

# JCC: Spanish Empire

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## Joint Crisis: Spanish Conquest

Dear Delegates,

My name is Ben Butz-Weidner and it is my utmost pleasure to be your chair this year! I am a 3<sup>rd</sup> year McGill student from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania majoring in Political Science, and minoring in Hispanic Literature and Culture and American History. Ever since high school Spanish language and literature have been amongst my favorite areas of study; now presented with the opportunity to combine this passion with my love for MUN I can say I am incredibly excited for this committee! The conquest of the New World is, in my opinion, one of the most interesting periods in human history and as such I think the chance to revisit and perhaps rewrite history in such a direct manner offers an amazing opportunity to learn more about our past and to do so while having a fiesta.

To reflect the two very different cultures represented in this committee, there are two very different background guides for each half of the joint crisis.

I look forward to seeing what intrepid adventures we have and what stimulating debate and discussion we have.

Until then all the best,

Ben



### Introduction:

Spain, the larger of two nations that inhabit the Iberian Peninsula, has been a part of many empires: that of Rome and the Muslim Caliphates that reached across Spain, North Africa, the Middle East and parts of central Asia. Following the fall of Rome, Spain, like its imperial guardian, was overrun with barbarian nations. For that very reason it is important to note the vast mixing of ethnic groups on the Iberian Peninsula. The original inhabitants of Spain were likely of the same origin as the group that populated North Africa, predominantly in areas like Morocco, Algeria, Libya, and Tunisia.<sup>1</sup> As such it is vital to remember the geographical and sanguine connection between the Moorish and Christian populations of the Iberian Peninsula and North Africa.

Following the invasion of barbarians through the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries by groups such as the Visigoths and other barbarian groups made their way through the remnants of the Roman Empire they set up their own kingdom, which lasted in succession until the arrival of the Abbasid conquerors in 711 CE<sup>2</sup>. From that point on Spaniards endeavored to rid the Iberian Peninsula of Arab occupants, taking stronghold after stronghold in an 800-year crusade, known as the Reconquista, or Reconquering<sup>3</sup>. The grueling and constant state of war bred zealotry amongst many Spaniards and the war against the Arabs was seen as a religious one. Religious militancy was ingrained into the Spanish conscious. That zeal produced Spain. The first truly global empire human civilization has been witness to.

15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century Spain was a sight to behold, with the political union of Ferdinand and Isabella creating a strong monarchy with grand ambitions. The conquest of Granada (1492) and ensuing emergence of a Catholic

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<sup>1</sup> Roger Bigelow Merriman. *The Rise of the Spanish Empire in the Old World and in the New, Volume I* (Harvard University: Macmillan, 1918), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Hammond Ines. *The Conquistadors* (New York; Bloomsbury). 1.



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Kingdom saw the rise of a merciless purification effort, based upon the principles that states can only be stable with religious unity and conformity<sup>4</sup>. Spain at the dawn of the era of exploration was a relatively powerful state, one albeit wracked by civil conflict as the crown and the church (armed through the inquisition) worked to bring about a fundamentally Christian state (a mission that required effort and bargaining due to the relatively large Muslim and Jewish populations). This militant religious zeal would find another outlet once the first Spanish galleys discovered the New World.

The process of colonization in the New World began on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1492 with the Italian explorer Christopher Columbus' first voyage to find a route to India on behalf of Spain<sup>5</sup>. On this voyage he discovered Watling Island in the Bahamas and the island of Hispaniola, both of which would become the first Spanish colonies in the New World<sup>6</sup>. However, the era of exploration was only made possible due to the political framework established by the union of Aragon and Castile, which was facilitated by the marriage of Ferdinand to Isabella respectively. The new (and visionary) monarchs created an efficient system of alliances and collaboration amongst the nobility, and in doing so vastly decreased sectarian and civil conflicts that had plagued the kingdom. The militancy of the commoners was also greatly controlled by regulating it; the establishment of citizen militias and urban vigilante groups across the countryside brought the people a sense of loyalty to the crown<sup>7</sup>. It also served to fuel Spain's foreign interests, as the aggressive nature of the nobility and peasantry was focused on wars across the European continent and exploration across the seas.

As Christopher Columbus was exploring the Caribbean, the Reconquista was helping to establish a common Spanish culture; with Castilian as the common language. The end of Al-Andalusia (and final fall of

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<sup>4</sup> "Spain - THE GOLDEN AGE - Ferdinand and Isabella." *Spain - THE GOLDEN AGE - Ferdinand and Isabella*. US Library of Congress, n.d. Web. 30 May 2015. <<http://countrystudies.us/spain/7.htm>>.

<sup>5</sup> "Christopher Columbus." *Infoplease*. Infoplease, n.d. Web. 30 May 2015.  
<<http://www.infoplease.com/encyclopedia/people/columbus-christopher-voyages-to-new-world.html>>.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, <http://www.infoplease.com/encyclopedia/people/columbus-christopher-voyages-to-new-world.html>

<sup>7</sup> Kamen, Henry. *Empire: How Spain Became a World Power, 1492-1763*. New York: HarperCollins, 2003. Print. Pg. 7



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Granada, the last Moorish stronghold on the Iberian Peninsula) served as a fascinating first-look into how the Conquistadors and missionaries would treat conquered peoples: the imposition of Catholicism through coercion and forced adherence to Spanish culture<sup>8</sup>. Yet establishing claims to the New World was not the Spanish Crown's only concerns. The Spanish dominions in Italy, Sicily, and the Netherlands were constant headaches to contend with, especially with the other European states constantly dueling over territory to increase their relative power. Wars with France over their mutual Italian claims and possessions (especially Naples) would be bloody and constant, with a particularly grueling series of battles end with France forcibly recognizing King Ferdinand of Aragon's dominance of the entirety of the region<sup>9</sup> (Naples). These conflicts in the Italian peninsula showcased a modernizing Spanish military system, with infantry modeled after the Swiss mercenaries hired by Ferdinand to help in the war against Granada, with an increasing usage pikes, arquebuses, and heavy cannon<sup>10</sup>.

Following the Spanish victories in Granada and Italy, wanting eyes veered southward to the northern coast of Africa. The religious fervor stirred up during the Reconquista never diminished; if anything it was increasingly propagated by the Papacy; dreams of crusades against the infidels across the straits were common. In May of 1509 an expedition was undertaken with the financing of Pedro Vereterra (the cardinal of Europe's second richest diocese) to conquer the coastal city of Oran<sup>11</sup>, which was soon followed by conquests on Algiers and Tripoli a year later. The acquisition of Oran mirrored the tactic used by the Spaniards to seize Granada (and would be seen often in their approach to the civilizations of the New World): allying with or encouraging defectors amongst the defenders and allies of the opposition<sup>12</sup>. The battles in North Africa also revealed a particular cruelty in the Spanish conquistadores; they took no pity on what they believed to be heathens and

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, pg. 20

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, pg. 27

<sup>10</sup> Kamen. Pg. 28

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, pg. 32

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, pg. 18



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enemies to Christendom, especially Muslims (due in large part to the past Muslim dominance of much of the Iberian Peninsula).

In 1513, King Ferdinand continued on his quest for empire by conquering the kingdom of Navarra. Culturally French, Navarra was nonetheless in Spain's sphere of influence, and so, Ferdinand ordered over a thousand knights, two thousand cavalry, and six thousand infantry<sup>13</sup> into the territory; they then managed to repulse a French attempt to dislodge them. By the time of King Ferdinand's death in 1516 Spain had become established as a leading power in the world; his work having managed to ensure Spanish influence spread across three continents. However, managing a burgeoning empire is costly, and the Spanish crown would never have a strong enough economy in its own right to pay for domestic and imperial endeavors<sup>14</sup>. One way that the crown could offset some of the costs of governance was by discovering new lands with highly valuable commodities available on them. This is what occurred at Hispaniola<sup>15</sup> when samples of gold were discovered and sent back to the crown. Another discovery made by Columbus was his observation that the natives of the New World were generally obedient and could all be easily enslaved<sup>16</sup> without the use of force. Records from Columbus' time on Hispaniola documented a "land that abounds in everything"<sup>17</sup>, including beautiful women and many Natives to serve them. In 1494 when the locals of Hispaniola began protesting their mistreatment, the Spanish response was to kidnap about five hundred Natives and ship them to Spain as slaves. This would set a dangerous precedent for interactions between Spanish colonists and the Native populations of the Americas, where typically any resistance to their rule (and abuses) would see swift usage of violence. Perhaps of all the groups in Spain, the

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, pg. 34

<sup>14</sup> Kamen. Pg. 39

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, pg. 42

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, pg. 43

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, pg. 43



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most motivated and excited by the prospect of the New World were members of the Church, who strove to spread their religion to the heretics beyond the sea.

Spain's Caribbean acquisitions remained small for some time, much to the frustration of those who ventured out for money and adventure. Hernando Cortes himself once exclaimed that he had "come here to get rich, not to till the soil like a peasant"<sup>18</sup>; however once Hispaniola's gold began reaching Spain, a large contingent of settlers arrived in 1502, along with a new governor: Nicolas de Ovando<sup>19</sup>. Although Ovando ensured stability on the colony, the cost was the merciless treatment of the Natives; culminating in the disappearance of the island's native Arawak population. Raiding other Caribbean islands for their natives worked for a time, but soon the dreams of glorious fortunes began to diminish. The response was emigration from Hispaniola, allowed by Queen Isabella's decree in 1503 that allowed the enslavement of 'cannibals' and rumors of more gold<sup>20</sup>. Spanish colonists claimed Puerto Rico by 1508, while Jamaica and Cuba were taken and pacified by 1511. The rapid depopulation of the islands however saw several adventurers begin exploring the mainland, while the Spanish crown was forced to begin thinking of an actual policy to put in place in its burgeoning empire. One such decision was the opening of the new Spanish territories to foreign investment and trade; a necessary step as it allowed for the financing of more exploratory missions, as well as creating demand for the goods produced in the New World. The creation of the first sugar mills (called ingenious) did the most to make the colonies profitable, as well as incidentally being the cause of the African slave trade to the New World<sup>21</sup> to offset the loss of Native workers as their populations plummeted upon the introduction of European diseases to the New World inhabitants.

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<sup>18</sup> Kamen. Pg. 83

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, pg. 83

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, pg. 83

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, Pg. 85



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A routine problem with the Spanish crown was its inability to pay off its debts, whether because of wars or dealings with the nobility. The New World would have to come to King Charles' aid, as the discovery and subsequent delivery of stores of discovered and looted gold became essential in the crown's attempts to finance and establish credit. The Caribbean colonies produced vast quantities of the precious metal, easily panned from the streams that crossed the myriad mountains<sup>22</sup>.

The acquisition and regulation of Spain's colonies is fascinating in how it differs from most preconceived notions of empire. Not a single overseas Spanish possession was taken by a Spanish army, but rather by intrepid bands of adventurers. These conquistadores were typically granted contracts by the crown to establish *encomiendas* in the lands they found. An *encomienda* is a contract that provides the holder of the contract the right to demand tribute and labor from the native populations, whilst ensuring that the conquistadores served the crown and spread the Christian faith<sup>23</sup>. These *encomiendas* usually also bequeathed the holder of the contract a parcel of land, which the natives would work under the subcontract of a *repartimiento*; the *repartimiento* is the granting of native persons for an *encomienda*<sup>24</sup>. However, soon conflict would arise between the clergy and the crown over the nature of the Spanish *encomienda* system. The frequent and systemic abuses of the native populations of the Americas, in addition to the raiding and pillaging of their resources, began to face significant criticism from the Spanish clergy<sup>25</sup>. King Ferdinand responded in 1512 with the Laws of Burgos, which had the intention of regulating the activity of both the colonists and the Natives under their charge. Unfortunately, not much attention was given to the order in the growing colonies across the Atlantic. By 1513 the first expedition Spanish expeditions reached the Yucatan peninsula; however, the most decisive (and famous) Spanish venture into Mexico was that of Hernando Cortes in 1519.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, pg. 88

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, pg. 96

<sup>24</sup> William. H. Prescott. *History of The Conquest of Mexico*. New York, Barnes and Noble, 2004 (1843).

<sup>25</sup> Kamen, Pg. 96





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Cortes was a conquistador who had initially sailed for the Caribbean in 1504 to reach Santo Domingo. By 1511 he had gone to Cuba to assist Diego Velazquez in his conquest of the island for Spain<sup>26</sup>. By 1514 Velazquez had become governor of Cuba, and in 1518 had tasked Cortes with mounting an expedition to the mainland of Mexico; however, a little before he was set to depart, Velazquez cancelled Cortes' voyage due to suspicions he held of Cortes' motives. Undeterred, Cortes took his eleven ships and roughly five hundred men and sailed for the Yucatan<sup>27</sup>.

### Velazquez, Cuba and the Discovery of “Tectetan”

Described by his men, as a man “possessed of considerable experience in military affairs honest, illustrious by his lineage and reputation, covetous of glory and somewhat more covetous of wealth” Don Diego Velazquez was a veteran of seventeen years of fighting in Europe who had come to the New World to quench his thirst for conquest.<sup>28</sup>

In 1511 Diego Columbus (the son of Christopher Columbus and Governor of Hispaniola) commanded Velazquez to explore the interior of the island of Cuba, which Columbus had discovered shortly before his death.<sup>29</sup> The excursion consisted of Velazquez, his lieutenant Narvaez, and small force of men; joining them was the priest Bartolomé (Bartholomew) de Las Casas, the “protector of the Indians” accompanied them to watch over the conduct of the excursion and to convert the indigenous population should there be any.<sup>30</sup> As it happened, Narvaez (who led the excursion into the island) and his men met little resistance other than from the Taino chief named Hatuey who had fled St. Domingo.<sup>31</sup> For this resistance he was burned at the stake, not before uttering

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<sup>26</sup> “Hernan Cortez” *BBC History*. BBC, n.d. Web. 5 Sept 2015.  
[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic\\_figures/cortes\\_hernan.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/cortes_hernan.shtml)

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> William. H. Prescott. *History of The Conquest of Mexico*. New York, Barnes and Noble, 2004 (1843). 87-107.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 92.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.



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his final words; when asked if he would embrace Christianity so his soul might be saved and find peace in heaven he responded “I will no be a Christian; for I would not go again to a place where I must find men so cruel!”<sup>32</sup>

Following the conquest of the island, Velazquez was made governor and he readily sought to attract colonists via grants of land and slaves. He made St. Jago the seat of government. However, being a man of adventure and glory he was not easily distracted from prospecting new conquests.

Several years later, in 1517, while on course to the Bahamas for more indigenous slaves Hernandez de Cordova was caught in a storm and ended up on uncharted land, which when asking the natives the name of the place was answered with “Tectetan” (“I do not understand you”).<sup>33</sup> Everything from the higher quality of goods, buildings, and agricultural methods denoted to Cordova that he had discovered a sophisticated civilization, and though greatly intrigued he was grossly outnumbered to make any attempts of conquest; rather the reputation of the Spanish had reached the ears of these people and all but Cordova and one other in the search party were killed (Cordova was wounded at least twelve times in a skirmish with indigenous forces).<sup>34</sup>

Though he died shortly after returning to Cuba, the high quality gold he managed to procure intrigued Velazquez so that he decided to make the venture himself- he fitted four ships under the command of his nephew Juan de Grijalva and his captain Pedro de Alvarado to skirt the coast of this land, which in 1518 led to the discovery of Cozumel, the Yucatan Peninsula, and the first interactions with the natives (which gained the Spanish ornate gold armor, and other works of high quality).<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 92.

<sup>33</sup> William. H. Prescott. *History of The Conquest of Mexico*. New York, Barnes and Noble, 2004 (1843). 87-107. 93.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 93.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 94.



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Velazquez was furious over Grijalva's decision to **not** found a colony and was reprimanded; Velazquez began fitting a new outfit for a full conquest of these new, rich lands. However, before a royal answer was received, Cortés had been selected to lead the expedition, and had left<sup>36</sup>

### **Governance in the New World and Spain under Charles V**

The rule of Charles V marks a drastic change in Spanish political life from that under the rule of his grandparents, Ferdinand and Isabella. During the reign of the Ferdinand and Isabella Spanish common folk saw political enfranchisement and participation beyond that of any other country in Christendom.<sup>37</sup> The late Queen and her husband the King had made a point of encouraging and listening to the expressions made by common people via public assemblies; this had been perhaps a necessity during the turbulent period of war preceding the completion of the Reconquista in 1492. Before that time and the final political consolidation of Spain under the crown every new bit of territory reclaimed from the Arab were governed by “armed and castled warlords”<sup>38</sup> with armies at their disposal, as such oppressive monarchical rule could have easily given rise to treasonous rebellion.

Charles V, on the other hand, was a foreigner in his own land. As the heir to the Habsburg lands (Austria, Hungary, Germany, Bohemia, The Netherlands, and Spain along with Spanish colonies in the New World), Charles had been raised abroad and was more Flemish than Spanish, and he spoke Castilian poorly and with great difficulty<sup>39</sup>. Following the death of his grandfather Ferdinand in 1516 Charles V became king; while away Spain was ruled in his stead by the regent Cardinal Ximenes took control of things.<sup>40</sup> Ximenes sought more

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<sup>36</sup> Prescott. 96.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 87

<sup>38</sup> Hammond Ines. *The Conquistadors*. New York; Bloomsbury. 1.

<sup>39</sup> Prescott. 88

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 88



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grandeur for Spain but did so at the cost of Spanish liberty, which was exacerbated to a greater extent upon the return of Charles to Spain in November of 1517.<sup>41</sup>

The Spanish people did not take a kind liking to Charles or his policies. He appointed Flemings to key positions in the government, took their advice, and disregarded the public assemblies that made Isabella and Ferdinand so beloved; they reluctantly called him King and vigorously monitored the appropriation of resources he collected through taxation to ensure that the Fleming ministers did not abuse Spanish goods and funds.<sup>42</sup> Charles' disregard for popular opinion and dissent led to a festering of resentment, which led ultimately to a brief but tumultuous civil war; The War of Comunidades was eventually won by the crown and gave precedent to the total revocation of civil liberties in Spain.<sup>43</sup>

His rule was less palpable in the colonies, which was more symmetrical to the rule his grandparents had exercised abroad, unlike the drastic change in rule that took domestically place. The conquest of the New World had led to the Spanish possession of vast swaths of land from the bay of Honduras to the Rio de La Plata on the southern end of the continent, though the gulf had not been discovered<sup>44</sup>. The administration of colonial matters was handled via two bodies: The Council of the Indies and the “*Casa de Contratación*, or India House, at Seville”.<sup>45</sup>

Queen Isabella had enjoyed the vast wealth brought to her by imports such as sugarcane, dyewoods, and precious metals “at the gratuitous labor” of the indigenous population; she had however sought to repress the system of *repartimientos*.<sup>46</sup> Much in the same way that former soldiers and cavaliers of the Reconquista and

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid. 88

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. 88-89

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 89

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. 89,90

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 89

<sup>46</sup> Prescott. 90-91



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wars in Europe and Africa had sought further adventure and glory in the New World, men of the cross with no one left to persecute (after the expulsion of the Jews and Muslims in 1492), sought to convert new souls to the Catholic faith in the New World. The Dominicans, as they were called, pursued this cause with great fervor, but also acted with authority at the crown's behest; it had been the friar Las Casas that had convinced Ximenes to send an investigative committee of three friars and a jurist to investigate abuses of the natives and other grievances in the New World.<sup>47</sup>

Las Casas' hope for protections of the natives was in vain as the commission reported that without compulsion the indigenous population could neither work nor be converted, and as such both the systems of *repartimientos* and of *encomiendas* were continued with as much fervor for capitol gain as that which the Dominicans possessed for salvation.

Political disturbances aside, the rule of Charles V saw a great flourishing of art and literature in Spain. This was partly due to the great romantic inspiration and excitement that tales of war and exploration produced amongst the Spanish people.

### Characters

#### Hernan Cortes

Position: mission leader

Cortes was born the son of a military captain, reduced to poverty after his days of fighting were over, living on only a small pension. He was placed in a church receive a good, but reasonably priced, education at the age of 11. He eventually attended University of Salamanca, studying to become a lawyer. However, his studies did not interest him enough, and quickly he decided to leave the University and look for a posting that would suit his taste for a more adventurous life.

His wish was finally realized—after narrowly failing to set sail to many missions to Latin America—to join Diego Velazquez on one of his expeditions to Cuba, as his secretary. While the two originally got along, they came to get into more and more disagreements the more they stayed in Cuba. Eventually, with the support of

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 91



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several friends Cortes had made during his mission, he was appointed in 1518 to lead mission in Yucatan. This appointment is a testament to Cortes' charisma, since while he is known as a good leader, his military skill is as of yet untested.

A few weeks before departure, Cortes was told by one of his friends, Andres de Duerro, that Velazquez was having second thoughts about sending Cortes as head of the expedition. Before Velazquez could change his mind, Cortes set sail towards Yucatan. On the sea already, there have been some scuffles between those faithful to Velazquez and Cortes' supporters.

### **Bernal Diaz de Castillo:**

Position: Cortes' trusted companion

Bernal Diaz is from a poor family with a minimal education, and has been driven his whole life by a quest for economic security. He has a good temperament, and is an agreeable companion to have along for any trip, faithful for those who show him respect and friendship. He embarked as a teenager for the Americas in 1514 in the hope of some fortune. He distinguished himself during the expedition by showing cool thinking under stress and duress, as well as a generally amiable disposition during the entirety of the voyage. He is one of the men who has thrown his lot in with Cortes, and though he did not participate in some of the arguments that have already appeared in between the two camps, there is no doubt he would side by Cortes should push come to shove.

After his first expiation was over, he met Cortes, with whom he set out to Yucatan in 1519. Bernal Diaz was an easy recruit, since he is an able fighter, and able to read and write despite his earlier poor education. During the sail to Yucatan, Bernal Diaz earned Cortes' respect, and has already been entrusted with some of the most important tasks, including negotiating with any indigenous tribes encountered if Cortes is absent, as well as the more administrative tasks of rationing the food, water, and any spoils acquired of the expedition.

### **Diego Pizarro:**

Position: Cortes' cousin

Diego Pizarro is one of the younger men on board Cortes' ship. Most of the people in his family, including his cousin Cortes, have become explorers either to Africa or the Americas, and Diego never questioned following in their footsteps. Contrary to many young men his age, Diego is not brash but level-headed when making decisions, and though he himself cannot come up with complex solutions or plans to solve a problem, once an action has been decided upon, he can follow through without trouble.

Thanks to his tie to Cortes and his posed behavior during the trip, Diego has already earned a position of leadership within the expedition: Cortes has trusted Diego with a group of fifteen men to lead, should the



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bigger troops ever be separated or have to go different ways once they land. Cortes has also told his cousin that should the need come up, he is ready to entrust him with a larger number of troops. Most of the men under Diego's command are young, so they do not question his authority, but there are also a few more experienced soldiers, who might question the young man's authority if he shows a sign of weakness or causes a blunder.

### **Diego de Ordaz:**

Position: Lieutenant

Diego de Ordaz is known as a good fighter, and has already been recognized for his military deeds by several of his superiors. He is middle aged with a good poise, and obtains what he wants through patience. He can make friends easily since he can adapt himself to any type of person or conversation, though he himself does not count many people as friends.

Originally recruited as part of Velazquez' group, Diego quickly got to like the energetic and ambitious Cortes, and decided to join him for his expedition towards Yucatan. He did this knowing full well that they were leaving without Velazquez' blessings. What is in the expedition for Diego is unclear, since he shares neither the breathless enthusiasm of the younger soldiers, nor the lust for gold of the rest. Most likely he is doing this for some kind of Kingly recognition, as he already received a formal thanks from Charles V for his past accomplishments: if successful this expedition may allow him to get a more material honour. He is not the most animated supporter of Cortes, and generally keeps to himself, which has allowed him to stay in the good graces of Velazquez' supporters, and Cortes' supporters.

### **Andres de Duerro:**

Position: Expedition's accountant

Andres de Duerro is a man small in stature with quick hands. He is very well educated and smart, and also has a relatively easy access for many thanks to his family. His presence at the expeditions is therefore due more to the fact that gentlemen of Spain these days should have some kind of occupation rather than him needing to earn his bread.

Andres used to be Diego Velazquez's secretary, with whom he still gets along quite well, contrary to the brasher Cortes. This position is how he met Cortes, very soon becoming a close friend and ally. At his friend's request, he convinced Velazquez to appoint Cortes as commander of the expedition to Yucatan. When the time came, he was also the one who warned Cortes that he should leave straight away, as Velazquez was having doubts about the entirety of the expedition.

Contrary to many men, Andres is not adventurous, which is certainly due to his peaceful upbringing. He is, however, very good at taking a care of all the administrative needs of the expedition, a skill all his comrades



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can appreciate and gladly leave to him: while most of them find the bureaucratic back and forth to ask permission for an action, the accounting, and other such tasks boring; Andres enjoys them as a way to exercise his mind. Andres joined the expedition with Panfilo Narvaez out of concern for Cortes

### **Bartolome de Olmedo:**

Position: Priest

Bartolome's father was a doctor, and he has grown up in a comfortable household, eventually choosing the church as his profession out of keen interest. As a priest, he was just chosen by Cortes for the expedition after Cortes had had a bad experience with a secular priest in a previous expedition. Bartolome was previously a priest for four years in Santo Domingo where his sermons were known as articulate and to the point.

He is seemingly a kindly man; though his voice becomes harsher and his whole body language changes when he speaks of God, hinting at a more imposing man should he come to see someone or something as an obstacle. For the moment he gives the mission a little extra legitimation, especially now that it is being led behind Velazquez' back, and his presence also served to reassure the soldiers who do not feel as comfortable on a boat than on land.

Having been brought on board the ship by Cortes himself, Bartolome has no particular allegiance towards Velazquez, which is not to signify that he has thrown himself behind Cortes. While his own position is neutral, as the religious figure of the expedition Bartolome has a quarter of the crew that genuinely listen to what he says, and are therefore partly under his influence. Bartolome is the closest thing to a doctor on the expedition.

### **Ignacio Salvaral**

Position: First Lieutenant

Ignacio Salvaral is an expedition's veteran, having survived several voyages through tempestuous seas, scabies, countless battles, mutinies; and has the wounds to show for it. He respects the order of things, such as obeying a military superior, or the general ranks in life, and has himself slowly climbed the military ladder to the position of first Lieutenant. He is a suspicious man, and it takes a long time to earn even only his grudging acknowledgment, but is an asset to any missions since his experience is usually far superior to anyone else's.

Ignacio was quite close to Velazquez, the two having played with each other when they were children, and helping themselves out in their respective carriers over the years. For ten years then, the two managed to get assigned to the same expeditions, and Velazquez became one of the only people Ignacio would always listen to. As such, he does not take Cortes' hasty departure—against Velazquez' desires—kindly. This is all the more exacerbated by the fact that Cortes' military abilities are unproven, and that Ignacio dislikes serving under what he sees as unqualified people. However, since Cortes was officially named as captain of the expedition under





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Velazquez, Ignacio has held his tongue and behaved well; avoiding some of the more heated arguments the rest of the divided crew took part of.

### **Pedro Alvarado:**

Position: expedition financier and captain under Cortes

Pedro Alvarado is a gentleman who has already been on his fair share of expeditions, and as such knows how to navigate the tricky 'Pacific' Ocean and the currents closer to the shore. As soon as he came to Cuba, coming from Middle America, he was sought out by Cortes as a possible collaborator for the expedition. Not one to rest on his laurels, and taken by Cortes' enthusiasm, Pedro agreed to help Cortes with his expedition, providing his own ships, soldiers, and horses.

The two set out to prepare the expedition with an inordinate amount of energy, drawing to them all the resources they could. Eventually the preparations became so large scale that Velazquez got alarmed which is when he and tried to call it off. By that time the two men had invested too much in their venture, and after having been warned, they both agreed to depart without Velazquez' approval. Pedro is an independent spirit, and is certainly not 'Cortes' man', but having put so much of his own interest invested in this voyage, he is determined to see it to the end.

While he does not have an official military position in the expedition, Pedro is a skilled military leader, and should the time come can certainly be trusted to draw up and see through his own plans.

### **Garcia de Holguin:**

Position: soldier

Garcia is an ambitious young man who wants to make his mark in Spanish history, and as such is the type of person who likes being on the winning side. He joined Cortes' expedition without hesitation, lured by the older soldiers who told him of the gold and wealth that was to be found in Yucatan.

Garcia is a smart young man, though brash. He saw understood immediately, while Cortes was rushing the departure, that staying with Velazquez—who had originally hired him—would bring him nothing, and quickly joined Cortes' supporters. This support however is based on Garcia's impression that Cortes is the best party to get him where he wants to be, and a reversal in fate could possibly lead him to switch over to another side he sees as more favourable for his carrier.

Garcia was recruited for the expedition because his past superiors recommended him as an energetic young man who had experienced battle, and who did not get flustered in the middle of an intense fight. He also is known for often bringing back enemies captive, rather than killing them, a skill particular to Garcia. He has



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however disobeyed orders from time to time when he thought he had a better way of doing things than was given him, but as this usually ended up with positive results, he was just softly reprimanded for it.

### **Juan de Escalante:**

Position: A captain in Cortes' expedition

Juan de Escalante is, according to the description of all who know him, a true gentleman, with the calm and manners to accompany such a position.

He is a very close friend of Cortes, and came to join the expedition after Cortes wrote him a letter asking him to accompany him. He has no particular thirst for gold or glory, but is here to help his friend with an expedition, and perhaps also see a little more of the world. He commandeers his own ship and crew, and has absolute freedom to come and leave the expedition as he will if he so wishes.

Juan was asked along by Cortes because he knew his friend's negotiating skills, and decided that Escalante might be useful should they come along other belligerent expeditions, or people indigenous to Yucatan. Though Escalante does not speak Nahuatl, he is very expressive even without words, and can learn a language fast when totally immersed. To complete Escalante's abilities, Cortes knows his friend reads people very well, and in a land where customs and language are unknown, it is useful to have someone who understands quickly whether the person facing him is scared, genuine, or any other range of emotions. Escalante's ability to understand the environment is essential to any tactic or plan to be drawn up.

### **Gonzalo Sandoval:**

Position: Youngest lieutenant under Cortes

Gonzalo Sandoval has the energy that characterizes the young men of his age. He got into the army by lying about his age, and by the time this was discovered he has risen in ranks so much and distinguished himself enough that his generals just laughed and congratulated the young man on his courage and desire to fight for his country.

As a young man who has been in the army during some of the formative years of his life, Gonzalo sees hierarchy and order as essential to the success of any mission, especially an expedition as dangerous and risky as Cortes'. While he feels slightly uneasy about leaving without Velazquez' approval—Cortes' superior—he understands that from time to time it is necessary for someone to take a proactive decision to get anything done.

As such, Gonzalo has kept his small group of 30, under his orders, in line, and out of the arguments that propped up on the ship from time to time. He is particularly strict and doesn't give an inch to anyone, and no



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man has dared challenge him—Gonzalo would most probably take any affront to his honour or authority seriously enough to ask for a duel, or just execute a man as a mutineer against his lieutenant.

### **Juan Pedro de Montón:**

Position: captain under Cortes

Juan Pedro de Montón is usually an optimistic person, smiling often and making sure that everyone around him sees the world in the same positive light he sees it. However, he has been much more ruminative these past weeks on the boat, keeping company only with the men from his troops.

This is due to the fact that Juan Pedro is a friend of Velazquez', and was not told till halfway through the sailing to Yucatan that Cortes left without his permission. While not usually given over to negative thoughts, Juan Pedro resents having been kept in the dark for so long. This was ordered by Cortes because he feared that if Juan Pedro knew he would separate himself from the expedition immediately; and Cortes could not afford to lose such an experienced military man, especially one who had 40 men under him who had fought with him for years, and were likely to leave with him too.

Cortes explained all of this to Juan Pedro, but has not yet received a word from the captain. His field skills, apart from being an excellent tactician and fighter, include trap-laying, as much for animals as for people. He also has basic medical skills learnt on the battlefield, such as applying a tourniquet, amputation, and other such emergency care.

### **Mallinalli Tenepatl (Dona Marina):**

Position: translator

Mallinalli is a very beautiful woman, as well as extremely smart. She learnt growing up to be very independent and quick on her feet, and she will make the best out of any situation for herself.

She was acquired after a few encounters with the Maya people, given away as a slave—she was already, at that time, a captive princess of another nation. As a Nahua princess who has spent some time in captivity, Mallinalli speaks Mayan and Nahuatl, and has already started to pick up some Spanish since she was handed over to Cortes and his men. She understands the culture of most of the empires or independent tribes of the Yucatan peninsula, and is ready to give up her knowledge if she sees some advantage for herself in this.

Mallinalli can be very convincing, and especially as a woman, will be viewed with only a little suspicion by other indigenous people. Already she has gained the acceptance from most of Cortes' men, even though all of them viewed her with suspicion at first. Her motives for helping are unclear, but so far she seems satisfied with being treated respectfully, and given good food, and a bed to sleep.



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### **Diego Velazquez:**

Position: The governor of Cuba

He first ventured to the New World along with Christopher Columbus on his second voyage in 1493. Under the leadership of Governor Nicolas de Ovando he helped pacify Hispaniola, and then went about taking an active role in the Conquest of Cuba in 1511. He is responsible for founding a number of Spanish settlements across the island, most noticeably Baracoa, Santiago, and Havana (1511, 1514, and 1515 respectively).

He was then appointed to be the Governor of Cuba, and under his direction a local government council was established (the 'cabildo'), allowing the settlers to have a way to deal directly with Spain. While exploring the Mexico region, he authorized various expeditions to explore lands further to the West, including Francisco Hernandez de Cordoba's expedition to the Yucatan in 1517. Velazquez also initially backed Cortes' expedition to Mexico, although pulled his support before he was scheduled to launch.

### **Panfilo Narvaez:**

Position: A conquistador sent under the orders of Velazquez

A Spanish conquistador and soldier operating in the New World, Narvaez first embarked to Jamaica in 1510 as a soldier and one of its first settlers. He eventually participated in the conquest of Cuba as a commander under Diego Velazquez; over the course of the campaign he gained the description as being extremely cruel to the Natives. He was rewarded for his actions with public offices and land grants, and left him rather wealthy.

In March of 1520 he left Cuba under orders of Diego Velazquez, commanding a fleet of about 900 men to capture Cortes for treason and disloyalty.

### **Juan de la Cruz**

Position: a Dominican priest from Spain, poet

Juan de la Cruz wrote poetry on the growth of the soul and his work is considered summit of mystical Spanish literature. A deeply religious man with many powerful friends in the Spanish Empire and throughout the Catholic world.



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### **Alfonso Gonzalo Ramirez**

Position: Smuggler

Alfonso Ramirez was the eldest child from a poor family of modest fishers. Like his parents he also took to the sea, but he quickly became desensitized with his family's meager lifestyle. He began by smuggling illegal and rare goods, and later occasionally smuggling people. He was careful about his wealth, keeping his lifestyle humble and giving large shares of his revenue both to his family and local officials.

Alfonso was called to help supply the Spaniards and Italians during the Italian War of 1499-1504. He distinguished himself by commendable seamanship and assisting in the capture of Charles de la Motte, and equally distinguished his roguish character by supporting the settling of la Motte's insults through a tournament. Spain was outnumbered in this war, but creative tactics alongside stronger supply lines ensured its victory. For his assistance, Alfonso was granted some legitimate wealth and power.

After several years of satisfaction, Alfonso began to dislike how his new position warranted increased scrutiny of his background. He set sail for the Americas – after investing a significant portion of his wealth into the expedition – hoping to create a world where he'd belong. As a member of Cortes' expedition, Alfonso Ramirez is a useful asset both at sea and on land; he acts deftly, subtly, and with adaptability.

### **Lorenzo de Cordoba**

Position: Engineer

Lorenzo de Cordoba was born the third son of a well-off noble family. From a young age he was always eager to expand his understanding of any subject, even from sources considered unusual. In his youth he was tutored the broader concepts of battle tactics, although he has little interest in fighting personally. His studies at the University of Salamanca fostered excellence in physics and an appreciation of religion. While not a terribly pious man, he's interested in the great works of architecture associated with religion, and the motivational power of worship.

Lorenzo saw it as somewhat of a blessing that the burden of maintaining his house fell upon his two older brothers, as it gave him the opportunity to explore the world on his own terms while still being backed by a sizeable inheritance. His search for knowledge having not been satisfied by travelling across Europe, he was one of the first settlers to venture to the New World.

Under Velazquez, Lorenzo helped oversee the construction efforts in Cuba, specifically defenses and churches. However, he felt no affinity to Velazquez, and joined Cortes with his offer to explore even more distant lands. Although not very sociable, Lorenzo seeks to prove to his companions of poorer backgrounds that he is equally capable. In terms of geography and structures, he is a sound advisor.



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### **Roberto Cristobal de la Mallorca**

Position: Builder and Craftsman

Roberto Cristobal de la Mallorca was born in an aristocratic family, the last of nine brothers. He was very social, although turbulent– he was extremely energetic, and only calmed down when he would focus intensely on a new building project. Roberto was only interested in engineering, and after many disputes with his father, became an apprentice of the builder in charge of building his family's new house. Eventually, immensely talented, he managed to become a key builder in Cortes' expedition after working for three years in Cuba. Roberto was known for his creative machines and original constructions – he was famous for being able to improvise and adapt to situations and materials that often left other builders in disarray. While admired, Roberto Cristobal de la Mallorca was also feared, as he was renowned for his cruelty and interest in the torture practices he encountered during his travels.



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