonor of our idols; and as for the peace you wanted, come out here and we will discuss how it must be."

The Mexicans said so much about this and other things that I cannot now remember it all, and so I will stop here. But they said they had already chosen a good king, and he would not be so weak

of heart that he could be tricked with false words as their good Montezuma had been. They also said that we should not concern ourselves about the burial but about our lives, that in two days none of us would be left alive to send them such messages. With these words came very great cries, whistles, showers of stones and spears and arrows, and many other squadrons were still trying to set fire to many parts of our lodgings.

[CXXVIII] Day by day we saw our forces growing smaller and those of the Mexicans increasing, and we saw many of our people dead and most of the rest wounded. Although we were fighting courageously, we could not make the Mexicans retreat nor free ourselves of the many squadrons that day and night were attacking us; our gunpowder was dwindling and also the food and water; the great Montezuma was dead, and they were not accepting the peace and truces we were requesting. In short, we saw our deaths before our very eyes, and the bridges were raised. Cortés and all our captains and soldiers decided that we should leave at night when the warrior squadrons should be least watchful. To distract them further, we sent a *papa* who was a prisoner, a man important among them, and some other prisoners, with a message saying that they should let us leave in peace in a week from then, and we would give them all the gold; all this was done to distract them so we could leave that night. Besides this, we had a soldier named Botello with us, seemingly a very honest man who knew Latin and had been in Rome. Some said he was a necromancer, others that he had a familiar spirit,<sup>3</sup> some called him an astrologer. This Botello had said four days earlier that he found by casting lots or by his astrological readings that if we did not leave Mexico that night, if we waited longer, none of us would leave alive;<sup>4</sup> at other times he had even said that Cortés was to have many

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3. A “familiar spirit” is a spiritual force or “person,” sometimes thought to be evil, with whom one can consult to know the future.

4. Gómara reports that the *noche triste* was referred to as “Botello’s night” because of his prediction (Gómara, 219).

difficulties or was to be dispossessed of his position and honor, but that afterward he would become a great lord again, illustrious, with much income, and he said many other things.

Let us leave Botello, about whom I will speak again later, and I will tell how it was arranged that a bridge be made of very strong timbers and boards that we could carry to put over the destroyed bridges, and four hundred Tlaxcalan Indians and one hundred fifty soldiers were designated to carry and place it and guard the way until all the baggage and the army had passed; two hundred Tlaxcalan Indians and fifty soldiers were designated to bring the artillery; Gonzalo de Sandoval and Diego de Ordaz were designated to be in front, fighting; Francisco de Saucedo, Francisco de Lugo, and a company of one hundred young, fast soldiers were divided into two groups to go where they were most needed in the fighting; Cortés himself, Alonso de Ávila, Cristóbal de Olid, and the other captains were designated to be in the middle; in the rearguard Pedro de Alvarado and Juan Velázquez de León, and inserted in the middle, between the captains and Narváez's soldiers, three hundred Tlaxcalans and thirty soldiers were designated to take charge of the prisoners and doña Marina and doña Luisa.

This agreement made, it was already night and time to get out the gold to take it away or distribute it. Cortés ordered his chamberlain Cristóbal de Guzmán and other soldiers who were from his household to bring out all the jewels and silver and gold, and with the help of many Tlaxcalan Indians he had given them for the purpose, they put it in the hall. Then he said to the king's officials, Alonso de Ávila and Gonzalo Mejía, that they should take the king's share, and he gave them seven wounded and lame horses and a mare and more than eighty Tlaxcalan friends. They loaded as much of it in bulk as they could carry, for it had been made into very wide bars, but much gold was left in piles in the hall. Then Cortés called his secretary and other King's notaries, and he said: "Give me written testimony that I can't do anything more to guard this gold; here in this building and hall we have more than seven hundred thousand gold pesos,

and as you have seen, it can neither be weighed nor put in a safer place, I hereby give it to those soldiers who would like to take some of it, otherwise it's going to be left here lost among these dogs." When many of Narváez's soldiers and some of ours heard that, they loaded themselves with the gold. As for me, I coveted nothing but my life, although I did not fail to grab, from some small boxes, four chalchuiis, which are stones very much prized by the Indians. I immediately put them on my chest under my armor; later, their value served me well for healing my wounds and buying food.

When we learned of Cortés's arrangement for how we were to leave and go to the bridges that night, and as it was somewhat dark, misty, and drizzling, we began before midnight to carry the bridge and move the baggage, the horses, the mare, and the Tlaxcalans loaded with gold. The bridge was quickly put in place, and Cortés, with those he took with him, went over first, as did many of the horsemen. While this was going on, the Mexicans' voices, horns, cries, and whistles sounded, and they called out in their language to the people of Tlatelolco: "Come out with your canoes immediately because the teules are leaving; cut them off so that none of them is left alive." When I was not expecting it, we saw so many squadrons of warriors on us and the entire lake solid with canoes that we could not defend ourselves, and many of our soldiers had already gone over.

With us in this situation, a great multitude of Mexicans charged to get rid of the bridge and wound and kill our men, who were unable to lend each other a hand. Misfortune is compounded in such times, and one evil follows on another; as it was raining, two horses slipped and fell into the water. When I and other of Cortés's men saw that, we got to safety on the far side of the bridge, but so many warriors were charging that no matter how well we fought, no further use could be made of the bridge. Thus, that passage and the opening in the water were quickly swollen with dead horses, Indian men and women, *naborías*, baggage, and trunks. Fearing they would kill all the rest of us, we pushed ahead along our causeway and encountered many squadrons waiting for

us with long lances. They hurled insults, among which were: “Oh, *cuilonés*,<sup>5</sup> are you still alive?”

With sword thrusting and slashing we got through, although they wounded six who were with us. Was there some order like what we had planned? Not a sign of it, for Cortés and the captains and soldiers on horseback who passed over first, so as to protect themselves and get to dry land and save their lives, spurred on forward along the causeway and they did the right thing, and the horses with the gold and the Tlaxcalans also got out safely; but I say that if we had waited on the bridge for one another, and this is as true for the horsemen as for the soldiers, all of us would have perished, not one of us would have been left alive, and the reason is this: passing along the causeway, assaulting the Mexican squadrons, with water on one side and flat-roofed houses on the other, the lake filled with canoes, we could do nothing. The escopetas and crossbows all stayed on the bridge, and because it was night, what could we do other than what we had done, which was to charge, slashing a bit at those who came to take hold of us and go forward until we left the causeways. Had it been daytime, it would have been worse; and even those of us who escaped did so only because it pleased Our Lord. For anyone who did not see the huge number of warriors that were on us that night and the canoes full of them coming to seize our soldiers, I say to you, it was terrifying.

While we were advancing along our causeway into the town of Tacuba, where Cortés and all his captains already were, Gonzalo de Sandoval and Cristóbal de Olid and other horsemen who had gone ahead were calling loudly: “Señor captain, wait for us, because they say we are running away and leaving them to die on the bridges. Let us go back to help them in case some have been left behind, for no one is coming out or getting here.”

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5. This is a sexual term used derisively to call into question an enemy's manliness and courage; in Nahuatl it is *cuiloni*, the passive partner in male homosexual relations.

Cortés's response was that it was a miracle any of us had got out. Then he went back with the horsemen and soldiers who were not wounded, but they did not go any distance, because soon Pedro de Alvarado appeared, badly wounded, on foot with a lance in his hand because the Mexicans had killed his sorrel mare. He brought with him four soldiers as badly wounded as he was and eight Tlaxcalans, all streaming blood from many wounds. While Cortés was on the causeway with the rest of the captains, we made a halt in the courtyards of Tacuba. Many squadrons had already arrived there from Mexico crying out to inform Tacuba and another town called Escapuzalco, so they began to hurl spears, rocks, and arrows, and attack with their large lances. We made some assaults, defending ourselves and attacking them.

Let us return to Pedro de Alvarado. When Cortés and the rest of the captains found him in that condition and saw that no more soldiers were coming, tears sprang to his eyes, and Pedro de Alvarado said that Juan Velázquez de León had died at the bridge with more than eighty other gentlemen, both ours and Narváez's. He said that, after the Mexicans killed their horses, he and the four soldiers he brought with him passed with great danger at the bridge over dead bodies, horses, and trunks, for the area around the bridge was packed solid with them. He also said that all the bridges and causeways were filled with warriors. At this sorrowful bridge, which later they called Alvarado's leap, I say at that time no soldier was stopping to see whether his leap was small or great only because we had plenty to do to save our lives and were in great danger of death, seeing the multitude of Mexicans charging us. Everything Gómara says about this incident is a joke because, although Pedro de Alvarado might have wanted to jump and support himself on his lance, the water was very deep and he could not reach the bottom with it; in addition, the bridge and gap were very wide and high, so he could not jump over it no matter how agile he was, neither on his lance nor in any other way. You can still easily see how high the water was at that time and how high the walls are where the beams of the bridge were, and

how wide the gap was.<sup>6</sup> I never heard of this Alvarado's leap until after Mexico had been won, and it was only in some satires by one Gonzalo de Ocampo, which, as they are somewhat ugly, I will not record here. But among those he says: "And you should remember the leap you made from the bridge." I will speak no more about this touchy matter.

While we were in Tacuba, many Mexican warriors came together from all the towns around and killed three of our soldiers. We decided to leave that town as rapidly as we could with five Tlaxcalan Indians, who discovered a way to go to Tlaxcala without using the road. They carefully guided us until we arrived at some groups of houses on a hill next to a cu, their fort-like adoratorio, where we made a halt. We were followed by the Mexicans who were hurling arrows, spears, and stones from slings, and they surrounded us, always charging; it was a terrifying thing. I have said this many times, and I am tired of saying it, but readers should not see it as long-windedness, because each time the Mexicans pressed us, wounded us, and made strong attacks on us, I must mention the squadrons that followed and killed so many of us. Let us not talk about it so much anymore, but let us talk about how we defended ourselves.

We took shelter in that cu and fortress and tended to the wounded, but even with the many fires we made, there was nothing to eat by any stretch of the imagination. After the great city of Mexico was won, we built a church in that cu and adoratorio called Our Lady of Los Remedios, now much venerated, and many citizens and gentlemen of Mexico now go there on pilgrimage and make many novenas. But let us leave this and return to discussing how pitiful it was to see our wounds treated and dressed with cloths from blankets, and because they were chilled and swollen, they were very painful. But more to weep for were the missing

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6. Gómara writes, "He reached the last channel and vaulted over it with his lance, a feat that amazed the Indians and even the Spaniards, for it was a prodigious leap which others were unable to make, although they tried and were drowned" (Gómara, 221).

gentlemen and brave soldiers, Juan Velázquez de León, Francisco de Salcedo, Francisco de Morla, and one Lares, the good rider, and many others of us men of Cortés. I name only these few, because to write the names of so many of us who were missing would not allow me to finish very soon. As for Narváez's men, most of them were left on the bridges loaded down with gold. Let us now talk about the astrologer Botello whose astrology was of no use to him, for he also died there with his horse. After we were out of danger, some papers were found in this Botello's trunk, bound like a book, with figures and lines and notes and signs that said: "Must I die here in this sad war in the hands of these Indian dogs?" And in other lines and figures farther on it said: "You will not die." And it went on to say in other figures and lines and notes: "Yes, you will die." And the other line answered: "You will not die." And it said in another place: "If they are going to kill me, my horse too?" It said further on: "Yes, they will kill." In the same fashion, there were figures and something like lots declared by some letters facing others in those papers, which were like a small book. In the trunk there was also something like a man's genital, about a span long, made of sheepskin, looking just like a man's genitals, and inside were tufts of shorn wool.

Let us note that the sons and daughters of Montezuma as well as the prisoners we were bringing and Cacamatzin, lord of Texcoco, and other kings of provinces were left behind, dead, on the bridges.

We were all thinking about what we were facing ahead; all of us were wounded, and only twenty-three horses had escaped; we saved none of the guns, artillery, or powder; the crossbows were few, and we immediately repaired their cords and made bolts. And the worst of all was that we did not know the mood we were going to find in our friends in Tlaxcala. In addition, that night, still surrounded by Mexicans and their cries, their spears and arrows and stones shot from slings, we decided to leave at midnight. With our Tlaxcalan guides in front, we went on our way in good order, the wounded in the middle, the lame with staffs, some who could not walk and were very ill on the haunches of lame horses not fit

for battle, and the horsemen who were not wounded in front and distributed on either side. In this way, all of us who were fit faced the Mexicans; the wounded Tlaxcalans were inside the body of our squadron, but the rest who were fit faced the enemy with us, because the Mexicans were still harassing us with loud shouts and cries and whistles, and they were saying, "You are going where none of you will be left alive." We did not understand why they said that, but you will see further on.

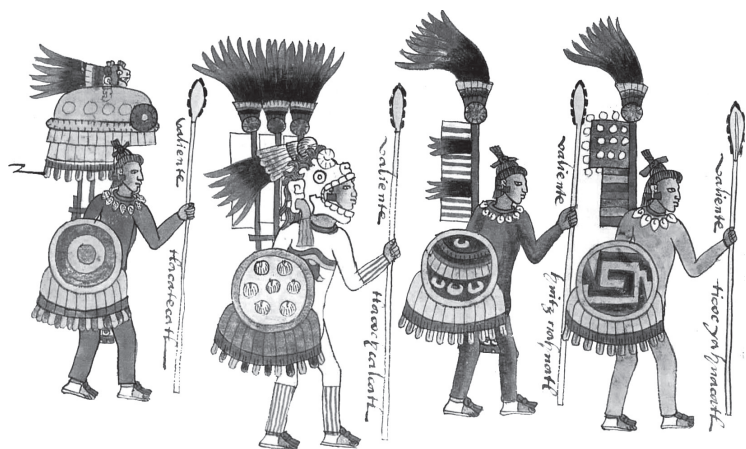
I have forgotten to write about the joy we felt in seeing alive our doña Marina and doña Luisa, the daughter of Xicotenga, who some Tlaxcalans had saved at the bridges, and also a woman named María de Estrada, for she was the only Spanish woman we had with us in Mexico. Those who had escaped and gotten away from the bridges first were some sons of Xicotenga, brothers of doña Luisa, but the rest of the *naborías* given to us in Tlaxcala and in Mexico City itself were dead.

Let us return to talking about how we arrived that day at some outlying settlements and groups of houses belonging to a large town called Gualtitan,<sup>7</sup> which was given to Alonso de Ávila after we won Mexico; and although the Indians yelled and shouted at us and hurled stones, spears, and arrows, we stood up to it all. From there we went past some houses and small towns, the Mexicans always following us, and, as many of them were now gathered, they tried to kill us. They began to surround us and hurl many stones from slings and spears and arrows, and used their broadswords, and they killed two of our soldiers in a place hard to get through. They also killed a horse and wounded many of our men, but with sword thrusts and stabs we also killed some of them, and the horsemen did the same. So we slept in the houses and ate the horse they killed. Early the next day we began to move with the same arrangement as before, and even better, with half the horsemen always in front. A little more than a league from there, on a plain, just when we believed we were out of danger, our

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7. Cuauhtitlan.

scouts who were reconnoitering returned from the countryside and reported that the fields were filled with Mexican warriors waiting for us. When we heard this, we were very fearful, but not so much that we lost heart or failed to meet them in a fight to the death. We stopped there for a while and it was arranged that the horsemen were to charge and return at slack rein, that they should not stop to lance but point their lances at the Mexicans' faces until their squadrons were thrown into confusion, that we soldiers should all thrust our swords so that they passed through the Mexicans' entrails, and that we would do everything in a way to avenge our dead and wounded very well so that, if it pleased God, we might escape with our lives. After commending ourselves completely to God and to Saint Mary and invoking the name of señor Santiago, when we saw that the Mexicans were beginning to surround us, the horses, in groups of five, broke through them, and all of us charged together. Oh, what a thing it was to see, this so dreadful and fierce battle! How we moved, all mixed up with them at close quarters, how we slashed and thrust at them with our swords, with what fury the dogs fought and how they wounded and killed us with their lances and war clubs and two-handed swords, and, because the field was flat, how the horsemen lanced at will, charging and returning, and although both they and their horses were wounded, they did not stop battling as the bravest of men! All of us who did not have horses seemed to put forth a double effort, for although we were wounded, and we received new wounds, we did not bother to tighten our bandages in order not to have to stop, for it was not the time to, but with great energy we came to grips with the enemy to give them sword thrusts. I want to mention Cortés, Cristóbal de Olid, Gonzalo de Sandoval, Gonzalo Domínguez, and one Juan de Salamanca, who, although they were badly wounded, rode from one side to the other breaking up squadrons; and I want to note also the words Cortés said to us who were in the midst of the enemy, that the thrusts and slashes of our swords should be aimed at the notable lords, because all wore great plumes of gold and carried rich arms and devices. Then to see how the brave and spirited Sandoval



Four Aztec warrior-priests wearing regalia and, bound to their backs, standards appropriate to their level of experience, achievement, and leadership in battle. The least accomplished is on the right and the most senior warrior is on the left, bearing the image of a mountain lion on his helmet. *Codex Mendoza*.

encouraged us and said: "Come on gentlemen, for today is the day we'll win; have faith in God that we'll come out alive for some good purpose!" And I will note once more that they killed and wounded many of our soldiers. Let us return to Cortés, Cristóbal de Olid, Sandoval, Gonzalo Domínguez and the others on horseback I do not name here, and Juan de Salamanca. All of us soldiers gave Cortés great courage to fight, and Our Lord Jesus Christ and Our Lady, the Holy Virgin Mary, put that courage in our hearts, as did señor Santiago, who certainly helped us.

It pleased God that Cortés and the captains I have already named went together to a place where the captain general of the Mexicans was, with his banner unfurled, with rich arms of gold and great plumes decorated with silverwork. When Cortés saw him with many other Mexican chieftains, all of whom wore great plumes, he said to Gonzalo de Sandoval, Cristóbal de Olid, Gonzalo Domínguez, and the rest of our captains: "Come on gentlemen! Let's break them up and not leave a single one without

wounds.” Commending themselves to God, Cortés, Cristóbal de Olid, Sandoval, Alonso de Ávila, and other horsemen charged. Cortés ran his horse into the Mexican captain, which forced him to lower his banner, and the rest of our captains finished breaking through the squadron of many Indians. It was Juan de Salamanca who was following the captain with the banner, who had not yet fallen from the blow Cortés had given him; Salamanca was riding with Cortés, mounted on a good cream-colored mare, and lanced him, took the rich plumed headdress he was wearing, and right away then gave it to Cortés, saying that, as it was Cortés who first engaged the Mexican captain and made him lower the banner, which caused his men to lose their will to fight, the plume was his. But three years later His Majesty gave it to Salamanca for his coat of arms, and his descendents have it on their armorial banners.

Let us return to our battle. It pleased Our Lord God that with the death of that Mexican captain carrying the banner and many others who died there, the Indians’ fighting grew weaker, and all the horsemen were pursuing them. We were neither hungry nor thirsty, but it seemed instead that we had endured or experienced neither suffering nor hardship, and we followed up the victory killing and wounding. Our friends, the Tlaxcalans, became like lions with their swords, broadswords, and other arms they had seized there, using them effectively and courageously. When the horsemen returned from following up the victory, we all gave great thanks to God for having escaped from so great a multitude, for there had never been seen nor encountered in battle in all the Indies so large a number of warriors together; and because they were the flower of Mexico, Texcoco, and all the towns around the lake and many other bordering towns, as well as the towns of Otumba, Tepetexcoco, and Saltocan,<sup>8</sup> they thought that this time not a trace of us would be left. What rich arms they carried, with so much gold and plumes and devices, and so many captains and important people! Near where this hard-fought and famous

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8. Xaltocan.

battle took place, in a town called Otumba, this battle as well as many other battles we had with the Mexicans up to the time we conquered Mexico, is very well painted with carved portraits of the Mexicans and Tlaxcalans.

Curious readers might appreciate being reminded that when we went to the aid of Pedro de Alvarado in Mexico we were, in all, more than thirteen hundred soldiers, counting those on horse, which amounted to ninety-seven, and eighty crossbowmen, as many escopeteros, and more than two thousand Tlaxcalans and much artillery. We entered Mexico on St. John's Day, June of 1520; we left fleeing the tenth of July of the same year, and this battle, called the Battle of Otumba, occurred on July 14. Now that I told how we escaped from all the close calls I have mentioned, I would like to give another count of how many of us were killed, not only in Mexico, but also on the bridges and causeways, in all the clashes, in this Battle of Otumba and along the roads: In about five days, more than eight hundred sixty soldiers were killed and sacrificed, as well as seventy-two in a town called Tustepeque, and five Spanish women; the ones killed in Tustepeque were Narváez's men; more than twelve hundred Tlaxcalans were killed.

They also killed a Juan de Alcántara the elder with three other citizens of Villa Rica, who were coming for the shares of gold that fell to them, so they lost both the gold and their lives. If we think about it, in general, none of us had much pleasure from the shares of gold they gave us, and if on the bridges many more of Narváez's men died than Cortés's, it was because they left loaded down with gold, and because of its weight, they could neither swim nor get out of the water.

Let us talk about how we were now going along very joyfully and eating some squashes they call *ayotes*, eating as we were going toward Tlaxcala. The Mexican squadrons were afraid to gather and attack us from those small towns, but still they shouted at us from where we could not reach them, and they hurled many stones at us with their slings and spears and arrows, until we went to some houses around a small town, because the country was populated all around. There was a good cu and a fortified house

where we stopped that night, tended our wounds and got some rest. Although squadrons of Mexicans continued following us, they did not dare come close, but those that did appeared as if they were saying: "There you go out of our land." From that small town and the house where we slept appeared the hills around Tlaxcala, and when we saw them we were as happy as if they were our own homes. But how could we know for sure that the Tlaxcalans were going to be loyal to us or what their mood would be or what had happened to those who had settled in Villa Rica, whether they were dead or alive?

Cortés then said to us that, because we were few, and only four hundred forty of us remained, along with twenty horses, eleven crossbowmen, and seven escopeteros, and we had no powder and were all wounded, lame, and maimed, we should see very well how it pleased Our Lord Jesus Christ to let us escape with our lives, for which we must always give him much thanks and praise. He also said that we were reduced to the number and strength of the soldiers who had been with him when we first entered Mexico, that is, four hundred fifty soldiers. He begged us, while we were in Tlaxcala, not to cause the Tlaxcalans annoyance or take anything from them; and this he explained for Narváz's men, because they were not used to subjecting themselves to captains in wars, as we were. And he added that he had trust in God that we would find the Tlaxcalans good and very loyal, and that if it were otherwise, which God forbid, we would have to ward off the blows with stout hearts and strong arms, and for this we must be well prepared, and our scouts went ahead into the countryside.

We arrived at a fountain on a hillside, and there were some walls and defenses from earlier times, and our friends the Tlaxcalans said that the meeting place of the boundaries of the Mexicans and them was there. Feeling at ease after the misery we had experienced, we stopped to wash and eat. Then we began to march, and we went to a town of Tlaxcalans called Gualioapar, where they welcomed us and gave us something to eat, but not very much, and if we did not pay them for it with some small pieces of gold and chalchiuis, which some of us carried, they would not have

given it to us for free. We stayed there one day resting and tending our wounds and also taking care of our horses. When they learned in the head town of Tlaxcala that we were there, Maseescaci, Xicotenga the elder, Chichimecatecle, and many other caciques and chieftains came immediately, along with all the people of Guaxocingo. When they arrived in that town where we were, they embraced Cortés and all our captains and soldiers, and, some of them crying, especially Maseescaci, Xicotenga, Chichimecatecle, and Tecapaneca, said to Cortés: "Oh, Malinche, Malinche, how sad we are for your difficulty and that of all your brothers and so many of our people who have died with yours! We told you many times that you should not trust the Mexican people, because one day or another they would attack you. You did not want to believe me. Now that it has happened, nothing can be done for you but to take care of you and give you something to eat. You are at home here. Rest, and we will go now to our town, and we will give you lodging. And do not think, Malinche, that it is any small thing to escape with your lives from that strong city and its bridges; I tell you that, if previously we regarded you as very courageous, now we hold you in even higher regard. I know well that many women and Indian women of our towns will cry a great deal over the deaths of their sons and husbands and brothers and relatives; do not be distressed by this. You owe much to your gods who have brought you here and have delivered you from such a multitude of warriors who were waiting for you in Otumba. I found out four days before that they were waiting to kill you. I wanted to go searching for you with thirty thousand of our warriors, but I could not because they were not all together yet."

Cortés and all our captains and soldiers embraced them and told them we were so grateful to them. Then Cortés gave all the chieftains gold jewelry and stones that had been saved, and every soldier gave what he could; thus some of us gave some of what we had to the people we knew. What a celebration they had and what joy they showed when they saw that doña Luisa and doña Marina were safe, but what crying and sadness they had for the rest of the Indian women who did not come, who were left behind dead.

Especiallly Maseescaci cried for his daughter doña Elvira and for the death of Juan Velázquez de León, to whom he had given her. So we went to the head town of Tlaxcala with all the caciques, and Cortés was lodged in the house of Maseescaci, and Xicotenga gave his lodgings to Pedro de Alvarado. There we tended our wounds and convalesced, although four soldiers died of their wounds, and the wounds of some others had not healed yet.

## IN MEXICO THEY ELEVATED ANOTHER LORD

[CXXIX] Cortés asked about the gold they had brought there, forty thousand pesos, the shares of the citizens who stayed in Villa Rica. Maseescaci, Xicotenga the elder, and a soldier of ours who had stayed there ill and had not been in the affair of Mexico when they defeated us, said that one Juan de Alcántara and two other citizens had come from Villa Rica and had taken all of it; they brought letters from Cortés saying they should be given it, which letter the soldier produced; he had left it with Maseescaci when they gave him the gold. Asking how, when, and at what time Juan de Alcántara took the gold, and learning by counting the days that it was while the Mexicans were attacking us, we understood at once that the Mexicans had killed them on the way and taken the gold. Cortés was very saddened by it, and we were also troubled at not knowing about the people of Villa Rica, whether they might have experienced some misfortune. Right away and quickly Cortés wrote a message and sent it with three Tlaxcalans, in which he informed the people of Villa Rica of the great dangers we had experienced in Mexico and how and in what way we escaped with our lives; but he did not tell them how many of our people were missing. He told them to be always very much on the alert and looking out, and that if there were some healthy soldiers, they should send them, and that they should guard Narváez and Salvatierra very well. He asked whether there was powder or crossbows, because he wanted to go back through the areas around Mexico. He also wrote to the one who stayed as

guard and sea captain, named Caballero, to watch so that neither Narváez nor any ship went to Cuba; if he saw that the two ships of Narváez's fleet that remained were unfit to sail, he should wreck them and send him the sailors with all the weapons they had.

The messengers left and returned quickly, bringing letters saying there had not been wars, that neither their Juan de Alcántara nor the two citizens they had sent for the gold had returned, that the Mexicans must have killed them on the way, and that they knew well about the war the Mexicans waged against us in Mexico because the fat cacique of Cempoala had told them about it. The sea admiral, Caballero, also wrote and said he would do what Cortés ordered, that one ship was good and they would wreck the other and send the men, but that there were few sailors because they had become sick and died. Soon they came with the help they sent from Villa Rica, which was four men, plus three seamen, making seven in all, and as their captain came a soldier named Lencero, who owned the roadside inn that is now called Lencero's. When they arrived at Tlaxcala, as they came ill and thin, often, to pass the time and make fun of them, we called them "Lencero's reinforcements," for just seven soldiers came, five of them covered with sores and the other two swollen up, with big bellies.

Let us stop joking and talk about what happened to us there in Tlaxcala with Xicotenga the younger and his ill will, he who had been captain of all Tlaxcala when they attacked us. The fact is when it became known in that city that we were fleeing from Mexico and that the Mexicans had killed many soldiers, ours as well as those Indians who had gone out from Tlaxcala in our company, and that we were coming for help and shelter in that province, Xicotenga the younger was going about summoning all his relatives and friends and others he thought were of his party. He told them that by night or day, when they were most prepared, they should kill us and make friendship with the lord of Mexico, Coadlavaca, who at that time had been elevated as king. Besides this, they should steal some of the cloaks and cloth we had left in Tlaxcala to be guarded and the gold we were bringing now from Mexico, and they would all be made rich with it. The old

Xicotenga, his father, learned of this and reprimanded him, telling him that no such thought should enter his mind, that it was wrong, and that if Maseescaci, Chichimecatecle, and other lords of Tlaxcala should learn of it, they might kill him and those who agreed with him; but as much as the father reprimanded him, he did not stop what he was saying and continued his evil plans.

It came to the ears of Chichimecatecle, who was the mortal enemy of the young Xicotenga, and he told it to Maseescaci. They decided to consult and make an agreement about it, and they called Xicotenga the elder and the caciques of Guaxocingo and ordered Xicotenga the younger to be brought before them as a prisoner. Maseescaci gave a talk before all of them, in which he asked whether they remembered or had heard that during more than one hundred years before then, in all Tlaxcala, there had ever been such prosperity and riches as since the teules came to their land, or that they had ever been so highly regarded in all the provinces. They now had many pieces of cotton clothing and gold, they ate salt, and wherever their Tlaxcalans went with the teules, they were honored; and although now many of them had been killed in Mexico, they should remember what their ancestors had told them many years before, that from where the sun rises men would come who would rule over them. So why now was Xicotenga going around in those treasons and evil acts, arranging to attack and kill us? It was wrong, and he could find no excuse for the wickedness and evil he always had hidden in his breast. Now that he saw us coming defeated in that way, when he should be helping us so that when we were healthy we could return against their enemies, the towns of Mexico, he wanted to commit that treachery. To these words that Maseescaci and his father, Xicotenga the blind, said to him, Xicotenga the younger replied that what he said about making peace with the Mexicans was a good decision, and he said other things that they could not bear. Then Maseescaci and Chichimecatecle and his old father, blind as he was, stood up and took Xicotenga the younger by the neck and his cloak, ripped the cloak, and pushing him and saying insulting words to him, they threw him down the steps with his cloak all

torn. If it had not been for his father, they would have killed him, and they took prisoner the rest who had been in his confidence. As we had taken refuge there, it was not the time to punish him, so Cortés dared say no more about it. I have reminded you of this so you could see how loyal and good the Tlaxcalans were and how much we owe them, especially the good old Xicotenga, who they say had ordered his son to be killed when he learned of his schemes and treason.

Let us leave this and talk about how we were in that town twenty-two days healing and recovering from our wounds. Cortés decided we would go to the province of Tepeaca, which was close, and another town near Tepeaca, named Cachula,<sup>1</sup> because there the Mexicans had killed many of our soldiers and Narváez's soldiers who were on the way to Mexico. When Cortés told this to our captains and they prepared Narváez's soldiers to go to war—as they were not very accustomed to wars and had escaped the defeat in Mexico and at the bridges and the Battle at Otumba, and they could hardly wait to return to the island of Cuba to their Indians and gold mines—they cursed Cortés and his conquests, especially Andrés de Duero, partner of our Cortés. They cursed the gold Cortés had given Duero and the rest of the captains, all of which had been lost at the bridges; and as they had seen the great attacks the Mexicans made on us and were very happy to have escaped with their lives, they decided to tell Cortés they did not want to go to Tepeaca nor to any war whatsoever, but they wanted to return to their homes, that what they had lost in coming from Cuba was enough. Cortés spoke with them about it very gently and affectionately, believing he would attract them into going with us on the expedition to Tepeaca, but however many speeches and scoldings he gave them, they would not go. When they saw that their words were of no use with Cortés, they formally demanded of him before a notary of the king that he should go right away to Villa Rica and stop the war, giving as a reason that

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1. Quecholac.

we had neither horses nor escopetas nor crossbows nor powder nor thread to make cords nor a supply of materials to make bolts; that we were all wounded, and that of all our soldiers and those of Narváez only four hundred and forty were left; that the Mexicans would take from us the ports and sierras and passes, and the ships, if we waited any longer, would be eaten by ship worms; and they said many other things in the demand. When they had given and read it to Cortés, if they said many things in it, he replied with very many more opposing points. Besides this, most all of us who had come with Cortés told him not to give permission to any of Narváez's men nor to anyone else to return to Cuba, but we should all try to serve God and the king; this was the right thing to do, not return to Cuba.

After Cortés had replied to the demand, and when the people making it saw that many of us would stand in the way of their pestering just by saying it was not in the service of God and of His Majesty that they abandon their captain during wars, at the end of much discussion, they replied that they consented to go with us on any expeditions he might undertake, but only if Cortés promised them that if an opportunity arose, he would allow them to return to their island of Cuba. But even with this they did not stop grumbling against him and his conquest that had cost them so dearly in leaving their homes and their tranquility and coming to put themselves in a situation where even their lives were not secure. They also said that if we entered into another war with the forces of Mexico, which we could not avoid doing sooner or later, they believed and were sure we could not hold up against them in the battles, as they had seen in the affair of Mexico and the bridges and in the famous Battle of Otumba. They said further that our Cortés only wanted to command and always be a lord, and we who came over with him stayed with him because we had nothing to lose except our selves. They made many other senseless remarks, and everyone overlooked them because of the time in which they spoke; but not many months passed before Cortés gave them permission to return to their homes on the island of Cuba.

*At this point, Bernal Díaz expresses anger at the chronicler Gómara for exalting Cortés and ignoring the other soldiers, accusing Gómara of receiving gold and other gifts to do so. He also accuses Gómara of such inaccuracies as saying Juan Velázquez de León and Diego de Ordaz were settling Pánuco and Guazacualco, that Cortés secretly ordered that Xicotenga the younger be killed in Tlaxcala, and that he does not make clear who presented Cortés with the request to return to Cuba. He also says of the encounter with the Mexican captain at the Battle of Otumba that it was Cortés who made the captain lower his banner, which is true; but he fails to say that it was Juan de Salamanca who killed the Mexican captain, took the banner, and gave it to Cortés. Bernal Díaz says he is not recalling this to memory to take away the great honor owing to Cortés, but to share this honor with others who were important in bringing about the result. Further, he shows outrage that “this chronicler says that so many thousand thousands of Indians went against us in the expeditions; there is no count nor sense to so many as he puts. He also says of the cities, towns, and villages that there were so many thousands of houses, but there was not even a fifth of that number. If one adds up everything he puts in his history, there are more millions of men than populate the whole universe. . . .”*

[CXXX] *With several thousand Tlaxcalans, Cortés now moved against the people of Tepeaca where the Mexicans had posted their largest garrison. The joint force of Mexicans and Tepeacans were defeated and many of the people were enslaved by the Spaniards and Tlaxcalans. The town of Tepeaca was renamed by the Spaniards the Villa de Segura de la Frontera and from there, in about forty days, numerous towns in the surrounding area were pacified and punished, including Cachula, Tecamachalco, and the town of las Guayabas “and other towns whose names I do not remember.”*

At that time in Mexico, they had elevated another lord, because the lord who had driven us out of Mexico had died of smallpox. The lord they raised up was a nephew or very close relative of Montezuma named Guatemuz, a young man of about twenty-five years, very much a gentleman for an Indian, very courageous, and

he made himself so feared that all his people trembled before him. He was married to a daughter of Montezuma, a very beautiful woman for an Indian. When this Guatemuz, lord of Mexico, learned we had defeated the Mexican squadrons in Tepeaca, that the people there had given their obedience to His Majesty, were serving us and giving us things to eat, that we had settled there, he feared we would raid Oaxaca<sup>2</sup> and other provinces and attract them to our friendship; so he sent his messengers through all the towns so that they would be very ready with all their weapons, and to the caciques he gave golden jewels, and he pardoned others from their tribute. Above all he ordered very great captaincies and garrisons of warriors to see that we did not enter his lands, and he sent to say that they should fight very vigorously with us, so that what had happened in Tepeaca, Cachula, and Tecamachalco, where we had made them all slaves, would not happen again.

[CXXXI] As we moved around that province of Tepeaca punishing those who were involved in the death of our companions, those who killed them in those towns, and leading them to peace, all of them giving their obedience to His Majesty, letters came from Villa Rica saying that a ship had come to the port. As captain came a gentleman named Pedro Barba, a good friend of Cortés, and this Pedro Barba had served as deputy governor for Diego Velázquez in Havana. Because the ship he brought was very small, he brought only thirteen soldiers, a horse, and a mare. He brought letters for Pánfilo de Narváez that the captain Diego Velázquez had sent against us, believing he had routed us and that New Spain was his. In the letters Velázquez told Narváez that if he had not yet killed Cortés, he should send him right away as a prisoner to Cuba to be sent to Castile, for don Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca, bishop of Burgos and archbishop of Rosano, president of the Indies, had ordered that Cortés, with other captains, be made prisoner immediately, because Diego Velázquez was certain we were defeated or, at least, that Narváez was master of New Spain.

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2. Bernal Díaz uses Guaxaca.

Then, when Pedro Barba arrived in the port with his ship and anchored, the sea admiral named by Cortés, Pedro Caballero or Juan Caballero, went right away to visit and welcome him with a ship well manned with sailors, their weapons hidden. He went to Pedro Barba's ship, and after speaking polite words: "How are you, sir?" and taking off their hats and embracing each other as is the custom, he asked Pedro Barba about señor Diego Velázquez, governor of Cuba, how he was, and Pedro Barba replied that he was very well. Pedro Barba and the others he brought with him asked about Pánfilo de Narváez and how he was doing with Cortés. He replied that he was doing very well, but that Cortés was fleeing and in rebellion with twenty of his companions, that Narváez was very prosperous and rich, and that the land was peaceful. In the course of the conversation, they told Pedro Barba that there was a town near there, that he should disembark, and they could sleep and stay there, that they would bring them food and whatever they needed, for that town had been designated for just that purpose and service. They told them so many tales that they convinced them to go ashore in the boat and in other boats that soon came there from other anchored ships. When they came away from the ship, a body of sailors near the admiral Pedro Caballero said to Pedro Barba: "Surrender in the name of the señor captain Cortés, my lord."

Thus they seized them, and they were astonished. Then they took the sails, rudder, and compass from their ship and sent the prisoners to where we were with Cortés in Tepeaca. We were delighted with this help that came at the best possible time, because those expeditions I said we were making were not so safe that many of our soldiers were not wounded, others got sick from the hardships and the blood and powder coagulating in their entrails, and we passed nothing else from the body and through the mouth. As we always carried our weapons on our backs and never stopped night or day, within about two weeks five of our soldiers had died from pleurisy. I also want to say that with this Pedro Barba came one Francisco López, who was later a citizen and councilman in Guatemala.

Cortés paid great honor to Pedro Barba and made him captain of crossbowmen. Pedro Barba gave news that Diego Velázquez was going to send another small ship from Cuba with cassava bread and provisions. That ship came in a week, and in the ship, as captain, a gentleman native of Medina del Campo named Rodrigo Morejón de Lobera. He brought with him eight soldiers, six crossbows, a great deal of twine for bowstrings, and one mare. In precisely the same way they had taken Pedro Barba, they took this Rodrigo Morejón; they went at once to Segura de la Frontera, and we were delighted with all of them. Cortés paid them much honor and gave them assignments, and, thanks be to God, we were now fortifying ourselves with soldiers and crossbows and two or three more horses.

*Guatemuz (Cuauhtemoc) had sent garrisons to his borders, and the warriors were said to have committed robberies and violence against the people of those towns where they were lodged. Two of those towns asked Cortés for help, and Cortés sent Cristóbal de Olid with a large force. Under the influence of some captains of Narváez, Cristóbal de Olid abandoned the expedition and returned to camp, incurring Cortés's anger. Olid, "like a lion fierce in its anger," then led his men in a ferocious attack against Guacachula<sup>3</sup> and Ozucar,<sup>4</sup> defeating the Mexicans.*

*While Cortés and his men were in Segura de la Frontera, two ships sent by Francisco de Garay to settle Pánuco came with men, horses, and supplies. Cortés welcomed both groups and incorporated them with their captains into this band. He also commissioned Gonzalo de Sandoval to pacify a number of the surrounding towns, a task he effectively carried out. By then, according to Bernal Díaz, "Cortés had acquired such great authority, reputation, and command that disputes were brought before him by Indians from far-off lands, especially on matters of the office of caciques and lordships, and as in that time*

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3. Huaquechula.

4. Izucar.

*smallpox had spread throughout New Spain, many caciques died, and they came to Cortés with questions about who the territory belonged to, who was lord, and who the land, vassals, and goods belonged to, as though he were absolute lord of all the land, so that with his hand and authority he might raise as lord whoever it belonged to.”*

[CXXXV] When Gonzalo de Sandoval had arrived at the town of Segura de la Frontera, that province now being pacified and there being no other expeditions to make at that time because all the towns in the area had given their obedience to His Majesty, Cortés decided, with the officials of the king, that the pieces<sup>5</sup> and slaves who had been taken should be branded so that his fifth could be taken out after that of His Majesty. For that he ordered proclamations given in the camp and town that all of us soldiers should bring to a house that had been designated for that purpose all the pieces we had collected to brand, and they set as a time limit that day and the next. All of us came with the Indian women, girls, and boys we had captured, but we did not bother with the adult men, for it was hard to guard them and we did not need their service, having our friends the Tlaxcalans.

When all the pieces were together and a brand was made, which was a “G,” which stood for *guerra*,<sup>6</sup> when we were not watching, they set aside the royal fifth, then they took out another fifth for Cortés; besides this, the night before, when we put the pieces in that house, they had already taken and hidden the best Indian women and not one good-looking one was to be seen, so at the time of distributing they gave us the old and wretched ones. Regarding this there were great grumblings against Cortés and those who ordered the good-looking Indian women to be stolen and hidden, so much so that some of Narváez’s soldiers said to Cortés himself that they swore to God no such thing had ever

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5. This term means “units” and is the way the Spaniards counted slaves; the common term was *pieza de indias* and refers to slaves here.

6. War.

happened as having two kings in the land of our king and lord and taking two fifths. One of the soldiers who said this to him was one Juan Bono de Quexo; and he said further that they would not live in such a land and that he would make it known in Castile to His Majesty and to the lords of the Royal Council of the Indies. Another soldier told Cortés very clearly that it was not enough to divide the gold that had been taken in Mexico in the way he divided it, because when he was dividing it, he said three hundred thousand pesos had been collected, but when we were fleeing from Mexico, he ordered testimony taken that there was still more than seven hundred thousand; now the poor soldier who had sweated and toiled so hard and was covered with wounds could not have a good-looking Indian woman and they, the soldiers, had given petticoats and skirts to the Indian women and had those Indian women taken from them and hidden. When the proclamation was made that they were to bring the pieces to be branded, they believed that each soldier would have his pieces returned to him and a calculation made how many pesos they were worth, and that according to the value calculated they would pay the fifth to His Majesty but that there would not be a fifth more for Cortés, and they made other more serious grumblings than these.

When Cortés saw this, with somewhat gentle words he said that he swore on his conscience, for this is how he usually swore, that from then on it would not be done that way, but that good or bad Indian women would be taken out to public auction and the good ones would be sold as such and those who were not for a lower price, and so they would have no quarrel with him; although no more slaves were taken in Tepeaca, afterward, during the affair of Texcoco, it was almost the same, as I will tell farther on.

Let us discuss another thing, almost worse than that of the slaves, and it is that, during the night of sorrows, when we were fleeing from Mexico, there were left in the room where Cortés was lodged many bars of gold that were lost because they could not carry off any more than what they loaded on the mare and horses and the many Tlaxcalans and what our friends and the other soldiers carried off. Because the rest would have been lost

and in the custody of the Mexicans, Cortés said before a notary of the king that anyone who might want to take gold from what was left there might take it away and they were very welcome to it, as it would otherwise be lost. Many of Narváez's soldiers loaded themselves with it, and also some of ours, and in taking it out, many lost their lives, and those who escaped with the booty they had taken were at great risk of being killed, and they left covered with wounds. As in our camp and town of Segura de la Frontera, Cortés learned that many bars of gold were being used in gambling, and as the saying goes, gold and love are hard to hide, he ordered a proclamation that, under heavy penalties, they bring and show the gold they had taken out, that the third part of it was for them, but if they did not bring it, it would all be taken. Many of the soldiers who had it did not want to give it up, and some Cortés took as a loan but more by force than from willingness, and as most of the captains had gold and the officials of the king even more, no one talked about the proclamation; but what Cortés had ordered seemed very bad.

[CXXXVI] When Narváez's captains saw that we now had reinforcements from those who came from Cuba as well as those from Jamaica sent by Francisco de Garay for his fleet and they saw that the towns of the province of Tepeaca were peaceful, after much discussion with Cortés with great promises and pleas, they begged him to give them permission to return to the island of Cuba, for he had promised it to them. Cortés then gave it and even promised them that if he won New Spain and the city of Mexico again, he would give much more gold to Andrés de Duero, his partner, than he had given him earlier, and he also made the offer to the rest of the captains, especially Agustín Bermúdez, and he ordered that they be given such provisions for the trip as he then had, including maize, salted little dogs and a few hens, and one of the best ships. Cortés wrote to his wife, Catalina Juárez, la Marcaida, and to Juan Juárez, his brother-in-law, who at that time lived on the island of Cuba, and he sent them some bars and jewels of gold and informed them about all the misfortunes and hardships that had happened to us and how we were driven out of Mexico.

Let us talk about the people who requested permission to return to Cuba, who would still be going rich. They were Andrés de Duero; Agustín Bermúdez; Juan Bono de Quexo; Bernaldino de Quesada; Francisco Velázquez the hunchback, relative of Diego Velázquez, governor of Cuba; Gonzalo Carrasco, who afterward returned to New Spain and went to live in Puebla; one Melchor de Velazco, who was a citizen in Guatemala; one Jiménez de Cervantes, who went for his children; the commander Leonel de Cervantes, who went for his daughters and who, after Mexico was won, married them very honorably; there was one named Maldonado, who was ill (I am not speaking of Maldonado, the husband to doña María del Rincon, nor Maldonado the wide, nor another Maldonado who was named Alvaro Maldonado the fierce, who was married to a woman named María Arias); also one Vargas went, settler in Trinidad, whom they called in Cuba Vargas el Galán (I am not speaking of Vargas who was father-in-law to Cristóbal Lobo, late citizen of Guatemala); a soldier from those of Cortés went, named Cárdenas, pilot (that Cárdenas was the one who asked one of his companions how we soldiers could rest having two kings in this New Spain, and he is the one to whom Cortés gave three hundred pesos so he could go to his wife and children). To avoid tediousness in recording them all, I will just say there were many others whose names I do not remember.

When Cortés gave them permission, we asked him why he gave it since there were so few of us left, and he replied that it was to avoid scandals and pestering, and we could already see that some of those who were returning were not fit for war and that it was worth more to be alone than in bad company. To dispatch them from the port, Cortés sent Pedro de Alvarado and said that when they had embarked, he should return right away to the town.

Let us talk now about how Cortés sent to Castile Diego de Ordaz and Alonso de Mendoza, a native of Medellín or of Cáceres, with some messages from himself, and I do not know whether they carried others of ours, nor did he share with us anything about the business he was negotiating with His Majesty, nor did I find out what happened in Castile except that the bishop of

Burgos said openly in front of Diego de Ordaz that Cortés as well as all of us soldiers who came with him were bad and treasonous, although Ordaz answered very well for all of us. Then they made Ordaz a commander of señor Santiago and for his coat of arms the volcano that was between Guaxocingo and Cholula.

Let us talk about how Cortés ordered Alonso de Ávila, captain and accountant of this New Spain, and with him another gentleman named Francisco Álvarez Chico, a man who understood business affairs, to go in another ship to the island of Santo Domingo to give a report on everything that had happened to the Royal Audiencia, which resided there, and to the Jeronymite friars, who were acting as governors of all the islands, telling them that they should give their approval of what we had done in the conquests and the defeat of Narváez and how Cortés had made slaves in the towns that had killed Spaniards and renounced the obedience they had given to our lord and king, and he intended to do the same in all the rest of the towns that were in the alliance and name of the Mexicans. He implored them to report all of this in Castile to our great emperor and to remind him of the great services we always performed for him and that by their intercession and that of the Royal Audiencia and the Jeronymite friars, we might be favored with justice against the ill will and acts that the bishop of Burgos and archbishop of Rosano attempted against us.

Cortés also sent another ship to the island of Jamaica for horses and mares, and the captain who went with it was named somebody de Solís, who after Mexico was won we called Solís-of-the-Orchard, son-in-law of one who was called bachelor Ortega. I know well that some curious readers will ask how, without money, Cortés could send Diego de Ordaz for negotiations to Castile, for it is clear that in Castile and other areas money is necessary, and in the same way how did he send Alonso de Ávila and Francisco Álvarez Chico to Santo Domingo for negotiations and to the island of Jamaica for horses and mares? To this I say that, when fleeing from Mexico that night, as many bars of gold were left in a hall in a heap, most of the soldiers grabbed some of it, and the horsemen especially, and even more the men of Narváez, and the

officials of His Majesty, who had it in their possession and charge, carried off prepared bundles. Besides this, when more than eighty Tlaxcalan Indians were loaded with gold by order of Cortés and were the first to get off the bridges, it is clear that they saved many loads of it, that all was not lost on the causeway; but as we poor soldiers had no command, rather were commanded, at that time we were trying to save our lives and afterward to heal our wounds, so we did not pay attention to whether many loads of the gold went out over the bridges or not, nor did we care much about it. Cortés and some of our captains tried to get it from the Tlaxcalans who had carried it out, and we even suspected that they had also taken the forty thousand pesos of the shares of those at Villa Rica, spreading the rumor that it had been stolen. With this gold, Cortés sent to Castile for personal business and to buy horses and to the island of Santo Domingo to the Royal Audiencia, because at that time everyone was quiet about the bars of gold they had, no matter how many proclamations had been issued.

Let us talk about how, with all the towns in the neighborhood of Tepeaca at peace, Cortés decided that Francisco de Orozco would stay in the town of Segura de la Frontera as captain with some twenty soldiers who were wounded and ill, and with all the rest of our army we went to Tlaxcala. Arrangements were made for wood to be cut to make thirteen brigantines in order to go against Mexico again, because we were certain we could not master the lake without brigantines, nor could we attack, nor again enter the causeways to that great city except with great risk to our lives. He who was the master of cutting the wood, making the frames and calculating and planning everything, explaining how they had to be fast and light for their purpose, and making them, was one Martín López, who certainly, besides being a good soldier in all the wars, served His Majesty well in this matter of the brigantines and did a strong man's work on them. It seems to me that if he had not been fated to be among the first to come in our company, having to send to Castile for another master would have wasted much time, and none might have come because of the great obstacles that the bishop of Burgos put in our way.

I will return to our subject and talk about how, when we arrived at Tlaxcala, our great friend and very loyal vassal of His Majesty, Maseescaci, had died of smallpox; his death made all of us very sad, and Cortés felt it, as he said, as if he were his father, and he wore black cloaks in mourning as did many of our captains and soldiers. Cortés and all of us paid much honor to the children and relatives of Maseescaci; and because in Tlaxcala there were disagreements about the command and office of cacique, Cortés ordered and commanded that it be one of the legitimate sons of Maseescaci himself, because his father had ordered that before he died. Maseescaci had also told his sons and relatives that they should see that they did not stray from the command of Malinche and his brothers, because we were certainly the ones who would be masters over these lands, and he gave them much other good advice. Let us stop talking now about Maseescaci, because he is dead, and let us talk about Xicotenga the elder, Chichimecatecle, and all the other caciques of Tlaxcala, who offered to serve Cortés both in cutting wood for the brigantines and all other things he might order for the war against the Mexicans.

Cortés embraced them with great affection and gave them thanks for it, especially Xicotenga the elder and Chichimecatecle, and tried to get them to turn Christian, and the good old Xicotenga said that he very willingly wanted to be Christian, so with the greatest celebration that could be made in Tlaxcala at that time, the Mercedarian father baptized him and gave him the name don Lorenzo de Vargas. Let us return to talking about our brigantines. Martín López was so fast in cutting the wood with the great assistance of the Indians, that in a few days he had it all cut and each piece of wood marked with the place it was supposed to go in the way that the officials, master craftsmen, and ships' carpenters make their marks. Also another good soldier named Andrés Núñez assisted him and an old carpenter who was lame from a wound, who was called Ramírez the elder.

Then Cortés sent to Villa Rica for much iron and nails from the ships we wrecked and for anchors, sails, rigging, cables, and tow, and all the other equipment for making ships, and he

ordered all the blacksmiths who were there to come, and one Hernando de Aguilar, who was somewhat of a blacksmith and helped in the pounding. And because at that time there were in our camp three men named Aguilar, we called this one Hernando Aguilar Majahierro.<sup>7</sup> Cortés sent as captain to Villa Rica for the equipment I have talked about, to order it brought to him, one Santa Cruz, a native of Burgos, who afterward was councilman of Mexico, a very good and diligent soldier. He brought everything, even the caldrons for making tar and everything that had earlier been taken from the ships, with more than one thousand Indians that all the towns of those provinces, enemies of Mexicans, gave them to carry the loads. Then, as we did not have pitch to make tar, nor even Indians who knew how to do it, Cortés ordered four sailors who knew that trade to go make pitch in some very good pine woods near Guaxalcingo.

Certain curious gentlemen who knew Alonso de Ávila very well asked me why, as he was a very courageous captain, accountant of New Spain, warlike, more inclined to war than carrying on negotiations with the Jeronymite friars, who were acting as governors of all the islands, Cortés sent him, when he had other men more used to such things, like Alonso de Grado or Juan de Cáceres the rich, or others they mentioned to me. To this I say that Cortés sent Alonso de Ávila because he felt he was very manly and would dare stand up for us as justice would demand, and also he sent him because Alonso de Ávila had had disputes with other captains and had the boldness to say to Cortés whatever he thought it suitable to say to him; he sent him to avoid disturbances and to give the captaincy he had to Andrés de Tapia and the accountant's position to Alonso de Grado, which he gave him at once. Let us return to our story.

Well, seeing that the wood for the brigantines was now cut and the people named by me had just gone to Cuba—Narváez's men, whom we saw as burdens, especially as they were always

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7. *Majahierro* in Spanish means "iron pounder."

trying to put fears in us, saying that we were not sufficient to resist the great power of the Mexicans when they heard us saying we would go to besiege Mexico—Cortés, free of those worries, decided we would go with all our soldiers to the city of Texcoco. Opinions varied greatly about this, because some soldiers said that Ayotzingo,<sup>8</sup> near Chalco, with its canals and ditches was a better place to make the brigantines than the inlet of Texcoco; others insisted that Texcoco would be better because it was near many towns, and that when we had that city on our side, we could make expeditions into the lands neighboring Mexico, and once we were in that city we would have a better idea of how things might go.

When what I was talking about was settled, some soldiers brought news and letters about how a ship had come to Villa Rica from Castile and from the Canary Islands, large, loaded with much merchandise, escopetas, powder and crossbows, crossbow cords, three horses, and other weapons, and one Juan de Burgos came as owner of the merchandise and ship, and, as master, one Francisco de Medel, and thirteen soldiers. With that news we rejoiced greatly, and if before we knew about this ship we were hastening to leave for Texcoco, then we hurried even more, because Cortés sent immediately to buy all the weapons, powder, and everything else it carried; Juan de Burgos himself, Medel, and all the passengers soon came to where we were, and we received them, very happy to see such good reinforcements at that time.

I remember that then one Juan del Espinar came, late citizen of Guatemala, a person who was very rich, and also one Sagredo came, uncle of a woman called la Sagreda, who was in Cuba, natives of Medellín; and also one Vizcayan came named Monjaraz, who was said to be uncle of Andrés de Monjaraz and Gregorio de Monjaraz, soldiers who were with us, and father of a woman who later came to Mexico, called la Monjaraza, a very beautiful woman. I mention this because of what I will say further on, which is that Monjaraz was never in any war or expedition

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8. Ayotzingo.

with us because he was ill at that time, but when he became fit and healthy, he boasted of being very courageous, and when we were besieging Mexico, Monjaraz said he wanted to see how we battled with the Mexicans, because he did not believe the Mexicans were valiant. He went and climbed up a high *cu*, like a small tower and, we never learned how and in what way, the Indians killed him that very day. Many people, who had known him on the island of Santo Domingo said that it was by divine leave that he should die that death because he had killed his wife, a very honorable and good and beautiful woman, without any guilt on her part at all, and he sought false witnesses who swore that she had put a curse on him.

[CXXXVII] When Cortés saw such good arrangements with escopetas, powder, crossbows, and horses and knew of the great desire that all of us, captains as well as soldiers, had to go against the city of Mexico, he decided to speak with the caciques of Tlaxcala to ask for ten thousand Indian warriors to go with us on that journey to Texcoco, which is one of the largest cities in New Spain after Mexico. When he asked for this, making a good speech about it, right away Xicotenga the elder said that he was pleased to give with goodwill not only ten thousand men, but many more if he wanted to take them, and that another very courageous cacique, our great friend Chichimecatecle, would go with them as captain. Cortés thanked him for it, and after our muster was held—and I do not now remember well how many we were, soldiers as well as the rest—a day after the Feast of the Nativity in the year 1520, we began to move with great order as we always did, and we spent the night at a town subject to Texcoco, and the people of that town gave us whatever we needed.

From there on it was Mexican territory. We went very cautiously, our artillery, crossbowmen, and escopeteros arranged in great order, and always four scouts on horseback and four other very quick soldiers with sword and shield with the horsemen to see if the passes were fit for horses; on the road we had learned that a difficult pass had been blocked that day on the sierra with trees cut down because they had good notice in Mexico and Texcoco

that we were moving toward their city. That day we did not run into any hindrance at all, and we spent the night at the foot of the sierra, three leagues distant, and that night was very cold; but with our sentinels, lookouts, watchmen, and scouts we passed the night, and after dawn we began to climb a narrow pass, and in some difficult places like ravines, the sierra was cut away so that we could not pass, and much wood and pines had been put in the road, but as we had with us so many Tlaxcalan friends, it was quickly cleared. With much order we went forward with a good captaincy of escopeteros and crossbowmen, our friends cutting and setting the trees to one side so the horses could pass, until we climbed the sierra, and we even descended a little to where the lake of Mexico came into view, its great populated cities in the water. When we saw it, we gave great thanks to God that he let us see it again. Then we remembered our past defeat, when they drove us out of Mexico, and we promised, if it pleased God, to proceed differently in the war when we besieged the city.

Then we descended the sierra, where we saw great smoke signals that the people of Texcoco were making as well as the people of its subject towns. Going further forward, we came upon a large squadron of men, warriors from Mexico and Texcoco, who were waiting for us at a difficult pass in a great thick forest where there was a wooden bridge that seemed to be broken, a deep ravine, and a great stream flowing below; we very soon routed the squadrons and passed in safety. Then to hear their shouting—they did nothing else from the outlying settlements and ravines, and it was from places where the horses could not go—but our friends the Tlaxcalans carried off hens, and whatever they could steal from them they did not leave, although Cortés ordered them not to attack the people if they did not attack. But the Tlaxcalans said that if they were of good heart and peaceful, they would not have gone out on the road to attack us as they did at the pass of the ravines and bridge so as not to let us through.

Let us talk about how we spent the night at an abandoned town subject to Texcoco. With our watchmen, patrols, sentinels, and scouts posted, we spent that night with great precaution so the

many warrior squadrons waiting for us at some bad passes would not fall upon us. We learned about the squadrons because five Mexicans were seized at the first bridge I mentioned, and those men told us. According to what we later learned, they did not dare attack us nor wait for us anymore, because it seems there were disagreements and factions between the Mexicans and the people of Texcoco, and also they had not yet recovered from smallpox, an illness that had spread throughout the land; they had also learned that in the affairs at Guacachula, Ozucar, Tepeaca, Xalacingo, and Castilblanco, we had defeated all the Mexican garrisons and had gained fame, and they believed that all the forces of Tlaxcala and Guaxalcingo were with us, so they decided not to wait for us. And Our Lord Jesus Christ directed all of this.

When dawn broke, all of us in great order, artillery as well as escopetas and crossbows, the scouts going ahead to reconnoiter the land, we began to move toward Texcoco, which was about two leagues from where we slept. We had gone less than half a league when we saw our scouts returning at breakneck speed, very happy. They told Cortés that ten Indians were coming carrying some golden standards and banners but no weapons whatsoever, and that in all the outlying settlements and hamlets they passed, the Indians were not crying out or shouting as they had the day before; it seemed that everything was peaceful. Cortés, our captains, and we soldiers all rejoiced. Then Cortés ordered us to stop until seven Indian chieftains, natives of Texcoco, arrived. They carried a golden banner and long lance, and before they arrived, they lowered their banner and bowed down, which is a sign of peace. When they came before Cortés, our interpreters doña Marina and Aguilar being there, they said: “Malinche, Cocoyoacin,<sup>9</sup> our lord and lord of Texcoco, sends to beg that you receive him in friendship and he is awaiting you in peace in his city of Texcoco. As a sign of this, receive this golden banner; and he begs you as a favor that you order all the Tlaxcalans and your brothers to do no

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9. Conanacohtzin.

harm in his land and that you come to lodge in his city; he will give you whatever you need." They also said that the squadrons in the ravines and bad passes were not from Texcoco but Mexicans Guatemuz had sent.

When Cortés heard those words of peace, he rejoiced a great deal as did we, and he embraced the messengers, especially three of them who were relatives of the good Montezuma and all the rest of the soldiers knew them as his captains. The message considered, Cortés right away summoned the Tlaxcalan captains and very affectionately ordered them not to do any harm nor take anything whatsoever in all the land because it was at peace, and they did as he ordered. But he did not forbid them from taking food if they took only maize, beans, even hens and little dogs, of which there were many, all the houses filled with them. Then Cortés took counsel with our captains, and it seemed to all of them that requesting peace in that way was feigned because if it were not, it would not have come so suddenly and they would have brought food. Nevertheless, Cortés accepted the banner, which was worth about eighty pesos, and he gave great thanks to the messengers. He told them that it was not his custom to do evil or harm to any vassals of His Majesty, rather he favored them and looked out for them; that if they kept the peace as they said, he would assist them against the Mexicans; that he had already ordered the Tlaxcalans not to do damage in their land, as they had seen, and thus it would be observed from then on; that he knew well that in that city they had killed more than forty Spaniards, our brothers, when we left Mexico, and more than two hundred Tlaxcalans, and they stole many loads of gold and other spoils; that he begs their lord, Cuacayutzin,<sup>10</sup> and all the other caciques and captains of Texcoco to give him all the gold and clothing, and as for the death of the Spaniards, there was now no remedy, and he would not ask it of them.

Those messengers replied that they would tell their lord as he had ordered, but that the one who ordered the Spaniards killed was

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10. Identical to Cocoyoacin/Coanacochtzin.

Coadlavaca, who was elevated as lord in Mexico after Montezuma died, and he got all the spoils, and they brought all the rest of the teules to Mexico where they sacrificed them right away to their Huichilobos. When Cortés heard that response, in order not to make them resentful or fearful, he did not reply beyond saying they should go with God; one of them stayed in our company. Then we went to a place on the outskirts of Texcoco called Guatinchan or Guaxuntlan,<sup>11</sup> I have now forgotten the name, and there they gave us plenty to eat and everything we needed, and we also threw down some idols that were in some buildings where we stayed. The next morning we went to the city of Texcoco, and in all the streets we saw no women, boys, or little children, and the Indian men were as if frightened and as though they were on a war footing; and we went to lodge at some large buildings and halls. Cortés summoned our captains and all the rest of the soldiers at once and told us not to go out of the large courtyards there and that we should be very much on the alert until seeing how that city was, because it did not seem to him that it was at peace.

He ordered Pedro de Alvarado, Cristóbal de Olid, and other soldiers, me with them, to climb a large cu, which was very high, to take about twenty escopeteros as our guard and to look out from the high cu over the lake and the city, because everything could be seen clearly from there; and we saw that all the inhabitants of those towns were leaving with their belongings, children, and women, some to the hills and others to the reed beds in the lake, and the whole lake was crowded with canoes, some large and others small. When Cortés learned this, he was going to seize the lord of Texcoco who had sent the golden banner, but when certain papas whom Cortés sent as messengers went to summon him, he had already taken refuge, for he was the first to flee to Mexico with many other chieftains. So we passed that night with very great precaution with watchmen, patrols, and lookouts. Very early

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11. Coatlinchan and Huexotla respectively; the two seem to be different locations.

the next day, Cortés summoned all the chieftains who were in Texcoco, because as it is a very great city there were many other lords, factions opposed to the fleeing cacique, with whom they had debates and disagreements about the command and kingship of that city. When they came before Cortés, he learned from them how, in what way, and since when Cuacoyozin<sup>12</sup> had ruled there. They told him that because of Cuacoyozin's greediness to rule, he had evilly killed his older brother, Cuxcuxca, with assistance given to him by the lord of Mexico, Coadlavaca, the one who attacked us when we were fleeing after Montezuma's death. They said there were other lords to whom the kingdom of Texcoco came more justly than the one who now had it, in particular a youth who at that time, with great solemnity, became Christian, and he was named don Hernando Cortés because our captain was his godfather.

This youth, they said, was the legitimate son of the lord and king of Texcoco and his father's name was Nezabalpincintle.<sup>13</sup> Without any further delay, with great feasts and celebrations in all Texcoco, they raised him to king and natural lord with all the ceremonies they usually held for such kings; with much peace and the love of all his vassals and other neighboring towns, he ruled very absolutely and was obeyed. In order to better instruct him on the matters of our holy faith and to instill civil behavior in him, and so that he might learn our language, Cortés ordered that he should have as tutors Antonio de Villarreal, husband of a very beautiful wife, whose name was Isabel de Ojeda, and a bachelor named Escobar. As captain of Texcoco, so he might watch and keep any Mexicans from having dealings with don Hernando, Cortés posted a good soldier named Pero Sánchez Farfán, husband of the good and honorable woman María de Estrada.

Let us talk about how Cortés asked this cacique for a large number of Indian laborers to broaden and deepen the canals and

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12. Yet another form of Cocoyoacin/Coanacochtzin.

13. Nezahualpilli.

ditches through which we were going to take the brigantines to the lake when they were finished and ready to set sail. He explained to don Hernando himself and others of his chieftains to what end and purpose the brigantines were to be made and how and in what way we were going to besiege Mexico; for all this don Hernando offered all his power and vassals, not only what Cortés ordered, but he would also send messengers to other towns in the region to tell them to give themselves as vassals of His Majesty and accept our friendship and authority against Mexico. All this arranged, after we had lodged very well, each captaincy by itself, the posts and places were designated where we were to go if there was a sudden attack by the Mexicans; we were to guard the shores of the lake, for from time to time Guatemuz sent large pirogues and canoes with many warriors who came to see if they could take us unaware. At that time some towns subject to Texcoco came peacefully to ask for pardon and peace if they had erred in some way in the recent wars and had been part of the deaths of Spaniards. Cortés spoke to them all very kindly and pardoned them.

I want to say that there was not a single day that seven or eight thousand Indians failed to work on the ditch and canal, and they opened and broadened it very well so that ships of large size could have floated in it. At that time, as we had in our company more than seven thousand Tlaxcalans and they were desirous of winning honor in fighting with the Mexicans, Cortés decided that because we had such faithful companions, we would go and look at a town called Iztapalapa, through which we passed the first time we came to Mexico. The lord of this town was Coadlavaca, the one they elevated as king in Mexico after the death of the great Montezuma. This town, according to what we learned, had done us great harm, because they were very much the enemies of Chalco, Tamanca, Mecameca, and Chimaluacan, who wanted to come to make friendship with us, and the Iztapalapans prevented it.

## GUATEMUZ SHOULD COME IN PEACE

[CXXXVIII] As we had spent twelve days in Texcoco, and the Tlaxcalans had nothing with which to sustain themselves; and because there were so many of them, the people of Texcoco could not supply them with enough provisions; and so that they might not become a burden to the people of Texcoco, and also because the Tlaxcalans desired to battle with the Mexicans and avenge the many Tlaxcalans they had killed and sacrificed in the recent defeats, Cortés decided that, with him as captain general and Andrés de Tapia, Cristóbal de Olid, thirteen horsemen, twenty crossbowmen, six escopeteros, two hundred twenty soldiers, our friends from Tlaxcala, and twenty other chieftains of Texcoco don Hernando gave us, who we knew were the cousins and relatives of don Hernando and enemies of Guatemuz, we would go on our march to Iztapalapa, which was about four leagues from Texcoco.

More than half the houses in Iztapalapa were built in the water and the other half on dry land. As the Mexicans always had watchmen, garrisons, and warriors to oppose us and assist any of their towns when they knew we were going to attack them, they informed the people of Iztapalapa to be prepared, and they sent them more than eight thousand Mexicans as reinforcements. So as good warriors, they waited for us on dry land, both the people from Iztapalapa and the Mexicans who came to assist them, and they fought with us very valiantly for a good while; but our horsemen broke through their ranks, and with the crossbows and escopetas and all our Tlaxcalan friends, who set upon them like mad dogs, they quickly left the field and withdrew to town.

All of this was arranged ahead of time and with a strategy they had agreed among themselves, and it would have been damaging enough for us had we not quickly got out of that town and the houses on dry land, and it was like this: They made as if they were fleeing and got into canoes in the water and into the houses that stood in the lake, and others of them went into some reed beds. As the night was now dark, without making either noise or demonstrations of war, they let us lodge on dry land, content with the spoil we had and more with our victory. While we were in this situation, although we had watchmen, lookouts, patrols, and even scouts, when we least expected it, so much water flowed through all the town, that if the chieftains we had brought from Texcoco had not cried out and warned us to get out of the houses and onto dry land right away, we all would have been drowned, because they had released two canals of fresh and salted water and opened a causeway, whereupon everything was suddenly completely swollen with water. As our friends the Tlaxcalans were not used to water, nor did they know how to swim, two of them died; and we, with great risk to ourselves, all of us completely wet and the powder ruined, left without our gear. As we were in that condition and were very cold and had not eaten, we spent a bad night; and the worst of all was the mocking and shouting and whistles, which the people of Iztapalapa and Mexico gave us from their houses and canoes.

But another worse thing happened to us. Because in Mexico they knew of the plan to drown us by opening the causeway and canals, many battalions of warriors were waiting on land and in the lake, and when dawn broke they attacked us in such a way that we could hardly hold out against them, but they did not defeat us; they killed two soldiers and a horse and wounded many others, both our soldiers and Tlaxcalans. Little by little they slackened off in their fighting, and we returned to Texcoco half humiliated by the trick and ruse of driving us into the water, and also as we did not gain very much in reputation in the battle they fought with us afterward because we had no powder. However, they were still fearful, and they had enough to do with burying

or burning their dead and healing their wounds and repairing their houses.

[CXXXIX] *While Cortés and his men were in Texcoco after the expedition to Iztapalapa, three towns came in peace to ask pardon for the past wars and the death of Spaniards they had killed, saying they had done these things by order of the lord of Mexico, Coadlavaca. Cortés pardoned them and they pledged to be vassals of the Spanish king. Another town, Mezquique, which the Spanish also called by another name, Venezuela, also came in peace and friendship because the people there had always hated the Mexicans. At the same time, the Mexicans were pushing back against “the four towns that had first come for our friendship, which were called Guantinchán or Guaxutlán, and [Bernal Díaz could] not remember the names of the other towns.” The Mexicans were after the great plantations of maize there that were ready to harvest and from which the people of Texcoco supplied Cortés’s camp; the Mexicans wanted the maize for their idols. Cortés sent men to the aid of the towns, and Bernal Díaz went with them. Cortés arranged that when the townspeople had to collect the maize, he would send a captain with many horsemen and soldiers to guard those who went to get the maize. Bernal Díaz states that he went on two of those patrols. Also Mexicans came after the people of Chalco, Tamanalco, Venezuela, and other friendly towns. Because it was not possible to help all those towns, Cortés chose to send Gonzalo de Sandoval and Francisco de Lugo with about two hundred soldiers to Chalco and Tamanalco so that the road to Tlaxcala and Villa Rica would be clear. The Mexicans fled. At the request of the people of Chalco, Sandoval brought to Cortés two sons of the lord of that province who had just died of smallpox. The lord had asked that his sons meet Cortés “so that by his hand they might become lords of Chalco.” Cortés gave the lordship of Chalco to the older brother, with more than half the towns subject to him, and the lordship of the other towns to the younger brother.*

Cortés decided to send eight prisoners Sandoval seized in that rout at Chalco to Mexico to tell their lord, Guatemuz, who had

been elevated as king, how much he, Cortés, desired that they not be the cause of his destruction or that of so great a city; that he, Guatemuz, should come in peace and he, Cortés, would pardon them the deaths and damage they did to us in the city and would not ask anything else of them; that Guatemuz should see that war is easy to remedy at the beginning but difficult in the middle and end, and that in the end they would be destroyed; that they knew well about the barricades and defenses and stores of darts, arrows, lances, war clubs, thick round stones and slingshots, and all kinds of material for war that they were continually making and preparing, but that it was a waste of time and in vain to do it; why was it that Guatemuz wanted all his people to die and the city to be destroyed; and that he should see the great power of Our Lord God, the one in whom we believe and worship, and that he always helps us; and that he should also consider that all the towns that are his neighbors are now of our party; that the Tlaxcalans desired nothing but war so as to avenge the treacheries and deaths of their people at their hands; and that they should lay down their weapons and come in peace. He promised always to give them much honor, and doña Marina and Aguilar gave them many other good arguments and advice about the matter.

Those eight Indians, our messengers, went before Guatemuz, but he would not send any response whatsoever. Instead, he went on making more barricades and defenses and sent an order to all the provinces that if any of us should be captured while straying from the group, they should bring them to Mexico to be sacrificed, and that when he summons them, they should come right away with their weapons. He sent to forgive and pardon them from much of their tribute and even made great promises. Let us stop talking about the preparations for war they were making in Mexico, and let us talk about how many Indians returned once again from the towns of Guantínchan and Guaxutlan, beaten by the Mexicans because they had accepted our friendship and because of the dispute over the maize fields they used to sow for the Mexican papas during the time they served them. As these towns were close to the lake of Mexico, the Mexicans came each week to attack them and even took

some Indians as prisoners to Mexico. When Cortés learned of this, he decided to go again, himself, with a hundred soldiers, twenty horsemen, and twelve escopeteros and crossbowmen; and he had good lookouts so that whenever they saw the Mexican squadrons coming they could come to tell him. Because Texcoco was only one or two leagues away, one Wednesday morning, at the break of day, Cortés found himself where the Mexican squadrons were. He fought with them in such a way that he soon broke them up, and they retreated to their canoes in the lake. There four Mexicans were killed and three others were taken prisoner, and Cortés returned with his men to Texcoco. From then on, the Culhuans did not come against those towns.

[CXL] *Bernal Díaz writes that Cortés sent Gonzalo de Sandoval to Tlaxcala for timber to finish building the brigantines with a large company of soldiers, escopeteros, crossbowmen, horsemen, Tlaxcalans, and chieftains from Texcoco. He also was to take the youths and elders from Chalco to see them safely home. Cortés made peace between those traditional enemies, Tlaxcala and Chalco, a peace so solid that it lasted from then on. On his way, Sandoval went to the town of Pueblo Morisco where Spaniards had been killed coming from Villa Rica; there they found the remains of the men and horses in the cu but pardoned the inhabitants, who pledged obedience to the Spanish king. As Sandoval made his way toward Tlaxcala, near the head town, he met Martín López with eight thousand Indians carrying wood for the brigantines, eight thousand more as a guard, and two thousand carrying the food and serving as relief for the porters. Sandoval joined them and they marched in this same order until they reached Mexican territory, where the Mexicans began harassing them. To prepare for a possible surprise attack, Sandoval divided the horsemen, crossbowmen, and escopeteros and ordered Chichimecatecle and his Tlaxcalans to march in the rear. Chichimecatecle took this order as an insult to his bravery, but Sandoval marched with him and explained that it was an important position because the Mexicans always attacked the baggage in the rear. In two days the entourage arrived at Texcoco in a triumphant march. With all the wood and Martín López now in*

*Texcoco, work on the brigantines moved along quickly. As that work was progressing, the Mexicans tried to set the brigantines on fire; the Mexicans also sent messengers to all their subject towns relieving them of paying tribute and working on the city's defenses.*

[CXLI] As more than fifteen thousand Tlaxcalans had come to Texcoco with the wood for the brigantines and had been in that city five days without doing anything worth mentioning and had no provisions, and as the captain of the Tlaxcalans, Chichimecatecle, was very courageous and proud, he said to Cortés that he wanted to render some service to our great emperor by fighting against Mexicans, as much to show his strength and the goodwill he had for us as to take revenge for the deaths and robberies they had committed against his brothers and vassals both in Mexico and in his lands. So he asked Cortés as a favor to order and direct him to where he could go to find our enemies. Cortés told him that he regarded his goodwill highly and that the next day he was going to a town called Saltocan, five or six leagues from Texcoco, where the houses were built on the water of the lake, but there was an entrance to it by land. He had sent to that town to ask for peace three times, but they would not come, so he again sent messengers with the people of Tepetexcoco and Otumba, their neighbors; instead of coming in peace, they insulted the messengers badly and beat two of them about the head. The answer they gave was that if we went there, they would have no fewer forces and no less a fortress than Mexico, and whenever we might come we would find them in the field. They said their idols had told them that they would kill us there, and the idols counseled them to give this reply.

For this reason, Cortés got ready to go in person on that expedition, and he ordered two hundred fifty soldiers to go in his company and thirty horsemen, and he brought with him Pedro de Alvarado, Cristóbal de Olid, many crossbowmen and escopeteros, all the Tlaxcalans, and a captaincy of warriors from Texcoco, most of them chieftains. He left Gonzalo de Sandoval on guard in Texcoco to keep a good lookout over the Texcocans, the brigantines, and the camp so there would not be an attack on

the camp one night; as I have already said, we always had to be on the alert to keep the Mexicans out and also because Texcoco was such a large city and all its inhabitants were friends and relatives of Mexicans. He ordered Sandoval and Martín López, the master constructing the brigantines, to have the brigantines ready to be launched and sailed within fifteen days. After having heard mass, Cortés left Texcoco with his army.

*They first went to Xaltocan where they were able with the help of their friends to find an entrance to the town and defeat the people there. The next day they went to Quiahuiztlan, which had been abandoned, and from there to Tenayuca, which they used to call the "Snake Town," because in the largest adoratorio there, they had found two large statues of snakes with evil faces, their idols. That town and the next town, Azcapotzalco, were both deserted. They finally met the Mexicans in the town of Tacuba where they had battles and encounters with the enemy for five days. The Indians tricked Cortés, leading him into an ambush, but Cortés narrowly escaped and retreated to Alcuman, after which he returned with his army to Texcoco. The Tlaxcalans, now rich and loaded with spoils, asked to return to their lands, and Cortés gave them permission. Four days later, some people from the north coast came to ask for peace and offer themselves as vassals of the Spanish king. Although Cortés knew they had been involved in the death of Juan de Escalante and the six soldiers in Almería, he received them as vassals of the emperor.*

At this moment, other towns that had offered themselves as our friends came to Cortés to ask for help against the Mexicans. They said we should come to help them because great squadrons had come against them, had entered into their land and carried off many of their Indians as prisoners and had injured others. At that same time, people of Chalco and Tamanalco came and said that if we did not help them soon, they would be lost, because many garrisons of their enemies were upon them. They told such tales of woe, and they brought a piece of maguey fiber cloth painted in a lifelike way of the squadrons that came against them, that

Cortés did not know what to say or how to answer them nor to give relief to any of them, because he had seen that many of our soldiers were wounded and ailing and eight had died of pleurisy and of vomiting coagulated blood mixed with mud through the mouth and nose. This was because of the exhaustion from always carrying weapons on our backs, from our continually going on expeditions, and from the dust we swallowed. Besides this, he saw that three or four horses had died of wounds, and we never stopped going on expeditions, some coming and others going. The response he gave to the first towns was to praise them and to say he would go presently to help them, but that in the meantime until he should come, other towns, their neighbors, should help them; that they should wait in the field for the Mexicans and all together attack them; that if the Mexicans saw them facing up to them and setting their forces against them, they would be afraid; that now the Mexicans did not have such strength to wage war as they used to, because they had many enemies. Through our interpreters, he said such words to them and encouraged them that their hearts were calmed somewhat. Right away they asked for letters for two towns who were their neighbors, our friends, telling them that they should come to help. They did not understand the letters at that time, but they knew well that among us it was a certain thing that when letters were sent it was like commands or signs that we were ordering some things of importance. With the letters, they went away very content, showed them to their friends and summoned them, and as our Cortés had commanded, they waited in the field for the Mexicans and had a battle with them; with the help of our friends, their neighbors, to whom they gave the letter, it did not go badly for them.

Let us return to the people of Chalco. Seeing that it was a very important matter for us that that province and road be cleared of Culuan people because we had to come and go through there to the Villa Rica de la Veracruz and Tlaxcala, and we had to supply our camp from it because it is a land of much maize, our Cortés ordered Gonzalo de Sandoval, chief constable, to prepare himself at once to go to Chalco the next morning. He ordered him to take

twenty horsemen, two hundred soldiers, twelve crossbowmen, ten escopeteros, and the Tlaxcalans in our camp, who were very few because most of the others had gone to their land loaded with spoils. He also brought a captaincy of the people of Texcoco in his company, and likewise the captain Luis Marín, who was his very close friend. Cortés, Pedro de Alvarado, and Cristóbal de Olid stayed to guard that city and the brigantines.

Before Gonzalo de Sandoval goes to Chalco as arranged, I want to talk about how, while I was writing in this narrative everything that happened to Cortés on his expedition to Saltocan, by chance two very curious gentlemen were present who had read Gómara's history, and they said to me that I had forgotten to write three things that the chronicler Gómara had written about the same expedition of Cortés. The first was that Cortés went to look at Mexico with thirteen brigantines, and he fought very well against the great power of Guatemuz with his large canoes and pirogues in the lake; the second was that, when Cortés entered the causeway of Mexico, he had conversations with the Mexican lords and caciques and told them he would deny them provisions and they would die of hunger; and the other was that Cortés did not want to tell the people of Texcoco that he was going to Saltocan because he did not want to alert them to it. I replied to these same gentlemen that, at that time, the brigantines were not yet finished, and how could the brigantines be carried by land, or the horses and so many people by the lake? What he writes is laughable. When Cortés entered onto the causeway, as we have said, he had all he could do to escape, he and his army; he was half-routed, and at that time we had not put a blockade on Mexico to prevent their provisioning, nor were they hungry, and they were masters of all their vassals. What happened many days later, when we had them very hard pressed, Gómara puts here. In what he says about his going by another road to Saltocan so the people of Texcoco would not know it, I say that of necessity they went by the towns and lands of Texcoco because the road went through there and nowhere else. What he writes is very foolish. From what I have understood, he is not to blame but the one who informed him, who told him such a story in order to

glorify and exalt the one who perhaps gave him money for it, and he wrote it down, glorifying the things he did. They gave him those stories so he would not declare our deeds heroic, and this is the true one. When those same two gentlemen had understood well and saw clearly that what I said was true, they swore that they were going to tear up the book and history of Gómara that they had, for he says so many things over and above what happened that are not true. But let us leave this conversation and return to the captain Gonzalo de Sandoval, who left Texcoco after having heard mass and was near Chalco at dawn.

*Gonzalo de Sandoval went to Chalco and successfully fought with many squadrons of Mexicans. In the first encounter, the horse of Gonzalo Domínguez tumbled and fell on him, and a few days later Gonzalo Domínguez died from the fall. There was much sorrow in the camp because he had been one of the best riders and most courageous men. After several other encounters in which Sandoval and the horsemen were successful, Sandoval went to rest and sleep in an orchard, "the most beautiful orchard, with the most wonderful buildings and so much to see that it was the best that had been seen in New Spain." Sandoval sent to towns in the area urging them to come in peace, but they refused. He went to Yecapixtla and attacked the town with success and returned to Texcoco with his army and much plunder, "especially many good-looking Indian women." Guatemuz (Cuauhtemoc) was so angry he sent great forces of warriors to Chalco. Cortés and Sandoval had a conflict over the Mexican attack on Chalco; Cortés accused Sandoval of negligence and sent him back, exhausted, to Chalco. But the people of Chalco had already summoned the men from Guatzocingo, which was nearby, and more than twenty thousand of the combined forces had met and defeated the Mexicans. "For the Mexicans, this battle was a much greater dishonor, because it was the people of Chalco who had defeated them, than if we had routed them." Cortés and Sandoval soon reestablished their friendship. Bernal Díaz did not go on this expedition because he was badly wounded from a lance blow to his throat at the affair of Iztapalapa, which put him in danger of death and from which he still had a scar.*

[CXLIII] As Gonzalo de Sandoval had arrived with his army at Texcoco with many captured slaves, and many others had been taken in past expeditions, it was decided that they would be branded right away. When it was announced that they were to be taken to a designated house to be branded, most of us soldiers took the pieces we had taken to be marked with the brand of His Majesty, which was a “G,” signifying “Guerra.” As we had agreed earlier with Cortés, we believed that they would be returned to us after the royal fifth was paid and that each piece would be appraised according to its worth. But it was not done this way. If it was badly done at Tepeaca, as I have said before, it was done much worse in Texcoco, for after the royal fifth was taken, there was another fifth for Cortés and other shares for the captains, and during the night before the branding, when the women were brought together, our best-looking women disappeared. Cortés had told and promised us that the best pieces would be sold in a public auction for what they were worth, and those who were not so good for a lower price, but there was not good order in that either, because the officials of the king who had charge of the women did what they wanted. So if it was done badly once, it was worse this time. From then on, many of us soldiers who took good-looking Indian women, so that they would not be taken away from us as in the past, hid them and did not take them to be branded, saying they had fled. Those who were favorites of Cortés took the women secretly at night to be branded; the women were appraised for what they were worth, marked with the iron, and the favorites paid the fifth. Many others were left in our lodgings, and we said they were *naborías* who had come from the neighboring towns that had made peace with us and from Tlaxcala.

I also want to say that, as some of the slave women had been in our company now for two or three months, they knew which soldiers in the whole camp were good, which were bad, which treated their Indian women and *naborías* well, which treated them badly, and who had a reputation as a gentlemen but was not. When they sold them at the public auction, if some soldiers got them whom these Indian men or women were not happy with

or had treated them badly, the Indians immediately disappeared and were not seen again, and to ask after them was, as they say, like looking for Mohammed in Granada or writing to my son the bachelor of arts in Salamanca. In the end, it all stayed as a debt on the books of the king, both the public sales and the fifths, and when it came time to give out shares of gold, the debt consumed them, so that very few or no soldiers received shares, because the amount was already owed and even many pesos beyond what the officials of the king later collected from them.

Let us leave this and talk about how at that time a ship came from Castile, bringing as His Majesty's treasurer one Julián de Alderete, citizen of Tordesillas, and one Orduña the elder, a former citizen of Puebla and who, after Mexico was won, brought five daughters whom he later married honorably; he was a native of Tordesillas. A friar of St. Francis also came, fray Pedro Melgarejo de Urrea, native of Seville, who brought some bulls of señor St. Peter,<sup>1</sup> and with them, we made our peace if we had committed some fault in the wars we had been in. So, in a few months, the friar went back to Castile rich and taken care of. When he came, he brought as deputy to take charge of the bulls, Jerónimo López, who afterward was secretary in Mexico. There came also one Antonio de Carvajal, who now lives in Mexico, very old now, who was captain of a brigantine, and Jerónimo Ruiz de la Mota, who became Orduña's son-in-law after the conquest of Mexico, who likewise was captain of a brigantine, native of Burgos. One Briones came, native of Salamanca; they hanged this Briones in this province of Guatemala for inciting mutiny four years after he arrived after the expedition to Honduras. And many others came whom I no longer remember; and also one Alonso Díaz de la Reguera, a former citizen of Guatemala, who now lives in Valladolid. In this ship they also brought many weapons and powder. In short, as a ship coming from Castile, it came loaded with many things, and we rejoiced at that and at the news it brought from Castile.

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1. Bernal Díaz here refers to papal bulls, or decrees.

I do not remember well, but it seems to me that they said the bishop of Burgos had already lost [his position] and that His Majesty was not on good terms with him, because he had come to know of our many good and notable services; and as the bishop used to write to him in Flanders the opposite of what happened and in favor of Diego Velázquez, and as His Majesty found that everything our representatives told him on our behalf was very clearly true, he would not listen to anything the bishop might say to him.

Let us return to talking about how Cortés saw that the building of the brigantines was completed and the great will all our soldiers had for laying siege to Mexico. At that time the people of Chalco came once more to say that the Mexicans were attacking and that he should send help, and Cortés sent to tell them that he would go in person to their towns and lands and would not return until he drove all the enemies from those neighborhoods. He ordered three hundred soldiers to be readied, thirty horsemen, all the remaining escopeteros and crossbowmen, and the people of Texcoco, and in his company went Pedro de Alvarado, Andrés de Tapia, Cristóbal de Olid; the treasurer Julián de Alderete also went and the friar fray Pedro de Malgarejo, who by that time had already arrived at our camp, and I went then with Cortés because he ordered me to go with him.

[CXLIV] As Cortés had told the people of Chalco that he would go to help them so that the Mexicans would not come to attack them, for we were tired of coming and going each week to rescue them, he decided to ready all the soldiers and army mentioned above. He left Gonzalo de Sandoval, with a good number of soldiers and horsemen, to guard Texcoco and the brigantines. One morning, Friday the fifth of April, 1521, having heard mass, we went to Tamanalco, where they received us very well and we slept there. The next day we went to Chalco, because the towns were very close to each other. There Cortés ordered all the caciques of that province to be called and he gave a speech through our interpreters doña Marina and Jerónimo de Aguilar, giving them to understand how, at present, we were going to see

whether we could bring some towns around the lake to peace and also to view the land and position in order to besiege Mexico, and that we were going to launch the brigantines, of which there were thirteen, and he begged them to have all their warriors ready to go with us the next day.

When they had understood this, to a man they said they would do it very willingly. The next day, we spent the night in another town subject to Chalco, called Chimaluacan, and more than twenty thousand friends came there from Chalco, Texcoco, Guaxocingo, as well as the Tlaxcalans and other peoples, and so many came that, in all the expeditions on which I had been since I came to New Spain, never did I see so many warriors from our friends as came in our company then. So great a multitude of them went because of the spoils they would get, and certainly in order to gorge themselves on human flesh if there were battles, because they knew well that there would be battles. It is the same as when in Italy an army marched from one place to another, crows and kites and other birds of prey would follow it to nourish themselves on the dead bodies that were left on the field after a very bloody battle; so I believe this is the reason so many thousands of Indians followed us.

Let us return to our story. At that time we had news that many squadrons and captaincies of Mexicans and their allies, all from that region, were waiting on a plain near there to fight with us, and Cortés warned us to be very alert. Very early in the morning, having heard mass, we went out from that town where we slept, Chimaluacan, and in very good order we went along among some rocky crags between two small mountains in which there were fortresses and barricades where many Indian men and women were gathered and entrenched. From this stronghold, they shouted at us and yelled and screamed, but we did not care to fight with them. Rather we kept silence and marched on our way to a large deserted town called Yautepeque, which we also passed without stopping. We arrived at a plain where there were some springs with very little water, and on one side was a high rocky hill with a fortress very difficult to overcome, as the effort soon proved.

When we came near this rock, we saw that it was filled with warriors and, from the top, they shouted at us and threw stones, spears and arrows, and soon wounded three of our soldiers. Cortés ordered us to stop there and said: "It seems that all these Mexicans put themselves in fortresses and mock us for not attacking them." He said that because of those we had passed by among the small hills. Then he ordered some horsemen and crossbowmen to go around one side of the rocky hill to see if there was a better way up, with a good approach to be able to fight them. They went and said that where we were was best of all, because in all the rest there was no way up at all, just sheer rock. Then Cortés ordered us to go in and up, the standard-bearer Cristóbal del Corral in front, along with other banners, and all of us following him; Cortés and the horsemen waited on the plain as a guard, so that other squadrons of Mexicans would not come to strike our baggage or us while we were attacking that stronghold.

As we began to climb up the hill, the Indian warriors rolled down so many large stones and boulders that it was frightening to see them leaping and flying, and it was a miracle they did not kill all of us. Then one soldier, whose name was something Martínez, a Valencian, who was chief waiter to a great nobleman in Castile, died at my feet, and this soldier wore a steel helmet, but he never called out or said a word. Still, we kept climbing, but as the *galgas*, which is what we called the great rocks coming down, came tumbling, hurtling down, skipping, they killed two other good soldiers, Gaspar Sánchez, nephew of the treasurer of Cuba, and somebody Bravo. Still we did not stop climbing. Then they killed another soldier, very courageous, named Alonso Rodríguez, and another, and wounded in the head two and in the legs nearly all the rest of us, and still we persisted and advanced. I, as in that time I was mobile, kept following the standard-bearer, Corral, and we went under some hollows and cavities in the hillside. I took the risk that some of the boulders would hit me while I was climbing from hollow to hollow, which was a very great risk. The standard-bearer, Cristóbal del Corral, was protecting himself behind some thick trees with many thorns, which grow in those hollows, and

he was wounded in the head, his face covered with blood, the banner broken, and he called out to me: "Oh, señor Bernal Díaz del Castillo, there's no question of going ahead, watch out that none of these rocks or boulders hit you; stay in the shelter of that cavity!" because now we could not even hold on with our hands, much less climb.

At this time, I saw Pedro Barba, who was captain of crossbowmen, with two other soldiers climbing up in the same way Corral and I had, from hollow to hollow. I called to him from above: "Ah, señor captain, don't climb any further, for you'll not be able to hold on with hands and feet, but will roll back down!" And when I said this to him he answered like a very courageous man, or so that the response would seem like that of a great lord: "You're not supposed to say that, rather go forward." Those words stung me personally, and I replied: "Then let's see you come to where I am," and I went still higher. At that very moment so many very large stones they had held back for the purpose came rolling from above that they wounded Pedro Barba and killed one of his soldiers, and they could not move a step from where they were. Then the standard-bearer Corral yelled out that they should pass the word from mouth to mouth to Cortés that it was not possible to climb higher and that to retreat would also be dangerous.

When Cortés was told this, he understood, because down where he was on level ground, he had already had three soldiers killed and seven wounded by the great impetus of the boulders that had plunged down, and Cortés was even sure that all the rest of us who had climbed up were dead or badly wounded, because from where he was he could not see for the turns in the hill. Then from signs and shouts and some escopeta shots we, above, had indications that they were ordering us to retreat. So in good order, from hollow to hollow, we climbed down, and the bodies of the dead, all wounded in the head and streaming blood, the banners broken and eight dead. When Cortés saw us, he gave thanks to God.

Then they told him what had passed between Pedro Barba and me, because Pedro Barba himself and the standard-bearer Corral were telling him about the great strength of the hill and that it was

a marvel that the boulders flying down did not carry us away, and they soon knew about it throughout the camp. Let us leave these empty tales and talk about how there were many captaincies of Mexicans waiting in an area where we could neither see nor find out about them. They were waiting to reinforce and aid those on the hill, and they knew well that we would not be able to climb up to the fortress. So while we were fighting, they had arranged that those on the hill would attack us on one side and they themselves on the other and, just as they had agreed, they came to the assistance of those on the rock. When Cortés knew they were coming, he ordered the horsemen and all of us to go and meet them, and so it was done. That land was level. In places there were something like meadows that were among other high mountains, and we pursued the enemy until we came to another very strong rocky hill, but in the pursuit very few Indians were killed because they took shelter in places they could not be reached.

Returning to the stronghold we had tried to climb, and seeing that there was no water there and we had not had anything to drink all day, nor even the horses, because the springs I have said were there were nothing but mud—we brought so many friends, they were on them and did not let them flow—so we ordered our camp to be moved and we went down through a meadow to another rocky hill, which was about a league and a half away, believing we would find water there, but there was very little. Near that hill were some native mulberry trees; we stopped there, and there were about twelve or thirteen houses at the foot of the stronghold. When we arrived, they began to yell at us and hurl spears, boulders, and arrows from above, and there were many more people in this stronghold than on the first hill, and it was even stronger, as we learned later. Our escopeteros and crossbowmen shot at them, but they were so high up and had so many barricades that we could do them no harm at all. It was impossible to climb up and enter them, although we tried two times from the houses that were there, through some passes by which we could climb up two turns in the path, but beyond that, I have already said, it was worse than the first. So at this stronghold, as at the first,

we did not add to our reputation, rather the Mexicans and their confederates had the victory.

That night we slept among those mulberry trees almost dying of thirst, and it was agreed that the next day all the crossbowmen and escopeteros would go to another rocky hill near the large hill and that they would climb it because there was a way up, although not a good one, to see if from there, crossbows and escopetas could reach the other strong hill so they could attack it. Cortés ordered Francisco Verdugo and the treasurer, Julián de Alderete, who boasted of being good crossbowmen, and Pedro Barba, who was a captain, to go as leaders, and all the rest of us soldiers to attack from the passes and ways up from the houses that I mentioned we tried to climb. Thus we began to attack, but they hurled so many large and small stones that they wounded many soldiers; besides this, we did not in fact climb up them because it was too much, for we could not hold ourselves in place even using our hands and feet. While we were trying to attack, the crossbowmen and escopeteros from the hill I have mentioned managed to reach the enemy with the crossbows and escopetas, although not by much, and they killed some and wounded others. We were fighting with them for about half an hour, when it pleased Our Lord God that they agreed to make peace, because they had no water at all and there were many people up there on the rock. On a flat place at the top, men, women, children, and some infants from all those districts had taken refuge. So that we down below would understand that they wanted peace, the women waved some cloths from the hilltop toward us below, and clapped their hands, signaling that they would make bread or tortillas for us, and the warriors stopped throwing spears, stones, and arrows.

When Cortés understood this, he ordered that no harm should be done to them at all, and by signals, he made them understand that five chieftains should come down to make peace discussions. They came down, and with great respect asked Cortés to pardon them, that it was to protect and defend themselves that they had climbed up into that stronghold. Quite angrily, Cortés told them through our interpreters, doña Marina

and Aguilar, that they deserved to die for having begun the war, but as they had come in peace, they should go right away to the other hill and summon the caciques and chieftains who were on it, bring the dead, and that he would pardon them for what had happened in the past. They should come in peace, but if they did not, we would attack and besiege them until they died of thirst, because we knew well that they had no water, for there is very little water in that whole land. They then went to summon the caciques as they had been ordered.

Let us stop speaking about this until they return with the reply and talk about how Cortés was talking with the friar Melgarejo and the treasurer Alderete about past wars we had fought before they came and also the great power of the Mexicans and the great cities we have seen since we came from Castile. They said that if the emperor our lord were informed of the truth (for the bishop of Burgos had written the opposite to him), he would send and give us great rewards; and they said they could not remember that any king in the world had received greater services than what Cortés and we had done for him by winning so many cities without his knowing a thing about it. Let us leave out other numerous discussions that went on and talk about how Cortés ordered the standard-bearer Corral and two other captains, Juan Jaramillo and Pedro de Ircio, and me, for I found myself standing there with them, to go up the hill and see what the stronghold there was like, whether there were many Indians wounded or killed by crossbow bolts and escopetas and what people were gathered there. When he ordered us to do that, he said: "Make sure, gentlemen, that you don't take even a grain of maize from them," and, as I understood it, he wanted us to profit by it, and for that reason he sent us and ordered me to go with the others.

Climbing the crag by some bad paths, I say that it was stronger than the first because it was sheer rock. Once at the top, one entered into the fortress by an opening no wider than two mouths of a granary or an oven. At the highest point, where it was level, there were very wide meadows, all filled with people, warriors as well as many women and children, and we found some twenty dead and many wounded, and they did not have a drop of water to

drink. They had all their gear and property in bundles and many other bundles of cloths, which was the tribute they were giving to Guatemuz. When I saw so many loads of cloth, and I knew they were for tribute, I began to load four Tlaxcalans, my *naborías* whom I brought with me, and I also put four other bales on the backs of four other Indians from among those who were guarding the tribute, one load on each one. When Pedro de Ircio saw it, he said I should not take it, and I insisted that I should; but as he was a captain I did what he ordered because he threatened to tell Cortés. Pedro de Ircio told me that I had heard very well that Cortés said we should not take a grain of maize from them; and I said that it was true, but because of those very words I was going to take that cloth. But he would not let me take anything, and we went down to tell Cortés what we had seen regarding what he had sent us to observe.

Pedro de Ircio told Cortés what happened in order to set him against me, thinking Cortés would be delighted with him. After telling Cortés what he had seen, he said: "Nothing at all was taken from them, although Bernal Díaz del Castillo had already loaded eight Indians with cloth, and if I hadn't stopped him, he would have brought them down loaded." Then Cortés said, half angrily: "Well, why didn't he bring them; and you two should have kept the cloth and the Indians." And he said: "Look how they didn't understand me that I sent them so that they could avail themselves of it, and from Bernal Díaz, who did understand me, they took the spoils he was bringing from those dogs, who will be left there laughing at us with those who have killed and wounded us." When Pedro de Ircio heard that, he said he would go up to the stronghold again. Then Cortés told them that it was no longer the time for it, and he was on no account to go there. The people of the other hill came, and after many discussions about forgiving them for the past, they all gave their obedience to His Majesty.

Because there was no water in that place, we journeyed at once to a fine town, Guaxtepeque,<sup>2</sup> where the orchard was, the one I

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2. Huaxtepec.

have said is the best I have seen in my whole life, and I say it again. After the treasurer Alderete and the friar Melgarejo and our Cortés had seen it then and walked around it a while, they said they were amazed and had not seen a better orchard in Castile. That night we all lodged in the orchard, and the caciques of that town came to speak to and serve Cortés, because Gonzalo de Sandoval had already received them in peace when he entered that town.

That night we rested there, and very early the next day we left for Cuernavaca, and we met some squadrons of Mexican warriors that had come from that town. Our horsemen pursued them for more than a league and a half before confining them in another large town called Tepuztlan, where the inhabitants were caught so off guard, that we came up on them before the lookouts they had watching us arrived. Here we got very good Indian women and spoils, but no Mexicans or men native to the town waited for us. Cortés summoned the caciques three or four times to come in peace, and if they did not come, he said he would burn the town and we would go out to search for them. The response was that they would not come. So that other towns would have fear of the same, he ordered half the houses near there to be set on fire. In that instant, the caciques of the town through which we passed that day, Yautepeque, came and gave obedience to His Majesty. The next day we journeyed to another better and larger town called Coadlavaca,<sup>3</sup> and we now commonly corrupt that word and we call it Cuernavaca. There were many warriors in it, both Mexican and native, and it was very strong because of some depressions and streams in the ravines through which the water runs, very deep, more than eight fathoms to the bottom, although they do not carry much water, and it is a fortress for them. Also there was no way for the horses to enter except for two bridges, which they had broken. So they were so strong that we could not reach them, although we managed to fight with them from this

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3. In other contexts, Bernal Díaz has used the same name, Coadlavaca, to designate Cuitlahuac, ruler of Tenochtitlan and, later, Mexico.

side of their ravines with the little stream in the middle. They hurled many spears, arrows, and stones from slings, which were falling thicker than hail.

While we were engaged in this, they advised Cortés that further along, about a half league, there was a place for the horses to enter. He immediately went there with all Narváez's men and all the horsemen, and all of us stayed there searching for a way to pass. We saw that from some trees next to a deep depression, one could pass to the other side. Although three soldiers fell down from the trees into the water, and one of them even broke his leg, we still crossed, even though it was with great danger. I say of myself that truly when I crossed and saw how very dangerous and bad the passage was, my head became faint, and yet I got across along with others of our soldiers and many Tlaxcalans. We fell on the rear of the Mexicans who were hurling stones, spears, and arrows at our men. When they saw us, they thought it was impossible, and they believed that there were many more of us than there were. At that instant Cristóbal de Olid and Andrés de Tapia arrived with other horsemen, who had passed with much risk to themselves by a broken bridge, and we fell on the enemy so that they turned their backs and went fleeing into the forests and other parts of that deep depression where they could not be taken. A little while later, Cortés also arrived with all the rest of the horsemen. In this town there was great spoil, both very large cloaks and good Indian women; Cortés ordered that we stay there that day, and we all lodged in an orchard of the lord of that town, a very good orchard. Although I would like to speak many times in this story about the great precautions we took with lookouts, sentinels, and scouts wherever we were, whether on the road or not, it is tiresome to recite it so many times, and for this reason I will go ahead and talk about how our scouts came to tell Cortés that some twenty Indians were coming and that it seemed from their movements and appearance that they were caciques and chieftains who brought messages or to ask for peace. They were the caciques of that town. When they arrived where Cortés was, they showed him great respect, presented him with certain jewels

of gold, and asked him to pardon them for not coming out in peace. They said that the lord of Mexico had ordered them, since they were in the fortified place, to attack us from there, and he sent them a large squadron of Mexicans to help them. But from what they have now seen there is no place, as strong as it might be, that we will not attack and master. They begged for mercy and that he receive them in peace. Cortés looked on them kindly and said that we were vassals of a great lord, the emperor don Carlos, who showed great favor to all those who served him, and that in his royal name he, Cortés, would receive them in peace, and there they gave obedience to His Majesty. I remember that those caciques said that, because they had not come in peace until then, our gods permitted theirs to punish them in their persons, belongings, and towns.

[CXLV] Well, as we were on our way to Xochimilco, which is a great city, with most of the houses built in the freshwater lake, about two and one-half leagues from Mexico, going along our way, arranged in very good order as was our custom, we went through some stands of pine trees, but there was no water the whole way. As we went with our weapons on our backs and it was already late and the sun very hot, we suffered a great deal from thirst and did not know whether there was water ahead. We had gone two or three leagues and were completely uncertain how far from there the well was that they had told us was on the road. As Cortés saw our entire army so tired and the Tlaxcalan friends fainting and one them had died of thirst—and it seems to me that one of our soldiers who was old and ill also died of thirst—Cortés decided to stop in the shade and cool of some pine groves. He ordered six horsemen to go ahead on the road to Xochimilco to see how far from there was a town or outlying settlement or the well that we had heard was close, in order to go and spend the night. When the horsemen, Cristóbal de Olid, one Valdenebro, Pedro González de Trujillo, and other very brave men left, I decided to go off with three of my Tlaxcalan naborías, very bold and swift, to a place where neither Cortés nor the horsemen could see me. I followed the horsemen until they saw me coming behind them

and stopped me to make me return in case there might be some surprise attack of Mexican warriors against whom I would not be able to defend myself. Still I insisted on going with them, and Cristóbal de Olid, as I was his friend, said that I could go but that I should keep my fists ready to fight and my feet ready to take me to safety if there should be any skirmishes with Mexicans. But my thirst was so great that I would risk my life to fill up with water. About a half league ahead, on the sides of some small hills, were many outlying settlements and small groups of houses belonging to the people of Xochimilco. Then the horsemen left me in order to search for water in the houses; they found it and they filled themselves with it. One of my Tlaxcalans brought me, from a house, a large pitcher—for there are large pitchers in that land—of very cold water, from which I and they satisfied ourselves. Then I decided to return from there to where Cortés was resting, because the dwellers of those settlements were already beginning to call to arms and yell and whistle at us, and the Tlaxcalans and I brought the large pitcher filled with water, and I found Cortés, who was beginning to move again with his army.

I told Cortés there was water in some settlements very close to there and that I had drunk and brought water in the large pitcher, which the Tlaxcalans carried very carefully hidden so that it would not be taken from me, because thirst has no law. Cortés and other gentlemen drank, and he was very satisfied and all were rejoicing and hurried on their way. We arrived at the settlements before sunset, and around the houses they found water, but not much, and with their thirst and hunger, some of them ate things like thistles, which hurt their tongues and mouths.

At that moment, the horsemen returned and said that the well was far away and that already all the land was calling to arms for war, so it would be best to spend the night where we were. Then they posted watchmen, lookouts, and scouts, and I was one of them they posted as a watchman. It seems to me that it rained a little that night or that there was a lot of wind, and the next day very early we began to march; at about eight we arrived at Xochimilco. I do not know now how to tell about the multitude of warriors

that were waiting for us, some on land and others on a bridge they had broken, and the many barricades and earthen walls they had made, and the lances they carried made from the swords they seized at the time of the great slaughter of our men in the affair of the bridges in Mexico. Many other Indian captains carried swords taken from us, ours all fixed on other long lances, very shiny; then archers and those who use double-pointed javelins and slings with stones and war clubs somewhat like broadswords and made with sharp blades. I say that the entire dry land was filled with them, and at the passage of that bridge we fought with them about a half hour and could not get through, and neither crossbows nor escopetas were enough nor the great charges we made, and worst of all was that many other squadrons were already coming from behind to attack us. When we saw that, we broke through the water and bridge half swimming, half wading, and some of our soldiers who did not willingly want to drink so much water, in passing under that bridge did drink so much that their bellies were swollen from it.

Let us return to our battle. At the passage of the bridge many of our soldiers were wounded, but soon we carried the enemy with our good slashing through some streets where there was solid ground ahead. Cortés and the horsemen got by other ways to firm ground where they ran up against more than ten thousand Indians, all Mexicans, who were coming as reinforcements to help the people of that town. The way they fought with our men was to wait for the horsemen with their lances, and they wounded four of them. Cortés was in that close press, and the horse on which he was riding, a very good, dark chestnut they called *el Romo*,<sup>4</sup> whether he was so fat or so lacking in vigor because he was pampered, faltered, and the Mexican enemies, who were many, laid hands on Cortés and dragged him from the horse. Others said that they knocked him down through sheer strength. Be it the one or the other, in that instant many more Mexican warriors

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4. "The Wide" or "Lifeless."

arrived to see whether they could grab Cortés alive. When some Tlaxcalans and a very brave soldier named Cristóbal de Olea, a native of Old Castile in the area of Medina del Campo, saw that, they immediately came, and with good cuts and thrusts, made room for Cortés to remount, although badly wounded in the head, and Olea was very badly wounded with three cuts. At that point all the rest of us soldiers who were near Cortés came to help. At that time, as in every street of that city there were many squadrons of warriors, and as we necessarily had to follow the banners, we could not all be together, but some of us fought in some areas and others in others as we were ordered by Cortés. But we understood very well where Cortés and the horsemen went because there were many shouts, yells, shrieks, and whistles, and that is where fighting was most intense. Without further explanation, although there were many warriors all around us, we went with great risk to ourselves to where Cortés was. Fifteen horsemen had already joined him, and they were fighting with the enemy next to some canals where the enemy had made barricades and earthen walls. When we arrived we put them to flight, although not all of them turned their backs on us; and because the soldier Olea, who had helped our Cortés, was very badly wounded with three cuts and was bleeding excessively, and because the streets of that city were filled with warriors, we told Cortés he should turn back to some barricades so that he and Olea and the horse could be tended to. We turned back but not without concern for the spears, stones, and arrows they were hurling at us from many sides where they had barricades and earthen walls, and the Mexicans, believing we were retreating, pursued us with great fury.

*The battle continued with Cortés and his men managing to drive the Indians from that place and courtyard. Then Guatemuz (Cuauhtemoc) sent thousands of warriors to attack both night and day from all directions. At night, security precautions were particularly intense. Bernal Díaz tells of an incident when he was standing watch, and Cortés accompanied by ten horsemen came close to where he was; he "shouted out and we said: 'Who comes there? Can't you*

*speak? Who comes or walks there?'; and we threw three or four stones at him. And when Cortés recognized my companion and me from our voices, Cortés said to the treasurer Julián de Alderete and fray Pedro Melgarejo and to Cristóbal de Olid, the maestre de campo, . . . 'We have no need of putting here more security than the two men posted . . . who are among those who were with me from the first, and we can fully trust them this watch, even should there be another great confrontation.'"* Cortés's army, without powder for the escopetas or bolts for the crossbows, spent the entire night feathering and setting bolts to use with the crossbows. Some soldiers who went into the houses in Xochimilco to take cloaks and other spoils were attacked by Mexican warriors who came in fleets of canoes. The Mexicans carried off four Spaniards, including Juan de Lara and Alonso Hernández, alive to Mexico. Bernal Díaz writes, "When they carried those four soldiers to Guatemuz (Cuahtemoc), he managed to find out how very few we were, those who came with Cortés, that many were wounded, and he learned everything he wanted to know about our journey. When he was fully informed, he ordered the feet, arms, and heads of our unfortunate companions to be cut off, and they sent them to many towns of our friends who had come to us in peace, and he sent a message to them that before we returned to Texcoco, he thought not one of us would remain alive, and he offered their hearts and blood to their idols." Cortés and his men then moved from Xochimilco to Coyoacan and from there to Tacuba. During the move, the Mexicans seized two of the young squires who served Cortés and carried them off to Guatemuz (Cuahtemoc), who sacrificed them, which brought Cortés close to tears.

## WITHOUT THE BRIGANTINES WE COULD NOT INVADE

When Cortés arrived at Tacuba it was raining heavily. We repaired to some large courtyards for about two hours, and Cortés with other captains and the treasurer Alderete, who was ill, and the friar Melgarejo and many of us soldiers climbed up to the high cu of that town, from where one had a dominating view of the city of Mexico, which is very close, the whole lake, and the other cities I talked about, which are built in the water. When the friar and the treasurer Alderete saw so many cities and so large, all standing in the water, they were amazed. Then when they saw the great city of Mexico and the lake and such a multitude of canoes, some going loaded with food, others going to fish, others empty, they were that much more astonished. They said that our coming to this New Spain was not something done by human beings, but it was the great mercy of God that sustained and protected us. Other times they had said that they did not remember having read anywhere that any vassals had done such great services for their king as we had, and that now they said it even more strongly and they would make a report to His Majesty about it. Let us leave out the many other conversations that took place there and how the friar consoled Cortés for the loss of his squires, for he was very sad about them, and let us talk about how Cortés and all of us stood looking from Tacuba, at the great cu of Huichilobos and Tlatelolco and the buildings where we used to be, and we could see the entire city and the bridges and causeways over which we had left fleeing. In that instant, Cortés sighed with a very great

sadness, much greater than he had had before, because of the men they had killed before he climbed up to the high cu, and from that time came a song or ballad:

In Tacuba is Cortés  
With his courageous squadron,  
Sad and very distressed,  
Sad and with great care,  
One hand on his cheek  
And the other on his side, etc.

I remember that then a soldier called the bachelor Alonso Pérez, who after the conquest of New Spain was the royal attorney and citizen of Mexico, said to him: “Señor captain, don’t be so sad, for these things happen in wars, and it won’t be said of you:

Nero from the Tarpeian rock watches  
Rome as it is burning.”

Cortés said to him that he had seen how many times he had sent to Mexico to beg them to make peace, and that the sadness he had was not just for one thing but in thinking about the great hardships we would have to see before ruling the city again, but that with the help of God we would soon put it into effect.

Let us leave these conversations and ballads, for this was not the right time for them. Let me talk about how our captains and soldiers were asked for their opinion about the causeway, because it was so close to Tacuba where we were. But as we had no powder nor many crossbow bolts and most of the soldiers of our army were wounded, remembering that the other time a little more than a month before, Cortés, trying to enter the causeway with many soldiers, was in such danger that he feared being defeated, it was decided that we would continue on our way for fear that we would have some skirmish with the Mexicans that day or in the night, because Tacuba is very close to the great city of Mexico and Guatemuz might use his great forces to carry off our soldiers alive.

*Cortés and his army continued on their way to Texcoco, passing through four towns before arriving there, but as Bernal Díaz writes, “instead of resting and healing our wounds, we had to deal with certain persons, partisans of Narváez, who had arranged a plot to kill Cortés, Gonzalo de Sandoval, Pedro de Alvarado, and Andrés de Tapia.”*

[CXLVI] I have already talked about how we came so shattered and wounded from the last expedition. It seems that a great friend of the governor of Cuba, Antonio de Villafañá, native of Zamora or Toro, planned with other soldiers among Narváez's men, who I will not name here for the sake of their honor, that when Cortés returned from that expedition, they would kill him with dagger stabs and it would be in this way: As at that time a ship had come from Castile, when Cortés was seated at his table eating with his captains, one of those people who had made the plan would bring a letter closed and sealed tightly as if it came from Castile, and he would say it was from his father Martín Cortés, and while he was reading it, they would stab him with the daggers—Cortés, as well as all the captains and any of us soldiers who were near him and would come to his defense. When everything I have said had been done and discussed, it pleased Our Lord that those who had agreed to it made the affair known to two important people, whom I will also not name here, who had gone on the expedition with us. In the agreement, they had even named one of them as captain general after they had killed Cortés, and they made other soldiers of Narváez's men chief constable, standard-bearer, alcaldes, city councilmen, accountant, treasurer, auditor, and other posts of this sort, and even divided among themselves our goods and horses. This agreement was kept secret for two days after we arrived at Texcoco; and it pleased Our Lord God that such a thing should not take place, for New Spain would have been lost and all of us, because at once factions and squabbles would have arisen. It seems that a soldier revealed it to Cortés, who immediately remedied it before more flames could flare up regarding that matter, because that good soldier gave him to understand that there were many people of rank in it.

When Cortés learned of it, after having made great promises and given gifts to the one who revealed it to him, very quickly, secretly, he made it known to all our captains, Pedro de Alvarado, Francisco de Lugo, Cristóbal de Olid, Andrés de Tapia, and Gonzalo de Sandoval, and to me and two first-instance judges who were serving that year, Luis Marín and Pedro de Ircio, and all of us who were the partisans of Cortés. So when we learned of it, we got ready, and without any more delay we went with Cortés to the lodging of Antonio de Villafañá, and many of those who were in the conspiracy were there with him. We immediately seized Villafañá with the help of four constables whom Cortés brought with him; and the captains and soldiers who were with Villafañá began to flee, but Cortés ordered that they be stopped and arrested. As soon as we had taken Villafañá prisoner, Cortés drew from Villafañá's breast the memorandum he had with the signatures of those who were in on the agreement, and after Cortés had read it and saw that in it were many people of rank, in order not to defame them, he spread the rumor that Villafañá had swallowed the memorandum and that he, Cortés, had neither seen nor read it.

Right away Cortés undertook proceedings against Villafañá, and in his confession Villafañá told the truth; with many witnesses of good faith and credibility who gave evidence regarding the case, the first-instance judges serving together with Cortés and the *maestre de campo*, Cristóbal de Olid, pronounced the sentence. After Villafañá confessed to Father Juan Díaz, they hanged him from a window of the building where he was staying. Cortés did not want anyone else to be defamed in that terrible affair, although at that time they made prisoners of many in order to frighten them and to signal that he wanted to bring others to justice, but as the time was not right for it, he overlooked it. Then Cortés decided to have a guard for his person, and it was his captain, a gentleman named Antonio de Quiñones, native of Zamora, with six soldiers, good men and brave, who watched over him day and night, and he begged those of us whom he felt were of his faction to look after his person. From then on, although he showed great

goodwill toward those who were in on the conspiracy, he was always wary of them.

Let us talk about how he ordered it proclaimed right away that all the Indian men and women we had taken in those expeditions should be brought for branding within two days to a house designated for it. In order not to waste more words in the story about the way they were sold in the auction, beyond those I have expressed the two other times they were branded, if it had been done badly before, it was done much worse this time, for after taking out the royal fifth, Cortés took out his, and thirty additional for captains. If the Indian women we sent to be branded were beautiful and good, they stole them at night from the group so these women would not appear again soon; for this reason many pieces were left out whom we later had as *naborías*.

[CXLVII] When Antonio de Villafañá had been brought to justice and those quieted who together with him were conspiring to kill Cortés, Pedro de Alvarado, Sandoval, and those of us who would go to their defense, and, seeing that the brigantines were now finished, their rigging and sails and very good oars in place, more oars than necessary for each brigantine, and the waterway through which they were to go out to the lake very wide and deep, Cortés sent to tell all the towns close to Texcoco that were our friends that each town should make eight thousand copper tips for crossbow bolts patterned after others from Castile that they took to them as a sample. Likewise, he ordered that each town should make and trim another eight thousand bolts of a very good wood, for which they also brought a sample. He gave them a deadline of a week to bring them, both the bolts and the bolt tips, to our camp, which they brought within the time he ordered, more than fifty thousand bolt tips and as many thousand bolts, and those bolt tips were better than the ones from Castile.

Then Cortés ordered Pedro Barba, who at that time was captain of the crossbowmen, to divide both bolts and bolt tips among the crossbowmen and to order them to continue trimming the supply and feather them with a glue made of some roots called *zacotle*, which sticks better than that from Castile. Likewise, he

ordered Pedro Barba to see that each crossbowman had two very smooth and well-prepared cords for their crossbows and as many spare nuts, so that if a cord should break or the nut fail, another could immediately replace it. He also ordered that they should be shooting at a target to see how far the crossbow would carry, and he gave them a great deal of Valencia thread for the cords, because the ship from Castile that I said came a few days before, which belonged to Juan de Burgos, brought a great deal of thread, a large quantity of powder and crossbows, many other arms, horseshoes, and escopetas. Cortés also ordered the horsemen to have their horses shod and their lances ready and to mount their horses each day, run them and train them very well to turn and skirmish.

This done, he sent messengers and letters to our friend Xicotenga the elder who, as I have already said other times, had now become a Christian and was called don Lorenzo de Vargas, and to his son Xicotenga the younger, and to his brothers, and to Chichimecatecle, informing them that when the day of Corpus Christi had passed, we were going to leave that city to go against Mexico to besiege it. He asked that they send him twenty thousand of their warriors from Tlaxcala and those of Guaxocingo and Cholula, for all were friends and brothers in arms, and they already knew the time and plan through their own Indians who were always going from our camp loaded with spoils from the expeditions we had made. Also he cautioned the people of Chalco and Tamanca and their subjects that they should be prepared for when we might summon them, and he let them know the arrangements for besieging Mexico, and at what time we were going to go. He also told don Fernando, lord of Texcoco, and his chieftains and all his subjects, and all the rest of the towns that were our friends. All to a person replied that they would do fully what Cortés ordered them and that they would come, and the people of Tlaxcala came when the Feast of the Holy Spirit had passed. This done, it was agreed to make muster on one of the feast days.

[CXLVIII] After things were arranged, and messengers and letters were sent to our friends, the people of Tlaxcala and the

people of Chalco, and notice was given to the rest of the towns, Cortés decided with our captains and soldiers that, on the second day of the Feast of the Holy Spirit of the year 1521, he would muster the men. The muster was held in the great courtyards of Texcoco, and there were eighty-four horsemen, six hundred fifty soldiers with swords and shields, many with lances, and one hundred ninety-four crossbowmen and escopeteros. From those were selected for the thirteen brigantines the following:

For each brigantine, twelve crossbowmen and escopeteros; these men did not have to row. Besides these men, another twelve rowers were selected, six for each side, plus a captain for each brigantine, so each brigantine would go out with twenty-five soldiers counting the captain. There were thirteen brigantines of twenty-five soldiers, which comes to two hundred eighty-eight, and with the artillerymen given to them besides the twenty-five soldiers, there were in all the brigantines three hundred soldiers, according to the account I have given. Also, he divided among them all the brass guns and falconets we had and the powder it seemed they needed.

This done, he ordered proclaimed the ordinances we all had to follow.

First, that no person should dare blaspheme Our Lord Jesus Christ nor Our Lady, his blessed mother, nor the Holy Apostles nor other saints, under pain of heavy penalties.

Second, that no soldier should treat our friends badly, because they were there to help us, nor should they take anything at all from them, even if it should be things they had acquired in war, neither an Indian man nor woman, nor gold, nor silver, nor chalchuiis.

Another, that no soldier should dare go out, night or day, from our camp to go to any town of our friends nor anywhere else to get food or anything else, under pain of heavy penalty.

Another, that all soldiers should wear very good armor, well quilted, a gorget, visor, leggings, and shield; as we knew how great would be the number of spears, stones, and arrows and lances, against all that it was necessary to wear the armor the proclamation declared.

Another, that no person should gamble for horses or arms on any account, with great penalty.

Another, that no soldier, horseman, crossbowman, or escopetero should sleep without being dressed in all his armor and with his hempen sandals on, unless it was from great need because of wounds or being ill, so that we might be very ready for whatever time the Mexicans came to attack us.

Besides this, the laws were proclaimed that are normally observed in the military matters, which is that anyone who falls asleep on watch or leaves his post, punishment of death, and that no soldier should go from one camp to another without permission of his captain, punishment of death.

Another, for the soldier who deserts his captain in war or battle, punishment of death.

[CXLIX] After having held the review I have talked about before, Cortés saw that there were not enough seamen who knew how to row the brigantines, even though those we had brought in our ships that we wrecked when we came with Cortés were well known, and likewise the sailors from the ships of Narváez and those from Jamaica were known. All were placed on a list and were warned that they would have to row, but even with all of them, there were not enough for thirteen brigantines, and many of them objected and even said they would not row. Cortés made inquiries to find others who were sailors or had been seen going fishing, and if they were from Palos, Moguer, Triana, Puerto, or any other port or area where there were sailors, he ordered them under heavy penalties to go into the brigantines; and however much they might say they were gentlemen, he made them row. In this way he gathered one hundred fifty men to row, and they came off much better than we who were on the causeways fighting, and they got rich from spoils, as I will say later on.

After Cortés had given the order regarding those who would go into the brigantines and divided the crossbowmen and escopeteros, powder, guns, crossbow bolts, and all the rest needed among them and ordered them to put in each brigantine a royal banner and another banner with the name given to each brigantine, and other

things that were needed, he named as captains for each one of them: García Holguín; Pedro Barba; Juan de Limpías Carvajal, the deaf; Juan Jaramillo; Jerónimo Ruiz de la Mota; his companion Carvajal, who is now very old and lives on San Francisco Street; one Portillo, who had just come from Castile, a good soldier, who had a beautiful wife; one Zamora, who was ship's mate and who lives now in Oaxaca; one Colmenero, who was a sailor, good soldier; one Lema; Ginés Nortes; Briones, native of Salamanca; I do not remember the name of the other captain; and Miguel Díaz de Ampié. After he had named them and ordered all the crossbowmen, escopeteros, and the other soldiers who had to row to obey the captains whom he was placing over them and not to leave their commands under heavy penalties, he gave instructions for what each captain was to do and in which position he had to go along the causeways and with which of the captains on the land he would coordinate.

When he had finished arranging everything as I have said, they came to tell Cortés that the captains of Tlaxcala were coming with a large number of warriors and that as their captain general came Xicotenga the younger, the one who was captain during the wars of Tlaxcala and who was planning the treason against us in Tlaxcala when we were fleeing from Mexico. They said he was bringing in his company two of his brothers, sons of the good old man don Lorenzo de Vargas, and was also bringing in his company a large number of Tlaxcalans under Chichimecatecle as captain, and another captaincy from Guaxocingo and another of Cholultecas, although they were few, because as far as I could ever see, after we had punished the people in Cholula, they never were with the Mexicans, nor with us either, but never committed themselves, and even when we were driven out of Mexico, they did not oppose us. Let us leave this and return to our story. When Cortés learned that Xicotenga, his brothers, and other captains were coming, and they came a day earlier than he had told them they should come, Cortés went out to receive them a quarter of a league from Texcoco with Pedro de Alvarado and others of our captains, and when he met Xicotenga and his brothers, Cortés

paid them much respect and embraced them and all the rest of the captains. They were coming in great order, all very brilliant with great devices, each captaincy by itself, its banners unfurled, with the white bird they have as their badge that looks like an eagle with its wings outspread, their standard-bearers waving their banners and standards about, and all of them with their bows and arrows, two-handed swords, and spears with spear-throwers. Others carried war clubs and large lances and others small lances, and they wore their feathered headdresses; they were positioned in good order, shouting, crying and whistling, calling out: "Long live the emperor our lord!" "Castile, Castile!" "Tlaxcala, Tlaxcala!" They took more than three hours entering Texcoco. Cortés ordered them to be lodged in good buildings and fed from everything there was in the camp. After many embraces and promises that he would make them rich, he took leave of them and told them that the next day he would give them orders as to what they had to do but that now they were tired and should rest.

The very moment those caciques arrived from Tlaxcala, letters came to camp from a soldier named Hernando de Barrientos, from a town called Chinantla, about ninety leagues from Mexico. What was contained in them was that, at the time the Mexicans drove us from Mexico, they had killed three of his companions who were at the settlements and mines where captain Pizarro, for that was his name, left them to search and explore all those neighborhoods to see if they had rich mines of gold. That Barrientos had taken refuge in that town of Chinantla where he was, and he said that they are enemies of the Mexicans. This town was the one from where they brought the pikes when we went against Narváez; and because other details that were in the letter have nothing to do with our story, I will omit talking about them. In his reply, Cortés told him how we were on our way to besiege Mexico and told him to give his regards to the caciques of those provinces and that he should take care not to come back from that land until he knew by a letter from him what he should do so that the Mexicans would not kill him on the way.

*Cortés divided his army into four groups; one was led by Pedro de Alvarado, and he was sent to Tacuba. A second under Cristóbal de Olid was sent to Coyoacan. A third under Gonzalo de Sandoval went to Iztapalapa. Finally, Cortés took command of the thirteen brigantines.*

Let us talk about how Cortés gave instructions to each captain. As we were to leave the next day, and so that there would not be so many impediments along the way, we sent ahead all the captaincies of Tlaxcala until they should reach Mexican territory. As the Tlaxcalans were moving along carelessly with their captain Chichimecatecle and other captains with their men, they did not notice that Xicotenga the younger, who was their captain general, had left, and when Chichimecatecle questioned and inquired what had happened to him, where he could be, they learned that he had returned secretly that night to Tlaxcala and was going to take by force the caciqueship, vassals, and land of Chichimecatecle himself. The Tlaxcalans said that the reasons for it were that when Xicotenga the younger saw the captains of Tlaxcala going to war, especially Chichimecatecle, he knew he would have no opposition, because he did not fear Xicotenga the blind, who, as his father, would help him, and our friend Maseescaci was now dead, so the only one he feared was Chichimecatecle. They also said they always knew that Xicotenga had no desire to go to war against Mexico, because they heard him say many times that all of us and all of them were going to die in such a war.

When the cacique Chichimecatecle heard and understood that, he turned back from the journey quickly and came to Texcoco to inform Cortés of it. Cortés ordered that five chieftains from Texcoco and another two from Tlaxcala, friends of Xicotenga, go at once to make him return and tell him that Cortés begged him to come back immediately to go against his enemies the Mexicans, to consider that if his father don Lorenzo de Vargas were not old and blind as he was, he would come against Mexico himself, and that since all the people of Tlaxcala were and are very loyal servants of His Majesty, he should not want to defame them with what he was doing now. He also made many offerings and promises to give

him gold and cloaks so he would come back. The reply Xicotenga sent was that if the old man, his father, and Maseescaci had believed him, Cortés would not have dominated them so much and made them do everything he wanted, and so as not to waste more words, he said he would not return. When Cortés heard that response, he immediately gave an order for a constable to go very quickly with four horsemen and five chieftains of Texcoco, and wherever they reached Xicotenga, they should hang him. He said: "There's no cure for this cacique; he'll always be a traitor, evil minded and with evil plans," and it was no time to put up with him any longer nor to tolerate what had happened. When Pedro de Alvarado learned of it, he pleaded strongly for Xicotenga, and Cortés gave him a good response, but secretly he ordered the constable and horsemen not to leave Xicotenga alive. So it was done, and in a town subject to Texcoco, they hanged him, and that is what his treasons led to. There were some Tlaxcalans who said that don Lorenzo de Vargas, Xicotenga's father, sent to tell Cortés that that son of his was bad, that he would not trust him, and that Cortés should try to kill him.

Let us leave this conversation thus, and I will say that for this reason we halted that day without setting out for Texcoco. The next day, which was May 13, 1521, we set out, both captaincies together, because Cristóbal de Olid and Pedro de Alvarado had to go the same way. We spent the night in a town subject to Texcoco, Aculman, and it appeared that Cristóbal de Olid sent ahead to that town to arrange lodging, and he had put in each house, as a sign, green branches above the roof. When we arrived with Pedro de Alvarado, we found no place to lodge, and over this business, those of us in our captaincy had already put hands on our weapons against those of Cristóbal de Olid, and even the captains were opposing each other. But there was no lack of gentlemen on both sides who put themselves between us and quieted the noise somewhat, but not enough that we did not have a bad taste in our mouths. From there, they informed Cortés of it, and he immediately sent fray Pedro Melgarejo and the captain Luis Marín in all haste, and he wrote to the captains and all of us

reprimanding us for the matter, and when they arrived they made us friends; but from that time on, the captains Pedro de Alvarado and Cristóbal de Olid did not get along well.

The next day we went on our journey, both captaincies together, and we spent the night in a town that was deserted, because it was now Mexican territory. The next day too we spent the night in another large town called Gualtitan, which I have mentioned other times, and it was also without people. The next day we passed through two towns called Tenayuca and Escapuzalco, also deserted. At the hour of vespers, we arrived at Tacuba and right away lodged ourselves in some large houses and lodgings, because this town was also deserted, and all our friends the Tlaxcalans also lodged themselves, and that very afternoon, they went through the outlying settlements of those towns and brought things to eat. We slept that night with good watches, sentinels, and scouts, because I have already said other times that Mexico is near Tacuba. As night fell, we heard great cries that they were giving out to us from the lake, yelling many words of contempt, saying that we were not men enough to come out to fight them. They had many canoes filled with warriors and the causeways filled with warriors too, and those words were intended to offend us so that we would come out that night to fight. But as we had learned our lesson from the experience of the causeways and bridges, we did not want to go out until the next day, which was Sunday. After having heard mass, which Father Juan Díaz said for us, and after commending ourselves to God, we decided that both captaincies together would go and cut off the water from Chapultepec, from which the city was supplied, which was a half league from Tacuba. As we were going to break the pipes, we came upon many warriors who were waiting for us on the road, because they had understood well that that would be the first thing by which we could do them harm. So when they met us near some bad passes, they began to shoot arrows and throw spears and stones from slings, and they wounded three of our soldiers; but we quickly made them turn their backs, and our friends the Tlaxcalans pursued them so that they killed twenty and captured seven or eight of them. When

those squadrons had been put to flight, we broke the pipes through which the water went to the city, and from then on it never went to Mexico as long as the war lasted.

When we had done that, our captains decided that we should go right away to look around and enter along the causeway of Tacuba and do what we could to take a bridge from them. When we had arrived at the causeway, there were so many canoes on the lake filled with warriors, and warriors on the causeways themselves, that we were amazed at it. And they threw so many spears, arrows, and stones from slings that in the first engagement they wounded more than thirty soldiers. Still we kept advancing along the causeway toward a bridge; and as I understand it, they allowed this in order to get us on the other side of the bridge. When they had us there, I say that such a multitude of warriors charged at us that we could not hold out against them, because on the causeway, which was eight paces wide, what could we do against such a great power that was on one side and the other of the causeway and used us as a target? Although our escopeteros and crossbowmen did nothing but load and shoot at the canoes, they did them only very little damage, because they had the canoes very well reinforced with wooden shields. And when we attacked the squadrons that were fighting on the causeway itself, they immediately threw themselves into the water, and there were so many of them that we could not prevail. The horsemen did no good at all because the enemy wounded their horses from both sides in the water, and when they charged against the squadrons, the enemy threw themselves into the water. They had made barricades where other warriors were waiting with some long lances they had made like scythes from the weapons they took from us when they drove us from Mexico and we left fleeing. We were fighting with them for about an hour in this way, and they pressed us so that we could not defend ourselves against them; and we even saw that from other directions a great fleet of canoes was coming to cut off our passage and attack us from the rear. Knowing this, our captains and all of us soldiers warned that our friends the Tlaxcalans, whom we had brought, were blocking the causeway and that they should leave

it, because it was clear they could not fight in the water. So we decided to retreat in good order and not advance anymore.

When the Mexicans saw us retreating and sending the Tlaxcalans away, what cries, howls, and whistles they gave us and how they came up to join us hand to hand. I say that I do not know how to write about it, because they filled the entire causeway with spears, arrows, and stones they had hurled at us, and those that fell in the water were many more. When we found ourselves on dry land, we gave thanks to God for having delivered us from that battle. But eight were left dead at that time and more than a hundred were wounded. Even with all this, they gave us cries and yelled out words of contempt from the canoes, and our friends the Tlaxcalans yelled at them that they should come on land, and even if the enemy were double their number, they would fight them. This was the first thing we did: take away their water and take a look at the lake, although we won no honor with them by doing so. That night we stayed in our camp and tended the wounded, and one horse even died, and we placed watchmen and sentinels for good security.

*At this point, Cristóbal de Olid, who had a dispute with Pedro de Alvarado, went to Coyoacan, where Cortés had originally ordered him to go; Pedro de Alvarado stayed in Tacuba. Gonzalo de Sandoval went to Iztapalapa from Texcoco. Meanwhile, Cortés and the brigantines held off many attacks from the Mexicans, protecting the three groups of men on the causeways from attacks by canoes on the lake, although Cortés made his base with Cristóbal de Olid in Coyoacan. Cortés ordered Sandoval to leave Iztapalapa and go by land to besiege the other causeway that goes from Mexico to Tepeaquilla, "which they now call Our Lady of Guadalupe, where she makes and has made many and holy miracles." During this time, all three groups were attempting to fight down the causeways in order to enter Mexico, and they were under constant attack by the Mexicans.*

[CLI] As Cortés and all our captains and soldiers understood that without the brigantines we could not invade along the

causeways to fight against Mexico, he sent four of them to Pedro de Alvarado, he left six in his camp, which was that of Cristóbal de Olid, and to Gonzalo de Sandoval, on the causeway of Tepeaquilla, he sent two brigantines and ordered that the smallest brigantine not go about any more on the lake for fear the canoes might overturn it because it was not very steady; he ordered the men and sailors who were in it to be divided among the other twelve, because there were already twenty very badly wounded men among those who were in them.

When we found ourselves assisted by the brigantines in our camp at Tacuba, Pedro de Alvarado ordered two of them to go along one side of the causeway and the other two on the other side; we began to fight in earnest because the brigantines routed the canoes, which had been fighting us from the water, so we had an opportunity to take some bridges and barricades from them. When we were fighting with them, they were hurling at us so many stones from slings, spears, and arrows that despite all the soldiers being well armored, they injured and wounded us, and we did not stop the fighting and combat until night separated us.

Well, I want to say that the Mexicans were moving their squadrons around and relieving them from time to time; we knew this from their devices and insignias on their armor. As for the brigantines, what they did to them from the rooftops! They hurled spears, arrows, and stones on them thicker than hail. I do not know how to say it here, nor will anyone be able to understand it except those who were with us in it, that such a multitude of them came, more than like hailstones, that soon they covered the causeway. Then, when, with much difficulty, we took some bridge or barricade and left it without guarding it, that same night they would take it and deepen it, and they built much better defenses and even made hidden pits in the water so that the next day when we were fighting and it was time to retreat, we would become entangled and fall into the pits; with the canoes they would then be able to rout us because they also had prepared many canoes for this purpose, positioned in places

where our brigantines could not see them, so that when we were in difficult straits in the pits, some by land and others by water would come after us. So that our brigantines could not come to help us, they had put many stakes hidden by the water so our brigantines would run up on them. This is the way we were fighting every day.

Let us talk about how, when we separated at night, we tended our wounds by burning them with oil, and a soldier named Juan Catalán blessed them and used spells on them, and I say truly we found that Our Lord Jesus Christ was pleased to give us strength in addition to the many mercies he gave us each day, for they healed quickly. Wounded and bandaged with rags, we fought from morning to night, and if the wounded had stayed in the camp without going out to fight, there would not have been twenty healthy men in each captaincy to go out. When our friends the Tlaxcalans saw that the man I have discussed was blessing all our wounds and injuries with the sign of the cross, they all went to him, and there were so many of them that he had plenty to do all day long treating them. Well, I want to talk about our captains, standard-bearer, and other flag bearers, who were covered with wounds and their banners ragged; and I say that every day we had need of a new standard-bearer, because we all came out in such a condition that they could not go back to the fight carrying the flags again. Well, with all of this, do you think we had enough to eat? I am not talking about lacking maize tortillas, of which we had plenty, but of some refreshment for the wounded, of which we had not the slightest. What kept us alive were some *quelites*, herbs that the Indians eat, and native cherries as long as they lasted, and afterward, prickly pear fruits, which came into season at that time. Things were the same in the camp where Cortés was and in Sandoval's as they were in ours. Never for a single day did there fail to be great captaincies of Mexicans that continuously attacked them from dawn until night. To achieve that, Guatemuz had designated the captains and squadrons that were to go to each causeway, and Tlatelolco and the towns on the lake had been alerted that when a signal came from the great cu

in Tlatelolco,<sup>1</sup> some should come by canoes and others by land. The Mexican captains had been prepared for this, with careful arrangement, how, when, and to what places they were to go.

Let us leave this and say how we changed our order and way of fighting: When we saw that whatever openings in the water we gained by day—and in gaining them had our soldiers killed and the rest of us wounded and the Mexicans stopped them up again—we decided that we would go station ourselves in the causeway in a small plaza where there were some towers of idols we had already taken, where there was room to make our huts, even though they were quite miserable, for when it rained we all got very wet, and they were only good for covering us against the evening dew. We left the Indian women who made bread for us in Tacuba, and all the horsemen and our friends the Tlaxcalans were left to guard them and to watch and guard the passes so the enemy would not come from the neighboring towns to attack us in the rear on the causeways while we were fighting. So when we had set up our huts where I have said, from then on we tried to destroy the houses or blocks of them right away and fill in the openings in the water we took from them. We knocked the houses to the ground, because if we set them on fire, it would take too long for them to burn and one house would not catch fire from another, because every house stood in the water and one could not go from one to the other without crossing bridges or going in canoes. If we wanted to cross by swimming, they would do us much harm from the flat roofs, so we were more secure destroying the houses.

As soon as we had taken some barricade or bridge or bad pass where they put up much resistance, we tried to guard it day and night. In this way all our captaincies kept the night watch together, and the agreement that was made was that the first captaincy took the watch from nightfall to midnight, and they were more than

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1. The cu was not in Tlatelolco, the site of the great market, but at Tenochtitlan.

forty soldiers; from midnight until two hours before dawn, another captaincy of forty men took the watch, but the first captaincy did not leave the post, rather we slept there on the ground, and this watch is called the *modorra*, the time of heavy sleep and dreams; then came another forty soldiers and they had the dawn watch, which is those two hours before daylight, but those who had the *modorra* watch could not leave either but had to stay there, so that when dawn broke there were more than one hundred twenty soldiers on the watch together. Some nights, when we sensed great danger, we even kept watch together from nightfall to daybreak, waiting for the great impetus of the Mexicans for fear they might break through, for we had warnings from some Mexican captains we had captured in battles that Guatemuz had the idea, and had brought it up in conversation with his captains, that they would try either in the night or by day to break through us on our causeway, and, defeating us on our side, he could quickly defeat and rout those on the other two causeways where Cortés was and where Gonzalo de Sandoval was. He had also arranged that the nine towns on the lake and Tacuba itself and Escapuzalco and Tenayuca would unite, and on the day when they wanted to break through and attack, the nine towns would hit us from the rear on the causeway, and that one night they would quickly carry off the Indian women who were making bread for us in Tacuba and our baggage. When we became aware of this, we warned the horsemen who were in Tacuba to watch and be on the alert all night, and also our friends the Tlaxcalans. Thus, as Guatemuz had planned it, he put it into effect. On several nights great squadrons came to break through us and attack at midnight, others during the *modorra*, and others during the dawn watch, and they came sometimes without making any noise and other times with great yells and whistles, and when they arrived where we were keeping watch at night, what spears, stones, and arrows they hurled, and many others were there with lances, and although they wounded some of us, we resisted them and many of them went back wounded. Many other warriors who came to fall on our baggage were routed by our horsemen and Tlaxcalans, because as it was night, they

did not stay around long. And in the way I have said we kept watch, no matter whether it rained or was windy or cold, even if we were in the middle of pits of mud and wounded, we were going to stay there; even with those miserable tortillas and grass that we had to eat or prickly pear, something extra over and above the job of fighting, as the tradesmen say, it was going to be that way.

Well, even with all these precautions we took, they would reopen the bridge or causeway that we had taken from them, and we could not keep them from doing it by night, so the next day we took it from them again and filled it in, and they opened it again and made it stronger with barricades, until the Mexicans changed their way of fighting, which I will talk about at the appropriate time. Let us stop talking about all the battles we had every day, and the same thing in the camp of Cortés and in that of Sandoval, and let us talk about what little good it did to have taken the water of Chapultepec from them, nor did it do any more good to prevent them from getting provisions and water by the three causeways, neither were our brigantines of any use staying in our camps, serving only to protect our backs in the fighting against the warriors who were in canoes and fighting from the roof terraces. The Mexicans received much water and provisions from the nine towns on the lake, which supplied them by canoes at night, and from other friendly towns they received maize, hens, and everything they wanted. To prevent these supplies from getting to them, it was decided by all three camps that two brigantines should go by night around the lake to give chase to the canoes that came loaded with provisions and capture all the canoes they could and destroy them or bring them to our camps. When this arrangement was made, it was good, although we were without the two brigantines at night to help us when we were fighting, but they were of great use in preventing provisions and water from entering. Even with all this, many canoes loaded with provisions were able to get in, and as the Mexicans went without caution in their canoes carrying supplies, there was not a day that the brigantines did not capture canoes with many Indians hanging from the yards of the brigantines.

Let us talk about the clever ruse the Mexicans had for taking our brigantines and killing those who were in them. It was like this: As I have said, every night and in the mornings, our brigantines went searching for enemy canoes around the lake, overturned them, and captured many of them, so the Mexicans decided to equip thirty pirogues, which are very large canoes, with very good rowers and warriors, and by night they positioned all thirty canoes among reed beds in an area where the brigantines could not see them and covered them with branches; before nightfall, they sent out two or three canoes with good rowers as if they were carrying provisions or bringing in water; and in a place where it seemed to the Mexicans the brigantines would go when they were fighting with them, they had driven in many thick pieces of wood made into stakes so the brigantines would run up on them; then as the canoes went around the lake showing signs of being fearful, drawing close to the reed beds, two of our brigantines went out after them, and the two canoes made as though they were retreating to land and went to the area where the thirty pirogues were lying in wait, the brigantines following them, and when they arrived at the ambush, all the pirogues together came out and fell upon the brigantines; they quickly wounded all the soldiers, rowers, and captains, and the brigantines could not go in either direction because of the stakes the Mexicans had put in place. In this way, they killed the captain, who was called somebody de Portilla, an excellent soldier who had been in Italy, and they wounded Pedro Barba, who was a very fine captain, and three days later he died of the wounds, and they captured one of the brigantines. These two brigantines were from the camp of Cortés, and he was very distressed over it. But a few days later, they paid for it very fully in some other ambushes they set.

*At this point, four main activities occurred. First, the routine of the Mexicans opening bridges the Spaniards had captured during the day and the Spaniards returning during the following day to recapture and fill up the newly made gaps was broken when the Mexicans made a much deeper and wider ditch full of stakes and traps. Under Pedro*

*de Alvarado, this obstacle was crossed temporarily, but with much danger and loss. Bernal Díaz himself was seized, calling on God and the Virgin in that moment, and had to pull his arm away, thrusting mightily. Even so, he got a bad wound in the arm, coming out of it senseless and out of breath from the effort. Cortés reprimanded Alvarado and warned him in the future by no means to advance without having filled in any intervening water obstacle. Second, the Mexicans continued using their pirogues to lure the brigantines that were giving chase to them into areas in which they had placed stakes for the brigantines to run up on, but, in response, the Spaniards devised their own ambush, luring the pirogues into a trap by hiding six brigantines in reed beds at night to fall upon the pirogues that were in pursuit of the brigantine that was fleeing an Indian ambush; after that, the Indians gave up the ambush strategy. Third, every day the Mexicans massively attacked all three camps. Finally, more and more towns south of the city came to Cortés to seek peace.*

[CLII] As Cortés saw that it was not possible to fill in all the openings, bridges, and ditches of water we took each day, because at night the Mexicans came back to open them and make the barricades stronger than they had been before, and that it was a great hardship fighting and filling bridges and all of us together keeping watch, especially as most of us were wounded and twenty soldiers had died, he decided to start conversations with the captains and soldiers in his camp; he also wrote to us in the camp of Pedro de Alvarado and that of Sandoval to get the opinion of all our captains and soldiers. What he asked was whether it seemed to us that we should enter the city at one rush to reach Tlatelolco, the great marketplace of Mexico, much wider and larger than that of Salamanca, and that having arrived there, whether it would be good to establish all three camps in it, because from there we would be able to battle through the streets of Mexico without having such difficulties in retreating nor having so much to fill in nor keep watch on the bridges. As usually happens in such discussions and consultations, there were many viewpoints; some of us said that it was neither advisable nor reasonable to

put ourselves right in the heart of the city, but that we should keep doing as we were, battling and pulling down and leveling houses. Those of us who were of this opinion gave as the most obvious reasons that if we stationed ourselves in Tlatelolco and left the causeways and bridges unguarded and deserted, that the Mexicans, who had so many warriors and canoes, would break the bridges and causeways again, and we would no longer be masters of them. They would attack night and day with their great forces, and as they always had many stakes prepared, our brigantines could not help us. With what Cortés suggested, we would be the ones besieged, and the Mexicans would have the land, countryside, and lake for themselves; we wrote to him about the proposal so that what happened to us before, when we fled Mexico would not happen to us again, as the saying from “Mazagatos”<sup>2</sup> goes.

After Cortés had heard everyone’s opinion and the good arguments we gave for them, what resulted from the whole discussion was that the next day we were to go out from all three camps with all the strength we could, horsemen as well as crossbowmen, escopeteros, and soldiers, and we were to push forward as far as the main plaza, which is Tlatelolco. With everything ready in all three camps, and with our friends the Tlaxcalans as well as the people of Texcoco and those from the towns of the lake, who had recently given obedience to His Majesty and were to come with their canoes to aid the brigantines, one Sunday morning, after having heard mass, we set out from our camp with Pedro de Alvarado, and Cortés also set out from his, and Sandoval with his captaincies. With great strength, each captaincy pushed forward capturing bridges and barricades; the enemy fought like brave warriors, and Cortés on his side was victorious, and likewise Gonzalo de Sandoval on his side. As for our position we had already captured another barricade and a bridge with much difficulty because large forces of Guatemuz were guarding them, and we came out of it with many of our

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2. *Mazagatos* is an allusion to a difficult or dangerous situation.

soldiers wounded, and one later died of the wounds, and more than one thousand of our friends the Tlaxcalans came out badly injured, but still we followed up our victory very satisfied.

*At this point, Cortés and his contingent fell into another Mexican trap. The Mexicans pretended to flee, and Cortés followed. In the confusion of the counterattack, Cortés's contingent fled, their backs turned.*

When Cortés saw them turning back defeated, he encouraged them and said: "Stop, stop, gentlemen! Stop short! What is this that you're doing turning your backs?" But he could not stop them. In that passage Cortés's men had neglected to fill in, and on the causeway, which was narrow and bad there, with the canoes they put Cortés to rout and wounded him in the leg; they carried away alive more than sixty-six soldiers and killed eight horses. Six or seven Mexican captains had already grabbed Cortés, but it pleased Our Lord God to help him and to give him strength to defend himself even though he was wounded in one leg, because at that moment a very brave soldier named Cristóbal de Olea, a native of Old Castile, came quickly to him, and when he saw so many Indians holding onto Cortés that way, the soldier fought so fiercely that he quickly killed with sword thrusts four of the captains who had seized Cortés, and another very valiant soldier named Lerma helped him. The personal bravery of the two men was so great that the Indian captains let Cortés go, but in defending Cortés, Olea lost his life there, and even Lerma was at the point of death. Soon many soldiers hurried to help, and although badly wounded, they got hold of Cortés and helped him get out of that danger and the mud in which he was standing. Then Cristóbal de Olid, the *maestre de campo*, came in haste, and they took Cortés by the arms and helped him get out of the water and mud, and they brought him a horse on which he escaped death. At that instant, one of the *mayordomos* named Cristóbal de Guzmán came and brought him another horse. From the roof terraces, the Mexican warriors kept fighting very fiercely and victoriously and in a very evil way

so that they captured Cristóbal de Guzmán and carried him alive to Guatemuz. Still the Mexicans continued pursuing Cortés and all his soldiers until they reached their camp.

Even after that disaster, when Cortés and his men found themselves in safety, the Mexican squadrons did not cease following them, chasing them down and screaming, yelling out many insults, and calling them cowards. Let us stop talking about Cortés and his defeat and return to our army, that of Pedro de Alvarado, in the causeway of Tacuba. As we went forward victoriously, and when we did not expect it, we saw coming against us many Mexican squadrons with great cries and very beautiful devices and plumes, and they threw in front of us five heads running with blood that they had cut off from the men they had taken from Cortés, and they said: "So will we kill you as we have killed Malinche and Sandoval and everyone they brought with them, and these are their heads, so look at them well." Saying these words to us, they closed in on us to the point of laying hands on us, and neither slashing nor thrusting with our swords nor crossbows nor escopetas were of any use; they just came at us as if at a target. Even so, we did not lose a bit of our order in retreating, because right away we ordered our friends the Tlaxcalans to remove themselves from the streets, causeways, and bad passes. This time they did so willingly, because when they saw the five heads of our companions running with blood and heard the Mexicans say they had already killed Malinche and Sandoval and all the teules they brought with them and that they were going to do the same to us, the Tlaxcalans were very frightened; they believed it was true, and for this reason I say that they cleared off from the causeway in all earnest.

Let us return to talking about how, when we were retreating, we heard drumbeats coming from the great cu, which is where the idols Huichilobos and Tezcatepuca were and which, from its height, dominated the whole city; they played a large drum with the most doleful sound, in short like a demonic instrument, and it thundered so that it could be heard for two leagues, and together with it, many little drums, shell trumpets, horns, and whistles.

At that moment, as we learned later, they were offering ten hearts and much blood from our companions to the idols I have mentioned. Let us leave the sacrifice and return to our retreat and the great war they were waging on us from the causeway, the terraced roofs, and the canoes on the lake. In that instant, many squadrons Guatemuz was sending out anew came against us, and he ordered his cornet sounded, which was a signal that his captaincies and warriors had to fight in such a way that they would take prisoners or die in the attempt, and the sound it made resounded in the ears. When the squadrons and captaincies heard it, I do not know how to express here how terrifying the fury and strength was with which they came at us to lay hands on us; and now that I stop to think about it, it is as if I am actually seeing it and am in that war and battle. But I affirm again that Our Lord Jesus Christ saved us, for if he had not given us strength, because we were all wounded, we could not have managed otherwise to get to our huts, and I give him much thanks and praise that I escaped that and many other times from the hands of the Mexicans.

Returning to our story, the horsemen made charges there, and with two heavy guns we put near our huts, some firing and others loading, we held out; the causeway was full from one rim to the other with enemies, and they came at us up to the houses, as if we were already conquered, to throw spears and stones at us, and with those guns we killed many of them. The one who helped most that day was a gentleman named Pedro Moreno Medrano, who now lives in Puebla, because he served as the artilleryman; the artillerymen we usually had were dead, some of them, and others wounded, and Pedro Moreno, besides having always been a very courageous soldier, was a great help to us that day.

Because we were in that condition, greatly distressed and wounded, and we knew nothing of Cortés or Sandoval and their armies, we did not know whether or not they had been killed or defeated, as the Mexicans told us when they threw the five heads before us, which they held by their hair and their beards; and they said they had already killed Malinche and all the teules and that they were going to kill us in that way that same day. We could

not know anything about them because we were battling about half a league from each other, and where they defeated Cortés was farther away; for this reason we were distressed, but with all of us keeping together as a single body, both the wounded and the sound, we held out against the fury of the Mexicans who were on us, who believed that none of us would be left alive, neither the weak nor the strong, after the war they were waging against us. They had already captured one of our brigantines, killed three soldiers and wounded the captain and most of the soldiers in it, but another brigantine, with Juan Jaramillo as captain, came to its aid. Another brigantine had run up on the stakes in a place from which it could not go out, and its captain was Juan de Limpías Carvajal, who at that time became deaf and now lives in Puebla. He fought so valiantly himself and so encouraged all the soldiers who were rowing in the brigantine that they broke the stakes and got away, all of them badly wounded, but they saved their brigantine. This brigantine was the first that broke the stakes, which was a good thing for the future.

Let us return to Cortés. As he and all his men were for the most part killed or wounded, the Mexican squadrons went to his camp to attack. They even threw down before his soldiers who were resisting the Mexicans as they were fighting, four other heads streaming with blood, heads of the soldiers they had carried off from Cortés himself, and they told the soldiers that they were the heads of Tonatio, who is Pedro de Alvarado, Sandoval, and that of Bernal Díaz and of other teules and that they had already killed all of us who were at Tacuba. Then they say Cortés was much more disheartened than he ever was before, and tears were coming from his eyes and the eyes of all those with him, but not in such a way that they could sense too much weakness in him. Then he ordered Cristóbal de Olid, who was *maestre de campo*, and his captains to take care that the many Mexicans who were coming at them did not break through to the camp and that both wounded and sound should keep together in one body. He ordered Andrés de Tapia to go as quickly as possible with three horsemen, risking their lives, to Tacuba, which was our camp, to find out whether

we were alive, and if we were not defeated, to tell us to keep a very good watch in the camp, and that all together we should make one body by day and night on watch; what he was ordering us to do we already customarily did. The captain Andrés de Tapia and the horsemen who were with him came very quickly, even though Tapia and two of those in his company were wounded, and their names were Guillén de la Loa, Valdenebro, and one Juan de Cuéllar, brave men. When they arrived at our camp and found us battling with the Mexican force that was still close to us, they rejoiced in their hearts and told us all that had happened with the rout of Cortés and what he had sent to tell us, but they did not want to let us know how many were dead, so they told us about twenty-five and that all the rest were well.

Let us return to Sandoval and his captains and soldiers, who were victoriously advancing in the section and streets of their conquest. When the Mexicans had routed Cortés, they turned on Sandoval and his army and captains in such a way that they could not defend themselves. They killed six of his soldiers and wounded all those he had brought with him, and they wounded him in three places: the thigh, the head, and the left arm. As he was battling with the enemies, they put before him six heads of those of Cortés's men they had killed, and they said those heads were of Malinche and Tonatio and other captains and they were going to do the same to Sandoval and those who were with him, and they fought him most fiercely. When Sandoval saw that, he ordered all his captains and soldiers to show great spirit, not to be disheartened and to take care that in retreating there not be any disorder on the causeway, which was narrow; the first thing he did was to order our friends, who were many, to leave the causeway, so they would not hinder them, and with his two brigantines, his escopeteros and crossbowmen, he retreated with great difficulty to the place he was staying, all his men very badly wounded and even fainting and six dead. When he found himself clear of the causeway, although he was surrounded by Mexicans, he encouraged his men and his captains and strongly charged them to keep together in one body, both day and night, and to guard the camp

so the Mexicans would not defeat them. When he learned from the captain Luis Marín that he could do so very well, wounded and bandaged though he was, Sandoval took with him two other horsemen and went very quickly by land to the camp of Cortés. When Sandoval saw Cortés he said to him: "Oh, señor captain! What is this? Are these the counsels and ruses of war that you've always given us? How has this disaster happened?" Cortés answered him, the tears flowing from his eyes: "Oh, my son Sandoval, it's been permitted because of my sins, but I'm not so guilty in it as all our captains and soldiers make me, but it's the treasurer Julián de Alderete, to whom I gave the instruction to fill in that passage where they defeated us, and he didn't do it as he isn't used to fighting nor even receiving orders from captains!" Then the treasurer himself replied. He was there next to Cortés and had come to see and speak to Sandoval to find out whether his army was dead or routed. He said that Cortés himself was to blame, not he, and the reason he gave was that, as Cortés was going forward in victory, in order better to follow it up, he said: "Forward, gentlemen," and did not order them to fill in either the bridge or the bad passage, that if he had ordered it, he would have done it with his captaincy and the friends. He also blamed Cortés for not ordering the many friends he brought with him to clear off the causeways in time. Because there were many other discussions between Cortés and the treasurer and they were spoken with anger, they will be left untold, and I will talk about how, in that instant, two brigantines that Cortés had in his company and on his causeway arrived; they had not come nor was anything known of them since the rout. It seemed they had been stopped and run up on some stakes, and, according to what the captains said, they had been held back and surrounded by canoes that attacked them, and they were all wounded. They said that God, first of all, helped them, and with a wind and the great strength they put into rowing, they broke the stakes and saved themselves, which greatly delighted Cortés, because until then—although he did not publicize it because he did not want to dishearten the soldiers, as he knew nothing about them—he took them for lost.

Let us return to Cortés, who then strongly instructed Sandoval to go immediately, rapidly, to our camp of Pedro de Alvarado, the Tacuba camp, to see if we were routed or how we were, and if we were alive, to help us put up resistance in the camp so they could not break through. He told Francisco de Lugo to accompany him because he knew well that there were Mexican squadrons on the road; and he told him he had already sent Andrés de Tapia with three horsemen to find out about us, and he feared he might have been killed on the road. When he had said this to him and took his leave, he went to embrace Sandoval and said to him: "Look, my son, since I'm not able to go everywhere, for you see that I'm wounded, I entrust these tasks to you so that you might see to the safety of all three camps; I know well that Pedro de Alvarado and all his captains, brothers, and soldiers I gave him must have battled bravely and acted like gentlemen, but I fear the great power of these dogs might have defeated him. As for me and my army, you see how I am."

Sandoval and Francisco de Lugo quickly came to where we were, and when he arrived, it was a little after the time of vespers, because the rout of Cortés seems to have been before the time of the main mass. When Sandoval arrived, he found us battling with the Mexicans, who were trying to get into our camp by way of some houses we had pulled down, others by the causeway, many canoes by the lake; they already had one brigantine run up on the ground, and they had killed two of the soldiers who were in it and wounded most of all the rest. Sandoval saw me with six other soldiers waist high in the water helping the brigantine get into deeper water, many Indians coming at us with swords they had taken from us in the rout of Cortés, others with broadswords with knife-like blades—and they gave me an arrow wound and a knife cut in the leg—so that we would not help the brigantine, which they wanted to carry off with their canoes judging by the effort they were putting into it, for they had tied many ropes to carry it off and take it inside the city. When Sandoval saw us in that condition, he said to us: "Oh, brothers, use all your strength to keep them from carrying off the brigantine!" We put forth such

strength that we soon pulled it to safety, although as I have said, all the sailors came out wounded and two soldiers dead.

At that time many captaincies of Mexicans came to the causeway and wounded both the horsemen and all of us, and they even gave Sandoval a strong blow in the face with a stone. Then Pedro de Alvarado came to his aid with the other horsemen. As so many squadrons were coming, and I and twenty other soldiers were facing them, Sandoval ordered us to retreat little by little so they would not kill the horses, and because we did not retreat as quickly as he wanted, he said to us with fury: "Do you want them to kill me and all these horsemen because of you? For my sake, brother Bernal Díaz, fall back all of you." Then they again wounded him and his horse. At that time we sent our friends off the causeway and, little by little, we retreated facing the enemy and not turning our backs, just going along checking them, some crossbowmen and escopeteros shooting and others loading their escopetas, for they did not shoot them all at once; the horsemen making some charges, and Pedro Moreno Medrano setting up and firing his guns, but no matter how many Mexicans the cannon balls carried off, we could not get them away from us, but they kept coming after us constantly with the idea that they would carry us off to sacrifice that night. Well, when we were retreating close to our lodgings and had already crossed a large opening where there was much water, and the arrows, spears, and stones could not reach us, and Sandoval, Francisco de Lugo, and Andrés de Tapia were standing with Pedro de Alvarado, each telling what had happened to him and what Cortés ordered, the very mournful drum of Huichilobos sounding again, along with many other shell horns, cornets, and others like trumpets, and the sound of all of them was terrifying. We all looked to the high *cu* where they were making the sounds, and we saw them taking our companions up the steps by force, the same ones they had captured when they defeated Cortés, and they were taking them to be sacrificed. When they had taken them up to a small plaza where the adoratorio was in which their cursed idols were, we saw them put plumes on the heads of many of them and they made

them dance with something like fans before Huichilobos, and as soon as they had danced, they put them on their backs on top of some stones, rather narrow, that they had made for sacrifices, and with some flint knives, they sawed them open at their breasts and pulled out their beating hearts and offered them to the idols there, and they kicked their bodies down the steps; Indian butchers who were waiting below cut off their arms and feet, flayed the faces, preparing them afterward like glove leather, and they kept them with their beards to celebrate with when they had drunken festivals, and they ate the flesh with *chilmole*.<sup>3</sup> They sacrificed all the others in the same way, eating their arms and legs and offering the hearts and blood to their idols, as I have said, and the bodies, that is the bellies and entrails, they threw to the tigers, lions, and snakes they kept in the house of the beasts.

Well, when we saw those cruelties, all of us in our camp, and Pedro de Alvarado, Gonzalo de Sandoval, and all our other captains—the curious readers who should see this can imagine how sorry we felt for those killed—said to each other: “Thank God they didn’t take me to be sacrificed today!” The curious readers should also note that we were not far from them, but we could not help them; rather we prayed to God to guard us from this most cruel death. Well, in the very instant they were making the sacrifices, great squadrons of warriors suddenly fell on us and gave us a great deal to do from all directions, and neither in one way nor in another could we prevail, and they shouted at us: “See the way you are all going to die, for our gods have promised it to us many times.” Then the threatening words they yelled at our friends the Tlaxcalans were so hurtful and so evil that they disheartened them, and they threw roasted legs of Indians at them and the arms of our soldiers and yelled at them: “Eat the flesh of these teules and of your brothers, for we have already had our fill of them, and you can stuff yourselves with what is left over from us, and we will take you to the houses you have knocked down so

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3. *Chilmole* is chile sauce.

that you can build them again much better with white stone and well-worked stonemasonry. So help those teules very well, for you will see them all sacrificed.”

Well, another thing Guatemuz ordered them to do was that when he won that victory, he sent the feet and hands of our soldiers, their flayed faces with their beards, and the heads of the horses they killed to all the towns of our allies, friends, and their relatives, and he sent word to them that more than half of us were already dead and that he would finish us off soon, that they should give up our friendship and come to Mexico, that if they did not give it up immediately, he would come to destroy them. He sent to tell them many other things so they would leave our camp and us, because we would quickly be killed at his hand. As they were continuing to attack us day and night, all of us in the camp kept watch together, Gonzalo de Sandoval, Pedro de Alvarado, and the rest of the captains keeping us company on the watch, and although great captaincies came at us at night, we resisted them. Half the horsemen were in Tacuba all day and night and the other half on the causeways. Well, they did another greater evil to us; no matter how much we had filled in after getting onto the causeway, they opened it again, and they built barriers much stronger than before. Then the friends from the cities of the lake, who had recently accepted our friendship and came to help us with their canoes, believed “they took wool and came back shorn,” because many of them lost their lives and more than half the canoes they brought, and many others returned wounded; but even with all this, from then on they did not help the Mexicans because they were on bad terms with them, but they never committed themselves.

Let us stop speaking about misfortunes and go back to talking about the caution and the manner of it that we used from then on and about how Gonzalo de Sandoval, Francisco de Lugo, Andrés de Tapia, Juan de Cuéllar, Valdenebro, and the rest of the soldiers who had come to our camp thought it would be good to return to their posts and report to Cortés how and in what way it was with us. So they went rapidly and told Cortés how Pedro

de Alvarado and all his soldiers were exercising great care, both in fighting and in keeping watch, and Sandoval, as he considered me a friend, even told Cortés that he found me and the other soldiers battling waist high in the water defending a brigantine that had run aground, that if it were not for us, the enemies would have killed all the soldiers and the captain who were in it, and because he said other things praising me personally when he ordered me to retreat, I am not going to say them here; other people talked about it and it was known in both our camp and that of Cortés, so I do not want to recite it here.

*At this juncture, Cortés told the soldiers in all three camps not to undertake offensive fighting but simply to defend themselves while they recuperated from their wounds and losses and decided what to do.*

## FOR NINETY-THREE DAYS WE WERE CONSTANTLY BATTLING

[CLIII] *The attacks on all three camps continued incessantly day and night. The Indians' sacrifices of the Spaniards also continued; it took ten days to sacrifice all the soldiers, and they saved for last Cristóbal de Guzmán, whom they kept alive twelve or thirteen days. The verbal threats and taunts at both the Spaniards and Tlaxcalans also continued. To one taunt, "Look how bad and vile you are; even your flesh is bad to eat, it tastes as bitter as gall, so bitter we cannot swallow it," Bernal Díaz commented that it seemed "Our Lord willed their flesh to become bitter." Perhaps most damaging was that many of the Indian friends left to return to their lands. Bernal Díaz noted that "of more than twenty-four thousand friends that we brought, only about two hundred friends stayed in all three camps, and all went away to their towns." A turning point seemed to come when a lord of Texcoco, Ixtlilxochitl (don Carlos) told Cortés that it was all right to stay in the camps, but he should send the brigantines out every day and night to make sure water and provisions were not brought into the city, "because inside this great city there are so many xiquipiles of warriors that the food they have will run out, and the water they are now drinking, from some springs they have made, is brackish. What can they do if you keep the food and water from them?" According to Bernal Díaz, Cortés was elated by the advice. The three camps went back to filling in the causeways, supported by the brigantines, which were now able to break through any stakes set for them. Mexican attempts to use crossbows they had taken failed. Some Indian friends began to return.*

Because I am tired of writing about battles, and I was more tired and wounded when I was in them, it will seem wearisome to the readers that I talk about them so much, but I can do nothing else, because for ninety-three days we were constantly battling. From here on, if I may be excused, I will not bring it up so much in this story. Let us return to our tale. As in all three camps we were entering their city, Cortés on his side, Sandoval on his, and Pedro de Alvarado on ours, we reached the spring from which they were drinking the brackish water, and we tore it down and took it apart so they could not use it. Many Mexicans were guarding it, and we had a good skirmish with spears, stones, arrows, and many long lances with which they were waiting for the horses, because now we were moving through all parts of the streets we had taken, because now they were level and without water and openings and the horses could run very easily.

[CLIV] When Cortés saw that we were taking many bridges, causeways, and barricades in the city and knocking down houses, as he had as prisoners three chieftains who were captains of Mexico, he ordered them to speak to Guatemuz about making peace with us, but the chieftains said they would not dare go with such a message because their lord Guatemuz would order them killed. But, in short, so much did Cortés beg them, and with promises he made them and cloaks he gave them, that they went. What he ordered them to say to Guatemuz was that because he liked him very much, because he was such a close relative of Montezuma his friend, married to his daughter, because from pity Cortés did not want the destruction of so great a city to be completed, and in order to avoid the great slaughter that occurred each day on its inhabitants and visitors, he begged him to come in peace, and in the name of His Majesty he would pardon all the deaths and damage they had done to us and would do them many favors; he said they should take into account that he had already sent this message four times, and that Guatemuz—whether because he was young, or because of his advisors, and most of all because of his accursed idols and papas who gave him bad advice—had refused to come and had wanted only to wage war; but because he had

now seen so many deaths that had occurred in the battles they fought against us, and we had on our side all the cities and towns of that whole area, and every day more new ones were coming against them, that he should take pity because of such ruin of his vassals and city; and also he sent to say that we knew they had used up the provisions, that they had no water, and many other well-chosen words.

The three chieftains understood this very well through our interpreters, and they asked Cortés for a letter, not because they would understand it, but because they already knew clearly that when we sent some message or things we were ordering them, it was on a paper like those they call amales, a sign that it was an order. When the three messengers appeared before their lord Guatemuz, with great tears and sobbing they told him what Cortés ordered them, and Guatemuz, when he and his captains who were with him heard it, according to what we learned, was furious at first that they had dared come to him with those messages; but Guatemuz was a young man, a fine figure of a man for an Indian, of good disposition and joyful countenance, and even his color had something more of a tinge of white than the shade of Indians; he was about twenty-five or twenty-six years old and was married to a very beautiful woman, daughter of the great Montezuma, his uncle, and, as we came to know later, he wanted to make peace. In order to discuss the message, he ordered all the chieftains, captains, and papas of the idols to come together, and he told them that he wanted not to fight against Malinche and all of us; what he said to them was that he had already tried everything that was possible to do in the war and changed the way of fighting many times, but we were of such a nature that when he thought he had us conquered, we would return much more vigorously against them; that at present he knew about the great forces of friends who had newly come to us, that all the cities were against them; that the brigantines had already broken their stakes; that the horses were galloping unrestrained through all the streets of his city; and he put before them many other problems they had regarding provisions and water. He begged or ordered each of them to give his opinion, and

the papas should also give theirs and what they had heard their gods, Huichilobos and Tezcatepuca, say and promise, that no one should fear saying truthfully what they believed. It appears that they said to him: "Lord, and our great lord, we already have you for our king, and you were a good choice to rule, for in everything you have shown yourself manly, and the kingdom comes to you by right; the peace you mention is good, but reflect and think: Since these teules entered this land and city, how things have gone from bad to worse for us; look at the services and gifts that our lord, your uncle the great Montezuma, gave them, how he ended up; then your cousin Cacamatzin, king of Texcoco, with the same result; then your relatives, the lords of Iztapalapa, Coyoacan, Tacuba, and Talatcingo, what became of them; then the sons of our great Montezuma all died; then all the gold and riches of this city are gone; then you already see that they have made slaves and branded the faces of all your subjects and vassals of Tepeaca and Chalco, and even Texcoco, and all your cities and towns. Look first at what our gods have promised you, give it full consideration and do not trust Malinche and his friendly words, which are all lies and wickedness; it is better that we all die in this city fighting than see ourselves in the hands of those who would make slaves of us and torture us for gold."

At that time, the papas also told him that their idols had promised them victory three nights in a row when they were sacrificing. Then Guatemuz, half angry, said: "Because you want it to be so, be very watchful of the maize and provisions that we have, and let us all die fighting, and from now on no one must dare ask me for peace; otherwise I will order him to be killed." Then, everyone promised to fight night and day or die in defense of their city. Then with this finished, they negotiated with the people of Xochimilco and other towns to bring them water in canoes, by night, and they opened other springs in places that had water, although brackish. Let us now talk about how Cortés and all of us were two days without entering the city awaiting their reply, and when we did not expect it, a great many squadrons of Indian warriors fell on us in all three camps, attacking us furiously

and coming to engage with us like very fierce lions, believing they would carry us off conquered. What I am talking about was on our side, that of Pedro de Alvarado; on that of Cortés and that of Sandoval, they also said that the enemy arrived at their camps, that they could not keep them back however much they killed and wounded them, and when the enemy were fighting, the cornet of Guatemuz sounded, and then we had to keep close order so they would not rout us because they pushed themselves onto the very points of our swords and lances to lay hands on us. As we were already accustomed to these encounters, because every day they wounded and killed some of us, we held out against them hand to hand, and in this way they fought six or seven days in a row, and we killed and wounded many of them, and even with all this, they cared nothing at all about dying fighting.

I remember that they said to us: "What is Malinche up to, asking us for peace every day? Our idols have promised us victory, we have plenty of food and water, and we are not going to leave any of you alive; so do not talk any more about peace, for words are for women and arms are for men!" Saying this, they would come on us like mad dogs, all of them, and we would fight them until night separated us; then we would retreat with great order because great captancies of them were coming in pursuit of us. We would get our friends off the causeway because now many more had come than before, and we would return to our huts and at once, all together, go on watch. On the watch, we would eat our scant quantity of quelites, which are grasses, and in the early morning we began to fight because they did not give us much resting time. This is the way we were for many days. While we were in this situation, another very troublesome thing arose, and it is that they gathered together from three provinces, Matalzingo, Malinalco, and another town called Tulapa, and I do not remember now the names of the rest, which were about eight or ten leagues from Mexico, to come against us in our rear and in our camps while we were battling with the Mexicans, and then the Mexican forces would come out, some on one side and some on the other, and they thought they would rout us.

[CLV] So that this might be understood well, it is necessary to go back to talking about when they defeated Cortés and carried off to sacrifice the seventy-odd soldiers, and I may as well say seventy-eight, because there were that many when they were counted well. I have also said that Guatemuz sent the heads of the horses and faces they had flayed and the feet and hands of the soldiers they had sacrificed to many towns and to Matalzingo and Malinalco and Tulapa. He sent them word that they had already killed more than half our men and begged them, so they could finish killing us, to come help him and attack our camps day or night, so that, of necessity, we would have to fight with them to defend ourselves; when we were fighting, they would come out from Mexico and attack us on the other side so that they would conquer us and have many of us to sacrifice to their idols, and they would satiate themselves on our bodies. He sent this word to them in such a way that they believed it and took it as true. In Matalzingo and Tulapa, Guatemuz had many relatives on his mother's side; and when they saw the faces and heads of our soldiers and heard what he sent word to them to say, they immediately set about gathering all the forces they could to come to the aid of Mexico and of their relative Guatemuz. They were already in fact coming against us, and along the road where they went were three towns friendly to us, and they began to attack and rob the settlements and maize fields, and they killed children for sacrifice; the towns sent to let Cortés know about it at once so that he would send them aid and relief.

He immediately sent Andrés de Tapia, who, with twenty horsemen, one hundred soldiers, and many Tlaxcalan friends, helped them very much; he made the enemies go back to their towns, and he returned to the camp, at which Cortés was very pleased. In that moment also other messengers came from the towns of Cuernavaca to ask for help, for the same people of Matalzingo, Malinalco, Tulapa, and other provinces were coming down on them, and they asked Cortés to relieve them. To do that, he sent Gonzalo de Sandoval with twenty horsemen and eighty soldiers, the soundest there were in all three camps, and I went with him, and many friends. God knows that those who stayed

were at great personal risk in all three camps, because most of them were wounded, and they had no nourishment at all. Although there is much to say about what we did in Sandoval's company, how we defeated the enemies, I will omit talking about it except to say that we came back immediately to relieve Sandoval's camp, and we brought two chieftains from Matalzingo with us, and we left those towns in peace. That expedition we made was very useful. For one thing, it kept our friends from receiving more damage than they had received. For another thing, it kept the enemy from coming against our camps to attack us, as in fact they were coming to do. Also Guatemuz and his captains could see that they no longer had aid or support from those provinces, nor could they say, when we were fighting with the Mexicans, that they were going to kill us with the help of Matalzingo and other provinces and that their idols had promised it to them.

Let us return to talking about how Cortés sent to Guatemuz to make peace, that he would pardon him everything that was past, and he sent word that the king our lord had recently sent to order him not to destroy more of that city; for this reason, the past five days he had neither attacked nor entered the city fighting. He said they should consider that they no longer had food or water, that more than two thirds of their city was flattened, and that as for the relief they were awaiting from Matalzingo, he should inform himself from those two chieftains that Cortés now sent him, how it had gone for them in their expedition. He also sent to make them other promises. With those messengers went the two Indians from Matalzingo and six Mexican chieftains who had been taken prisoner in recent battles. When Guatemuz saw the prisoners from Matalzingo and they told him what had happened, he gave them no response at all except to tell them to return to their town, and he ordered them to leave Mexico at once.

Let us leave the messengers who departed immediately. The Mexicans came at us in three directions with the greatest fury we had seen up to that time and fought very strongly in all three camps, and given that we wounded and killed many of them, it seems to me they wanted to die fighting. Then when they were

going most furiously against us hand to hand and killed ten of our soldiers, whose heads they cut off, hastening martyrdom for them like the rest they had killed, they brought the heads and threw them in front of us. They said: "*Tlen quitoa, rey Castilla, tlen quitoa.*" This means in their language: "What does the king of Castile say now?"<sup>1</sup> With these words, they hurled spears, stones, and arrows, which covered the ground and causeway.

Let us leave this, for now we were winning a large part of the city from them, and we sensed that even though they were fighting very manfully, not so many squadrons were coming in relief as before, nor were they opening ditches or causeways; but another thing they did most certainly, which was that, when we were retreating, they came pursuing us until they laid hands on us. I also want to say that we now had used up the powder in all three camps, and at that moment a ship had arrived at Villa Rica from the fleet of licentiate Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón, which was lost or destroyed in the island of Florida; but the ship showed up at that port, and some soldiers, powder, and crossbows came in it. The deputy governor who was in Villa Rica, Rodrigo Rangel, who was guarding Narváez, immediately sent powder, crossbows, and soldiers to Cortés.

To be brief, let us return to our conquest. Cortés arranged with all the other captains and soldiers that we should advance as much as we could until we reached Tlatelolco, which is the great marketplace, where their high cus and adoratorios were. Cortés on his side, Sandoval on his, and we on ours went on taking bridges and barricades. Cortés advanced as far as a little plaza where there were other adoratorios and some small towers. In one of those houses were some beams put on end, and on them many heads of our Spaniards whom they had killed and sacrificed in recent battles, and they had very long hair and beards, much longer than when they were alive, and I would not have believed it had I not

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1. The actual translation is, "What does the king of Castile say, what does he say?"

seen it. I recognized three soldiers, my companions, and when we saw them like that, it saddened our hearts. At that time, they were where they were, but twelve days later they were removed, and we buried those heads and others they had offered to idols in a church we built, which is now called The Martyrs, near the bridge they call Alvarado's Leap.

Let us talk about how those of us in the captaincy of Pedro de Alvarado went forward fighting; we arrived at Tlatelolco, and so many Mexicans were guarding their idols and high cus, and they had so many barricades that we were unable to enter or take them for a good two hours, but as the horses, even though most of them were wounded, could now enter, they helped us very much, and the horsemen speared many Mexicans. As so many enemies were in three places, we two captaincies went to battle with them, and Pedro de Alvarado ordered the captaincy of a captain named Gutierre de Badajoz to climb to the top of the cu of Huichilobos, which has one hundred fourteen steps, and they fought very well against the enemies and the many papas in the cus and adoratorios. The enemies attacked Gutierre de Badajoz and his captaincy in such a way that they made him tumble down ten or twelve steps, and we immediately went to help him. As we were advancing, the squadrons with which we were fighting followed us, and we ran great risk of our lives, but we still climbed the steps, which are one hundred and fourteen.

Here there would be much to tell about the danger in which we all found ourselves in capturing those fortresses, which were very high, and in those battles they again wounded us all very badly; still, we set them on fire, the idols were burned, we raised our banners; and setting it on fire, we were battling on level ground until nighttime, but we could not prevail against so many warriors.

The next day Cortés and his captains saw from where they were advancing, battling in their sections in other neighborhoods and streets far from the high cu, the flames that were burning the great cu, for they had not been put out; they saw our banners on top, and he rejoiced greatly and wanted also to be on it, but he could not—and they even said he was envious—because it was a

quarter of a league from one place to the other and he had many bridges and water openings to take. Wherever he went they waged furious war on him, and he could not advance as quickly as he wanted into the heart of the city, as we in Alvarado's company had. But within four days he joined us, Sandoval as well as Cortés, and we could go from one camp to the other through the streets and houses that were pulled down, bridges, barricades that were destroyed, and water openings now all filled in. In this instant, Guatemuz with all his warriors were already retreating to a part of the city within the lake, because the house and palace in which he lived had now been leveled to the ground, but with all this, they did not cease to come out every day and attack us, and at the time for us to withdraw they continued following even more closely than before.

When Cortés saw this and that many days were going by and they were not coming to seek peace nor had any such thought, he decided with all our captains that we would set up some ambushes, and it was in this way: From all three camps, about thirty horsemen and one hundred soldiers joined together, the most nimble and warlike that Cortés knew; Cortés summoned one thousand Tlaxcalans from all three camps, and very early in the morning we put ourselves in some large houses that had belonged to a lord of Mexico, and Cortés advanced with the rest of the horsemen, his soldiers, crossbowmen, and escopeteros through the streets and causeways, fighting in the usual way and making as though he was filling in a water opening and bridge. Then the Mexican squadrons that were prepared for it were fighting with him, as well as many others Guatemuz sent to guard the bridge. When Cortés saw that there was a great number of enemies, he made as if he was retreating and ordered the friends to get off the causeway so the enemy might believe our men were retreating. They pursued him, at first little by little, but then, when they saw that he was making as though fleeing in fact, all the forces in that causeway went after him, attacking him. When Cortés saw that they had passed somewhat beyond the houses where the ambush was, he ordered two cannons discharged close together, which was the

signal for us to come out of the ambush. The horsemen came out first, and then all our soldiers came out and we fell on the enemy at leisure. Then immediately Cortés turned around with his men, and our friends the Tlaxcalans, and they did much damage to the enemies so that many were killed and wounded, and from then on they did not follow us when it was time for us to withdraw.

Also in the camp of Pedro de Alvarado they made another ambush, but it came to nothing. On that day, though, I was not in our camp with Pedro de Alvarado because Cortés ordered me to go to his camp for the ambush.

Let us say how we were all now in Tlatelolco, and Cortés ordered all the captaincies to be there with him and keep watch, because we were coming more than a half league from the camp to do battle. We were there three days without doing anything of note, because Cortés ordered us not to advance any further into the city nor to tear down any more houses, because he wanted to ask for peace again. During those days when we were in Tlatelolco, Cortés sent to Guatemuz begging him to give himself up and not to have fear; he made great promises that he would respect and honor his person very much and that Guatemuz would govern Mexico and all his lands and cities as usual, and he sent him food and treats, which were tortillas, hens, cherries, prickly pear fruit, and cacao, for he had nothing else. Guatemuz entered into counsel with his captains, and what they advised him was to say that he would like peace but that they would wait three days to give the response, that at the end of the three days, Guatemuz and Cortés would see each other and would make the agreement for peace, because in those three days they would have time to know more fully the will and reply of their Huichilobos. What he did not say is that they would have time to repair bridges; open causeways; prepare spears, stones, and arrows; and make barricades. Guatemuz sent four chieftains with that answer. We believed that the peace was genuine, and Cortés ordered that the messengers be given plenty to eat and drink, and he sent them back to Guatemuz; with them he sent more refreshments, the same as before. Guatemuz again sent other messengers and with them two rich cloaks, and the

messengers said that Guatemuz would come when everything was arranged. But so as not to waste more words on this, he never agreed to come because they had advised him not to believe Cortés and reminded him about the end of his uncle, the great Montezuma, and his relatives and the destruction of the entire noble Mexican lineage; they told him he should say he was ill and they should all go out to fight, and it would please their gods to give them victory, for so many times they had promised it to them.

Well, as we were waiting for Guatemuz and he did not come, we understood the cunning, and at that moment so many battalions of Mexicans came out with their devices and attacked Cortés so fiercely that he could not hold out, and it was the same thing in our camp and in Sandoval's. They did this in such a way that they seemed to be beginning all over again, and as we were somewhat careless, believing they were already at peace, they wounded many of our soldiers, and three died from their very severe wounds, and two horses; but they did not go away boasting very much, because they paid for it fully. When Cortés saw this, he ordered us to go back to attacking them and to advance into the part of their city where they had taken refuge. When they saw that we were taking the entire city from them, Guatemuz sent two chieftains to tell Cortés that he would like to speak to him from across a water opening, Cortés on one side and Guatemuz on the other, and they designated the time for the next morning. Cortés went to speak with him, but Guatemuz did not come for the appointment; rather he sent chieftains, and they said their lord did not dare to come for fear that when they were speaking our men would fire escopetas and crossbows at him and kill him. Cortés promised him on his oath that he would not harm him in any way, but it was of no use, for they did not believe him, and they said they already knew about his promises.

At that time, two chieftains who were speaking with Cortés took out some tortillas from a large bag they were carrying and the leg of a hen and cherries, and they sat down in a very leisurely manner to eat so that Cortés would see this and believe they were not hungry. When Cortés saw that, he sent to tell them that,

because they did not want to come to make peace, we would soon go into their houses and see if they had maize, much less hens. We were another four or five days in this way, and we did not attack them, but at this time many poor Indians who had nothing to eat would come out of Mexico every night, and they came to our camp desperate from hunger; when Cortés saw that, he ordered us not to attack them, because perhaps they would change their mind about coming in peace. But they would not come, although he sent to them to request peace.

In the camp of Cortés was a soldier who said that he himself had been in Italy in the company of the Great Captain<sup>2</sup> and was in the Battle of Garellano<sup>3</sup> and other great battles; he said many things about engines of war and that he would make a catapult in Tlatelolco with which, after two days of firing it at the houses and in the part of the city where Guatemuz had taken refuge, he would soon make them give themselves up peacefully. He said so many things to Cortés about it, for he was a very great talker, that soldier, that Cortés immediately set to work making the catapult, and they brought lime and stone and wood as the soldier demanded it, and carpenters and nails and everything necessary for making the catapult; they made two slings of strong ropes and cords, and they brought him large stones, greater than jugs that held an arroba. When the catapult was made and mounted in the way the soldier arranged and he said it was ready to shoot, they put a shaped stone in the sling, and what happened was that the stone went up no higher than the catapult, and it immediately fell back where it had been set up. When Cortés saw that, he was very angry with the soldier who showed him how to make it, and he was unhappy with himself because he had believed him; he said that in war nothing is worse than talk for the sake of talking, and

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2. Gonzalo Hernández de Córdoba.

3. This battle occurred in 1503 between the French troops of the Marquess de Saluzzo and the Spanish troops of Gonzalo Hernández de Córdoba.

this man turned out to be the way I have said. This soldier was called, according to what he said, somebody de Sotello, a native of Seville; Cortés ordered the catapult immediately to be taken apart.

[CLVI] Seeing that Guatemuz and his captains did not want to make peace at all, Cortés ordered Gonzalo de Sandoval to enter with the brigantines into the place in the city where Guatemuz had retreated with the flower of his captains and most noble people in Mexico, but he ordered them not to kill or wound any Indians unless they attacked him, and, even if they did attack him, he should only defend himself and not do them any other harm, but he should knock down their houses and the many platforms they had made in the lake for fighting. Cortés climbed the great cu of Tlatelolco to see how Sandoval was advancing with the brigantines, and also with Cortés were Pedro de Alvarado, Francisco Verdugo, Luis Marín, and other soldiers. As Sandoval advanced vigorously with the brigantines on that place where the houses of Guatemuz were, and when Guatemuz saw himself surrounded, he was afraid they would capture or kill him, and he had ready fifty large pirogues with good rowers so that when he saw himself in trouble, he could save himself by placing himself in some reed beds and get from there to land and hide in other towns. He had also ordered his captains and people of most importance who were with him in that part of the city to do the same. When they saw that the brigantines were entering among the houses, they embarked in the fifty canoes where they had already placed his property, gold, jewels, and entire family and women, and he put himself in them and shot out onto the lake, accompanied by many captains. As many other canoes were leaving at that moment, the lake full of them, and Sandoval immediately got news that Guatemuz was fleeing, he ordered all the brigantines to stop demolishing houses and fighting platforms and pursue the enemy in the canoes and take care that they kept close track of where Guatemuz was going, that they not harm him or anger him at all but do their best to capture him peacefully.

As one García Holguín, a friend of Sandoval, was captain of a brigantine, a very fast sailing vessel with good rowers, Sandoval

ordered him to follow in the direction they told him Guatemuz was fleeing with his large pirogues; and he ordered that if he caught up with Guatemuz he should do him no harm at all beyond capturing him. Sandoval continued in another direction with other brigantines that accompanied him. It pleased Our Lord God that García Holguín caught up with the canoes and pirogues in which Guatemuz was going, and from the style and richness of it, its awnings and the seat in which he sat, he knew it was Guatemuz, the great lord of Mexico. He signaled them to stop, but they would not, so he made as if he was going to shoot with the escopetas and crossbows. When Guatemuz saw that, he was frightened and said: "Do not shoot me, for I am king of this city and they call me Guatemuz; what I beg of you is that you do not touch the things I am taking with me, nor my wife nor relatives, but take me immediately to Malinche." When Holguín heard him, he was greatly delighted, and with much respect he embraced him and put him in the brigantine along with his wife and thirty chieftains, and he had him sit in the stern on some mats and cloths and gave him what they had brought to eat; he did not touch the canoes carrying his property, but brought them along with his brigantine.

At that time, Gonzalo de Sandoval had ordered all the brigantines to gather together, and he learned that Holguín had captured Guatemuz and was taking him to Cortés; when he heard that, he had the rowers in his brigantine speed up so that he would catch up to Holguín and demanded the prisoner from him. But Holguín would not give him to him, because he said he had captured him and not Sandoval. Sandoval replied that it was true, but that he was captain general of the brigantines and García Holguín was under his command and banner, that it was because Garcia Holguín was his friend and his brigantine was the fastest that he ordered him to follow after Guatemuz and capture him, but he should give up the prisoner to him as general. But Holguín still insisted that he would not; and at that moment another brigantine went at great speed to Cortés—who was very close in Tlatelolco, watching from the high cu how Sandoval was

advancing—to ask him for a reward for bringing good news, and then they told him about the dispute Sandoval was having with Holguín over taking the prisoner from him.

When Cortés learned this, he immediately dispatched the captain Luis Marín and Francisco Verdugo to summon Sandoval and Holguín to come just as they were in their brigantines, without further debate, and, with much respect, bring Guatemuz's wife and all the rest, and he would determine whose the prisoner was and to whom would be given the honor. While they were summoning him, Cortés ordered a dais prepared, the best there could be in the circumstances, with mats, cloaks, other things to sit on, and a great deal of food from what Cortés had for himself. Soon Sandoval and Holguín came with Guatemuz, and the two captains brought him before Cortés; when he was in front of Cortés, he paid him much respect, and Cortés joyfully embraced him and showed much affection to him and also his captains. Then Guatemuz said to Cortés: "Señor Malinche, I have done what I was obligated to do for my city and vassals, and I can do no more, so I come by force and a prisoner before your person and power; take that dagger you have in your belt and kill me with it right away." When he said this, he wept many tears and sobbed, and other great lords he had with him also wept. Cortés answered him through doña Marina and Aguilar, our interpreters, very affectionately, and he told him that because he had been so valiant in defending his city, he thought much more highly of him personally, that he did not deserve any blame at all, but his defense should be seen as more good than bad; but what he wanted was that Guatemuz had come for peace of his own will when they had been nearly defeated, before so much of that city had been destroyed and there were so many deaths among his Mexicans; but now both had occurred, and there was no remedy or solution for it, so let his spirit be at rest and that of all his captains, and he will rule Mexico and its provinces as before. Guatemuz and his captains told Cortés that they were grateful.

Cortés asked after his wife and the other great ladies, wives of the other captains they told him came with Guatemuz. Guatemuz

himself replied and said that he had begged Gonzalo de Sandoval and García Holguín to allow them to stay in the canoes while he came to see what Malinche ordered. Cortés sent for them at once and ordered them given the best food they had in the camp, and then, because it was late and beginning to rain, Cortés arranged for them to go immediately to Coyoacan, and he took with him Guatemuz and all his household and family and many chieftains, and he also ordered Pedro de Alvarado, Gonzalo de Sandoval, and the rest of the captains each to go to his own shelters and camp; and we went to Tacuba, Sandoval to Tepeaquilla, and Cortés to Coyoacan. Guatemuz and his captains were captured on the thirteenth of August, at the hour of vespers, on the day of señor San Hipólito in the year 1521. Thanks to Our Lord Jesus Christ and to Our Lady, the Virgin Saint Mary, his Blessed Mother. Amen.

It rained and thundered with lightning that afternoon until midnight, with much heavier rain than at other times. After Guatemuz had been taken prisoner, all of us soldiers were left as deaf as a man standing at the top of a belfry with many bells clanging, all of which stopped in a single instant. I say this on purpose because all ninety-three days that we were besieging this city night and day, Mexican captains gave out so many yells and shouts while they were readying the squadrons of warriors who were going to battle on the causeways; others calling to those in the canoes who were going to fight with the brigantines and with us on the bridges; to others driving in palings and opening and deepening the water openings and bridges and making barricades; to others preparing spears and arrows, and the women making rounded stones to cast with the slings; then from the adoratorio and towers of idols the accursed drums and cornets and mournful great drums never stopped sounding. In this way, night and day, we had so much noise, we could not hear each other, but after the capture of Guatemuz, the shouts and all the noise stopped; that is why I have said it was as if we had been standing in a belfry before.

*Bernal Díaz now returns to the quarrel between Sandoval and García Holguín over the capture of Guatemuz (Cuahtemoc). Cortés told a*

*story about a similar situation in ancient Rome involving Marius and Sulla, which led to civil war and was never decided.*

Let us return to the thread of our subject. Cortés said he would tell His Majesty about this matter to see which one of them would be favored by giving him arms, that the determination would come from Castile, and in two years an order came from His Majesty that Cortés should have in his coat of arms seven kings, who were: Montezuma, great lord of Mexico; Cacamatzin, lord of Texcoco; the lords of Iztapalapa, Coyoacan, and Tacuba; another great lord who was the nephew of Montezuma, to whom they said the caciquedom and lordship of Mexico would come, and who was lord of Matalzingo and other provinces; and this Guatemuz, regarding whom the quarrel arose.

Let us talk about the dead bodies and heads in those houses where Guatemuz had retreated. I say, and I swear, Amen, that all the houses and fighting platforms in the lake were filled with heads and dead bodies, and I do not know how to write about it, for in the streets and in the very courtyards of Tlatelolco, it was all the same, and we could not walk except among bodies and heads of dead Indians. I have read about the destruction of Jerusalem, but I do not know if there was greater slaughter than here, because so many people in this town were missing, most of the warriors from all the provinces and towns subject to Mexico who gathered there died, and the ground and lake and fighting platforms were all full of dead bodies; they smelled so bad that there was no man who could bear it, and for this reason as soon as Guatemuz was taken prisoner, each of our captains went to his own camp, and even Cortés was sick from the stench that penetrated into his nostrils and from headache during those days he was in Tlatelolco.

Let us talk about how the soldiers who went about in the brigantines were the ones who fared best, and they had good spoil because they could go to the houses in certain areas of the lake where they believed there would be clothing, gold, or other riches; they also went to search in the reed beds where the Mexicans were carrying the wealth to hide when we took some areas and

houses. Also, under the pretext that they were chasing the canoes that carried provisions and water, when they came upon some of them in which some chieftains were fleeing to dry land to go among the towns of Otomis, who were nearby, they stripped them of everything they carried with them. I want to say that we soldiers who fought on the causeways and on land had no profit whatsoever except many arrow wounds, [and wounds from] lance thrusts, knife slashes, spears, and stones, because when we took some houses, the residents had carried off all the possessions they had and we could not go by water until we had first filled in the openings and bridges. For this reason I have said that when Cortés was searching for sailors to go in the brigantines, they fared better than those of us who battled on land. It also came out clearly because the Mexican captains and even Guatemuz told Cortés, when he demanded the treasure of Montezuma from them, that those who were in the brigantines had stolen the greater part of it.

Let us say that, as there was such a bad stench in that city, Guatemuz begged Cortés to give permission for all the forces of Mexico that were in the city to go outside to the neighboring towns, and he immediately ordered them to do so. I say that for three days and nights, all three causeways were crammed with men, women, and children, never ceasing, and they were so thin, yellow, dirty, and bad smelling that it was pitiful to see them. When they had cleared the causeway, Cortés went to see the city, and we saw the houses full of dead people, and among them even some poor Mexicans who could not leave, and what they excreted from their bodies was a filthiness such as very thin pigs that only eat grass excrete. The entire city was as if plowed up and the roots of the good herbs pulled out, and they had eaten them and even cooked the bark of some trees. We found no fresh water there, but brackish. I want also to say that they did not eat the flesh of their Mexicans but only our flesh and that of the Tlaxcalans whom they had captured, and there had not been a people for a long time that had suffered so much from hunger, thirst, and continual fighting.

After this so great and populous city, so well-known throughout the world, was conquered, after having given much thanks to Our

Lord God and His Blessed Mother, Our Lady, and having made certain offerings to God Our Lord, Cortés ordered a banquet to be held in Coyoacan in celebration for having conquered it. He already had much wine for it from a ship that had come from Castile to the port of Villa Rica, and he had pigs they had brought him from Cuba. For the fiesta, he ordered all the captains and soldiers who seemed to him to be worthy from all three camps to be invited, but when we went to the banquet, there were neither seats nor tables for a third of us soldiers and captains who went, and there was great disorder; it would have been better not to have held that banquet because of the not-so-good things that occurred. When they had cleared the tables, there was much rejoicing, thanks were given to God for the many goods and favors he always gave us and has continued to do.

I want to talk about other things that happened, which I was forgetting, although they might not belong here but somewhat farther back, and it is that our friends Chichimecatecle and the two young Xicotengas, sons of don Lorenzo de Vargas, who used to be called Xicotenga the old and blind, fought very valiantly against the forces of Mexico and helped us very much, as did a brother of don Fernando, lord of Texcoco, who was called Estesuchel,<sup>4</sup> who later was called don Carlos; he performed acts of a very valiant and courageous man. Another Indian captain, whose name I do not remember, native of a town of the lake, did marvels; and many other captains from towns of those who helped us all fought very powerfully. Cortés spoke with them and gave them great thanks and praise because they had helped us, and with many promises that in time he would make them lords and would give them lands and vassals, he took his leave of them; as they were rich and loaded with the gold and spoils they had taken, they went to their lands and even carried a lot of the dried flesh of the Mexicans, which they divided among their relatives and friends as things of their enemies, and they ate it at festivals.

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4. Ixtlilxochitl.

Now that I am away from the combats and fierce battles we had day and night with the Mexicans, for which I give many thanks to God who delivered me from them, I want to tell something that happened to me after I saw the sixty-two soldiers from the men of Cortés who were carried off alive, sacrificed, and cut open at their breasts, their hearts offered to the idols. What I will now say will seem to some people to be because of a lack of spirit on my part for fighting, but on the other hand, if one considers it well, it is from the excessive daring and great courage with which I had to put myself into the most ferocious of the battles those days, because at that time it was presumed of a good soldier and was necessary for his reputation that he do what the most daring soldiers were obliged to do. As every day I saw my companions being carried off to sacrifice, and I had seen how they were sawing through their chests to pull the beating hearts from them and to cut off their feet and arms and eat them, the sixty-two of them, and as previously they had killed eight hundred fifty of our companions, I feared that one day or another they would do the same to me, because they had already had me in their grasp twice to carry me off to sacrifice, but it pleased God that I should escape their hands. Remembering those very ugly deaths, and as the proverb goes, the little pitcher that goes often to the well, etc., for this reason, from then on, I always feared death more than ever. I have said this because, before going into the battles, I felt a sort of horror and great sadness in my heart, and I urinated once or twice, but commending myself to God and to His Blessed Mother, going into battle it was always the same, that dread immediately left me. I also want to say what a strange and new thing it was to me to feel that unaccustomed fear, when I had been in many battles and very dangerous encounters of war, and here at the end, my heart should have been hardened and spirit more deeply embedded than ever. For I can recall and recount things back to when I came to discover with Francisco Hernández de Córdoba and with Grijalva and returned with Cortés. I took part in the affair at Cape Catoche and in that of Lázaro, also called Campeche, and at Potonchan and at Florida,

which I have written about more fully when I came to discover with Francisco Hernández de Córdoba.

Let us go back and mention the expedition of Grijalva, and in the same expedition the affair of Potonchan, and then with Cortés in the matter of Tabasco and that of Cingapacinga and in all the battles and encounters of Tlaxcala and Cholula, and when we defeated Narváez, they designated me to be among those who went to capture their artillery, eighteen cannons loaded with stones and balls that we took from Narváez, and this was a moment of great danger; and I was in the first defeat, when the Mexicans drove us from Mexico, when they killed more than eight hundred fifty of our soldiers in about a week; and I took part in the expeditions of Tepeaca and Cachula and their surroundings, and in other encounters we had with the Mexicans when we were in Texcoco harvesting the maize fields; and I was in the affair of Iztapalapa when they tried to drown us, and I was there when we were climbing the rocky crags, as they now call the forts or fortresses that Cortés captured, and in the affair of Xochimilco, four battles, and in many other encounters; and I was among the first to enter with Pedro de Alvarado to lay siege to Mexico when we cut off the water from Chapultepec; and I took part when we first entered the causeways with Alvarado, and afterward, when they defeated us in the same place and carried off eight of our soldiers and laid hold of me and were carrying me off to be sacrificed, and I took part in all the rest of the battles I have already mentioned that we had every day, up to when I saw the cruel deaths they inflicted on our companions before my eyes. I have already said that all these battles and dangers of death had gone by without my having had such fear as I felt now at the end; let those gentlemen who understand military matters and have found themselves in danger of death in critical situations say to what cause they attribute my fear, whether to weakness of spirit or to great courage, because as I have said, I felt in my thoughts that when I was battling I had to put myself into such dangerous places that, of necessity, I had to fear death then more than at other times, and for this reason my heart trembled, because it feared death. All these battles in which

I found myself, which I have talked about here, they will see in my story, in what time and how and when and where and in what manner. I was in many other expeditions and encounters from that time forward, which I do not declare here until their time and place. Also I say that I was not always in very good health, because many times I was badly wounded, and for this reason I could not go on all the expeditions. But the hardships and risks of death I have told of are still not insignificant, for after we conquered this great and powerful city of Mexico, I went through many other war encounters with captains with whom I went out from Mexico.

EPILOGUE<sup>1</sup>

As Bernal Díaz del Castillo indicates, his story and the story of the Spanish conquest of New Spain do not end with the fall of Tenochtitlan. That part of the conquest was only the first and most focused step in the process of settling the land. Almost immediately upon the fall of Mexico, Cortés began to send his captains and their men off to New Spain's other major population centers in search of further treasure, lands to occupy and distribute in *encomienda*, and peoples to overcome and subject to Spanish domination. His reasons for sending off his several captains varied according to circumstance: with some, he was fulfilling promises he had made in the course of conquering Mexico; in others he was rewarding people who had served him particularly well; in yet others he was putting people he distrusted

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1. With the fall of Mexico and the capture of Guatemuz (Cuauhtemoc), Bernal Díaz's account in *The True History of the Conquest of New Spain* begins to lose narrative continuity and becomes episodic. Although the rest of the account contains a great deal of information about events that occur after the fall of Mexico, much of the information Bernal Díaz provides is at second and, one suspects, third and fourth hand, and so the vivacity of the first-person participant narrative fades. Nonetheless, Bernal Díaz's account of several incidents provides an indelible sense of how much more war and work the Spaniards faced before New Spain came into their possession, and how much disorder erupted as the conquistadors and those who so eagerly followed in their footsteps sought to grab their share of the newly opened territory. This epilogue seeks to capture some sense of the five or six years following the dramatic events leading up to the fall of Mexico. Although the events following did not have quite the drama of the initial conquest, they are important to the larger story.

at a distance so as to avoid revolts and attempts on his life. Thus, as reward for loyal service, he sent Gonzalo de Sandoval to settle the territory of the Zapotecs, that is, Oaxaca; Pedro de Alvarado to settle Guatemala; and Cristóbal de Olid to Honduras, an assignment Cortés would come to regret; but, for example, he sent Alonso de Ávila to Gualtitlan precisely because Cortés knew him to be “a very bold person and was uneasy with regard to him,” particularly as he had “served the bishop of Burgos, . . . and for that reason Cortés tried to keep Ávila at a distance from him” (CLIX). However, Cortés was not simply attempting to fulfill his promises to those who had served him in the overthrow of Mexico or keep his friends close and his enemies at a distance, but was, at the same time, attempting to consolidate his position as governor general of New Spain, along with the status and economic benefits that pertained to such a position, against the opposition of his enemies, representatives of the Spanish Crown, and those who simply wanted to take advantage of the chaos that arises in the midst of such social upheaval as the new situation created. Finally, Bernal Díaz del Castillo remains loyal to Gonzalo de Sandoval and Cortés, serving them as asked and required, even though his experience of Cortés convinces him that the latter is more interested in his own fame and fortune than the well-being of those who accompanied him on the trek to and siege of Mexico.

Among the signal events to which Bernal Díaz bears witness in the last part of his history are Cristóbal de Olid’s betrayal of Cortés and the execution that follows, the arduous nearly two-and-a-half-year trek with Cortés to Guatemala with its disastrous results, Cortés’s fight to secure recognition and compensation for service to the Spanish Crown, as well as Cortés’s lack of regard for those who served him, the chaotic state in which Cortés found Mexico upon his return, first, from the Guatemala expedition and then from his trip to Spain. Finally, Bernal Díaz recalls those who were in the company that overthrew Mexico, providing portraits of them, which he concludes with a final statement of his reasons for writing his history.

The Spanish Crown had urged Cortés to take possession of Higueras and Honduras in part to search out all the gold and other treasure possible and because it sought a passage to the Spice Islands. Cortés commissioned Cristóbal de Olid with this task because he had performed so valiantly during the siege of Mexico, because “he was made by the same hand . . . and because he had given Cristóbal de Olid a good share of Indians around Mexico, therefore believing he would be loyal” (CLXV). Olid was to go by sea from Villa Rica to Havana to secure provisions, particularly horses, from where he was to proceed to Higueras to invade Honduras. Among the company Olid took with him was a person named Briones, who was a “disruptive man and enemy of Cortés” (CLXV). Briones cajoled Olid into a conspiracy to meet with Diego Velázquez, who, when Olid’s fleet reached Cuba, “came to where the fleet was and reached an agreement with Cristóbal de Olid that together they would take the land of Higueras and Honduras for His Majesty and, in his royal name, Cristóbal de Olid, and that Diego Velázquez would do what was necessary to make it known to His Majesty in Castile” (CLXV). When Cortés discovered the conspiracy and Olid’s revolt, he determined to take revenge. He sent a relative, Francisco de Las Casas, with a well-armed fleet of five ships to Higueras and Honduras to take the territory back and punish Olid. As Las Casas’s fleet arrived and anchored at the port of Higueras, a storm came up that wrecked most of the ships, and Las Casas with most of his men had to abandon their ships and were captured and imprisoned by Olid, who, it turns out, ended up not guarding Las Casas and his companion Gil Gonzales de Ávila closely, even entertaining them at dinner. One night, while at dinner talking about old times, Las Casas “grabbed him [Olid] by the beard and slashed at his throat,” and Ávila, along with other supporters of Cortés, “rapidly gave Olid so many wounds that he could not defend himself” (CLXXII). Olid managed to escape and hide, but Las Casas and Ávila soon discovered where he was, captured him, and “brought charges against, sentenced, and beheaded him in the plaza at Naco. And so he died because he rebelled, having followed bad counselors” (CLXXII).

In the meantime, Cortés, opposed by some of his bitterest enemies, especially the bishop of Burgos and archbishop of Rosano, Diego Velázquez, and Pánfilo de Narváez, had petitioned the pope and the Spanish Crown to confirm him as governor of New Spain and grant him both lands and rights to make grants of lands and Indians to those he saw fit. After a protracted hearing in Spain, a specially appointed panel of judges sequestered itself for five days and unanimously found for Cortés and the conquistadors who accompanied him.

First, they found Cortés and all of us, the true conquistadors who came over with him, very good and loyal servants of His Majesty, and they thought highly of our great fidelity, and they lauded and praised most highly our daring in the great battles we had had with the Indians and did not fail to mention how few we were when we defeated Narváez, and they immediately silenced Diego Velázquez's claim to govern New Spain, although if he had spent on outfitting the fleets, he could sue Cortés for it in the courts. Next, they declared by formal judgment that Cortés should be governor of New Spain in accord with the order of the high Pontiff, and that they affirmed in the name of His Majesty the encomiendas Cortés had made and gave him power to divide the land from then on; and they approved of all he had done because it was clearly in the service of God and His Majesty. . . . And they ordered that all the conquistadors should receive preference and that they should give us good encomiendas of Indians and that we should be given the most prestigious seats, both in churches and in other places. (CLXVIII)

Upon hearing news of the judgment, Diego Velázquez fell ill and died within a few months. For his part, when Cortés heard the news, he began to allocate lands and Indians to those who were then in his favor and were supporting his current efforts, but not to the conquistadors who had been with him through the siege of

Mexico, nor did he plead their case to the Spanish Crown. Bernal Díaz repeatedly states that Cortés turned a blind eye and deaf ear to the conquistadors' complaints except when he was under duress and required their loyalty and service.

In the meantime, with the intention of settling areas in the northern part of Oaxaca, Bernal Díaz and a number of other captains and conquistadors went off on an expedition under the command of Gonzalo de Sandoval. After one less-than-successful foray, they made their way to Coatzacoalcos, about seventy leagues from Veracruz. When they came to the Coatzacoalcos River, a large river that required care in crossing, in part because in doing so they would have to divide their party and thus weaken themselves in case of an attack, they summoned the local caciques and sought their help, which the caciques initially gave only reluctantly. Having crossed the river, however, they found the area to be well populated, with rich soil and abundant food. Bernal Díaz writes,

We settled in the town that was near the river, and it was a good place for trade by sea because there was a port about four leagues downstream from there, and we named it the Villa de Espíritu Santo. We gave it that sublime name, first, because we defeated Narváez on the feast of the Holy Spirit; also because that holy name was our battle cry when we captured and defeated him; further because we crossed that river [Coatzacoalcos] on that same day; and, finally, because all those lands came peaceably, without making war on us. There the flower of the gentlemen and soldiers who had come from Mexico with Sandoval settled. (CLX)

Upon settling, Sandoval allocated the lands among those who came with him, but with time and the imposition of new laws, Bernal Díaz expresses the view that "it would have been better that I had not stayed there because, as it later turned out, the land was poor, and we brought many lawsuits against the three towns that were settled later" (CLX).

At this point, leaving the government of Mexico in the charge of certain of the king's officers and the conversion of the Indians to fray Toribio Motolinia, Cortés determined to go overland to Honduras in search of Cristóbal de Olid, Francisco de Las Casas, and the others he believed to be there, undertaking what turned out to be an arduous trek that lasted, according to Bernal Díaz, more than two years and three months. Once again, Cortés called on those who had been with him since arriving on the coast of New Spain. Bernal Díaz writes,

[Cortés] ordered all of us citizens of that town [Coatzacoalcos] to accompany him . . . [so that] at the time when we should have been resting up from our great hardships and acquiring some great property and enterprises, he ordered us to go on a campaign of more than five hundred leagues, going through lands nearly all on a war footing, leaving behind in ruin all we had, and we were on that journey more than two years and three months. (CLXXV)

On the one hand, this was another journey of discovery, with Cortés and his men making their way through territory not previously traveled by Europeans, mountainous territory marked by dense forests, mostly hostile Indian peoples able to attack and then slip silently away, and numerous streams and rivers, many of which required the Spaniards to build bridges in order to make their way across. It was also territory in which food was notably scarce, and Cortés's men spent a great deal of time on the edge of starvation. It seems also to have been the first expedition on which Cortés commissioned Bernal Díaz del Castillo as a captain to lead Spanish soldiers and Indians, although Bernal Díaz does not report events of particular danger or importance while he was doing so. However, during this long, arduous trek, one that led to several near revolts against Cortés's leadership, one singularly significant event did occur. For reasons that are not entirely clear, Cortés had decided to bring Guatemuz and other important Indian caciques from Mexico with him on this journey. At a certain point, they

conspired to kill Cortés and his men while they were vulnerable crossing some river or other difficult territory, return to Mexico, unite the remaining Indians, and kill all the Spaniards who stayed in the city. Cortés came to know of the plot, seized Guatemuz and the cacique of Tacuba, and forced a confession from them. Bernal Díaz writes,

Guatemuz confessed that it was as the others had said; nonetheless, the plan was not his idea and he did not know whether everyone was in on it or if it would be carried out, that he had never thought of actually doing it, but had only been in on the talk about it. The cacique of Tacuba said that he and Guatemuz had said that it would be better to die right away than to die each day on the road, seeing the great hunger their vassals and kinsmen were going through. Without further legal procedures, Cortés ordered Guatemuz and the lord of Tacuba, his cousin, to be hanged. . . . When they were about to hang him, Guatemuz said, "Oh, Malinche: I had long understood that you were going to kill me in this way and I had recognized your false words, for you kill me unjustly! God demands it of you for I did not kill myself when I was delivered to you in my city of Mexico." The lord of Tacuba said that in dying with his lord Guatemuz, he took his death as a good thing. . . . Truly, I was greatly saddened by the deaths of Guatemuz and the lord of Tacuba, for I knew them to be very great lords. . . . And this death they were given was very unjust, and it seemed bad to all who came with us. (CLXXVII)

One cannot fix the precise date of Guatemuz's execution, nor can one locate it precisely in the two years and three months of Cortés's expedition to Honduras. But the journey continues from this point, and even though Cortés seems to accomplish the tasks important to him, and the cost on the road in terms of the hardships his men endure and their sense of losing important time and opportunities to settle and begin to acquire land and wealth wears

at their morale, they continue to honor and support him. On the other hand, both morale and order are also beginning to decline in Mexico under the governorship of those on whom Cortés had settled authority for governance, and from Cuba Diego de Ordaz had even written those in charge that Cortés and all who were with him were dead, leading to further instability, so much so that Gonzalo de Sandoval and others finally confronted Diego de Ordaz, asking “him with great bitterness why he had written this, given that he neither knew nor had evidence for it, adding that his letters . . . were so evil that New Spain might have been lost because of them” (CXCII).

All of this occurred at a time when Cortés’s delegated governorship of New Spain had begun to fray and was being passed from individual to individual, and various of Cortés’s enemies began leveling complaints about and charges against Cortés both as a person and as governor, causing him to decide to return to New Spain proper and Mexico in particular. Just after he arrived in Veracruz, licentiate Luis Ponce de Leon also arrived to “take the *residencia* of Cortés” (CXCI), but even this event turned chaotic when the licentiate took ill and died shortly after having arrived in Mexico. As a consequence of the continuing turmoil, in the face of repeated threats to his governorship and in hope of securing even greater titles, rights, and privileges, Cortés went to Spain to seek preferment from the emperor, Carlos V, which, in fact, he received, including the title Marquess del Valle. Cortés did return to New Spain and supported a number of significant activities on behalf of the Spanish Crown, but none was as successful as his leadership of the conquest of New Spain itself. Finally, he returned to Spain, where he died and was first interred in his nearby parish church. Eventually, his body was disinterred, taken to Mexico, and laid to rest.

Bernal Díaz del Castillo, having unsuccessfully pursued a number of different strategies for securing good lands with grants of Indians—his main reason for participating in the discovery and conquest of New Spain—eventually settled in Guatemala, going there in 1541 to live permanently. He wrote his *True History of the*

*Conquest of New Spain* from there, in part to establish his merit as a participant in the conquest, in part to secure rights to lands and Indians in perpetuity for his children, rights that were being challenged in Spain. He also wanted to set the record straight, as his references to Gómara and other chroniclers indicate, a fact he emphasizes as he completes his account of those conquistadors who people his epic story:

My name is Bernal Díaz del Castillo, and I am a citizen and member of the town council of the city of Santiago de Guatemala, and a native of the very noble and famous and celebrated town of Medina del Campo, son of Francisco Díaz del Castillo, member of its town council, who was also known as el Galant, may he rest in holy glory; and I give great thanks and praise to Our Lord Jesus Christ and Our Lady the Holy Virgin Mary, his blessed mother, who has protected me from being sacrificed, for in those times they sacrificed most of my companions who I have named, so that now our heroic deeds should be revealed most clearly and who those valiant captains and tough soldiers were who won these regions of the New World and not attribute the honor due all of us to one captain alone. (CCV)

“Bernal Díaz’s *True History of the Conquest of New Spain*, the chronicle of an ‘ordinary’ soldier in Hernando Cortés’s army, is the only complete account (other than Cortés’s own) that we have of the Spanish conquest of ancient Mexico. Although it is neither so ‘true’ nor so unassumingly direct as its author would have us believe, it is unmistakably the voice of the often unruly, undisciplined body of untrained freebooters who, in less than three years, succeeded against all apparent odds, in bringing down the once mighty ‘Aztec Empire.’ It makes for **consistently fascinating reading, and Ted Humphrey and Janet Burke have provided the best, and the most engaging, translation ever to have appeared in English.**”

—ANTHONY PAGDEN, UCLA

“This excellent and highly readable translation remains faithful to the straightforward and unadorned prose that Díaz used to describe the events as well as his understanding of their significance. The useful Introduction, notes, and epilogue further enhance the volume’s accessibility. Highly recommended.”

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“A reliable modern translation of one of the great historical narratives. While faithful to the original text, [Burke and Humphrey’s] translation takes full advantage of the best scholarship of the last fifty years, providing useful context and interpretation for the non-specialist. The result is a highly readable, engaging book that will prove a valuable teaching tool in a variety of classroom settings.”

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“An excellent and very welcome new translation of this classic text . . . highly readable, it also renders Díaz’s prose in a way that rings true to the original Spanish text.”

—SUSAN KELLOGG, University of Houston

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Cover image: A scene from the Lienzo de Tlaxcala (panel 28) depicting Maseescaci (Maxixcatzin), a Tlaxcalan cacique, welcoming Hernando Cortés with a bouquet of flowers. Marina (Malinaltzin), the indigenous woman with command of several languages, stands next to Cortés, interpreting.

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