

Packet A Source 4: WERE THE SPANIARDS THAT CRUEL?

Spain's shining memories of its Golden Age, when the nation stood at the summit of world power, **have been tarnished by critics who call the 1492 arrival of the Spanish in the New World "an invasion" fueled by greed and leading to "genocide."** The Spanish were prosperous, powerful, and almost everyone else in Europe hated them. Fearful, envious, and poorer than Spain, rival European nations resorted to a paper war.

Were the Spanish that bad? Like many invaders, the Spanish committed horrifying acts. To understand their behavior in the Americas, one must look at the world as the Spanish did in the 15th century. **By their standards, they acted with moderation.**

When the English and French arrived in the Americas, they systematically drove the natives from their land. **The Spanish accepted the Indians into their society--however rudely--and sought to provide a philosophical and moral foundation for their actions in the New World.**

Millions of Indians died after the arrival of the Spanish. But a host of diseases brought from Europe wiped out the vast majority, **not war or abuse.** Spain's treatment of the Indians seems almost beneficent compared with the way other colonial powers dealt with natives. **The Spanish made a place for the Indians--as part of the lowest order, but at least they had a place. North Americans in many cases simply exterminated the Indians.** The Spanish mingled with the Indians, at times with the encouragement of the crown. The marriage of blood and cultures created the new mestizo people who compose most of today's Latin Americans. North America, where the natives were excluded, driven off their land and eventually hunted down, remained white.

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Newsweek, 9/1/91, Vol. 118 Issue 10, p48, 4p