

CORTES CONQUERS THE AZTECS

AFTER A THREE-MONTH SIEGE, SPANISH FORCES UNDER HERNÁN CORTÉS CAPTURE TENÓCHTITLÁN, THE CAPITAL OF THE AZTEC EMPIRE. CORTÉS' MEN LEVELLED THE CITY AND CAPTURED THE AZTEC EMPEROR.

CORTÉS VISITED THE COAST OF YUCATÁN AND IN MARCH 1519 LANDED AT TABASCO IN MEXICO'S BAY OF CAMPECHE WITH 500 SOLDIERS, 100 SAILORS, AND 16 HORSES. THERE, HE WON OVER THE LOCAL INDIANS AND WAS GIVEN A FEMALE SLAVE, MALINCHE-BAPTIZED MARINA-WHO BECAME HIS MISTRESS AND LATER BORE HIM A SON. SHE SERVED AS AN INTERPRETER. THE EXPEDITION THEN PROCEEDED UP THE MEXICAN COAST.

CORTÉS TRAINED HIS ARMY AND THEN BURNED HIS SHIPS TO ENSURE LOYALTY TO HIS PLANS FOR CONQUEST. HAVING LEARNED OF POLITICAL STRIFE IN THE AZTEC EMPIRE, CORTÉS LED HIS FORCE INTO THE MEXICAN INTERIOR. ON THE WAY TO TENÓCHTITLÁN, HE CLASHED WITH LOCAL INDIANS, BUT MANY OF THESE PEOPLE BECAME HIS ALLIES AFTER LEARNING OF HIS PLAN TO CONQUER THEIR HATED AZTEC RULERS. HEARING OF THE APPROACH OF CORTÉS, WITH HIS FRIGHTFUL HORSES AND SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS, MONTEZUMA II TRIED TO BUY HIM OFF, BUT CORTÉS WOULD NOT BE DISSUADED. ON NOVEMBER 8, 1519, THE SPANIARDS AND THEIR 1,000 WARRIORS WERE ALLOWED TO ENTER TENÓCHTITLÁN UNOPPOSED.

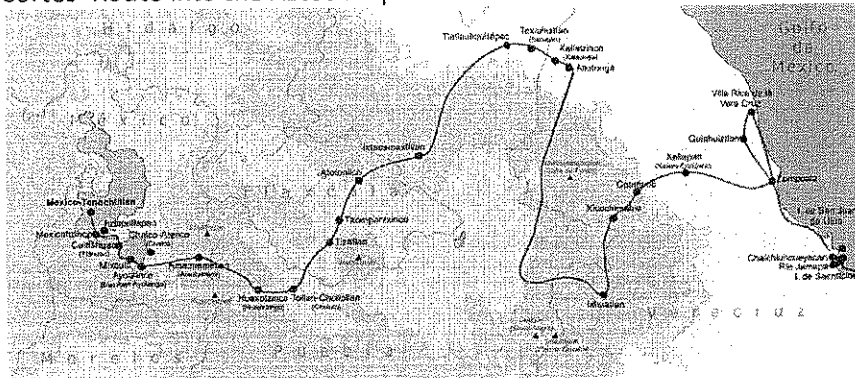
MONTEZUMA SUSPECTED THEM TO BE DIVINE ENVOYS OF THE GOD QUETZALCATL, WHO WAS PROPHESED TO RETURN FROM THE EAST IN A "ONE REED" YEAR, WHICH WAS 1519 ON THE AZTEC CALENDAR. THE SPANIARDS WERE GREETED WITH GREAT HONOR, AND CORTÉS SEIZED THE OPPORTUNITY, TAKING MONTEZUMA HOSTAGE SO THAT HE MIGHT GOVERN THE EMPIRE THROUGH HIM. HIS MISTRESS, MARINA, WAS A GREAT HELP IN THIS ENDEAVOR AND SUCCEEDED IN CONVINCING MONTEZUMA TO COOPERATE FULLY.

(HISTORY CHANNEL)

Aztecs vs. Spanish



Cortes' Route into the Aztec Empire



1. What advantages did the Spanish have over the Aztecs? What advantages do you think the Aztecs had over the Spanish?
2. What tactics did Cortes use to conquer the Aztecs?
3. Who did Montezuma believe Cortes to be? Why?
4. Do you think the collapse of the Aztecs was inevitable after the arrival of the Spanish? Explain.

PIZZARO CONQUERS THE INCA

AUG. 29, 1533:

ATAHUALLPA, THE 13TH AND LAST EMPEROR OF THE INCAS, DIES BY STRANGULATION AT THE HANDS OF FRANCISCO PIZARRO'S SPANISH CONQUISTADORS. THE EXECUTION OF ATAHUALLPA, THE LAST FREE REIGNING EMPEROR, MARKED THE END OF 300 YEARS OF INCA CIVILIZATION.

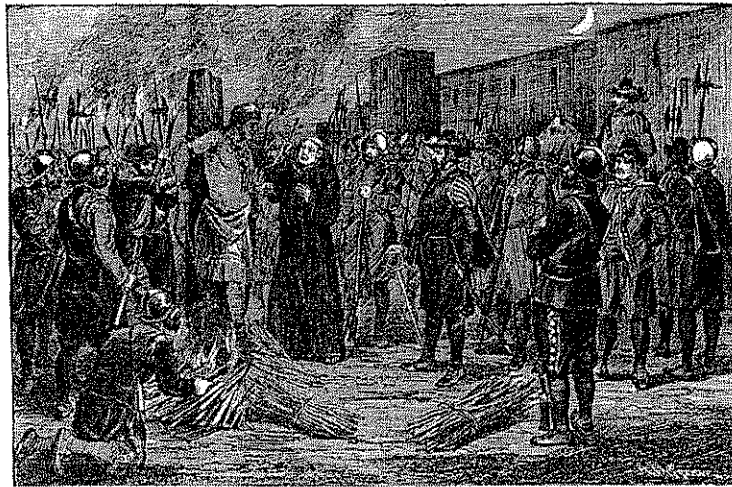
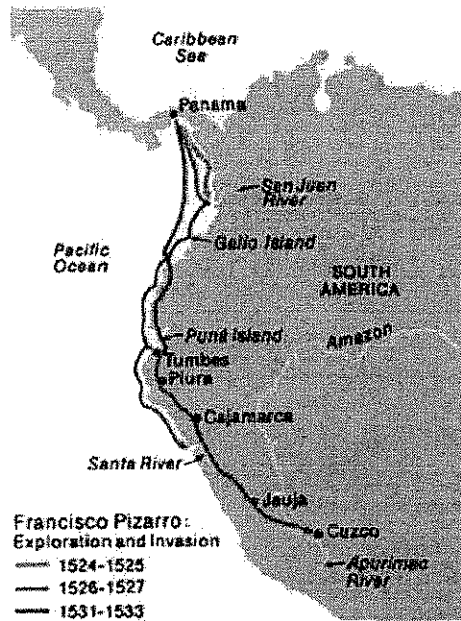
HIGH IN THE ANDES MOUNTAINS OF PERU, THE INCA BUILT A DAZZLING EMPIRE THAT GOVERNED A POPULATION OF 12 MILLION PEOPLE. ALTHOUGH THEY HAD NO WRITING SYSTEM, THEY HAD AN ELABORATE GOVERNMENT, GREAT PUBLIC WORKS, AND A BRILLIANT AGRICULTURAL SYSTEM. IN THE FIVE YEARS BEFORE THE SPANISH ARRIVAL, A DEVASTATING WAR OF SUCCESSION GRIPPED THE EMPIRE. IN 1532, ATAHUALLPA'S ARMY DEFEATED THE FORCES OF HIS HALF-BROTHER HUASCAR IN A BATTLE NEAR CUZCO. ATAHUALLPA WAS CONSOLIDATING HIS RULE WHEN PIZARRO AND HIS 180 SOLDIERS APPEARED.

FRANCISCO PIZARRO WAS THE SON OF A SPANISH GENTLEMAN AND WORKED AS A SWINEHERDER IN HIS YOUTH. HE LED HIS ARMY UP THE ANDES MOUNTAINS AND ON NOVEMBER 15, 1532, REACHED THE INCA TOWN OF CAJAMARCA, WHERE ATAHUALLPA WAS ENJOYING THE HOT SPRINGS IN PREPARATION FOR HIS MARCH ON CUZCO, THE CAPITAL OF HIS BROTHER'S KINGDOM. PIZARRO INVITED ATAHUALLPA TO ATTEND A FEAST IN HIS HONOR, AND THE EMPEROR ACCEPTED. HAVING JUST WON ONE OF THE LARGEST BATTLES IN INCA HISTORY, AND WITH AN ARMY OF 30,000 MEN AT HIS DISPOSAL, ATAHUALLPA THOUGHT HE HAD NOTHING TO FEAR FROM THE BEARDED WHITE STRANGER AND HIS 180 MEN. PIZARRO, HOWEVER, PLANNED AN AMBUSH, SETTING UP HIS ARTILLERY AT THE SQUARE OF CAJAMARCA.

ON NOVEMBER 16, ATAHUALLPA ARRIVED AT THE MEETING PLACE WITH AN ESCORT OF SEVERAL THOUSAND MEN, ALL APPARENTLY UNARMED. PIZARRO SENT OUT A PRIEST TO EXHORT THE EMPEROR TO CONVERT TO CHRISTIANITY AND ATAHUALLPA REFUSED, FLINGING A BIBLE HANDED TO HIM TO THE GROUND IN DISGUST. PIZARRO IMMEDIATELY ORDERED AN ATTACK, BUCKLING UNDER AN ASSAULT BY THE TERRIFYING SPANISH ARTILLERY, GUNS, AND CAVALRY (ALL OF WHICH WERE ALIEN TO THE INCAS), THOUSANDS OF INCAS WERE SLAUGHTERED, AND THE EMPEROR WAS CAPTURED.

ATAHUALLPA OFFERED TO FILL A ROOM WITH TREASURE AS RANSOM FOR HIS RELEASE, AND PIZARRO ACCEPTED. EVENTUALLY, SOME 24 TONS OF GOLD AND SILVER WERE BROUGHT TO THE SPANISH FROM THROUGHOUT THE INCA EMPIRE. ALTHOUGH ATAHUALLPA HAD PROVIDED THE RICHEST RANSOM IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD, PIZARRO TREACHEROUSLY PUT HIM ON TRIAL FOR PLOTTING TO OVERTHROW THE SPANISH. A SPANISH TRIBUNAL CONVICTED ATAHUALLPA AND SENTENCED HIM TO DIE. ON AUGUST 29, 1533, THE EMPEROR WAS TIED TO A STAKE AND OFFERED THE CHOICE OF BEING BURNED ALIVE OR STRANGLED BY GARROTE IF HE CONVERTED TO CHRISTIANITY. IN THE HOPE OF PRESERVING HIS BODY FOR MUMMIFICATION, ATAHUALLPA CHOSE THE LATTER, AND AN IRON COLLAR WAS TIGHTENED AROUND HIS NECK UNTIL HE DIED.

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THE EXECUTION OF THE INCA.

1. What advantages did the Spanish have over the Incas? What advantages do you think the Incas had over the Spanish?

2. What tactics did Pizzaro use to conquer the Inca?

3. Do you think the collapse of the Incan Empire was inevitable after the arrival of the Spanish? Explain.