More Heat and Some Light on the Spanish Struggle for Justice in the Conquest of America

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I

Was There a Struggle for Justice?

HAS THE Spanish conquest of America been the event of Latin American history most bitterly and most continuously discussed during the last 450 years?** No one familiar with the hundreds of items recorded in the first 25 volumes of the Handbook of Latin American Studies would deny the statement of the Swedish scholar Sverker Arnoldsson that this is so,1 and the entrance of the Soviet and Soviet-oriented publications2 into the field indicates that the flood of polemical articles and monographs will not abate in the foreseeable future. No one who has even sampled the mountain of writings which sets forth the many conflicting interpretations of the conquest is likely to question Arnoldsson's explanation of the uproar as not at all an ivory tower controversy among academics but rather a "part of life itself... the economic, social, and racial problems which were created by the conquest of the New World still exist. The conquest, thus, is in the highest possible degree a living past."3 Arnoldsson concluded his essay on the contradictory attitudes assumed toward the conquest since the sixteenth century by quoting Manuel Gamio, Luis Valcárcel, and José Vasconcelos, noting that no more disparate

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1 La conquista española de América según el juicio de la posteridad. Vestigios de la Leyenda Negra (Madrid, 1960), p. 9. The work first appeared in Swedish in 1953, and was issued in Spanish as an homenaje by the Instituto Ibero-Americano of Gothenburg.


3 Arnoldsson, La conquista española, pp. 9-10.
views could be held than the thinkers expressed, "three of the best-known and most widely read authors in the continent."

The key question on the conquest for many historians is how Spanish action in America affected the Indians, and the most frequently cited author on this basic question is Bartolomé de Las Casas, the Dominican monk who became the most articulate and most formidable defender of the Indians. As the Spanish-speaking world prepares to commemorate in 1966 the four hundredth anniversary of the death of this bold and controversial Spaniard, his ideas and influence have rightly become the focus of ever-widening interest. A bibliography on Las Casas up to 1954 included 849 items; today Professor Raymond Marcus of Paris has in preparation a supplemental work which will list many additional items published during the last 10 years. The quality of the material has improved as more of Las Casas' writings became available, and in better editions; and the arguments are usually presented with vigor and learning.

Looking back to 1932 when I first began to search in Spanish archives for manuscripts on Las Casas, I am still surprised at the reactions of two eminent scholars to my proposal to study his work and influence. Konrad Haebler, the outstanding German authority on Hispanic culture, believed that "all sources for his history are accessible in print," and Earl J. Hamilton, who had already begun to produce his fundamental contributions on the rise of prices resulting from the conquest, hoped that I would get Las Casas out of my system as soon as possible and turn to more significant topics.

Today the whole range of Las Casas' moral convictions and intellectual interests is being taken seriously, not only his allegations of the millions of Indians killed and several hitherto ignored topics are being explored. A Yugoslav Dominican Antoninus Zaminovic of Dubrovnik has been studying the ideas of Vicente Palatino de Curzola of Dalmatia, the only Dominican who opposed Las Casas in his lifetime, and the Instituto Peruano de Altos

"Ibid., p. 54.
"Manuel Giménez Fernández and the writer, Bartolomé de las Casas, 1474-1566. Bibliografía crítica y cuerpo de materiales para el estudio de su vida, escritos, actuación y polémicas que suscitaron durante cuatro siglos (Santiago de Chile, 1954). Henceforth referred to as Las Casas. Bibliografía crítica.
"Haebler to the writer in a letter dated March 16, 1932; Hamilton to the writer in a letter dated April 17, 1933.
"Letters to the writer from Friar Zaminovic dated May 28, 1956, and November 28, 1963. An 18th century copy of the treatise, from the Kinshorough Collection, has just been acquired by Indiana University. It is Ms. 1592 in the Bernardo Mendel Collection there: "De jure et justitia bellii quod habent
Estudios Islámicos has begun to investigate his position on Islam. General Cándido Rondon told me a few months before he died in 1954 at over 90 years of age that his work as pacifier of the Brazilian Indians and as the director of the earliest national agency in Latin America to protect Indians had been inspired by the example of Las Casas. Other hitherto unknown aspects of the life and influence of Friar Bartolomé may be brought to light by the Marcus bibliography.

Despite the increasing quantity of sources and increasing complexity of interpretation, the fundamental convictions of Las Casas are found to remain the same as when he enunciated them in the sixteenth century. He believed that Indians were rational human beings, who could be converted to the faith by peaceful means alone; conversion should involve a real understanding of Christian doctrine and not simply lead to superficial baptism of the uninstructed. The only real justification for Spanish rule in the New World, he insisted repeatedly, was the fulfillment of this mission. His experiences since he first went to Hispaniola in 1502 and the documents sent to him from many parts of the Indies until his death in 1566 convinced him that the years of Spanish dominion there constituted a betrayal of that mission. The conquest of America, in his eyes, was one of the darkest pages in the annals of mankind; his own countrymen, he contended, carried away by blind lust for gold and good living, had displayed the most wanton and fiendish barbarity toward the meek and defenseless natives, to whom they were supposed to bring the knowledge of Christ.

A full account of recent literature on the conquest would require at least an entire issue of the HAHRE. This review article must therefore be limited to examining two of the principal authors who have lately concerned themselves with the Spanish struggle for justice in the conquest of America: Juan Friede of Colombia, who doubts at times that any struggle for justice to the Indians took place at all, and Ramón Menéndez Pidal of Spain, whose volume on Las Casas spreads far and wide his passionate conviction that the Dominican was a pathological personality, an abnormal person, in fact a paranoic. In considering the works of these writers who have little in

reges Castellae at Leonia in regionibus occidentalis Indiae . . . ad . . . Regem Philippum. 11

1 Letter from the President of the Instituto, Professor Rafael Guevara Bazán, to the writer dated June 28, 1962.

10 For a succinct view of Las Casas' life and doctrines, see the writer's Bartolomé de Las Casas. An Interpretation of his Life and Writings (The Hague, 1951).
common, one should bear in mind the conclusions of Juan Pérez de Tudela Bueso who has done much in the thorny field of Las Casas studies.\textsuperscript{11} He regards Las Casas as "a gigantic and indispensable protagonist in the formation of Hispanic America" and argues that the Las Casas theme offers "one of the most significant subjects for meditation on the nature of history."\textsuperscript{12}

For one whose mother tongue is not Spanish,\textsuperscript{13} the fire and smoke generated by the controversy over the true nature of the Spanish conquest has special meaning. The tremendous and continuing divergence of opinion on the life and work of Bartolomé de Las Casas seems to point to a fundamental fact of Spanish culture: that the struggle on behalf of the Indians has had a profound effect on the writing of the history of Spain in America. We may learn much about Spanish history and about the convictions of Spanish-speaking scholars today in an analysis of the bitter and four-century long debate over the true significance of the discovery of America, which the sixteenth-century historian Francisco López de Gómara characterized as the greatest event since the coming of Christ.

It was this same historian who set the stage for the battle of charges and counter-charges on the conquest by thus extolling the benefits of Spanish rule:

\begin{quote}
Loor de españoles
Tanta tierra como dicho tengo han descubierto, andado y convertido nuestros españoles en sesenta años de conquista. Nunca jamás rey ni gente anduvo y se ha hecho tanto en tan breve tiempo como la nuestra, ni ha hecho ni mercedado lo que ella, así en armas y navegación como en la predicación del santo Evangelio y conversión de idolatrías; por lo cual son españoles dignísimos de alabanza en todas las partes del mundo. ¡Bendito Dios, que les dio tal gracia y poder! Buena los y gloria es de nuestros reyes y hombres de España que hayan hecho a los indios tomar y tener un Dios, una fe y
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{11}See his edition of the Obras escogidas de fray Bartolomé de Las Casas (Madrid, 1957-1958), that was brought out in a five volume edition in the Biblioteca de Autores Españoles (volos 95, 96, 108, 109, 110).

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., I, clxv. Tudela's introduction to this volume is entitled "Significada histórica de la vida y escritos del padre Las Casas" and provides a judicious and competent summary.

\textsuperscript{13}It is necessary to make this explanation, inasmuch as Pérez de Tudela considers that some Anglo-Saxon writers, specifically myself, "relata desconocimiento del español del lenguaje español" in discussions of certain aspects of the Spanish conquest. Ibid., pp. xxi-xxxi. Pérez de Tudela strives somewhat in attempting to explain exactly what sixteenth-century Spaniards actually meant when they referred to Indians as "animales," "apartados de razón," etc. See the writer's Aristotle and the American Indians (London and Chicago, 1969), pp. 23-24, 133, for some rather fine reasoning by Spanish-speaking writers on this subject. It would be interesting to know who is in the best position to understand the spirit of the Latin employed by Sepúlveda in 1550 in his Valladolid argument against Las Casas where he described the Indians as homunculi.
un baptismo, y quitándoles la idolatría, los sacrificios de hombres, el comer carne humana, la sodomía y otros grandes y malos pecados, que nuestro buen Dios mucho aborrece y castiga. Hanles también quitado la muchedumbre de mujeres, envejecida costumbre y deleite entre todos aquellos hombres carnales; hanles mostrado letras, que sin ellas son los hombres como animales, y el uso del hierro, que tan necesario es a hombre; así mismo les han mostrado muchas buenas costumbres, artes y policía para mejor pasar la vida; lo cual todo, y aun cada cosa por sí, vale, sin duda ninguna, mucho más que la pluma ni las perlas ni la plata ni el oro que les han tomado. 24

López de Gómara did not bother to justify the conquest on theoretical grounds but recommended that his readers consult “Sepúlveda, the Emperor’s chronicler, who wrote most elegantly in Latin on this topic, and thus you will be completely satisfied in this matter.” 25 Some Spaniards, however, were not “completely satisfied,” nor were non-Spaniards, and the battle of words has continued to this day on the nature of the Spanish conquest of America.

II

Professor Juan Friede’s Interpretation of the Conquest

The state of historical opinion on the leyenda negra, the “black legend” of Spanish cruelty and fanaticism, has long been taken as an accurate thermometer to indicate attitudes toward Spanish action in America as a whole. It was, therefore, revealing to have a colleague in the United States ask “whether a leyenda blanca, a ‘white legend’ of Spanish altruism and tolerance” is not beginning to emerge from writings such as mine. 26 Benjamin Keen was referring of course, not to my studies on Potosí, 27 but to my works revolving around Las Casas. He particularly deplores as “hyperbole” the statement that “no other nation made so continuous or so passionate an attempt to discover what was the just treatment for the native peoples under its jurisdiction, as the Spaniards.” 28

24 López de Gómara, Historia general de las Indias, 2 tomos (Madrid, 1932), II, 258-259.
25 Ibid., II, 259.
28 He makes this comment both in his edition of Bourne (p. x), and in his edition of Alonso de Ercilla’s Life and Labor in Ancient Mexico (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1963), p. 293. His remarks are based on my Aristotle and the
Gratifying as it is to learn that one's writings have been read, it is less gratifying to be told that my failure "to take into account the clash of political and economic interests that underlay the dispute over the Indians" gives my writings "a curiously abstract air." Professor Keen's further statement\(^\text{19}\) that a study by Juan Friede was "an effective attempt to place the Indian question in its political, social, and economic context" led me back temporarily to the field I had abandoned in favor of the Villa Imperial de Potosí.

Professor Friede's contributions have not been sufficiently known or properly recognized, partly because of their very abundance and also because they have appeared in widely scattered publication centers. No one, in recent years at least, has made more prolonged researches in Colombian archives on Indian history, published as much source material on Colombian history, been more devoted to historiographical studies than Professor Friede, and in addition he has written informative and polemical articles in both specialized reviews and newspapers. In order to make his impressive bibliography better known, I requested him to prepare the list given below.\(^\text{20}\)

\[\text{American Indians (London and Chicago, 1959) and The Spanish Struggle for Justice in the Conquest of America (Philadelphia, 1949).}\]

\[\text{For Keen's statement see his edition of Zorita, Life and Labor in Ancient Mexico, p. 283. The Friede study he refers to is cited in note 23 below.}\]

\[\text{Professor Friede has been kind enough to send a list of his publications, which he divides into these categories:}\]

A. Libros sobre la historia indígena de Colombia.

Los indios del Alto Magdalena. Vida, lucha y exterminio, 1603-1931 (Bogotá: Instituto Indígena de Colombia, 1943); El indio en lucha por la tierra. Historia de los reclamadores del marco central colombiano (Bogotá: Ediciones Espinal, 1944); Los andinos. Historia de la aculturación de una tribu selvática, 1537-1947 (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1953); Vida y luchas de Don Juan del Valle, primer obispo y protector de indios (Popeya, 1961); Los guerreros bajo la dominación española. Estudio documental, 1539-1810 (Bogotá: Ediciones Banco de la República, 1963); Problemas sociales de los indios. Tierra, gobierno, misión (Bogotá: Monografías sociológicas, no. 16. Publicación de la Facultad de Sociología, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1963).

B. Libros de historia de Colombia.

Some doubts and disagreements have developed concerning some of Friede’s historical contributions. Occasionally he does not provide sufficiently precise references to the manuscript material he cites, and sometimes he generalizes too broadly from the limited evidence available to him. More important, some inconsistencies in his work and what seem to me certain basic weaknesses in his approach to Las Casas are worthy of attention.

Professor Friede has elaborated his views in a long and fascinating article entitled “Las Casas y el movimiento indigenista en España y América en la primera mitad del siglo XVI.” This study is solidly based on extensive research in the Archivo General de Indias, where he spent the years 1948-1951 as the representative of the Academia Colombiana de Historia, and on wide reading in the lit-

EDIME, 1961); Historia de la antigua ciudad de Cartago. En Historia de Pereira, Parte II, Edición del Club Rotario de Pereira (Bogotá: Librería Voluntad, 1963); Fundación de las Casas de Moneda en Santafé de Bogotá, 1614-1637 (Bogotá: Ediciones del Banco de la República, 1964).

C. Articles en revistas relativos a problemas indígenas (selección).


For example, in his latest contribution “Los guimbayas bajo la dominación española” he has performed much archival investigation but gives his references to specific documents in such an imprecise way that it would be difficult to check on his references.

Demétrio Ramos has this to say about his generalizations based on evidence from one area of the New World: “S. Friede, empeñado en la interesante tarea de investigar la aculturación de los indígenas, hubiera extendido sus preferencias a los pueblos del área del Orinoco, sin duda alguna no habría podido escritor que las crónicas coloniales se refieren a la vida del indígena solamente en cuanto éste se relaciona con el hombre europeo,” “El etnógrafo Gumilla y su grupo de historiadores. Nuevos datos sobre las obras misionales de estos al mediado el siglo XVIII,” Miscelanea Paul Eiut octogenario dicta (México, 1958), II, 858.

Enrique Otto points out in his edition of Cédulas reales relativas a Venezuela (1500-1550) (Caracas, 1963), various aspects of the Welser concession upon which he considers Friede mistaken (p. xl, notes 141, 142).

Revista de Historia de América, no. 34 (México, 1952), pp. 339-411.
erature of Las Casas. His principal point is that many Americanists devote themselves to juridical and theological discussions and neglect the "American reality" which exerted the decisive influence on the development of these discussions and on Indian legislation. In his view Las Casas was not only a jurist, historian, theologian, moralist, but above all the political head of the pro-Indian party. This "indigenista" party confronted the "colonista" party and "despite citations of Aristotle, Saint Thomas, and Saint Augustine, these two parties represented divergent economic and political interests."24 The benevolent attitude toward the Indian, founded on Christian doctrine, was supported by the Church, which followed the interests of the Crown.

According to Friede, Las Casas, as leader of the indigenista party, about 1540 abandoned his efforts to reach his opponents by persuasion and adopted instead a belligerent, activist policy because of his experiences in America. Thenceforth he was not an "idealistic," "utopian," or "a crazy person like Don Quijote," as some have called him, but made sound proposals based on "American reality."25 Friede believes that historians err by excessive emphasis on Indian legislation "as conceived in Spain" and by not using the sources and experiences on which Las Casas based his action.26 With the failure of the New Laws after 1542 Las Casas definitely abandoned the "moralista" phase and entered into direct action, using principally the ecclesiastical weapons of excommunication and refusal of absolution unless Spaniards restored to the Indians what had been taken from them.27 In conclusion, Professor Friede holds that "the indigenista movement was born of social necessity: the preoccupation to conserve the native population, which was indispensable for the development of the new colonies."28

Some of Professor Friede's strangest assertions in this long and heavily footnoted article are clearly wrong, such as his belief that the attacks on Las Casas began long after his death, whereas it can be easily proved that he roused opposition as soon as he started to campaign for the Indians.29 Other assertions call for much more proof before they can be accepted, for example the idea that Las

24 Ibid., p. 353.
25 Ibid., p. 370.
26 Ibid., p. 372.
27 Ibid., p. 374 ff., 395.
28 Ibid., p. 498.
Casas' experience in America led him to change abruptly about 1540 from a moralistic theoretician on Indian affairs to a wholly political leader. Las Casas' ideas did not in fact change with the years; there was no significant evolution of his fundamental views either on the nature of the Indians or on the way the Spaniards should treat them. He favored using ecclesiastical sanctions before as well as after 1540, and he never stopped drawing up treatises full of law and theology to establish his position. While he was carefully selecting missionaries in Spain who would carry out his views on ecclesiastical penalties for Spaniards who robbed or mistreated Indians, he was preparing and publishing so many treatises in Sevilla that two printing presses were needed. During these same years, 1552 and 1553, Las Casas also composed his Historia de las Indias, designed to be published only after his death so that posterity would view Indian problems in the same light as he did.

The true position of Las Casas can best be seen, I believe, in the last important statement of his life, a letter submitted to Pope Pius V in the early months of 1566. Here he urged, in the most energetic terms, the excommunication of anyone who declared war against infidels to be just on account of their idolatry or as a means of preaching the faith. Those who believe that infidels are not legitimate owners of their goods or that they are incapable of receiving the faith "no matter how rude or ignorant they may be" should also be anathematized, Las Casas insisted, and informed the pope that all these matters were set forth in a book he was submitting to His Holiness. This book has never been found, but from his description of its contents it seems to have been very similar to the treatise entitled The Only Method of Attracting All People to the True Faith, which Friede believes was characteristic only of Las Casas' pre-1540 theoretical period. He was certainly a politician, and a relentless one when he considered the protection of the Indians at stake. But he always based his actions on what he believed to be sound Christian doctrine. The supposed change of 1540 in his strategy remains to be proved. Manuel Giménez Fernández, the champion of all researchers on Las Casas, gives us a much more balanced and realistic view when he states:

Si es cierto que a todo lo largo de su actuación presenta constantes caracteres de su extraordinaria personalidad (fidelidad a su fe cristiana, valor para defender sus convicciones, inteligencia, rectitud de intención, desinterés, vuelo imaginativo, tendencia a la exageración, descuido en su atropellado escribir), no es menos cierto su diverso comportamiento influido por las

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**See the writer's Aristotle and the American Indians, p. 85.**
opuestas circunstancias a lo largo de las distintas enencuajadas históricas en que le tocó vivir. Y, así, unas veces se nos presenta como político batal- lador que supo atraer a sus puntos de vista a Cisneros, a Adriano, a Carlos V y a Felipe II y, otras, como humilde religioso dominico en los conventos de Santo Domingo y México; es veraz historiador en la General y en el Apologética; mesurado exponent en el De uno vacational modo, y fiscal terrible en el Memorial de las Denuncias o en la Brevissima relación de la destrucción de las Indias; optimista propagador de las Instrucciones a los Gerónimos y las Leyes Nuevas, y desencantado relator en la Carta Granada al Confesor Real Caranza y en su Testamento.\textsuperscript{31}

The importance of the "reality in America" emphasized by Friede seems to me only a partially valid judgment. The influence of events he had witnessed there influenced Las Casas profoundly, but it does not necessarily follow that "with the aid of his experience—that is, the American reality as he had known or interpreted it in the Antilles, Mexico, and Guatemala—Las Casas assumes an empirical attitude that leaves his theoretical meanderings far behind."\textsuperscript{32} Las Casas scorned opponents such as Sepúlveda who lacked personal knowledge of the New World, but many Spaniards with great experience there were also quite wrong, in his opinion, because of their erroneous convictions on the nature and proper treatment of the Indians. Silvio Zavala has well-expressed the universal aspect of Las Casas' thought in discussing his doctrine that "All the peoples of the world are men." It was not necessary to see such matters with one's own eyes, Las Casas explained, but rather "to think this thought with Christian understanding."\textsuperscript{33} He utilized all his vast experience of American affairs to forward his projects in Spanish governmental circles and his personal knowledge of ill-treatment of Indians lent strength to his protests, but he always based his campaigns on doctrinal propositions.

Friede's advocacy of more study of what actually occurred in the various parts of the Spanish empire surely is a valuable and much-needed emphasis, whether the subject is Indian treatment, the encomienda, the cabildo, the audiencia, or any other aspect of Spanish rule. But is there not some danger in emphasizing what occurred in America while playing down what was happening in Spain? Is it not profoundly unhistorical to emphasize either of these undoubted influences to the exclusion of the other? To put the problem another

\textsuperscript{31} Giménez Fernández, "Veintiocho días de Bartolomé de Las Casas," Miscel- lanées Paul Rivet octogenario dicta, II (México, 1966), 703-704.

\textsuperscript{32} Friede, Las Casas y el movimiento indígenista, p. 264.

\textsuperscript{33} Zavala, "Un aspecto del pensamiento de Bartolomé de Las Casas," Annales de la Faculté des Lettres 3' Aix, t. XXXVI, 242.
way, did not ideas—"mere theories" as Friede would have it—held in Spain have a great and at times decisive influence in America?

To test Friede's views on this point, let us see what he says in a recent publication on the Vida y luchas de Don Juan del Valle, primer obispo de Popayán y protector de indios. This substantial volume, based on much hard work in European and Colombian archives, admirably demonstrates the value of a monograph devoted to showing what happened in one particular part of the Indies. Friede describes the support given to the protection of the Indians by the Church, details the attempts by a number of bishops to mitigate Indian abuses by denouncing the cruelties of conquistadores, and explains how there came into being in university circles a whole generation of thinkers whose ideas were tested in America:

La Universidad de Salamanca fue, como es sabido, la que junto con la de Alcalá de Henares—fundación del Cardenal Cisneros—, desaprobó las ideas regalistas y anti-indígenistas de Ginés de Sepúlveda y la que se opuso a la publicación de su "Demócratas Alter." Además, fue precisamente el obispo de Segovia—la patria chica de Juan del Valle—, quien impugnó públicamente el libro, cosa que obligó a aquel gran jurista a salir en su defensa. Estos hechos son indicios claros de que en España existía una inquietud por el problema, que permitió la formación de un grupo de antihélicos valores intelectuales, nacido al tiempo que aquel de los conquistadores, pero que tan distinto fué de este en cuanto a la dirección de sus pensamientos. Fué una promoción de hombres extraordinarios que dedicaron vida y esfuerzos a luchar por la libertad y dignidad del hombre, cuando estos valores se vieran en trance de perder, al ser negados por el hecho de la Conquista a los habitantes de todo un Continente. Generación, en fin, que fué el contrapeso intelectual y moral de la colossal empresa política que fué la Conquista.

Es en este ambiente en el que se modela la personalidad del primer obispo de Popayán, una figura histórica desconocida y olvidada por la historia oficial. En él se forja un gran luchador por la justicia, que abandona las asequibles aulas de la Universidad y la cómoda vida de la cátedra, para enfrentarse a una dura y difícil existencia, pletórica de luchas y pasiones, que le aguardaría en el Nuevo Mundo.

Friede then proceeds to provide in abundant detail the remarkable struggles for justice engaged in by Bishop del Valle, and uses language which might be equally applied to Las Casas:

Juan del Valle adopta definitivamente la única postura que considera justa y eficaz: emplear todos los medios a su alcance para conseguir la protección del aborigen, protección concordante con los dogmas de la religión católica y también con el espíritu animador de la Legislación Indiana.
So favorably is Friede disposed toward his Bishop del Valle that he reaches this strange conclusion, quite inconsistent with his other statements on Las Casas: "Mientras que Las Casas era un ideólogo, Juan del Valle era un hombre de acción." And his final peroration would be difficult to reconcile with his previous declarations that the indigenista "party" had little connection with theorists and really represented "economic and political interests":

Es pues en tierras extrañas, lejos de su Patria y aún más lejos del campo de sus actividades, en algún lugar de la Francia meridional, donde yacen los restos del gran luchador por la libertad del indio y por los fueros de la Iglesia en su carácter de depositaria de los peregrinos valores espirituales que debieron regir las relaciones entre los hombres. Un nombre más que añadir a la pletáda de aquellos varones ilustres que en el transcurso de la historia de la humanidad lucieron denodadamente por los altos principios que son la dignidad y libertad humanas, dejando su propia vida en este empeño, pero firmes y enteros hasta el final, en el convencimiento de que su empresa era una obra de justicia.39

One more aspect of Friede's position remains to be examined: his treatment of the famous New Laws of 1542 which were "the culmination of the indigenist influence in general and the Lascazal in particular" because they included the prohibition of Indian slavery, abolition of personal service, and drastic reforms of the encomienda

7"Ibid., p. 113.
8Ibid., p. 265. Another indication of Professor Friede's views comes from a hitherto unpublished statement entitled "Las Casas y la 'leyenda negra'," which he prepared at my request and sent in a letter dated August 14, 1956: "Creo que la única forma eficaz de reivindicar el nombre de Las Casas de su pretendido 'anti-hispanismo' y al mismo tiempo acabar con la 'leyenda negra' es demostrar, mediante investigación histórica, que sus ideas, su lucha por la justicia social para con el indio, es un bien común de la España del siglo XVI, con participación de altas esferas de la vida espiritual y política de la península. Crear una 'leyenda blanca' o una 'leyenda roja' es imposible frente a los documentos que se conservaron de aquellos tiempos. Es una falsedad histórica negar la validez de estos documentos y estigmatizarlos como malvadas exageraciones cuando por centenares abundan en los archivos coloniales.
9"Pero lo que no es aún suficientemente estudiado es precisamente la circunstancia en que se desarrollaba esta impresionante lucha por la justicia, que no era un asunto privativo de Las Casas y un pequeño grupo de sus seguidores, tratándose por el contrario de un gran y desafiante movimiento humanitario del cual puede estar orgullosa España. La investigación demostrará fácilmente que contra la acción de guerreros temerarios, valientes e intrépidos que incorporaban nuevas tierras al mundo con métodos y modos utilizados generalmente en su época, con estragos y a veces exterminio de la población aborigen, luchaba un movimiento ideísta y espiritual, el reverso de la medalla, más valioso para reivindicar el buen nombre del español y acabar con la 'leyenda negra,' que todas las otras justificaciones o interpretaciones que se quiere hacer de la historia de la Conquista. Tengo para mí, que la investigación del movimiento lascazalamo que en su aspecto social, actúa tanto en España como en América, será la que definitivamente acabará con la 'leyenda negra' contra España."
These laws were not drawn up, he says, because of Las Casas' theories, but because of the "pressing need to organize politically and economically the new Spanish colonies," a fact he says could be easily proved by archival documentation though he does not provide it. Nor does he mention that Charles V suspected corruption in the Council of the Indies and thus was disposed to take a new look at Indian legislation. Still more important, apparently none of those who have written on the New Laws—including Friede—have worked through the extensive unpublished documentation in Legajos 1530 and 1624 in the Indiferente General section of the Archivo General de Indias. These manuscripts best demonstrate the complex and varied points of view on Indian problems expressed before and after the New Laws were drawn up, which reveal the attitudes of colonists, Indian defenders, royal officials in Spain as well as in the New World, merchants, and members of the religious orders. On the basis of reading this mass of material in 1932 my conclusion was:

As is true for many of the great crises in history, no dogmatic conclusion should be drawn with respect to the passage and modification of the New Laws of 1542.

The unanimity of the religious orders in Mexico and of the majority of individual friars against the New Laws is impressive. . . . The church by now had an economic stake in the encomienda system, and its continuance was almost as vital to friars as to conquistadores. . . . To this consideration must be added the effect of the revolt in Peru and the threat of disorders in Mexico.

Besides reflecting these pressures of interests and personalities, the debate . . . reveals another aspect of the problem—the struggle between the feudalists and the regalists—which may have been the determining factor in the royal decision . . . The feudal concept was directly challenged by those who feared the granting of encomiendas in perpetuity with civil or criminal jurisdiction would seriously diminish the king's power in the New World.

A sharp division seems to have existed between those who held encomien-

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38 Friede, Las Casas y el movimiento indigenista, p. 386.
40 Professor France V. Scholes had these two legajos photographed in 1933 for the Carnegie Institution of Washington and later deposited the material in the Library of Congress.

Some of this documentation is beginning to appear. The opinions (e.g. 1545) of Juan Bernal de Lugo, Gutierrez Velásquez de Lugo, and Gregorio López on "encomiendas, juros y rentas de Nueva España" have been printed by Fernando Toro Garland, "Una carta inédita sobre las 'Leyes Nuevas'," Revista Chilena de historia del derecho, I (1959), p. 63-71. The original opinions are in the Archivo General de Indias, Indiferente General 1530, but the text used for the publication was an 18th century copy in the Archivo Histórico Nacional (Madrid). See also note 124 below.
das and those who did not . . . even in 1542 this stratification of society had proceeded far enough so that it was recognized as an important problem to be taken into account and attacked. The group of Spaniards without encomiendas did not, however, generate much political pressure, and probably had little to do with the King's decision. The final decision . . . was reached as a compromise among the humanitarian, the feudalist, and the regalist points of view.42

If Friede does not cite the documentation which provides such an excellent and detailed picture of the agitation for and against the New Laws in the crucial years 1540-1545, how does he explain that they were passed at all? He records that it was "public opinion" against the conquistadores and encomenderos that "made possible the passage of such radical measures as the New Laws of 1542." This public opinion was expressed by Las Casas, he continues, in this way: "porque ya todo el mundo . . . conozca y diga por las calles que el dinero y oro y riquezas que se traen de las Indias sean robados y usurpados y tirados por violencia e injustamente a sus dueños propios y naturales poseedores . . ."43

Friede is even more emphatic in his life of Bishop del Vaile, for there he writes:

Las Casas influyó positivamente en la opinión pública española a lo largo de varios decenios y sus conceptos penetraron hondamente en la vida intelectual y política de varios círculos dentro y fuera de España, al punto de que aún hoy, los movimientos anticolonialistas modernos contienen muchos elementos de su doctrina.44

Did a "public opinion" exist in the sixteenth century? Probably Friede had in mind the king, Council of the Indies, jurists, and other persons connected with the ecclesiastical, economic, and political affairs of the Indies. In any case, who was responsible for forming such a public opinion? Was it not Las Casas and all those in Spain as well as in America who supported his doctrines on the Christian way to conduct the conquest?

My own view is that Las Casas was largely responsible for forcing the issue of Indian affairs on the attention of the hard-pressed Charles V, always over-engaged in empire problems. The reasons for Charles' action, once the issue was joined, are more complex, involving Christian doctrine, royal policy, and conditions in America. An even greater complexity of motives and interests caused the partial re-

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42 See the writer's Spanish Struggle for Justice in the Conquest of America (Philadelphia, 1949), pp. 102-104.
43 Friede, Las Casas y el movimiento indigenista, p. 367.
vocation of the New Laws in 1545. Pérez de Tudela Bueso concludes, in a recent analysis, that the revocation was decreed by royal councilors who compromised somewhat but that it aligned them "al lado del Defensor de los indios, y mantuvieron la integridad de la reforma de 1542." ¹⁴³

In assessing the role of Christian doctrine in the political and economic affairs of the Indies it is sometimes remarked that the struggle for justice was carried on by a relatively small number of friars like Las Casas who were quite unrepresentative of their nation and their age. Friede has demonstrated conclusively that in Nueva Granada the struggle was intense, even though some avaricious priests were to be found there,²⁴ but he makes clear that the relations between priests and colonists "suscitaban muchos casos de conciencia, que caían por derecho propio dentro de la jurisprudencia eclesiástica y los abusos cometidos con la población aborigen eran tan obvios y persistentes, que durante todo el siglo XVI y aún mucho después, sólo en muy raras ocasiones podemos encontrar a un religioso que no admitiese su existencia y no clamase por el correspondiente castigo, sea cual fuere su tendencia en relación con la solución general del problema indígena. No todos ellos exigían la abolición radical de la encomienda o de la esclavitud indígena, pero aún en estos casos, abogaban por una severa reglamentación y vigilancia de las actividades de los españoles asentados en América; actitud ésta que tuvo que conducir irremediablemente a una más o menos benévola posición del sacerdote hacia el indio,"²⁴⁷ and rightly urges the need for more research on the struggle in other parts of the empire. Anyone who has tried to read the extensive correspondence on Indian treatment from ecclesiastics in all parts of Spanish America in the sixteenth century—as I did in Spain during the years 1932-1934—will see that Las Casas was only one of many Indian defenders. Soldiers as well as colonists and royal officials engaged in the bitter doctrinal disputes which ensued throughout the sixteenth century, and later.²⁴⁸ These disputes also show how intimately the Church and the Crown were linked to the struggle for justice; indeed, it could not have continued,

¹⁴³ "La gran reforma carolina de las Indias en 1542." Revista de Indias, año XVIII (Madrid, 1958), nos. 73-74, pp. 463-509. The quotation appears on p. 509. It is possible that Pérez de Tudela used some of the documents in Legajo 1830 (see note 41 above), as he cites them, but he may have depended upon the extracts given in the writer’s The Spanish Struggle for Justice.

²⁴ See the chapter entitled "La protectoría de indios" (p. 37-51) in his Vida y luchas de Don Juan del Valle.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 25.

²⁴⁸ See the writer’s Cuerpo de documentos del siglo XVI sobre los derechos de España en las Indias y las Filipinas (México, 1913).
no matter how loudly individual friars clamored, if these two powerful institutions had not been willing to listen to the Indian defenders. The few ecclesiastics who tried to work on behalf of the Negroes in seventeenth-century Spanish America, for example, were not heard by those in authority. Crucial laws, therefore, such as the New Laws of 1542, tell us much about the economic, political, and religious forces which determined Crown decisions, provided we study these laws and the pertinent documentation in sufficient depth.49

Where did the juridical and theological doctrines used by Las Casas and others in their battles for the Indians come from? Did these “mere theories” arise from American conditions in the New World—the “American reality” so emphasized by Friede—or from the ancient doctrines of the Church and of jurists? The influence of theories is always difficult to assess; some writers dismiss them as a mere smoke-screen for less noble motives. Pieter Geyl, the Dutch historian, quoting French scholars, has described the imperialistic spirit of the English as an “unreasoning self-confidence and sense of mission all cloaked in religious terms.”50 Something of this attitude may be found in the interpretations of Friede, for he writes history in an age when the economic and political aspects of international affairs are given greater emphasis than religious or legal concepts. Perhaps this view of the Spanish conquest of America illustrates the way in which all history tends to be contemporary history. His pioneer archival investigations to show what happened in America and his vigorously expressed views on Indian problems will be a valuable stimulus to other students. But his conclusions are too simplistic and contradictory to be accepted without proof and clarification. Moreover, an “either-or” approach violates a basic canon of historical interpretation, which insists that “causes” are complex. One of the inescapable facts to be kept in mind by historians of the conquest was the close and continuing relationship of events and ideas in Spain with affairs in the Indies.

To return to Professor Keen, and his fear that historians have begun to succumb to the “leyenda blanca,” are we to understand that he really believes that a leyenda blanca is “beginning to emerge” today? This position would be difficult to sustain, for students of the Spanish empire in America are publishing quantitative analyses of economic and population problems, monographs on institutions, treat-

49 For some pertinent remarks on this theme see Alfonso García Gallo’s introduction to his edition of the Cédulario indiano recopilado por Diego de Encinas, I (Madrid, 1945), 9-11; “Panorama actual de los estudios de historia del derecho indiano,” Revista de la Universidad de Madrid, I (1952), p. 43-64.
50 Debates with Historians (New York, 1956), p. 43.
ises involving ideas, science, and education, and on many other topics. Anyone who reads the historians in Europe and in the Americas, or anyone who consults the files of this review or of the *Handbook of Latin American Studies* will see that a healthy variety of facts and interpretations relating to the conquest is being produced as never before.

International comparisons are odious, as William James pointed out, but is it not essential for historians to understand that Spain placed herself in a difficult and unique position because from the beginning she justified her actions in America on religious grounds? This was the basis for the attacks by Las Casas and others on Spanish treatment of the Indians which constituted “the struggle for justice.” Is Keen really convinced that other colonial powers such as Belgium, France, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, or Portugal made “as continuous or so passionate attempt to discover what was the just treatment for the native peoples under its jurisdiction as the Spaniards”? If so, we should be given the documentary support with explanatory details. Until such time I believe we may continue to hold fast to the idea that some Spaniards fought mightily for justice for the Indians in the conquest of America. Though the friars, the lawyers, the colonists, the royal officers, the Council of the Indies, and the Crown had different and often sharply divergent ideas on the nature of “justice,” the sixteenth-century battle that they waged gives the Spanish conquest a special quality. Cruelty abounded as well as the search for justice, human greed operated as well as self-denial, the Church had its institutional interest, and the Crown’s purposes rode above all. To neglect or deny any part of the verifiable facts would be unhistorical; to assess their relative importance, including that of ideas, is the continuing problem of historians of Spanish action in America who would follow neither the “leyenda negra” nor the “leyenda blanca” but who instead endeavor to present the “historia verdadera,” which has been the aim of many writers since the time of Bernal Díaz del Castillo.

III

*Ramón Menéndez Pidal Versus Bartolomé de Las Casas*

Beside the great cathedral in Mexico City visitors observe a large statue of a friar and an Indian, with these words below:

*Stranger if you love virtue,*  
*Pause and venerate this man.*  
*This is Friar Bartolomé de Las Casas,*  
*Father of the Indians.*

63. The quotation comes from Friar Servando Teresa de Mier.
Other monuments of respect for this sixteenth-century Dominican stand in most Spanish American countries. But the visitor will find no monument to Las Casas in Madrid, where the most venerable and highly respected Spanish scholar, Don Ramón Menéndez Pidal, published in 1963 a large book attacking the Dominican and recording his passionate conviction that Las Casas was unworthy of such devotion, being instead a megalomaniac, an egotist, whose true villainy no one has until now fully plumbed despite the hundreds of publications written about him. Don Ramón has assumed the task of writing the "true history" of Las Casas as a patriotic duty and in so doing has produced, at the age of 93, probably the most remarkable, most complete, and most carefully-planned of all the many assaults on the Dominican made in the last 450 years; that is, since 1514 when Las Casas first determined to defend the original inhabitants of the New World from what he considered to be the un-Christian despoliation and destruction of the Indians by his fellow countrymen.

Let us review briefly who this Dominican was. Las Casas first appears on the stage of history, so far as documents about him are concerned, as he prepared to leave the island of Hispaniola in 1515 and return to Spain to begin his battle in court circles on behalf of the Indians. The letter of recommendation he carried from a group of Dominicans and Franciscans described him as "a person of truth and virtue, a special servant and friend of God and zealous in observing His law." The friars urged that "much reliance be placed in him, because he merits such, for he is moved by no other desire in the affairs of the Indians except the desire to serve God and Your Highness."

The last glimpse we have of him comes through the eyes of Friar Gabriel de Cepeda, historian of the convent of Atocha in Madrid, as Las Casas lay dying there in the month of July, 1568, at the age of ninety-two. His numerous manuscripts had been left to the monastery of San Gregorio in Valladolid, to which he had bequeathed what money he had as an endowment for fellowships for poor students. Las Casas urged all who were with him during his last moments to continue to defend the Indians. He regretted that he had been able to accomplish so little on their behalf, and, "with candle in hand,

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52 El padre Las Casas. Su doble personalidad (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1963), xvi, 410 p. Henceforth all references to this volume will give the page number only.
53 Antonio María Fabié, Vida y escritos de Don Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, II (Madrid, 1879), 41.
ready to depart from this world, he publicly affirmed his conviction that everything he had done in this cause he believed to be right.\textsuperscript{54}

In the centuries since Las Casas on his deathbed summed up his life's work, he has seldom been taken at his own valuation as a modest defender of the Indians who, though he had accomplished little, had always been right in his action on their behalf. Disputes began during his own lifetime, and the Franciscan Toribio de Motolinia probably represented a large body of opinion in the Indies when he complained to the Emperor Charles V in 1555: 'Truly, for the few canons Las Casas has studied he presumes a great deal, and his disorder seems very great and his humility small; he thinks everyone is wrong and he alone is right.'\textsuperscript{55}

Time has not wrought its usual softening influence; on the contrary, until today his memory has been kept fresh by keen and active disputation. The Dominican scholar Venancio D. Carro, who has done so much to elucidate the theological background of the conquest,\textsuperscript{56} goes so far as to say that the struggle for justice in America not only did not originate with Las Casas but that the controversy 'developed and would have continued its course even though Las Casas had never lived.'\textsuperscript{57} Another eminent Spanish scholar, Américo Castro, attributes such influence to the Dominican that he declares that his 'anarchical doctrines' were largely responsible for the Spanish American revolutions that began in 1810; one 'need not search for foreign ideas and influences to explain the independence of the Hispanoamerican colonies.'\textsuperscript{58} Another writer asks whether Las Casas was not a 

\textit{converso,}\textsuperscript{59} and the Soviet historian D. E. Mijnevich looks upon him as merely a kind of rara avis (\textit{mirlo blanco}) among the Spanish clergy in America. And always there are writers who contemplate

\textsuperscript{54} Giménez Fernández, \textit{últimos días de Bartolomé de Las Casas}, p. 715.
\textsuperscript{55} See the writer's \textit{Bartolomé de Las Casas. Hookman, Scholar, and Propagandist} (Philadelphia, 1932), p. 3.
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{La teología y las teologías juristas españoles ante la conquista de América}, 2 vols. (Madrid, 1944).
\textsuperscript{57} Carro, 'Las controversias de Indias y las ideas teológico—medievales que las preparan y explican,' \textit{Anuario de la Asociación Francesca de Victoria}, VIII (Madrid, 1948), 13-53. The quotation appears on p. 15.
\textsuperscript{58} As quoted by Roberto Agramont, \textit{Sociología latinoamericana} (Rio Piedras, 1963), p. 358.
\textsuperscript{59} Victor Wolfgang von Hagen, in a letter to the writer dated June 6, 1957. Pedrro Cieza de León was a 

\textit{converso,} according to von Hagen, and Cieza's friendship for Las Casas made Von Hagen wonder whether Las Casas was also one.

Claudio Guillén has discovered a 'Juan de Las Casas' among the Sevilla conversos in 1510, and asks whether Bartolomé de Las Casas' fervor on behalf of the Indians may not have resulted from a Jewish background, 'Un padrón de conversos sevillanos (1510),' \textit{Bulletin hispanique}, LXV (1963), nos. 1-2, p. 49-98. See particularly p. 80-81. Also see note 129 below.
the many problems present in Latin America today and conclude, as does Paul Johnson in the London New Statesman, that "The origins of the continental malaise can be traced back to the Spanish conquistadores. It is impossible to be too critical of this mindless bunch of ruffians." Nor is this opinion confined to non-Hispanic writers. The Venezuelan Francisco J. Herrera Luque argues in a recent volume that the pressing social problems of his country may be traced back to the actions of 16th century Spaniards and treats the "criminalidad," the "patología," and the "sintomatología psiquiátrica" of the conquistadores, and has a special chapter on "Pizarro el esquizoide." Now that Don Ramón is stigmatising Las Casas as a paranoid, perhaps we are on the verge of a psychiatric interpretation of the conquest.

Significantly enough, no official or religious group has come forward to claim ownership of Las Casas and exploit him for its own purposes, except for such indigenistas as exalt Indian virtues at the expense of the Spaniard. His own Dominican Order has paid little attention to him. Nor has the Order ever published any of his treatises or a single major work about him. Spain itself has been bitterly divided on his true worth. While America has on the whole considered him a noble figure, one of the most forthright denunciations in recent years was made by an Argentine historian. But the most sustained and the most uncompromising attack has been the recent volume by Don Ramón Menéndez Pidal.

It is a difficult work to review; indeed, a proper treatment of all the many topics included in it might require another volume of similar size. It is likely that no other life of Las Casas will be so widely discussed in this generation. The battle lines are already forming, and 10 years hence there will doubtless be so many items in print that another supplementary volume will be needed to bring the standard bibliography up to date. Many of these writers will enthusiastically support Don Ramón and his conviction, frequently stated, that previous biographers of Las Casas have obscured him.


61 The Dominican House of Studies in Washington, D. C., however, is now preparing the text of the first edition of Las Casas' "Apología" against Sepúlveda, and hopes to bring it out together with an English translation as a contribution to the 1966 commemoration.

62 Rómulo D. Carbia, Historia de la leyenda negra hispanoamericana (Buenos Aires, 1943).
by burning too much incense to his memory. Similarly one can see those who support Don Ramón already beginning to produce a powerful and pungent cloud of smoke offered to him, the great detractor.63 Those who oppose him, and there must be many even in Spain though they do not all see fit to publish their conviction, are doubtless preparing their broadsides.64 For Don Ramón reiterates over and over again that Las Casas was a hopelessly biased writer who simply could not tell the truth in describing Spanish action in America or the nature of the Indians. Although in some few respects a normal person, he was a propagandist rather than a thinker who incorp­orated in his works some Christian ideas, though at times incorrectly. Essentially, however, Las Casas was abnormal, declares Don Ramón, who employs his rich Castilian vocabulary in attempting to convey to the reader an idea of Las Casas' defects. Here is some of the language used, which surely must merit some kind of prize for variety and expressiveness: anticristiano, astuto y vehemente exagerador, egoísta vanidoso, presuntuosa vanidad, vanagloria megalómana, le faltaba una mínima partecilla de la fuerza moral de un San Francisco de Asís o de un Savonarola, pueril vanidad, delirio de grandeza, inexactitudes tendenciosas, genialidades excéntricas, bullicioso, injuriador, delirio sistematizado, intemperamente vehemente, hinchada truculencia, deleite descriptivo de bestialidades, lenguaje sañudo, chocante imprudencia de lenguaje, una irresistible propen­sión patológica, el vértigo de la normización, exageración enormizante habitual irreprimible, maníática preocupación, una víctima incon­cierte de su delirio incorrinatorio, prejuicio totalitario, canonista medieval, un rezagado, ataca con sus lanzallamas y con sus gases venenosos la ciudadela de los enemaderos, patológica certidumbre, confusión, infantiles fantasías nobiliarias, no es posible imaginar


64 Some counter replies have already been published: Venancio D. Carro, O.P., España en América..., sus legendas (Madrid, 1966), especially the "Carta abierta a D. Ramón Menéndez Pidal"; Manuel María Martínez, O.P., "Replica a la conferencia de Don Ramón Menéndez Pidal sobre P. Las Casas," La ciencia tomística, no. 285 (Salamanca, 1963), pp. 365-318. Many newspaper articles have appeared in Spanish America, too numerous to cite here.

The Academia Colombiana de la Historia has recently been urged by Dr. Félix Restrepo, S. J., to endorse officially Don Ramón's volume, but opposition arose and no decision has yet been reached. It will be surprising if the XXVI Congreso de Americanistas, which meets in Spain August 31-September 9, does not see some resolutions and counter-resolutions on this subject.
un egotismo más puerilmente vanidoso, tono jactancioso, tenía arte natural para paliar su autoelogio con actitudes piadosas y altruistas, infantil jactancia, manía protagonista, inteligencia débil, infatigación vanagloriosa, vanidad fantástica de un niño imaginativo, vanidosa altanería, su irrefrenable desfiguración de los hechos, ultrarigorismo moral, un ciego para la realidad como un delirante en planes quiméricos, su providencialismo egocéntrico, sus arbitrismos, ilusionista extravagante, impetuoso, sus obsesionantes ideas antiemocionadas, regocijo vanidoso, febril delirio, sobre-arrogante alegato, contradicciones irrazonables, prurito egoísta, dominico tardío, vehemente rigorismo, su total ensimismamiento, siempre extraído del mundo real, iluminado, alabancioso fatalmente irreflexivo, vanidoso engreimiento, irracional, el hombre más admirado de sí mismo que ha existido.

These representative samples of Don Ramón’s rich prose indicate that his biography of Las Casas will be an excellent manual for students interested in the vituperative possibilities of the Spanish language. Even his vast and expert vocabulary proved insufficient to convey an adequate idea of Las Casas’ exaggeration; he has found it necessary to invent a word: enormización (p. 321). Don Ramón occasionally allows a kind word to escape his pen on Las Casas: “De la buena fe y pura intención del Clérigo es imposible dudar, pero sí debemos desconfiar totalmente de su fantasía, de su ilusionismo, y de su poca discreción . . . ni era santo, ni era impostor, ni malévolo, ni loco; era sencillamente paranoico.”  

Few new documents are offered to substantiate all these charges; the volume is rather a massive and carefully organized collection of what the opponents of Las Casas have been saying these past 450 years. The result is a magnificent example of tendentious writing by a practiced hand. Before examining in detail some of the more important propositions of the book, it would be well to consider briefly the spirit in which Don Ramón has written his study:

It was a disagreeable task, reluctantly undertaken, but it was his duty to perform it. After 400 pages devoted almost wholly to blasting Las Casas, he concludes: “I have nothing more to say. I have fulfilled an unpleasant duty demanded by historical criticism.” One feels that Don Ramón has acted with the supreme confidence of an Inquisitor who has performed dutifully in the torture chamber.

Underneath the meticulous prose, the many footnote citations, the extensive quotations from Las Casas, and the frequent protestations of the most rigid and scientific impartiality one can see boiling an

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85 Pp. 43, xiv.
86 P. 392.
intense and unquenchable passion. One wonders whether Don Ramón did not perhaps absorb this passion from Las Casas himself. One Spanish biographer of Las Casas, Manuel José Quintana, emphasized the "electric nature" of the great Dominican's spirit and stated that it was almost impossible for anyone to consider his opinions and activities, even centuries after his death, without becoming affected by the passions they aroused.67

Don Ramón exhibits at times the same "pathological dogmatism" which he discovers so basic in Las Casas. He has never done any original research in the field, but uses extensively the contributions of Marcel Bataillon, Manuel Giménez Fernández, Juan Pérez de Tudela, and others, although on many individual points differing from them, even dissenting at times from Bataillon who is by no means an uncritical admirer of Las Casas. Don Ramón blandly gives his own opinions on many complicated institutions and events without troubling to explain how he has arrived at his conclusions. Sometimes facts and interpretations inconvenient to Don Ramón's thesis are not mentioned, either by design or ignorance. Indeed, on some questions one might apply to him the description Motolinía gave of Las Casas: "He thinks everyone is wrong and he alone is right." Some readers, unaware of the extensive literature on the history of Spain in America and eager to dispose of such an irritating figure as Las Casas, may be led astray by Don Ramón's assumption of omniscience when he asserts his opinion as gospel truth on all these highly controversial and sometimes still unresolved problems. Others will penetrate the veil of Don Ramón's apparent objectivity to see clearly the unmistakable prejudices of this cleverly written diatribe.

In presenting his version of Las Casas, Don Ramón reminds one both of a Royal Canadian mounted policeman stalking a criminal in the wastelands of the north and of a prosecuting attorney rather than of a historian at work. The tendentious and unhistorical nature of Don Ramón's brief against Las Casas discloses itself in several ways:

1. *His use of sources*

When a writer praises Las Casas, as Antonio de Remesal does on the Vera Paz attempt to preach the faith peacefully in Guatemala, Don Ramón denounces him.68 When the same writer disagrees with Las Casas, Remesal becomes a "mente sana."69 Even when there is no documentary proof of the charge that Las Casas abandoned his

67 Quintana, *Vidas de españoles célebres*, III (Madrid, 1833), 255.
68 Pp. 94-95.
69 P. 107.
bishopric—and Batallón doubts the veracity of Remesal on this point—Don Ramón accepts the story and even criticizes Pabé and Pérez de Tudela because they do not follow Remesal. His attitude is a simple one: “No veo motivo de duda, toda vez que presenta aspectos no glorificadores.”

Don Ramón inveighs against biographers of Las Casas who do not question Remesal’s account of Vera Paz or do not analyze the way he reaches his many favorable comments on Las Casas. Yet he himself uncritically accepts the Franciscan Toribio de Motolinía, one of his stellar witnesses because of Motolinía’s famous letter of 1555 to Charles V against the Dominican. He does not mention that Motolinía was possibly biased, due to his resentment that Las Casas worked actively and successfully against his appointment as bishop, which Manuel María Martínez, O.P., sets forth in an article not cited though easily available. The reader is told that Motolinía describes the number of Indians killed in the conquest and condemned Spanish actions “a veces con exageración lascasiana,” but pro-Indian remarks by Motolinía do not disturb Don Ramón’s confidence in him.

The well-known scandal of 1539 when Las Casas refused to baptize an insufficiently prepared Indian at Motolinía’s request is described in considerable detail. Don Ramón does not disclose that Las Casas was upheld, in his insistence that Indians be instructed in the faith before baptism, by a commission of Salamanca theologians headed by Francisco de Vitoria, for whom Don Ramón shows great respect in other sections of the volume.

At times it appears that Don Ramón favors the Franciscans over the Dominicans because he devotes so much attention to Motolinía and the great differences between his ideas and actions and those of Las Casas, and extols the splendid work of the Franciscans in Nueva Granada in the middle of the sixteenth century:

Luchaban tenaz pero pacientemente con oidores y encomenderos sin la violenta ruptura de relaciones practicada por Las Casas; véase... la carta de Fray Juan de San Filiberto al Emperador (Bogotá, 3 febrero 1553) donde en las págs. 197-199 se ve cómo funcionaban las restauraciones de los

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76 Pp. 185-189.
77 P. 186.
79 “El Obispo Marroquín y el franciscano Motolinía, enemigos de Las Casas; Examen de los motivos de su enemistad,” Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia, 132 (Madrid, 1953), no. 2, pp. 173-199.
80 P. 256.
81 Pp. 249-250.
82 Bartolomé de Las Casas. Bibliografía crítica, nos. 157, 159.
83 Pp. 123 f.
84 Pp. 241-270.
tributos mal cobrados por los encomenderos que no cumplían sus deberes de tener en justicia, en buena poliçía y en doctrina a los indios; en Panamá y otras partes muchos vecinos tenían sus indios para el servicio doméstico muy regalados y doctrinados, y, hasta vestidos de seda.”

This idyllic picture of Spanish action in the New World suggests that Don Ramón’s primary objective may be the establishment of a leyenda blanca; that he attempts to destroy Las Casas as an indispensable step toward this larger purpose. If so, he will encounter much skepticism among those familiar with the “reality in America,” as Professor Friede makes clear. For example, Don Ramón has great confidence in the Franciscans, and one wonders how he would explain away the following descriptions of Spanish cruelty in New Granada by Fray Jerónimo de San Miguel, first custódio of the Franciscans, about the time the Indians were reputed to be wearing silks:

En este Reino, aunque es poca tierra, se han hecho tantas y tan grandes crueldades que, si yo no las supiera de raíz y tan verazmente, no pudiera creer que en corazón cristiano cupieran tan cruces y fieras inhumanidades. Porque no hay tormento tan cruel ni pena tan horrible que de estos, que de muy servidores de Vuestra Alteza se precisen, no hayan experimentado estos fríos y pobrecitos naturales. Porque unos los han quemado vivos, otros les han, con muy grande crueldad, cortado manos, narices, lenguas y otros miembros; otros, es cierto haber ahorrado gran número de ellos, así hombres como mujeres; otros, se dice, han apuñalado indios y desfetado mujeres y hecho otras crueldades, que en sólo pensarlos tiemblan las carnes a los que algo de cristiano tienen. Estos son los servicios que acá a Vuestra Alteza se hacen y por los cuales piensen ser remunerados ...

De los cuales vi yo muchos—cuenta—altados y con colleras y otras prisiones, llorando y dando gritos, aunque les aprovechaba poco, y, como acá aún tenemos muy poco favor, no lo pude remediar. Y ya que en el pueblo no hallaron tantos ladinos como era menester, salían a saltar por los caminos y tomar por fuerza los indios que iban a sus labranzas y mercados, y así llegaban altados y presos ... Tenga por cierto Vuestra Real Alteza que de seiscientos indios que habrán llevado, sin los ladinos, que ninguno ha de volver, antes quedarán por allí muertos, porque son gente que en sacándoles de su natural se mueren, como ya se sabe por muy cierto. Si Vuestra Alteza permite esta manera de poblar, yo no lo sé. Lo que sé es que para poblar cincuenta casas de españoles, se despueblan quinientos o más de indios ...

There are no well-treated Indians dressed in silks in the pages of Friede’s well-documented Vida y luchas de Don Juan del Valle, primer obispo de Popayán y protector de indios, a monograph not

79 P. 267.

cited by Don Ramón. In fact, he refers to none of the many Friede publications which would have been pertinent.\textsuperscript{41} Why is no article from the HAHR cited, why are so few references made even to the Revista de Indias published in Madrid, the Estudios Americanos of Sevilla, The Americas of the Academy of American Franciscan History in Washington, or to the historical reviews and publications of Spanish America? Some gaps in the documentation may be due to the weakness of Madrid libraries, but cannot some of the strange omissions be due to Don Ramón’s determination to draw up the strongest indictment possible against Las Casas, and thus he did not search for or cite evidence that did not support his thesis?

The most flagrant abuse by Don Ramón of the accepted canons of the historian may be seen in his account of the incident of the pacification of Enriquillo in Hispaniola.\textsuperscript{42} This famous cacique, educated and Christianized by the Franciscans, had rebelled in 1519 because his wife was wronged by a Spaniard. For many years war ensued until Charles V appointed Captain Francisco de Barrionuevo on July 4, 1532, to offer the cacique peace or suffer the consequences of war by fire and sword. Barrionuevo finally located Enriquillo in August, 1533, in the mountain fastnesses at Baoruco and in two days convinced him that he should renew peaceful relations with the Spaniards. During the negotiations Enriquillo never ate any food the Spaniards offered for fear of poisoning, but Don Ramón records that in this brief period Enriquillo was tremendously influenced by the action of the Emperor and by being referred to as Don:

\[
\ldots \text{su triunfo es espléndido, al verse honrado y solicitado a la paz por el gran Emperador Carlos V. No tie...}
\]

No footnote is provided to support this astonishing assertion.

Don Ramón reports that Las Casas was making a nuisance of himself at the time by opposing the encomienda, and even refused absolution to a dying encomendero until he agreed to leave his goods to the Indians instead of his heirs. The Audiencia sent strong repre-

\textsuperscript{41} See note 20 above.

\textsuperscript{42} All references to the Enriquillo episode come from p. 73-90.
sentations to Spain against this difficult friar, whom they termed "escandalosa, desasosegado, estorbador de la real justicia."

Las Casas now feared that the peace arranged by Captain Barriónuevo would not be kept, and in a later letter explained how in August, 1533, he persuaded his Dominican superiors to allow him to go to Baeruco, "without authorization of the Audiencia." There he exhorted Enriquillo for about a month to remain faithful to the Emperor and assured him that the peace would be respected by the Spaniards. Las Casas also celebrated mass daily, and instructed Enriquillo and his band in matters of the faith.

This account comes from the historian Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, and Don Ramón qualifies it as "notoriamente fantástico," based on obviously erroneous Dominican reports given to Oviedo, though no evidence is given to support this assertion. Don Ramón then goes on to term Las Casas' description of his participation in the letter of April 30, 1534, as another prime example of his "delirio de grandeza," and Don Ramón is firmly convinced that "el recio viento documental disipe las nubes del incienso lascasiano y nos permita ver la verdad."

Let us examine briefly the documents now available. Las Casas' own account of April 30, 1534, might appropriately be questioned as that of an interested party, but no evidence is given by Don Ramón to support his brushing aside Oviedo's account; and it should be remarked that he accepts Oviedo as a good and reliable witness when the material is not favorable to Las Casas. The case against Las Casas, as Don Ramón presents it, rests entirely upon a letter signed by Enriquillo in 1534, in which Las Casas' share in his pacification is not mentioned, and upon a number of letters by the Audiencia. But would a historian not analyze the circumstances under which Enriquillo wrote the letter (or rather signed the letter, which appears to have been written by a Spanish scribe). Did the Indian know what he was signing? Does the fact that there is no mention of Las Casas in the letter necessarily mean that he had no role in the pacification of Enriquillo? More important still, would not the Audiencia be classified as a hostile witness? A historian would be expected to evaluate all the documents now known, and at least to suspend judgment in the face of doubt and disagreement among the witnesses.

Perhaps enough has been said to indicate that Don Ramón draws upon the great quantity of sources on the Spanish conquest captiously and in the spirit of a lawyer determined to win a case. Such a use
of sources may be permissible or at least expected in the courtroom, but can one who aims at discovering historical truth employ such a questionable method?

2. His attitude toward Indians

One wonders whether Don Ramón has ever seen an Indian, or been moved by the great drama of the confrontation in a New World of Spaniards with the many kinds of Indians ranging from almost Stone Age folk to highly cultured groups. Certainly he has an exalted opinion of European culture, for he exclaims at one point that:

todos los pueblos del mundo están, poco o mucho, penetrados de unos principios de civilización bastante uniformes, cuyas raíces y recursos principales están en Europa, esa Europa colonizadora genial, que desde los tiempos más remotos viene irradiando su alta cultura y su bienestar sobre toda la redondez de la tierra. Hoy día, los indígenas, los chinos, los árabes, todos los imperios que más brillante papel desempeñaron lo antiguo, se unen a los pueblos de África y de Oceania en el universal referéndum con que hoy tácitamente aprueban el multisecular colonialismo del Occidente como principal unificador de la humanidad; ellos dan su voto aprobatorio en su mismo traje, en esa corbata que quieren vestir los principales dirigentes de todas las razas; quieren dejar sus ropas nacionales para vestir su cuerpo al uso occidental, lo mismo que ellos van revivendo su espíritu con ideas occidentalistas de libertad que ellos no engendraron.  

Don Ramón betrays almost as much indifference to the Indians as he accuses Las Casas of showing. Las Casas, he asserts without citing his source, never worked with the Indians as a missionary, and showed a marked repugnance toward them; his motive was not love for Indians but hatred toward the Spaniards: "legista a palo seco, no ama a los indios."  

Don Ramón, looking back several hundred

"Pp. 136-137.


He has recently published "Missionsgeschichte der Verapaz in Guatemala" in the Jahrbuch für Geschichte von Staat, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Latein-
years through rose-tinted spectacles, sees few dead Indians, though his much respected authority Motolinía declared that so many had died in the mines that the birds and crows that came to feast on their dead bodies greatly obscured the sun.85 He sees, rather, a scene of contentment and cultural advance:

Para descredito de la utopía lascasiana, florecía una Nueva España, donde gobernantes y misioneros practicaban y depuraban la encomienda, donde los indios habían salido de una edad prehistórica, de la edad de piedra, con antropofagia y sacrificios humanos, para entrar en una vida civilizada, enriquecida ya con los mejores vegetales y animales útiles del mundo viejo y con las instituciones creadas por la vieja cultura, comenzando por la encomienda y llegando hasta la imprenta y los colegios mayores; una España Nueva donde gobernantes, obispos y misioneros sembraban catequesis, colegios, talleres y hospitales para los indios.86

Where did Don Ramón obtain his knowledge of Indian culture? He ignores such principal sixteenth-century writers as Diego de Landa and José de Acosta, and does not refer to the greatest of them all, the Franciscan Bernardino de Sahagún, except to quote him on the superiority of the natives of Asia to the Indians.87 The two witnesses he calls to testify on the nature of the Indians were carefully selected to prove his point, for both witnesses sang the same tune. He quotes the Dominican Tomás Ortiz who held in 1519 that "nunca crió Dios tan cocida gente en vicios y bestialidades, sin mezcla de bondad o policía,"88 and the Franciscan bishop Francisco Ruiz who reported that "aunque es gente maliciosa para concebir ruindad en daño de los cristianos, no es gente capaz ni de juicio natural para recibir la fe ni las otras virtudes de crianza necesarias a su conversión."89

His bibliography is equally meager on modern studies of Indian cultures. He cites none of the numerous learned publications of the Carnegie Institution of Washington on the Mayas or the copious contributions of Mexican anthropologists, he ignores the Handbook of South American Indians, uses no articles from the Journal de la Société des Américanistes of Paris, the American Anthropologist,
or the many volumes produced by the Congreso de Americanistas, although these volumes are full of descriptions and analyses of Indian cultures.\textsuperscript{90}

Some congresses have concerned themselves with the work of Las Casas. The last one held in Spain, in 1935, was marked by sharp controversies which followed Rómulo Carbía's paper accusing Las Casas of forging documents to further his own ends. This single paper, of all the many items on Indian affairs published by the congresses, is the only one given much attention by Don Ramón. The Argentine employed more than sixty times in this paper such words and concepts to describe Las Casas as make him a spiritual precursor of Don Ramón: "loco, falsoario, ladrón, mendaz, embuscador, vengativo, frenético y pintoresco." Don Ramón appears to accept these charges, though the Congress did not; instead it unanimously recommended that a critical edition of Las Casas' works be published and almost unanimously resolved that the men who criticized the colonial practices of Spain—Montesinos, Las Casas, and Vitoria—should be considered "como auténticos representativos de la conciencia española del Nuevo Mundo."\textsuperscript{91}

Neither these resolutions nor the fact that before and after 1935 Carbía was challenged by Rinaldi Caddeo and others are mentioned by Don Ramón, although their publications are listed in the standard Las Casas bibliography which he used intensively in the preparation of his volume.\textsuperscript{92} At times it appears that he has climbed into an ivory tower with the books and articles favorable to his thesis, pulled up the ladder behind him, and then proceeded to write his version of history. In addition Don Ramón never stoops to recognize that attacks on his position, which he first enunciated in a speech in Cuba in 1937, have appeared over the years. Some of them are listed in the standard bibliography, but these too he gives the silent treatment.

Don Ramón gives no evidence that he has ever heard of Justino Fernández's <i>Coaélice</i>, a study and defense of the aesthetic qualities of Aztec art, or of the publications of Father Ángel María Caribay G. in which he both asserts the values of Aztec poetry and raises his

\textsuperscript{90} Juan Comas, <i>Los Congresos Internacionales de Americanistas; síntesis histórica e índice bibliográfico general, 1875-1955</i> (México, 1954).

\textsuperscript{91} Las Casas. Bibliografía crítica, p. 316. Comas points out that the two volume <i>Reseña y trabajos científicos del XXVI Congreso Internacional de Americanistas</i> (Madrid, 1948) makes no reference to this resolution, <i>Ensayos sobre indigenismo</i> (México, 1953), p. 185-186. For other documentation on the Congress, where the resolution is described and the battle over Las Casas, see Las Casas Bibliografía Crítica, nos. 785, 787.

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., nos. 697, 698, 699, 703, 707, 710, 730, 731.
voice against prejudices against Indian culture. Nor is there any recognition of Inca contributions to music.66

Don Ramón’s only excursion into the rich and diversified modern literature on the Indians is his mention of a George Montandon, whom he identifies merely as “a Swiss ethnologist,” and then goes on to state: “Bien piensan muchos... Montandon por ejemplo... que la cultura mejicano-andina, la de Moctezuma y Atahualpa no se encontraba en una vía normal de evolución; no podía llegar a un natural empalme con la civilización del Occidente y estaba condenada a desaparecer, el ponerse al lado de esa civilización inmensamente más adelantada.”64 How little the subject of Indians interests Don Ramón is evident from his omission of any bibliographic information on the one modern work he uses to give an unfavorable description of the Indians, and his reliance on “a Swiss ethnologist” without reputation in the field of American anthropology is a curious lapse by such an experienced scholar.65 This cavalier treatment of a subject so basic to any serious consideration of the conquest can be understood, in part at least, as a reflection of the rudimentary development of the study in Spain of Indian cultures. Few Spaniards have made field studies in Spanish America since the time of Sahagún in the sixteenth century.

Don Ramón here illustrates the attitude against which Juan Fride has written so sharply. The true role of the Indian in the history of America has never been adequately described by historians, Fride feels, because some of them hold to the false idea that Indian culture was of no importance and few scholars have investigated the enormous amount of material in archives available for a study of the past played by Indians in the formation of America.65a


P. 237.

Don Ramón evidently has in mind George Montandon (1879-1944) who served as Professor of Ethnology in the École d’Anthropologie of Paris, and was considered as a French offshoot of the Génevois Kulturkreise school. His publications largely were devoted to non-American themes, according to the list of his works in the Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Anthropologie und Ähnologie Bulletin, Jahrgang 22 (Bern, 1945-1946), p. 23-25. The particular study evidently used by Don Ramón was L’ Oligénésse culturelle: Traité d’ethnologie cyclo-culturelle et d’ergologie systématique (Paris, 1934), p. 122.

See Juan Comas, Bibliografía selecta de las culturas indígenas de América (México, 1953). No work of George Montandon was included in this list of 2005 titles, selected by one of the leading authorities in the field.


Spanish priests continued to make valuable linguistic studies as late as the.
3. His inconsistencies, exaggerations, and dogmatisms

It may seem strange to apply these words to Don Ramón, for they are precisely the charges he makes against Las Casas.

The first inconsistency one notes is his attitude toward the writings of Las Casas. He naturally deplores above all the *Brevissima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*. It is the "único fundamento de la fama mundial" of Las Casas which he describes and condemns at great length, for the horrifying material in this denunciation of Spanish cruelty to the Indians fascinates Spaniards, who have done a great deal to spread the leyenda negra through their fulsome refutations. One feels at times that Don Ramón believes that, except for this work by Las Casas, Spain and the world would have been convinced that on the whole the Conquest was a noble effort marked mainly by the glorious deeds of conquistadores or the kindly acts to Indians of encomenderos. He sees Cortés defended by Vitoria, praised by Motolinía, favorable to Fray Martín de Valencia's peaceful preaching projects, a "genial and courteous" gentleman even in his meeting with the rancorous Las Casas. He admits cruelties on some occasions and some oppressive encomenderos in the early days, but generally seems to agree with the first important apologia for the conquest written by Francisco López de Gómara, and referred to earlier.

Nowhere does he consider the position of such a historian as the Mexican scholar Genaro García, and makes no reference to the latter's well-known study *Carácter de la conquista española en América y en México según los textos de los historiadores primitivos*, in which he states:

Para dar mayor fuerza á mis estudios, no sólo me refiero continuamente á los conquistadores á historiadores más autorizados, sino que transcribo sus palabras literalmente; y para que no se me objete que doy por probado lo que trato de demostrar, no cito á nuestro irreprochable don fray Bartolomé de Las Casas en cuanto tiendo á determinar el carácter de la conquista.

Nor does he consider that the natural jealousy of other European nations would have in any case tempered their enthusiasm for the expansion of Europe by Spaniards.

Don Ramón at first praises other writings of Las Casas, such as

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44 P. 99 ff.


48 See note 14 above.

49 (México, 1901), p. 9.
the Historia de las Indias and the Apologética historia, but later attacks both works, so that his opinions fluctuate according to his mood of the moment.

Another inconsistency appears in his treatment of relations between the Dominican Domingo de Betanzos and Las Casas. He tells how Betanzos influenced Las Casas to enter the order, but later became his decided enemy. We do not learn that these two fiery figures were linked together for many years by their common devotion to the ideal of peaceful persuasion. Why did these two men fall out? One of the reasons probably was their divergent convictions on the nature of the Indians. These were the years when the subject was being fiercely debated, and when Pope Paul III issued in 1537 his bull "Sublimis Deus," proclaiming that "... the Indians are truly men... capable of understanding the Catholic faith... are by no means to be deprived of their liberty or the possession of their property, even though they be outside the faith of Jesus Christ." Don Ramón pays slight attention to this bull, though it is central to Las Casas' doctrine in his treatise on The Only Method of Attracting All People to True Faith. Nor does Don Ramón emphasize that Betanzos' view on Indian affairs was so worrisome to some of his brother Dominicans that in 1549 they apparently prevailed upon him to renounce on his deathbed in Valladolid the anti-Indian memorial he had presented to the Council of the Indies long before.

Other inconsistencies, discrepancies, and doubtful judgments occur throughout El Padre Las Casas. Su doble personalidad, but they cannot all be considered here. Don Ramón manifests an equivocal attitude on the Las Casas—Sepúlveda dispute by labelling both contestants "Aristotelian" without explaining what he means, the New Laws are treated summarily, and his use of argument from silence does not inspire confidence in the validity of his opinions. One particularly noticeable lack of balance is the treatment of Las Casas' idea of peaceful preaching of the faith and the Vera Paz experiment. The idea is nothing new, merely an old Christian doctrine, we are told, and the experiment was greatly exaggerated in importance by Las Casas and by Antonio de Remesal, the 17th-century Dominican historian. Don Ramón follows Marcel Bataillon's analysis and that of the Jesuit Carmelo de Sáenz Santa María, the

100 Pp. vi-vi.
102 See the writer's Las Casas. An Interpretation of His Life and Writings, p. 13.
103 Pp. 211, 217.
latter presenting a very derogatory picture, but makes no reference to the valuable study by Benno M. Biermann, O.P. Peaceful conversion itself seems to be a dubious enterprise from Don Ramón’s narrative of Vera Paz, though when Martín de Valencia, Juan de Zumárraga, and Domingo de Betanzos favor it the idea is given warm approval. The Emperor Charles V backed the policy of peaceful conquests, according to one writer today, but Las Casas’ exposition of this doctrine and his attempt to put it into effect in Guatemala are treated as fantastic and farcical aberrations of a paranoia.\(^{105}\)

One further discrepancy should be mentioned: the proportion of space devoted to the two aspects of the *doble personalidad* of Las Casas. From the book’s title, one might hope for a judicious weighing of Las Casas’ faults and virtues, but in fact, since the diagnosis is unfavorable, the proportions are distorted. On occasion some dubiously favorable comment is made, such as: “la grave inequidad ... no era una falta moral, sino intelectual”; “es en general un escritor razonable,” “no tiene intención de falsear los hechos, sino que los ve falsamente.”\(^{104}\) On Las Casas’ four statements in the thorny case of Archbishop Domingo de Carranza before the Inquisition Don Ramón is even almost lyrical in recounting Las Casas’ courageous declarations on behalf of his friend in trouble: “nos revelan a Las Casas libre de su idea fija, bajo un aspecto altamente simpático y noble, defendiendo a Carranza con la mayor entereza en medio de la turbación causada por el apasionante proceso del Arzobispo. . . . Esas cuatro declaraciones son la comprobación más clara de la enfermedad de Las Casas. El paranoico, cuando sale del tema de sus delirios, es un hombre enteramente normal en el ejercicio de sus facultades grandes y chicas.”\(^{105}\)

But the reader who would see in full detail the approach Don Ramón uses in his delineation of the *doble carácter* of Las Casas should consult the carefully compiled *Sumario sinóptico.*\(^{106}\) Under


\(^{106}\) Pp. v, 330, 108.

\(^{104}\) P. 279.

\(^{104}\) Pp. 393-396.
the rubric "El carácter. Las Ideas" is a brief section on "El Las Casas normal, sus dotes positivas" which includes nevertheless such items as "no es un pensador, sino un propagandista; maneja ideas cristianas corrientes, a veces deformadas" and ends on this note: "todos los datos que poseemos, salvo raras excepciones, son referentes al Las Casas anormal." Then follow sections on "Hombre defensivo," "Idea fija, arbitraria," "Enfermedad mental," "Vocación anormal," and "Delirio de grandeza."

Don Ramón is ironical and denunciatory when considering Las Casas' exaggerations on the number of Indians killed by Spaniards in the conquest. In this large section he brings forward no new arguments or facts, mostly confining himself to employing a number of examples previously set forth in the eloquent attack by the Catalan Jesuit Juan Nuix upon Las Casas in 1780. Don Ramón classifies Las Casas as a "mente medieval," but does not indicate that this might involve exaggeration of the kind described by Steven Runciman:

Every medieval historian, whatever his race, invariably indulges in wild and picturesque exaggeration whenever he has to estimate numbers that cannot easily be counted. It is therefore impossible for us today to establish the actual size of the Crusading armies. When Fulcher of Chartres and Albert of Aix tell us that the fighting men of the First Crusade numbered 600,000, while Eckerdard gives 300,000 and Raymond of Aguilers a modest 100,000, or when Anna Comnena declares that Godfrey of Lorraine brought with him 10,000 knights and 70,000 infantrymen, it is clear that the figures are only meant to denote a very large number indeed.

Nor does Don Ramón appear familiar with the many wild and fantastic exaggerations of other Spaniards brought together in one of the many Spanish American publications he does not cite. We should never forget, also, that Las Casas' own doubtful statistics were in turn blown up by foreign translators to make them appear still more damning.

Don Ramón is himself on shaky ground when he denounces Las Casas' description of the Guatemala earthquake of 1541. In one of his earlier publications he criticized Las Casas' statement but, having later learned that he himself had exaggerated what Las Casas had said, he does not make it quite clear in El Padre Las Casas. Su doble

104 P. 394.
105 See the writer's Las Casas. Bookman, Scholar, and Propagandist, pp. 100-101
106 Juan Comas, Ensayos sobre indigenismo (México, 1953), pp. 203-205.
107 Dr. Wilcomb Washburn of the Smithsonian Institution, a well-known student of Indian history, has prepared a statement, as yet unpublished, on "Translation Variations in Various Editions of Las Casas' 'Destruction etc.'"
personalidad that he has retreated somewhat toward Las Casas' position which, however, he still feels so wrong that he concludes:

Los admiradores a ciegas de Las Casas sólo le tachan de candida credulidad y de exageración; dirán sencillamente que el clérigo sevillano propende a la andaluza. Sí; pero es una andaluza en grado patológico, porque la emplea en una obra de acusación histórica, y deforma, no una noticia oral, volandera, sino el testimonio escrito, hidalgo, notarial, que, aunque ya abultado, le deja insustituto, por lo que denuda irresistiblemente a abultarlo más. Esta exageración, extendida sistemáticamente a todos los relatos acusatorios, tiene una gravedad psicológica que no tiene la fugaz andaluza conversacional.111

The last word has probably not been said on the Guatemalan earthquake, and in due course we may have a more exact view of precisely how many bueyes were carried along by the earthquake.112 Meanwhile, we should suspend judgment on whether the report of the incident demonstrates the "pathological deformation" of Las Casas.

Dogmatism is another characteristic of Las Casas shared by Don Ramón, since both men believed in the absolute validity of their convictions. Neither considers it necessary at times to do more than state them, and just as Las Casas sometimes delivered himself of broad

111 He explains (p. 107): "Resumen y refutado en estas páginas," what he had previously published. Italics as in the original.

112 Professor Marcus has been kind enough to write me on this subject in a letter dated April 27, 1964: "Me llamó la atención el episodio del terremoto de Guatemala cuando lo lei por primera vez en "El P. Las Casas y Vitoria," Madrid, 1958, pág. 51. Allí dice D. Ramón que en la relación de Rodríguez, fuente de Las Casas, se decía: "las piedras como diez bueyes las llevaba," mientras que Las Casas habla de "piedras más gruesas que diez y veinte bueyes." D. Ramón concluye, a propósito de Las Casas, que "una irresistible propensión patológica... lo hace añadir veinte bueyes más." Puesto que la expresión "diez y veinte bueyes" no significa 10 + 20, sino diez o veinte bueyes, era evidente que, si Las Casas había añadido de modo hipotético diez bueyes a los de Rodríguez, D. Ramón a su vez había añadido tentativamente otros diez bueyes a los de Las Casas. Cuando tuve el honor de visitar a D. Ramón, en noviembre de 1961, me permitió hacerle observar lo que él sabía mejor que nadie. D. Ramón rectifica ahora, tal vez por eso, en "El Padre Las Casas, su doble personalidad," Madrid, 1962, pág. 107, diciendo que "una irresistible propensión patológica... lo hace añadir diez bueyes."22

Por otra parte, aprovechó mi estancia en Madrid para sacar de la relación un microfilm que le adjunto. Así se di cuenta de otra exageración de D. Ramón, quien sigue afirmando que la relación sólo habla de una "gran tormenta de agua," convertida por Las Casas en "tres diluvios juntamente, uno de agua y otro de tierra y otro de piedras. "Como podrá Ud. comprobarlo, en la relación, fol. 3ra., vuelta, se habla de "la gran tempestad que venía de piedra y agua e tierra."

Para ser exacto con D. Ramón, hay que hablar en compensación del episodio de Enriquillo, acerca del cual parece haber destruido, en su libro más reciente, una leyenda que favorecía mucho a Las Casas." See pp. 318-320 above.
generalizations without producing evidence, so does Don Ramón. He qualified Las Casas as "pathological" because he asserts that everything the encomenderos did was wrong; Don Ramón is just as absolutist in his own way for, though the encomienda was a highly controversial institution, he maintains:

todas ven que la convivencia tuteal con el español es el único medio para que los indios abandonen inhumanas y salvajes costumbres como los sacrificios de hombres o niños y la antropofagía, y para que se habitúasen a la vida en poblados, al trabajo regular, al matrimonio, etc.; la encomienda era, pues, benéfica; y para dominios y franciscanos, la encomienda parecía, además, hacia 1550, el único medio posible de contener la rápida desaparición de los indios amenazada por la vida salvática y por espantosas epidemias.113

Don Ramón endeavors to show that Las Casas was not taken seriously in his own time: "en general los contemporáneos lo miraban como una excentricidad o manía disculpable, cuyas extremosidades por violentas que fuesen no habían que tomarlas en consideración."114 No evidence is adduced to document this generalization; considerable material could be cited to show that in fact Las Casas received much support for his ideas throughout his life and that his powerful political influence was recognized by many different kinds of sixteenth-century Spaniards.115 Friars wrote to him from many parts of the Indies to report atrocities and the needs of the Indians,116 elidor Cristóbal Lebrón appealed to Las Casas for help in his difficulties with the audiencia of Nueva Galicia,117 the ancient conquistador Bernal Díaz del Castillo even had the audacity to ask Las Casas for assistance in keeping his encomienda and offered a bribe,118 the conquistador-chronicler Pedro Cieza de León willed his manuscripts to him,119 the Council of the Indies used him on confidential missions

114 P. 65.
115 P. 320.
116 An easy way for Don Ramón to verify this would have been to consult the Las Casas. Bibliografía crítica which he cites frequently.
117 Las Casas. Bibliografía crítica, nos. 420, 441, 443, 446.
118 Ibid., no. 419.
119 Ibid., no. 418.
120 The will was discovered by Miguel Martínez Estrada, "Cieza de León en Sevilla y su muerte en 1554," Anuario de estudios americanos, XII (Sevilla, 1955), 615-641. The provision in the will, dated June 23, 1554, has been translated thus by Harriet de Onís: "Furthermore, I order that regarding another book I wrote, which contains the chronicle of the Incas and all concerning the discovery and conquest of Peru, if one of my executors should desire to print it, he take it and benefit from the profits of its publication; and if none should wish to do this, I order it to be sent to the Bishop of Chiquitos at the court, with the injunction that he print it." Victor Wolfgang von Hagen, ed., The Inca of Pedro Cieza de León (Norman, 1959), p. 367. See also José Muñoz Pérez, "Reconocimiento al estudio de Cieza de León," Revista de Indias (Madrid, enero-mayo, 1959).
when he was 90 years of age, and he was active as a witness on Indian affairs until a few weeks before his death.

There were few more respected Indian “experts” in his time, and the influence of his doctrine and his example during his lifetime and in later years may be shown in many ways. Ciriaco Pérez Bustamante has demonstrated how close was Alonso de Ercilla to the doctrine of Las Casas and that the epic poet exalted in La Araucana (1569) “la radical originalidad y el eterno descontento del alma española, que al mismo tiempo que conquista gigantescos continentes vive obsesionada con los justos títulos y con el derecho de gentes, niega el poder temporal del Papa sobre los infieles y la jurisdicción universal del emperador y condensa esta misma conquista que realiza.”

Even Spanish captains were affected by Las Casas’ ideas according to F. J. Sánchez Cantón:

Un Capitán decía que si la Isla Española fuera bien gobernada, rentará más que todas las Yndias juntas aora; estos era hieniendo varonías, dando a cada varonia tantos mil Indios y tanta tierra, así curaran de los yndios como de cosa propia, y poblaran la tierra, y no los mataran como los mataron por los Repartimientos que de ellos hizieron, y a personas que residían en Castilla y no les vían ni los oyan; y unos muertos pedían otros, y luego se los davan, y así murieron en sola aquella isla millón y tantos mil yndios.

A recent documented study by Rev. Stafford Poole, C. M., of Cardinal Glennon College, demonstrates that the Third Mexican Council of 1585, “a gathering of all the bishops of the Mexican province, legislated in a vast number of areas in favor of the Indian population” in the spirit of Las Casas, and states that the Council “shows us that there was a powerful and articulate body of men in the New World who condemned the system of repartimientos as intrinsically evil, theoretically unjustifiable, and in practice inseparable from the most atrocious abuses.” Those who follow Don Ramón in believing that

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120 Las Casas. Bibliografía crítica, nos. 448, 456, 458. On Las Casas’ activities during this period, see Gíménez Fernández, Últimos días de Bartolomé de Las Casas.

121 Ibíd., pp. 711-714. The French scholar, Professor André de Saint Lu, discovered in the Archivo de Indias a document signed by Las Casas in Madrid on April 3, 1566.


123 Sánchez Cantón, ed., Floreta de andadutas y noticias diversas que recopiló un famoso dominico residente en Sevilla a mediados del siglo XVI, Memorial Histórico Español, t. XLVIII (Madrid, 1948), no. 122. The editor comments: “Es texto curioso, aunque notablemente exagerado; muestra el sentir crítico y de oposición de algunos españoles del tiempo influidos por el P. Las Casas.”

124 Poole, “The Church and the Repartimientos in the Light of the Third
the ecclesiastics supported the Indian labor system in the Indies and looked upon it as the best possible solution for Spanish-Indian relations, should study the documentation of Rev. Poole which led him to the following conclusion:

Even though some churchmen may have defended the repartimientos as theoretically heit and many more—the precise percentage we shall never know—profited by the exploitation of the Indian worker, the leaders of the Church in sixteenth-century Mexico condemned the repartimiento as an infringement of the liberty of men created free by God and secured in their freedom by pope and king.¹²⁵

The Jesuit José de Acosta, one of the foremost authorities on sixteenth-century Peru, not mentioned by Don Ramón, manifests in his De procuranda indorum salute (1580) a marked Las Casas influence, which visibly pains his present-day editor,¹²⁶ and it would be easy to cite other examples which have occurred from that day to this.¹²² One could with equal ease list the many powerful and articulate opponents of Las Casas who have flourished from Motolinía until Don Ramón, a fact insisted upon above in connection with the examination of the interpretations of Professor Friede.¹²⁸ A study of these opponents would be an interesting exercise, but cannot be attempted


A recent publication of considerable value is by José A. Liaguno, S. J., La personalidad jurídica del indio y el III Concilio Provincial Mexicano (1525). Ensayo histórico-jurídico de los documentos originales (Mexico, 1963). Two significant documents are printed from Indiferente General 1530 in the Archivo General de Indias: the “Relación de la junta que celebró don Sebastián de Fuenleal, Presidente de la Audiencia, con fray Juan de Zúñiga y otros frailes en 1532” (p. 151-154), and “Relación sumaria de la información que se trajo de la Nueva España a pedimento de la ciudad de México, y se tomó por el Governor a Audiencia Real de la Nueva España” (pp. 155-166). Dr. Liaguno comments on these documents and explains their importance (p. 13-26) in connection with the juntas of 1532 and 1544.

¹²⁵ Poole, The Church and the Esparamientos, p. 36.
¹²⁴ Escrivan de Acosta, De procuranda indorum salute (Madrid, 1942). See particularly Libro I, Capítulo 13 on “Daña mucho a la fe la violencia,” and Libro II, Capítulos 3-4 on the Aristotelian theory of natural slavery. Dr. Mateos comments (p. 109): “el espíritu de Las Casas bullía aunque amortiguado en Acosta, lo mismo que en la mayoría de los misioneros, y su indignación por algunos abusos fácilmente degeneraba en universalizaciones feales.” Then the editor launches into one of his own “universalizaciones,” in commenting on the need to avoid judging the work of Spain and the Church in America by the “remedias” of missionaries against encomenderos and conquistadores. This is an “error ya viejo en escritores protestantes de todos los tiempos.” See also Dr. Mateos’ article “El mito de Las Casas,” Esoón y fe, 187 (Madrid, 1983), 192-198.
¹²⁸ See the writer’s Las Casas. Bookman, Scholar and Propagandist, chapters 3-4.
¹²⁹ See above note 29.
here. Las Casas was never brought before the Inquisition, despite his habit of free-speaking. In a recently discovered document in the Archivo General de la Nación in Mexico we see his nephew Pedro Suárez de Peralta testifying in Guatemala on June 29, 1569, that he had come to the New World about 24 years previously with his uncle and proudly stating that none of his family had ever been sentenced by the Holy Office.\footnote{129}

Another way to assess the dogmatism of Don Ramón is to see how he meets criticism of his cherished opinions. He scorns Manuel Giménez Fernández roundly for holding fast to certain expressions after they were described as "erroneous,"\footnote{130} but he does much the same thing himself. Don Ramón wishes to be as "scientific" as possible in his analysis of paranoia, a word he uses freely throughout the book, and his personal interpretation of this central concept explains much about his methodology and the temper of his mind. To him, the only explanation of Las Casas' life is that he was a \textit{paranoico}, and Don Ramón unconsciously reveals in his approach to psychiatry how he obstinately clings to his own preconceived ideas no matter what the specialists say:

\begin{quote}
En mi trabajo de 1957 ... \textit{Una norma anormal del Padre Las Casas}, expuse algunos indicios que yo percibía de esa anormalidad enfermiza, y a pesar de mi total ignorancia de la psiquiatría, me arrojé a calificar tal anormalidad de delirio paranoico, calificación que yo entregaba a la corrección de los especialistas. Según el concepto vulgar, que utilizo como profano (y que tendrá, bien lo sé, mucha impresión técnica), el paranoico no es un loco, no es un demente, privado de normal raciocinio; todos sus juicios son normales, salvo los relacionados con una idea fija preconcebida, los cuales son fatalmente falsos, sistematizados para confirmarlos con el preconcepto. ...
\end{quote}

Toda la vida pública y todos los innumerables escritos de Las Casas tocan a los indios, y los escritos completamente deformados por la anormal idea fija, los que han tenido resonancia mundial, son los que han determinado la única acción destacada de Las Casas, mientras que los otros escritos, en que la anormalidad aparece sólo de tarde en tarde, apenas nos dan notas biográficas sobre la actividad lascasiana libre del falso prejuicio, así que el Las Casas normal casi nunca aparece ante nuestros ojos.

Para este total cambio de perspectiva que expongo, espero disculpa por parte de los psicólogos. Cuando ya esta mi biografía estaba completamente preparada para la imprenta, varias conversaciones con los profesores J.

\footnote{129} Inquisición 1547. "Proceso contra Pedro Suárez de Peralta, Alcalde Mayor de la villa de la Trinidad, Guatemala, 1569." Folios 45\textsuperscript{o}-66 record his testimony. Miss Eleanor Adams of Albuquerque was kind enough to call this document to my attention, and Dr. J. Ignacio Rubio Mané, Director of the Archivo, my friend and colleague in historical studies for almost 30 years, made this material available. On this nephew of Las Casas, see also Giménez Fernández, \textit{Últimos días de Bartolomé de Las Casas}, p. 714.
\footnote{130} P. xi.
Germain y R. Alberca me tranquilizaron bastante respecto a mi antiguo trabajo de 1957 y a la publicación del presente libro; ellos leyeron estas páginas en pruebas tipográficas, sobre las cuales me hicieron varias observaciones muy orientadoras para retocar mi lenguaje tan pródigo. Sin embargo, algunas frases y expresiones dejó sin corregir, intencionadamente, queriendo quedarse manifiesta mi calidad de leño en la materia. Conste aquí mi muy cordial gratitud a los profesores Germain y Alberca.131

Another example of how Don Ramón uses expert opinion as it suits his purpose involves a question of theology—the action of Las Casas in refusing absolution to conquistadores unless they restored to the Indians the goods he felt had been taken unjustly from them. For a judgment on this issue he requested the advice of his colleague in the Academia Española, Dr. Digo Garay, Bishop of Madrid, who condemned Las Casas’ ideas in his Confesionario as “absurdo.”132 One notes that Don Ramón did not call for an opinion from the one theologian in Madrid who has devoted most attention to questions of theology in the conquest,133 Friar Venancio D. Carro, O.P., who probably would have delivered a more subtle and more theologically informed opinion than the Bishop of Madrid.

A pointed example of the intuitive rather than historical approach is Don Ramón’s handling of the possible connection between Francisco de Vitoria and Charles V on the question whether Spain should abandon Peru. Marcel Bataillon, whose authority Don Ramón usually respects, doubts that Vitoria intervened on this issue. Don Ramón, giving us no shred of evidence, asserts that it is “inconcebible” that Charles V would not have consulted the famous Salamanca Dominican, and then gravely concludes:

En este caso concreto, como en otros varios, creo comprobado que fue Vitoria, en oposición a Las Casas, quien contribuyó esencialmente a soluciones definitivas.134

Enough has been said to illustrate how this veteran scholar, who indignantly denies that he is an antilascasista, exhibits in this extraordinary book some of the worst defects he attributes to Las Casas: inconsistency, exaggeration, and dogmatism. This curious book, which reveals Don Ramón’s tendency to transform conjecture into certainty, does make one important contribution; it helps us to understand—as did the work of Don Ramón’s spiritual ancestor Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo—those 11 dos Españas que desde hace mucho tiempo han

133 La teología y los teólogos—juristas españoles ante la conquista de América.
134 P. 148.
coexistido o luchado en la Península.' Will future students reach the same conclusion on Don Ramón as the following on Menéndez Pelayo?

Viene a ser, así, una especie de símbolo a través del cual podemos ver la pugna y la tragedia de la historia de España; es él mismo un problema histórico.138

IV

The Significance of Don Ramón’s Attack on Las Casas

How can Don Ramón’s dedication to his objective of demolishing Las Casas be explained? Is is merely a strange aberration? I cannot believe this. The volume is rather an astonishing tour de force which required great energy and acumen in marshalling data. Some have interpreted his campaign as a political effort, but this seems unlikely, although it is true that his first publication against Las Casas appeared at the end of the Spanish Civil War in the Falangist periodical Escorial. The many lectures and articles against Las Casas, between his first lecture in Cuba in 1937 and the climax reached with this book of 1963 constitute a personal crusade, I believe, sustained by his own passionate and very Spanish convictions.

Why did he write this book at an age when he could justifiably have devoted himself to being honorary president of literary congresses and to travelling about in the world? Incidentally he does this too! Recently he went to Israel, and in June, 1963, he told me he hoped to visit Russia, where a translation of some of his Romancería studies is being done, and he plans to go by air as he finds train travel boring. The Mexican writer Antonio Castro Leal has made some acute observations on what he considers to be the true explanation of the attack. In reporting on Don Ramón’s address in Oxford in 1962 to a group of Hispanists, Castro Leal wrote:

En esta ocasión dió España—ante una asamblea internacional de hispanistas—un espectáculo que confirma sus más arraigadas tradiciones. Porque un viejo de noventa años, respetado y admirado internacionalmente, se puso a hablar mal de otro viejo, respectable también y todavía más admirado de propios y extraños. Desde hace unos años Menéndez Pidal se ha dedicado a destruir, con tenacidad muy española, a Fray Bartolomé de las Casas. Es una obra sistemática, llevada a cabo con un método científico, y en apariencia, con gran objetividad.

Sorprende que el gran erudito español, que con tanta sabiduría y poder de adivinación ha descubierto y fijado aquellas hazañas a las que los héroes españoles de la historia y la leyenda deben su renombre y culto populares,

no sea capaz ver y aguilar que la acción y el arribo constante de Fray Bartolomé por defender y salvar a los indios, se sobreponen a todos los cargos de inexactitud histórica, de exageración y aun de lo que pueda haber de difusión en la crítica de las violencias españolas en América. Y a este apóstol tan emprendedor y activo, a este polemista tan furibundo y consciente de los males de su época ¿porqué se le va a juzgar simplemente como histo-
riador? Es un héroe que ganó una causa justa y noble. Es un héroe que ha echado raíces en la conciencia popular tanto como el Cid Campeador.126

Another scholar, the Bolivian historian Gunnar Mendoza, has also considered the meaning of Don Ramón’s attack and has reached this thought-provoking conclusion:

A menos que ocurra un milagro, no se puede esperar todavía un juicio español escúánime sobre las Casas porque eso es psicológicamente imposible, o si se quiere psiquiátricamente imposible ya que se ha traido a cuenta la psiquiatría. Y, desde luego, no es que los españoles desde este punto de vista sean enfermos mentales, como muchos de ellos piensan de las Casas, pero lo que está fuera de toda discusión es que se enferman mentalmente apenas se les pone delante las Casas. No soy malicioso ni Mendánez lo es, pero estoy dispuesto a apostar que en su biografía de las Casas va a hacer algo parecido a lo que ha hecho Madariaga en su biografía de Bolívar... Hay además de por medio un complejo de desquie o represalia, desquie y represalia contra quien—las Casas—siendo español se dice que infamó a España. Lo mismo ocurre con Bolívar. Nadie pretende que Bolívar fue un santo ni que las Casas no exageró, pero Bolívar con sus flaquezas y todo fue el Libertador, y las Casas con sus exageraciones y todo dijo esencialmente la verdad. Con las Casas, aparte del complejo del desquie o la represalia, hay el complejo de la conciencia atormentada. Pero cuando los españoles se sieren en sus transportes anti-lascasianos, acabarán por ver lo que ahora es obvio para los demás: que las Casas salvó la conciencia de España, o, aún más, que las Casas fue la voz de la conciencia atormentada de España por la contradicción dramática implícita, para el caso del indio, en la famosa fórmula “se obedece pero no se cumple.” Las Casas fue en América el verdadero Quijote (antes de que naciera don Quijote) contra los conquista-
dores andantes. Esta trilogía explica muchas cosas, y si Dios quiere para la conmemoración de las Casas en 1966 trataré de esbozar un papel para el que ya tengo (sublime progreso) el título: “De las Casas a don Quijote, y de don Quijote a Bolívar.”

Another powerful and expressive voice, that of Agustín Yáñez, Mexican novelist and former Governor of the State of Jalisco, helps us to understand that attitude toward Las Casas in Spanish America:

Se habla de Fray Bartolomé de las Casas tan familiarmente como si fuese un personaje de nuestro tiempo... Y cuando Las Casas muere... América tiene ya por siempre la fisonomía que su Padre y Doctor le trabajó;

fisonomía y estilo que retratan perdurablemente a Fray Bartolomé. Como éste, América es intransigencia, tenacidad, coraje; su clima es clima de lucha; su aspiración a la libertad, irreductible; América es dialéctica inacabable de abuso y derecho, de tropelía y verbo inhumano, de tiranía y democracia. Bien puede triunfar la violencia y vencer las argucias de los detentadores; América no se conformará, no se rendirá, como en jamás, ni en la hora de la muerte, pese a la adversa realidad y a lo aparentemente infiel del esfuerzo vital, se doblegaron el ánimo y las convicciones del fraile. Cuantos entre los americanos eminentes copian el templo de Las Casas: perseguidores de una idea, no los interesa que se les venga encima el mundo, que se les tache de soñadores, fanáticos o demonios; los abogan ultrajes, calumnias, desprecios; enfrentan la muerte y más aún: el ridículo; por el resultado de sus empresas parecerá que los abrumó la realidad; ni su voz, ni su doctrina cejarán; les asiste la certidumbre de que si es preciso, del sepulcro mismo surgirán sus ideas perseverantes hasta el triunfo final.

Por todo ello queda dicho que Fray Bartolomé de las Casas es uno de los sumos Padres y Doctores de América.187

Is it any wonder that in Spanish America, except for some discordant voices such as Rómulo D. Carbia and the venerable Chilean historian Francisco A. Encina, many persons of different orientations come to feel a special affection for Las Casas?188 The conservative historian of Argentina, Ricardo Levene, noted for his respect for Spanish traditions in America, has written some of the most acute and laudatory observations on Las Casas in recent times,189 and the

187 Dr. Mendoza expressed these views in a letter to the writer dated November 16, 1963. Dr. Yáñez sent his statement to the writer in a letter dated August 17, 1956, while he was still Governor of Jalisco. Dr. Yáñez previously had published Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas. El conquistador conquistado (México, 1942); Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas. Doctrina, second ed. (México, 1951). These contributions to the Las Casas literature are not mentioned by Don Ramón.

188 Carbia's interpretations are referred to above, note 21. Encina la very satirical on the illusions of conquistadores and ecclesiastics in sixteenth-century Chile, and adds: "La intensidad del sentimiento, actuando sobre el mismo fondo cerebral, determinó en la mayor parte del clero la esvalúiedad que admiramos en Cristóbal de Molina, en fray Gil González de San Nicolás... Bartolomé de Las Casas etc. La fuerza de sus sentimientos cristianos y especialmente el dogma de la igualdad de los hombres, provoca en ellos el estado delirante en todo lo concerniente a las relaciones entre españoles e indígenas. Trasponzan al aborígen su propia psiquis, sus sentimientos, su voluntad y su razón. Por lo que tiran de las alturas del esfuerzo de decir,christiano..." História de Chile, 29 vols. (Santiago de Chile, 1943-1962), I, 388.

189 Levene has this to say: "Los errores y extravíos en las apreciaciones del Obispo de Chiapa están desenmascarados por la crítica científica. Y es torpeza de los tendenciosos adversarios citar sus afirmaciones, como prueba de la barbarie de la Metrópoli, cuando él solo, por la universalidad de su genio, representa una gloria de España y América..."
Mexican Communist painter Diego Rivera recognized the contribution of Las Casas by including him in the famous mural in the Cortés palace in Cuernavaca, and characteristically placed on the opposite panel the fires of the Inquisition. The battles waged by Las Casas have also found their way into modern Spanish-American literature, for one hears in the Uruguayan poet Juan Zorrilla de San Martín’s Tabaré the echoes of the Las Casas-Sepúlveda controversy of 1550, and the Colombian dramatist Enrique Buenaventura presents in his “Requiem por el Padre Las Casas” a play which, as is sometimes the case with historical dramas, includes little history, roused the usual polemical discussions when presented in Cali, Colombia, in June, 1963. Such incidents reveal the truth of Professor Castro Leal’s remark that Las Casas has become a symbol, a folk-hero like the Cid Campodador.

One might describe this Spanish preoccupation with Las Casas as...
the Nessus-shirt of Spanish American history, to borrow a phrase Professor Peter Russell of Oxford employed about the history of Spain. But this figure of speech from Greek mythology is not wholly exact for America, since the shirt that Nessus gave to Deianira and which eventually pricked her husband Hercules was a burden thrust upon Hercules. The burden some writers on the conquest assume is more like a hair shirt, as voluntarily and as eagerly put on as the real hair shirts were by medieval monks.

However one describes the fatal fascination that draws Spaniards toward the conquest, one non-Spaniard at least believes that by attempting to diminish Las Casas they are thereby diminishing Spain itself. Let everyone freely admit that Las Casas not only exaggerated the statistics of Indian deaths, but that he also failed to give a well-balanced or full account of Spanish accomplishments overseas. But should Spaniards not be proud of the fact that the King and his councillors listened sympathetically to him no matter how horrible a tale he had to tell or how radical a solution he proposed for Indian problems? They allowed him to print and circulate his ideas widely while his opponents were not allowed to publish, and he received many marks of royal favor in his lifetime. But he could not stop the forcible conquest of the Indies, nor prevent the Indians from being exploited.

Don Ramón winces when he looks back at the life and reputation of Las Casas. How is it that some Spaniards from the sixteenth-century onward have tolerated, even praised him, when such men as Motolinía opposed him? And when Captain Bernardo de Vargas Machuca composed such a convincing Apologías y discursos de las conquistas occidentales? Don Ramón laments the blindness and pusillanimity of some of his ancestors, and condemns their timidity and error. For the Captain's apologia was never allowed to be published, despite the fact that it was prefaced by laudatory sonnets by four Dominicans. The Captain had a different experience with theologians, for when he drowned an Indian child he was absorbed in the confessional. His modern biographer comments: "Perhaps, perhaps Padre Las Casas would have condemned him to Hell."

Let us hope that the four-hundredth anniversary of the death of Las Casas—which falls in July, 1966,—will be the occasion for less

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heat and more light on the life and work of this great Spaniard. We
may at least agree with Don Ramón Menéndez Pidal that the story of
the Spanish conquest of America should be approached in the spirit
of impartial historical criticism even if he himself has not led the
way.

Now let us return to the great plaza in Mexico City where the
monument to Las Casas as the apostle to the Indians stands so firmly.
Will we ever see there a monument to Cortés, the conqueror of Mexico
whose life and achievements are as integral a part of her history as
those of Las Casas?

Cortés has long been a problem in Spain as well as in Spanish
America, as Professor Marcel Bataillon reminds us in another of his
acute studies, and it is not surprising that thus far Mexicans have
emphatically refused to raise a monument to him just as Spaniards
have never erected a statue to Las Casas in Madrid. Don Ramón
at Oxford in conversation with Castro Leal expressed astonishment
that Mexicans still cherished such feeling against Cortés and were
not yet ready to forget the cruelties of the conquest. Why did they
not remember instead the cultural contributions of Spain to Mexico,
he asked with that curious naiveté that marks the attitude of some
Spaniards toward Spanish-America.

The Mexicans’ usual reply to this question is that their nation is
not yet racially unified enough to permit any public recognition of
the conquistador who symbolizes the action of the sixteenth-century
imperialist invaders. Samuel Ramos, the Mexican philosopher, quotes
Rubén Darío’s cry that his soul was the object of contention “between
the Cathedral and the pagan ruins,” and then asks:

144 P. xiii.
145 Bataillon, “Hermán Cortés, autor prohibido,” Libro jubilar de Alfonso
Reyes (México, 1956), pp. 77-82.
146 An equestrian statue of Cortés, by the Spanish sculptor Florentino
Aparicio, was located in the gardens of the luxury hotel in Cuernavaca Casino
“pocos conocen esta obra de arte, digna de admiración y homenaje único en
México a la figura de aquél que, con arrojo y valentía, se enfrentara a un mundo
desconocido poniendo al Anáhuac por primera vez en el mapa del mundo.” This
reference comes from Hispania, XLVII (1964), no. 1, 165. The exhaustive
researches carried on at the request of the Mexican Secretario de Educación by
the commission of experts selected by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología
concerning the human remains and other objects discovered by Señorita Eulalia
Guridi on September 28, 1949, in Tecatecopan, is an impressive demonstration of
how anything connected with Cortés receives exceptional attention in Mexico.
See the handsome volume resulting from the prolonged investigations by a
panoply of experts, Los hallazgos de Tecatecopan (México, 1962, 552 p.) pub-
lished privately as the Actas y Dicématas de la Comisión. Dr. Arturo Armáiz
y Preg, who has helped me over the years with Mexican publications and in
other ways, was generous enough to give me a copy.
Isn't this, perhaps, a valid image of the drama of America? Today very serious problems persist because of the schism between the culture inspired in our cathedrals, and the other, which emanates from our ruins. When the two heritages met they could not be combined in the creation of a new synthesis.148

But is it not possible that Mexico, despite her important Indian heritage, is still so profoundly Spanish that Mexicans also share the burden of Spanish American history and will no more tolerate compromise than the Spaniards? If we ever see a statue to Las Casas in Madrid and a monument to Cortés in Mexico we can be sure that a new day has dawned, that mature acceptance has at least been reached, on both sides of the Ocean Sea, of the strange but strong relationship which always existed between the soldier and the priest whom the Spanish sovereigns sent together to the New World to conquer and to Christianize that world. Men will then see the long struggle for justice as a vital part of Spanish American history. They will see how many kinds of fighters participated149 and will understand how strongly the struggle has influenced historical writing on the Spanish empire.150

The day of serene historical judgment has not yet arrived. Thus the views of the conquest held by the Colombian Juan Friede and the Spaniard Ramón Menéndez Pidal underline the truth of Sverker Arnoldsson's statement: that the conquest has been so vigorously discussed for over four centuries because this great period of history created the still-smoking problems of today.

The conquest is the 'living past' of both Spain and Spanish America. How long ago it all happened! And yet how persistently the historical consequences remain as part of our world, our time, our problems.

150 'Rizal, Retana, and Pastells. Three very different historians but three of whom any nation might be proud. All three treat in different ways that theme which runs through Spanish colonial historiography from the early sixteenth century to the present day. The struggle for justice, and the balance between the spiritual and the temporal power, which preoccupied Fr. Bartolomé de Las Casas and Dr. Ginés de Sepúlveda, Padre Alonso Sánchez, and Padre Joseph de Acosta, Dr. Antonio de Morga, and Fr. Diego Aduarte, Padre Juan delgado, and Fr. Gaspar de San Agustín, is still the chief concern of many Spanish colonial historians today.' Charles R. Boxer, 'Some Aspects of Spanish Historical Writing on the Philippines,' in D. G. E. Hall, ed., Historians of South East Asia (London, 1961), II, 212.