The war of conquest
How it was waged here in Mexico

The Aztec view of Cortez's conquest as given to Father Bernardino de Sahagun, circa 1555


These excerpts come from a narrative of the conquest from native sources collated by Sahagun, a Spanish missionary who produced a 12-volume compilation of information about the geography, climate, crops, and customs of Mexico during the 1540s and early 1550s. Sahagun traveled around Mexico accompanied by natives conversant in Spanish and able to write the sounds of their own languages in the Latin alphabet. Many of the informants had been alive at the time and had seen the conquest of the Aztec capital. They answered questions orally or in writing done in the Aztec pictograms; Sahagun's assistants then transcribed the responses into a Latin alphabet and helped Sahagun translate them into Spanish. The account of the conquest is book 12 of Sahagun's *General History of the Things of New Spain*. The most complete version of the *General History* is a manuscript now in Florence and known as the Florentine Codex. It contains drawings of the events as well as text in two columns – one the Latin alphabet transliteration of the Nahuatl-language accounts and the other in Spanish. The Spanish column is not always an exact translation; frequently it is paraphrase. The Nahuatl columns give the fullest account of Cortez's conquest from the perspective of the Aztecs.

**Chronology**

c.1450 Aztecs, with Texcoco and Tlacopan allies, become the dominant people in what is now central Mexico

1519 February - Cortez and his expedition arrive in Mexico
March - expedition arrives in Tabasco. La Maliniche, known in Spanish as Marina, a woman born near the coast and fluent in Maya and Nahuatl is given to Cortez after his victory over her people. She learns Spanish and becomes Cortez's translator.
August - start of overland march.
August- September - recruitment of native allies either by agreement or after defeating them in battle.
October - Moctezuma invites Cortez and his expedition to proceed to Tenochtitlan (the Aztec capital; the site is now Mexico City)
November – Expedition and allies arrive in Tenochtitlan; Cortez captures Moctezuma and holds him prisoner

1520 April - Cortez, returning to coast, defeats an expedition led by Panfilo de Narvaez that had been ordered to stop Cortez's activities; meanwhile Alvarado leads massacre of Aztec warriors in Tenochtitlan; Moctezuma killed.
June 25 - Cortez returns to Tenochtitlan with reinforcements
July 1 - Spaniards and allies flee Tenochtitlan, suffering heavy casualties; regroup in Tlaxcalla.
September-November - smallpox outbreak
December - Spaniards and allies begin encirclement of Tenochtitlan by capturing towns surrounding the lake

1521 May - Tenochtitlan fully encircled; siege begins
August 13 - end of siege with complete conquest of city by Spaniards and allies; Aztec surrender. Tenochtitlan largely destroyed in the battles or in the looting and rapine that followed the surrender.
From the Manuscript

III. The Landings

So [Moctezuma’s messengers] got seacoast people to paddle them out to the Spaniards. Drawing near enough to see them and be seen, they went through motions at the prows of the boats as if kissing the earth. For they thought Quetzacoatl must have at last come back on that vessel [Aztec legend held that the god Quetzacoatl had left by sea to the east and would return from that direction]. …

And Moctezuma told his five messengers, "Set out! Hurry! Give our prayers to the lord, the god Quetzacoatl. Say to him, ‘Your deputy governor Moctezuma has sent us; here are his gifts for you, for you have come to occupy Moctezuma’s poor home here in Mexico.”

IV. The Capture and Death of Moctezuma

[While Cortez was on the coast fending off Panfilo de Narvaez’s efforts to suppress his expedition, Pedro de Alvarado nervous because of grumbling among the Aztecs initiated an attack during one of the Aztec religious festivals.]

So the feast began to be celebrated; already there was dancing, already there was song with dancing. The singing rolled like the breaking of the surf.

Having bided their time, having awaited the opportune moment, the Spaniards came forth to slay us. They wore battle array. They crowded wherever there was entry or exit to the courtyard of temples, the gateways called Quauhquiauac, Tecpantzinco, Acatl yiacapan and Tezacaoc. They blocked them; they stood in them. No one could get out. Then each with shield, each with iron sword, they filed on foot into the courtyard to kill us. They surrounded us dancers and then set upon the drummers. They first struck a drummer; they severed both his hands and cut off his head which fell to the ground some distance away. Then they charged the crowd with their iron lances and hacked us with their iron swords. They slashed the backs of some so their entrails poured out. They cut to pieces the heads of others -- pulverized them. They hacked at the shoulders of others, splitting their bodies open; or at their shanks, or at their thighs, or at their abdomens, breaking out their entrails, which dragged as they tried to run. But if any tried to run, the Spaniards stabbed and struck them down. …
As soon as it was realized that the massacre was taking place, a shouting arose: “Warriors! Mexicans! Come quickly -- in war array! Bring your emblems, shields, arrows! Come! Hurry! Already the Warriors have died, perished, been annihilated! Mexicans! Warriors!”

Quickly were forces marshalled. Determined, the brave warriors came with shields and arrows, and fought. We shot at the Spaniards with barbed arrows, with darts, with tridents, with arrows of board, obsidian point, a mass of yellow reach which testing shadow over the Spaniards.

Thus open where broke out. The Spaniards had to take to the shelter of the stone walls of the great palace, from behind which they shot back iron arrows and fired their guns. Also they put Moctezuma in irons. ...

In the late afternoon light, just before sunset, Itzquauhtzin shouted forth from a company of Spaniards and Mexicans on the palace roof terrace: “Mexicans! Man into of Tenochtitlan! Your ruler, the lord of men, Moctezuma implores you. He says, “Listen Mexicans! We are not equal to the Spaniards! Abandon the battle! Still your arrows, held back your shields! Otherwise evil will be the fate of the miserable old men and women, of the people, of babes in arms, of the toddlers, of the infants crawling on the ground or still in the cradle!”

“He tells you that we are not the Spaniards’ equals, that we should stop fighting, because they have put him in irons -- have put his feet in irons!”

But upon this the Mexicans raised a clamor. They berated him. They were furious with rage. One was so inflamed that he shouted, “What does Moctezuma say, you villain? Aren’t you one of his warriors?”

The lull that followed was not because of the Mexicans’ weakness. They still watched the various points where one might secretly enter the palace -- where one might secretly smuggle in tortillas. The Mexicans completely cut them off from supplies from outside; no one could leave them anything. They would starve them. ...
By then, Cortez, returning from his action against Panfilo de Narvaez, was just setting out from Tepeyacac. He had with him many more Spaniards [most of Narvaez’s men had joined him] and a host of Tlaxcallans and Cempoallans -- an abundance, a superabundance. Not only were they entering Mexican territory, but the Tlaxcallans and Cempoallans were coming as warriors, carrying emblems, arrayed for war, with shield and obsidian-bladed sword in hand, with hand staff shouldered. They raised a great column of dust, and their faces were caked with dust and ashes. They were covered and cloaked with dust. And they were moving fast, at a run. Hastening, they went each one shouting, “Hurry up, Tlaxcallans! Hurry up, Cempoallans!”

Things being as they were, Cortez entered the palace. The Spaniards fired their guns. Then the Mexicans came out with war cries and joined battle. There was fighting. Arrows and stones rained on the Spaniards. These returned volleys of iron bolts and shots.

Many of us Mexicans were felled. The crossbowmen aimed well; the bolts accounted for whomever they pierced. As they flew through the air, they went humming; they sped with a great rush, and not in vain. All struck their men -- pierced them through. And the guns were well-trained and aimed at the insurgents. On hearing the shot discharged, we would all fall and cower on the ground. The shots came upon one unaware; before one knew it, one was killed. As many as the missiles overtook, so many died when they struck at the forehead, the back of the head, the heart, the chest, the abdomen -- any vital point. If they struck the thighs or the shoulder, the men might not die; they could recover.

When we Mexicans realized how the iron bolts and shots struck, we would jump aside. We learned to be watchful, careful.

It was after another four days of fighting that the Spaniards threw the dead bodies of Moctezuma and Itzquauhtzin out of the palace, at a place called Teoayoc, the stone turtle carving.

There followed four further days of fighting. Then after remaining shut in the great palace seven days the Spaniards broke out again, to look around, going as far as Mazatzintamalco. They gathered the green stalks of corn, which was just maturing -- gathering it for fodder, just like enemies. It was a hasty sally; they know more than arrived there than they quickly returned an entered the building. The sun was high when they set forth; it was setting on their return.

V. The Escape of the Spaniards.

That night, at midnight, the enemy came out, crowded together, the Spaniards in the lead, the Tlaxicallans following, covering the reader -- like their walls, their ramparts. They carried a wooden platform with them, placed it over
the canal, and crossed over upon it. Screened by a fine drizzle, a fine sprinkle of rain, they were able undetected to cross the canals of Tecpantzinho, Tzapoltan, and Atenchicalco. But as they reached the fourth canal that of Mixcoatechialtitlan, just as they were crossing, a woman drawing water saw them.

Mexicans! Come, all of you!” she shouted. “They are already leaving! They are already secretly getting out!”

Then a watcher at the top of the temple of Uitzilopochtli also shouted, and his cries pervaded the entire city. Everyone heard him.

“Brave warriors! Mexicans!” He called. “Your enemy already leaves! Hurry with the shield-boats and along the road!”

Then there was a general outcry. The shield-boatmen broke forth, poling furiously. Boats kept striking against each other as they reached Mictlantonco macuilcuitlapilco. There from two sides the shield-boatmen pressed against the Spaniards just as the shield-boats of Tenochtitlan joined forces with those of Tlatelolco. Other warriors hurries on foot, going direct to Nonaoalco or Tlacopan, to ambush the rout if it reached that far.

From both sides the shield-boatmen hurled their barbed spears on the Spaniards. The Spaniards shot arrows and iron bolts at the Mexicans and fired their guns at them. Many died on both sides; Spaniards and Tlaxcallans were pierced by arrows; Mexicans were pierced by arrows. Then, when the Spaniards reached Tolteca canal, they seem to fall into a chasm. They filled it. It seemed as if everyone fell into it – Tlaxcallans, Tliliuhquitepecans, Spaniards, their horses, their women. The canal was filled, crammed with them. Those who came along behind walk over on men, on corpses.

At Petlacalo, where there was another canal, their quite unobtrusively, quietly, slowly, cautiously, the again crossed on the wooden platform. There they recovered a little -- restored themselves -- regained their manhood.

By the time they reached Popotlan, it was dawn. This gave them some courage, but also they could be seen from afar, and we Mexicans took after them with a roar, surrounding them, taking Tlaxcallan and Spanish captives, killing others. Mexicans and Tlatelolcans too were killed. There were deaths on both parts. But we drove the Spaniards to Tlacopan, pursuing them hotly, and continued to drive them to Tliliuhcan, to Xocotli ihiouican, to Xoxocotla.

After Xoxocotla they forded a small river, the Tepzolati, climbed up to Acueco, and finally rested at Otoncalpulco, where, in the courtyard, there were wooden palisades. There they could restore and mend themselves. There the people of Teocalhueyacan came to them and guided them forth. ...
[Three or four days later] our Mexican forces caught up with Spaniards, to try to intercept them as they camped at the foot of Mount Tonan. At dawn, the Spaniards attired themselves and ate; we Mexicans likewise attired ourselves, eight, and drank the war ration of pinole mixed with water. Then some climbed up the mountain to spy on the Spaniards and be ready for them as they made ready to go.

When the Spaniards were on the road the spies shouted, “Mexicans! The enemy is already going! Let us get into our war gear and move in on them together! Let no one stay behind!” Then there was running hither and thither in pursuit.

Seeing them, the Spaniards stopped and checked themselves, to size up the situation. As they hesitated, we Mexicans fell upon them so suddenly as to enclose them completely. But then followed repeated spearing and striking down of Mexicans and Tlatelolcans, who had thus cast themselves into the hands of the Spaniards…. Those who remained at a distance were still safe.

When the Spaniards had wiped out this Mexican force, had taken their pleasure with it, they went on, those carrying burdens upon their backs marching last. From this time on, we know not where they slept. This was the point at which we Mexicans turned back, turned away from the Spaniards’ footsteps.

VI. The return of the Spaniards

Once again the temples could be swept out -- the rubbish in each picked up, the dirt removed; and they could be adorned, ornamented. The month of Uei tecuihuuiltl came, and Mexicans once again observed its feast on the twentieth day. They attired all the images of the gods; they ornamented them with precious feathers, hung them with necklaces, put turquoise mosaic masks on them, and dressed them in godly ornaments -- the quetzal feather one, the yellow parrot feather one, the eagle feather one, all precious goods which the great noblemen guarded. ...

But was when the year was in its eleventh score, in Izcalli, that we once again saw the Spaniards. They were approaching from the direction of Quauhtitlan. They were approaching from the direction of Quauhtitlan. They kept on the right to make camp at Tlacopan, where they remained seven days. Then they went away for forty days. Once again they approached, coming quickly toward Quauhtitlan. Their only exploit was to kill people in Tlaliztacapan and Iztacalla; about four hundred Tlatelolcans died. ...

But at about the time that the Spaniards had fled from Mexico, before they had once again risen against us, there came a great sickness, a pestilence, the
smallpox. It started in the month of Tepeihuitl and spread over the people with great destruction of men.

[miseries of smallpox – from the Florentine Codex]

It caused great misery. Some people it covered with pustules, everywhere, the face, the head, the breast, etc. Many indeed perished from it. They could not walk; they could only lie at home in their beds, unable to move, to raise themselves, to stretch out on their sides, or lie face down, or upon their backs. If they stirred they cried out with great pain. Like a covering over them were the pustules. Indeed many people died of them. But many just died of hunger. They were so many deaths that there was often no one to care for the sick; they could not be attended.

On some the pustules broke out far apart. They did not cause much suffering, nor did many die of them. Many others were harmed by them on their faces; face and nose were left roughened. Some had their eyes injured by them; they were blinded. Many were crippled by it -- though not entirely.

The pestilence lasted through sixty day signs before it diminished. When it was realized that it was beginning to end, it was going towards Chalco. The pestilence became prevalent in the month of Teotl eco; it was diminishing in Panquetzaliztli. The brave Mexican warriors were indeed weakened by it.
It was after all this had happened at the Spaniards came back.

They began moving in from Texcoco, setting forth by way of Quauhtitlan. They established themselves in Tlalcopan. Here responsibilities were divided among the Spanish leaders. Pedro de Alvarado's forces blocked the Tlalcopan road leading to Tlatelolco. Cortes, with headquarters in Coyoacan, undertook to dominate it as well as the road leading from Acachinanco to Tenochtitlan; for he knew that the Mexicans were great warriors.

It was in next in Nexlatilco, or Illycac, that war first burst out anew. The Spaniards quickly came to Nonoalco; the brave warriors following after them made them turn their backs. None of the Mexicans died. The brave warriors fought from boats; the shield-boatmen rained arrows on the Spaniards, and it was we Mexicans who entered Nonoalco. Cortes, advancing along the Acachinanco road, thereupon threw his Spaniards against the Mexicans. Many times did the battle flare as Mexican warriors kept contending against him.

Now also the Spaniards made boats in Yexcoco in order to attack Mexico. Twelve of them had come from there, for the time remaining assembled at Acacinanco, where Cortes then joined them. Soon with two boats he started testing out where he could enter Mexico: when the canals were straight and deep enough and where too shallow lest they be grounded. But here the canals were too winding, too sharply curved. But they got them in at last by forcing them through the road which led from Xoloco.

Then they held a council of war and determined upon putting all Mexicans to the spear. So they resolved. They readied themselves. They carried guns. They bore a large cotton banner at their head. They advanced calmly, untroubled, beating the drums, blowing trumpets and flutes.

Quite silently did the two boats sail toward Zoquipan, holding themselves to one side of the canal, since a group of houses stood on the other. They moved apace, giving battle, men fell dead on both sides; attackers and attacked both took captives. Seeing this, the people of Tenochtitlan who lived in Zoquipan fled in terror – young, old, babes in arms. The common folk just all took to the water. A great wailing arose. Those who had boats filed them with their babies and poled away – poled furiously. Nothing else did they take; in their haste they abandoned all their scattered goods, poor stuff which our foes nonetheless looted . . .

But if the people of Tenochtitlan evacuated Zoquipan, the Tlatelolcans, arriving in shield-boats, fought the Spaniards there.
Next the Spaniards sailed up to Xoloco, where the wall stretched across the causeway road. They fired their big gun at it. The first shot did not break it down; the second did, the third and fourth tumbled it to the ground forever.

[demolishing the causeway gate -- from the Florentine Codex]

Then the two boats turned upon the Tlatelolcan shield-boatmen. Little contest in the water followed. Guns filled the prows of the Spanish vessels; they fired where the Mexican boats lay massed. The Mexican boats would lift their prows, veer sideways, and sink. And as for the iron crossbows, no one the Spaniards could aim at escaped; he then and there breathed his last. Many men thus died.

However, when we Mexicans had learned to judge how the shots from the guns and the bolts from the crossbows would fall, none of us ever ran a direct course. We would only zigzag from one side to the other. Likewise, when we saw that the big gun shot was about to fall we would all crouch or stretch out on the ground.

But the brave warriors quickly dispersed among the houses a wide road was left clear.

VII. Mexico under siege

In their dread of the Spaniards the people of Tenochtitlan began to pour into Tlatelolco. There were wails and weeping; there was shouting. Many where the tears of the poor women. We men each took our women; some of us carried our children upon our shoulders. It took an entire day for the people of Tenochtitlan to abandon their city. But the Tlatelolcans kept returning to Tenochtitlan to fight. ...

But just two days later, when the first two brigantines came there -- which we Mexicans repulsed -- they then all assembled and set up camp near the
houses of Nonoalco. From there they advanced on dry land. They followed the narrow road among the houses and reached the very center.

First all was clear there; none of a common folk came out. Then Tzilacatzin, a very brave warrior, came forth with three great huge stones, one in his hand, two carried upon his shield. They were white gallstones. He cast them and thereupon pursued the Spaniards, scattering them and dispersing them into the water. They were soaked. The brave Tzilacatzin was of the Otomi class of warriors. The Otomi style of hair-do was his by right. He despised his foes, even if they were Spaniards; he completely despised them. He inspired terror. When they saw Tzilacatzin they cowered. And persistently did they seek to kill him, trying to transfix him with an iron bolt or to fell them with a gun shot. But he just disguised himself, so that he would not be recognized. ...

The day after having been chased into the water, the Spaniards sailed their boats again, grounding them at Nonoalco and at Ayauhcaltitlan, and brought in a great force of warriors on foot, including all the Tlaxcallans and the Otomi tribesmen. The Spaniards had indeed massed to try to overcome us Mexicans. On their reaching Nonoalco, violent fighting broke out. On both sides they were deaths. Our foes were shot with arrows; Mexicans were shot with arrows. On both sides equally there were wounds. Thus was fighting all through the day, all through the night.

[Several further engagements are chronicled; the Aztec warriors fight bravely but are being pushed into a smaller and smaller space.]

Nevertheless, great became the suffering of a common folk. There was hunger. Many died of famine. There was no more good, pure water to drink -- only nitrous water. Many died of it -- contracted dysentery which killed them. The people ate anything -- lizards, barn swallows, corn leaves, salt grass; they gnawed colorin wood, glue orchid, the frilled flower; or leather and buckskin, cooked or toasted, or sedum and adobe bricks. Never had such suffering been seen; it was terrifying how many of us died when we were shut in as we were.

And quite imperturbably the enemy pressed about us like a wall quite imperturbably they herded us

**VIII. The beginning of the end**

Then the Spaniards began to harass us in Tlatelolco. The first time they penetrated the marketplace here was once when four horsemen broke in and galloped around the edge of the area, lancing the brave warriors. They killed a good many. This was the first time; then they withdrew, turning their backs on us. Our brave warriors were fearless against them. They took after the Spaniards.
Their attack was unexpected; there was no warning.

This was the time, too, that they burned the temple. They set fire to it, it burst into flames, the tongues of fire rising high, crackling, and continually flaring up. There was weeping, there were tears among the Tlatelolcans, who expected that the people would then be plundered.

For a long time fighting continued in the marketplace. Battles were fought at each of its edges. Gradually the Tlatelolcans were made to abandon the wall of Tenexnamacoyan and, where lime was sold, and at Copalnamacoyan, where incense was sold; then the Spaniards could penetrate among the houses at Xochicalco. Somehow the brave warriors managed to be everywhere on the walls thereaboutss for all the houses of the Quauhquechollan area surrounding the marketplace became a wall, and many warriors lay out of sight on the roof terraces, from which they could throw stones and shoot arrows. Besides, the warriors had made small openings in the back of the Quauhquechollan houses; with a horse-men followed after anyone, when they tried to take him or get ahead of him, he would slip inside. ...

There similarly was combat there at Yacacolco. The crossbowmen came filing in order. With them arrived allied warriors supplied by the Four Lords. Their object was to close off the road. As the sun began to Hein well, our brave warriors were crouching low among the houses in order to join battle with them. But when they had done this, some of our foes climbed a roof terrrace, saw us, and called out, “Tlaxcallans! This way! Here they are!” Then they rained darts upon us and crumbled us.

Thus is Spaniards slowly reached Yacacolco, carrying battle to each edge. But they were receiving more hurt then they gave; they could not break through the Tlatelolcans, who remained across the water stoning them, shooting arrows at them. No ford nor bridge did the enemy take.

By day the Spaniards systematically filled in the canals. By night, when the foe had withdrawn, we Mexicans with continual difficulty uncovered them. When dawn came, the scene looked just as it had the day before. For when the Spaniards had filled the canals, we at once took out the stones, the wood, etc. Thus by a little we lengthened the war. Only with difficulty could the Spaniards cross; the canals were our great walls.

In closing in on us the Spaniards and the Tlaxcallans concentrated upon the highway to Yacacolco and Atezcapan .... They undertook to give battle in boats. On the other hand, the warriors of Atlicuehyan and Ayacac, both boatmen and bowman, last no time in readying themselves to resist the Spaniards and Tlaxcallans. For a time they held their own. Barbed spears rained down like rattlesnake striking, so did the arrows hit their mark. When they used their dart throwers, it was as if a mass of darts cast a yellow shadow over the enemy. ...
And once the Spaniards landed in Totecco; when they came to the buildings where the young were trained his warriors, they set fire to them. Another of the brigantines entered at Atliceuhyan accompanied by boats filled with Xochimilcans. Brave Temilotzin, a warrior who had distinguished himself by taking four captives, was standing erect on a small pyramid facing the Spaniards. Then brave Coyoueuetzin, dressed in the array of an eagle-jaguar warrior, half eagle, half jaguar, came in a boat from Tolmayecan to throw the enemy back. He brought many shield-boats with him. “Courage, brave warriors,” he shouted; “we are repulsing them!” And they fell upon the enemy’s boats. When the Spaniards saw them, they turned and ran, the Mexicans pursuing them, Coyoueuetzin and his warriors then going to Atliceuhyan. Many Xochimilcans fell under Mexican arrows. The Spaniards then withdrew their boats to Amanalco, where they lined them up. Those pursued by the Mexicans made a stand. Coyoueuetzin hid behind a small pyramid, and then with his brave warriors reversed the enemy. He forced them to the young warriors school in Atliceuhyan. Then the Spaniards turned on Coyoueuetzin, chased him, and made him jump into the water. But then Itzpapalotzin, a young warrior of the Otomi class in turn repelled the Spaniards. Putting on a device, he drove them off -- rolled them up like mud balls, forced them into their boats so they went off defeated. ...

Still, the Spaniards gradually drove us back, pressed us back against the houses. At Copalnamacoyan, where the incense used to be sold, and at Amaxac they were practically shield to shield against us. ...

At dawn on the fifth day our enemies, the Spaniards and their allies, attacked us in force. They surrounded us. They all moved together. They wound themselves, wrapped themselves around us. No one could go anywhere. We jostled and crowded against one another. Many, in fact, died trampled in the press. When the enemy came close to us, there was one woman whose through whether at their heads; it ran down their faces.

Then Quauhtemoc [and other Aztec leaders] determined upon a great, brave warrior named Tlapalecatl opochtzin, a Coatlan man [to serve as an omen]. They put the queszel-owl garb upon him, an array which had once belonged to the ruler Atuitzotl [Moctezuma’s revered predecessor].

“This array was the array of my dear father Auitzotl. Let this warrior wear it; let him die in it, said Quauhtemoc. “May he vaunt himself in it before the enemy; let him show himself to them in it. Let the enemy see it; let them wonder at it!”

When they had dressed him in it, he was frightening, wonderful to behold. They bade four other warriors go with him to help, and they furnished him with darts which had belonged to the god – rod-like darts with flint points. With this array it was as if he had become one of the class of Mecixo’s rulers.
“Mexicans! Tlatelolcans!” the deputy ruler Tlacotzin said. “Is there nothing left of the Mexican state? What we have here is what naturally belongs to the god Uitzilopochtli – the weapons he cast. These are the fire serpent and the fire drill which he hurled at our enemies. What you wield, Mexicans, is the dart which is naturally his. Make it turn toward our enemies. Do not drop it; throw it with force against them. If one or two of our enemies are hit, Uitzilopochtli is truly on our side. We shall find his favor for a while. What more will he require?”

Then the quetzel-owl figure went off, his quetzel feathers spreading.

When the enemy saw him, it was as if a mountain had split in pieces. The Spaniards were terrified; he frightened them; he was something to wonder at.

He got up on a roof terrace. Some of the enemy who could see him came against him, turned him back, gave him chase. Then he turned on them and pursued them; he took their quetzel feathers and gold from them. Then he sprang down from the roof terrace. He did not die and the enemy did not capture him; rather, three or four enemies had been taken.

Finally the battle just quietly ended. Silence rained. Nothing happened. The enemy left. Battles quiet, and nothing more took place. Night fell, and the next day nothing happened either. No one spoke aloud; the people were crushed. Nor did the Spaniards move; they remained still, looking at the people, nothing was happening.

IX. The End

Late at night a sign appeared which made clear that we were forced to the well with no hope of relief. It had rained or sprinkled at intervals. Then, and the deepest darkness of the night there appeared in the heavens what was like a fiery bloodstone continually spinning, revolving, in a flaming whirlwind. Then the blazing, turning ember seemed to split into fragments, some large, some small, some only sparks. It swung up like a coppery wind, swishing, crackling, popping as it circled the ramparts at the lake shore and rocketed toward Coyonacazco. Then it plunged into the water and was no more.

No one called out; no one yelled striking the lips with a hand. No one said anything.

Next day nothing happened. We lay quiet; our enemies lay quiet.

Cortes could be seen watching for under any many-hued canopy on Aztauatzin's house, in Amaxac. He was looking toward the people crowded in Tlatelolco. About him swarmed Spaniards; they were consulting among themselves.
On our side were Quauhtemoc and the rest of our leaders: the deputy ruler Tlocotzin; the high judge Motelchiuhtzin; the chief priest; the high warrior Petlauhtzin. Representing Tlatalolco were the high warriors to knock it long. Representing twaddle local were the high warriors Coyoueuetzin , Temilotzin, Topantemoctzin, Uitzitzin, a lesser nobleman; and the high judges Auelitoctzin and Uitziliutzin. All of these were rulers. They had gathered in Tolmayecan to decide among themselves how to offer tribute and submission to the Spaniards.

After awhile Quauhtemoc left in a boat with two companions, his personal page Yaztachimal and the brave warrior Tepotzitoloc. The boat was polled by Cenyoatl.

The people wept as they saw them go. “Already noble young Quauhtemoc is leaving to surrender himself to the gods, the Spaniards!”

They captured him and disembarked him, and looking on as they took him by the arm to draw him forth. Then they escorted him to the rooftop to present them to Cortes who first stroked Quauhtemoc with his hand and then had him sit by him. Then they fired a volley from their guns -- striking no one, for the just fired upwards of the shots passed over our heads.

Then they brought out a gun, put it into a boat, and carried it to the house of Coyouueuetzin; they set it upon the roof cares and fired at the people. Many died. And the Mexicans just ran away.

So ended the war. When the shields were laid down, when we gave in, it was the year Three House of the civil calendar's count and the day One Serpent of the ceremonial calendar’s count.