**Aztec Account**

Once they entered the province of Cholula, the Spaniards quickly destroyed that city because of the great provocations given by its inhabitants. So many Cholultecas were killed in this invasion that the news raced through the land as far as the City of Mexico. There it caused the most horrible fright and consternation, for it was also known that the Tlaxcaltecas had allied themselves with the "gods" (as the Spaniards were called in all parts of this New World, for want of another name).

The Cholultecas had placed such confidence in their idol Quetzalcoatl that they believed no human power could defeat or harm them. They thought they would be able to vanquish us in a very short time-first, because the Spaniards were so few, and second, because the Tlaxcaltecas had brought them against Cholula by deceit. Their faith in the idol was so complete that they believed it would ravage their enemies with the fire and thunder of heaven, and drown them in a vast flood of water.

This is what they believed, and they proclaimed it in loud voices: "Let the strangers come! We will see if they are so powerful! Our god Quetzalcoatl is here with us, and they can never defeat him. Let them come, the weaklings: we are waiting to see them, and we laugh at their stupid delusions. They are fools or madmen if they trust in these sodomites from Tlaxcala, who are nothing but their women. And let the hirelings come, too: they have sold themselves in their terror. Look at the scum of Tlaxcala, the cowards of Tlaxcala, the guilty ones! They were conquered by the City of Mexico, and now they bring strangers to defend them! How could you change so soon? How could you put yourselves into the hands of these foreign savages? Oh, you frightened beggars, you have lost the immortal glory that was won by your heroes, who sprang from the pure blood of the ancient Teochichimecas, the founders of your nation. What will become of you, you traitors? We are waiting, and you will see how our god Quetzalcoatl punishes his foes! "

They shouted these and other similar insults, because they believed that the enemy would surely be consumed by bolts of fire which would fall from heaven, and that great rivers of water would pour from the temples of their idols to drown both the Tlaxcaltecas and the Spanish soldiers. This caused the Tlaxcaltecas no little fear and concern, for they believed that all would happen as the Cholultecas predicted, and the priests of the temple of Quetzalcoatl proclaimed it at the top of their voices.

But when the Tlaxcaltecas heard the Spaniards call out to St. James, and saw them burn the temples and hurl the idols to the ground, profaning them with great zeal and determination, and when they also saw that the idols were powerless, that no flames fell and no rivers poured out-then they understood the deception and knew it was all falsehoods and lies.

Thus encouraged, they grew so brave that the slaughter and havoc increased beyond imagining. Our friends also became well aware of the Spaniards' courage; they never again plotted any crimes, but were guided by the divine order, which was to serve Our Lord by conquering this land and rescuing it from the power of the devil.

Before the battle began, the city of Tlaxcala sent messengers and ambassadors to Cholula to ask for peace and to say that they were marching not against the Cholultecas but against the Culhuas, or Culhuacanenses Mexicanos. (They were called Culhuas, it is said, because they had come from the region of Culhuacan in the West; and Mexicanos, because the city which they founded and made supreme was called Mexico.) The envoys told the Cholultecas that they were marching under the command of Cortes and that they came desiring peace. They said that the people of Cholula should fear no harm from the bearded strangers, for these were a very great and noble people who only sought their friendship. Thus they begged the Cholultecas as friends to receive the strangers in peace, because they would be well used by them and suffer no ill treatment, but they also warned them not to anger the white men, for they were a very warlike, daring and valiant people, who carried superior weapons made of white metal. They said this because there was no iron among the natives, only copper.

They also said that the strangers brought arms which could shoot fire, and wild animals on leashes; that they were dressed and shod in iron, and had powerful crossbows, and lions and ounces so ferocious that they ate people (meaning the fierce greyhounds and mastiffs which the Spaniards had brought with them); and that against this might the Cholultecas could not prevail, or even defend themselves, if they angered the "gods" and did not surrender peacefully, as they should do to avoid greater harm. And they counseled them as friends to act in this manner.

***Death of the Envoy from Tlaxcala***

But the Cholultecas paid no attention to these words, preferring to die rather than surrender. Rejecting the good counsel of the Tlaxcaltecas, they flayed the face of Patlahuatzin, the ambassador, a man of great repute and valor. They did the same to his arms, which they flayed to the elbows, and they cut his hands at the wrists so that they dangled. In this cruel fashion they sent him away, saying: "Go back, and tell the Tlaxcaltecas and those other beggars, or gods, or whatever they are, that this is how we invite them to come. This is the answer we send them."

The ambassador returned in great agony, victim of an outrage that caused much horror and grief in the republic, because he was one of the worthiest and most handsome men of this land. He died in the service of his homeland and republic, where his fame is eternal among his people, who keep his memory alive in their songs and sayings.

The Tlaxcaltecas were enraged at this inhuman treatment of Patlahuatzin. They took such unthinkable cruelty as a great affront, since all ambassadors were traditionally respected and honored by foreign kings and lords, to whom they reported the treaties, wars and other events that took place in these provinces and kingdoms. Therefore they said to Cortes: "Most valiant lord, we wish to accompany you, in order to seek vengeance against Cholula for its insolent wickedness, and to conquer and destroy that city and its province. A people so obstinate and vicious, so evil and tyrannous, should not remain alive. And if there were no other cause than this, they would deserve eternal punishment, for they have not thanked us for our good counsel, but have scorned and despised us because of our love for you."

The valiant Cortes answered them with a stern face: "Have no fear. I promise you revenge." And he kept this promise, waging a cruel war in which vast multitudes were slaughtered, as is recorded in the chronicles.

The Cholultecas said that their foes would all be drowned by their idol Quetzalcoatl. This was the most venerated idol among the many that were worshipped in this land, and its temple at Cholula was considered a shrine of the gods. They said that when the crust was scraped from a portion of the limed surface of the temple, water gushed out. To save themselves from drowning, they sacrificed children of two or three years of age and mixed their blood with lime to make a kind of cement with which to stop up the springs and founts. They said that if they were ever in danger during a war with the white gods and the Tlaxcaltecas, they would break open all the mortared surfaces, from which a flood of water would pour forth to drown their enemies. And when they saw how hard pressed they were, they set to work.

***The Destruction of Cholula***

But none of their expectations was fulfilled, and they lost all hope. Of those who died in the battle of Cholula, the greater number hurled themselves from the temple pyramid in their despair and they also hurled the idol of Quetzalcoatl headfirst from the pyramid, for this form of suicide had always been a custom among them. They were as rebellious and contemptuous as any stiff-necked, ungovernable people, and it was their custom to die in a manner contrary to that of other nations that is, to die headlong. In the end, the greater part of them died in despair, by killing themselves.

When the battle of Cholula was finished, the Cholultecas understood and believed that the God of the white men, who were His most powerful sons, was more potent than their own. Our friends the Tlaxcaltecas, seeing themselves in the very thick of that battle and massacre, called upon St. James the Apostle, shouting his name in loud voices: "Santiago! " And from that day to this, when they are in some difficulty or danger, the Tlaxcaltecas invoke the saint.

They made use of a very good counsel given them by Cortes, so that they could be distinguished and would not die among the enemy by mistake. Since their weapons and emblems and those of the enemy were almost the same, with only the slightest differences, and since there was such a great multitude of people on both sides, some means of identification was a necessity. Otherwise, in the press of battle, they would have killed their own warriors without knowing it. Therefore they wore plaited garlands of feather-grass on their heads, in order to recognize each other; and the counsel proved to be of considerable value.

When Cholula had been stormed and destroyed, and a great host of people killed and plundered, our armies marched forward again, causing terror wherever they went, until the news of the destruction spread through the whole land. The people were astonished to hear such strange reports, and to learn how the Cholultecas were defeated and slain in so short a time, and how their idol Quetzalcoatl had not served them in any way.