***The Spaniards Take Possession of the City***

When the Spaniards entered the Royal House, they placed Motecuhzoma under guard and kept him under their vigilance. They also placed a guard over Itzcuauhtzin, but the other lords were permitted to depart.

Then the Spaniards fired one of their cannons, and this caused great confusion in the city. The people scattered in every direction; they fled without rhyme or reason; they ran off as if they were being pursued. It was as if they had eaten the mushrooms that confuse the mind, or had seen some dreadful apparition. They were all overcome by terror, as if their hearts had fainted. And when night fell, the panic spread through the city and their fears would not let them -sleep.

In the morning the Spaniards told Motecuhzoma what they needed in the way of supplies: tortillas, fried chickens, hens' eggs, pure water, firewood and charcoal. Also: large, clean cooking pots, water jars, pitchers, dishes and other pottery. Motecuhzoma ordered that it be sent to them. The chiefs who received this order were angry with the king and no longer revered or respected him. But they furnished the Spaniards with all the provisions they needed-food beverages and water and fodder for the horses.

***The Spaniards Reveal Their Greed***
When the Spaniards were installed in the palace, they asked Motecuhzoma about the city's resources and reserves and about the warriors' ensigns and shields They questioned him closely and demanded gold.

Motecuzoma. guided them to it. They surrounded him and crowded close with their weapons. He walked in the center, and they formed a circle around him.

When they arrived at the treasure house called Teucalco, the riches of gold and feathers were brought out to them: ornaments made of quetzal feathers, richly worked shields, disks of gold, the necklaces of the idols, gold nose plugs, gold greaves and bracelets and crowns.

The Spaniards immediately stripped the feathers from the gold shields and ensigns. They gathered all the gold into a great mound and set fire to everything else, regardless of its value. Then they melted down the gold into ingots. As for the precious green stones, they took only the best of them; the rest were snatched up by the Tlaxcaltecas. The Spaniards searched through the whole treasure house, questioning and quarreling, and seized every object they thought was beautiful.

***The Seizure of Motecuhzoma's Treasures***

Next they went to Motecuhzoma's storehouse, in the place called Totocalco [Place of the Palace of the Birds],' where his personal treasures were kept. The Spaniards grinned like little beasts and patted each other with delight.

When they entered the hall of treasures, it was as if they had arrived in Paradise. They searched everywhere and coveted everything; they were slaves to their own greed. All of Motecuhzoma's possessions were brought out: fine bracelets, necklaces with large stones, ankle rings with little gold bells, the royal crowns and all the royal finery-everything that belonged to the king and was reserved to him only. They seized these treasures as if they were their own, as if this plunder were merely a stroke of good luck. And when they had taken all the gold, they heaped up everything else in the middle of the patio.

La Malinche called the nobles together. She climbed up to the palace roof and cried: "Mexicanos, come forward! The Spaniards need your help! Bring them food and pure water. They are tired and hungry; they are almost fainting from exhaustion! Why do you not come forward? Are you angry with them?"

The Mexicans were too frightened to approach. They were crushed by terror and would not risk coming forward. They shied away as if the Spaniards were wild beasts, as if the hour were midnight on the blackest night of the year. Yet they did not abandon the Spaniards to hunger and thirst. They brought them whatever they needed, but shook with fear as they did so. They delivered the supplies to the Spaniards with trembling hands, then turned and hurried away.

***Chapter Nine***

**The Massacre in the Main Temple During the Fiesta of Toxcatl**

**Introduction**

Several indigenous texts-the Codex Ramirez, the XIII relacion of Alva Ixtlilxochitl and the Codex Aubin-describe the massacre perpetrated during the fiesta of Toxcatl, which the Aztecs I celebrated in honor of the god Huitzilopochtli. "This was the most important of their fiestas," wrote Sahagun. "It was like our Easter and fell at almost the same time."

Cortes had been absent from the city for twenty days when the massacre took place; he had gone out to fight Panfilo de Narvaez, who was coming to arrest him by order of Diego Velazques, governor of Cuba. Cortes' deputy, Pedro de Alvarado, treacherously murdered the celebrants when the festival was at its height.

We have chosen two different accounts of the massacre, both written originally in Nahuatl. They describe it with a realism comparable to that of the great epic poems of classical antiquity.

The first account, by Sahagun's native informants, tells of the preparations for the fiesta, the sudden attack by the Spaniards in the midst of the ceremonies and the retaliation by the Indians, who besieged the Spaniards when they took refuge in Motecuhzoma's palace.

The second brief account is by the native author of the Codex Aubin. "From a literary standpoint," says Dr. Garibav, "the passage is of extraordinary merit. It shows us the living, suffering people of Tenochtitlan as they faced the attack of the Tonatiuh (Alvarado), who was as handsome as he was wicked."