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Mexico: (8) The Aztecs (3):
Conquered by the Spanish III

Lead: In just two years, the Spanish Conquistadors, led by Hernan Cortez, were able to almost completely destroy the Aztecs, one of the most advanced indigenous empires of the Americas. Beware Spaniards bearing disease.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: During the late fifteenth century, the Spanish began to occupy the Caribbean, and in 1519, with relatively few resources, invaded present day Mexico and conquered

one of the most war-like civilizations in the Americas. In February of that year, Cortez and approximately five hundred soldiers arrived on the Mexican coast. Cortez either burned or scuttled his ships to discourage his already restless company from any thoughts of turning back. They brought with them things Native Americans had never seen before: guns, cannon and between ten and twenty horses. With these weapons and horses, Cortez was able to instill fear in and defeat the indigenous armies.

On his march up to Valley of Mexico and the capital of the Aztec Empire – Tenochtitlan – on the site of present day Mexico City, Cortez was

joined by members of other tribes, mainly the Tlaxcalans, with whom Cortez had formed an alliance. They were enemies of the Aztecs and brought thousands of warriors, on their march to the defeat of Montezuma. At first, Montezuma was confused and passive. He believed the Spanish to be descendants of one the Aztec Gods.

In the two year struggle to gain control of Tenochtitlan and the surrounding area, the Aztecs were weakened by battle, starvation, but mostly by disease. The Native Americans had no natural immunity to European sicknesses, and eventually 95 percent of a population, estimated before the invasion to be

about twenty million, were wiped out. Spanish rule continued in Mexico for the next three hundred years.

Research by Ann Johnson. At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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