**Spanish Colonization**

Queen Isabella was important to the start of Spanish colonization and the subsequent establishment of the encomienda system with the intention to protect Native Americans while at the same time trying to force them to work. The encomienda system was highly beneficial for Spanish colonizers although the same could not be said for the Native Americans. This system along with Spanish colonization was widely debated, especially among missionaries including Bartolome de las Casas who advocated for its abolishment. As a result, your task will be to argue in front of the Queen (myself, your humble teacher), based on your position, whether Spanish colonization and the encomienda system should continue or be eradicated.

**Task #1:** Read the sources provided to you to support your case. Some of these sources will support your case while others may negate them. It is your job to use these sources for your advantage. If you wish to conduct outside research as well, this is perfectly acceptable, but not required. In addition, you must take the viewpoint of your assigned role.

**Task #2:** Confer with your group members and brainstorm over the next two days. What will be your strategy? Which points should you stress? Which members will say what?

**Task #3:** Present your case to the Queen of Spain. You should reference the documents in your argument. Each group will have two minutes to present their opening statement, (2) 45 seconds to question/respond to any other group, (2) 45-second final rebuttal, and a one-minute closing statement. Each group member must speak for one of these allotted time periods.

**Group Point of Views (POVs):**

Group #1: King’s (Ferdinand II dies in 1516, Charles V takes over following Ferdinand II’s death) POV

Group #2: Priests’ POV

Group #3: Spanish colonizers’ POV

Group #4: Spanish citizens’ POV

Group #5: Native Americans’ POV

Documents

**Source A: Establishing the Basis for the Encomienda System**  
Medina Del Campo, Dec. 20, 1503. Isabella, by the Grace of God, Queen of Castile, etc. In as much as the King, my Lord, and I, in the instruction we commanded given to Don Fray Nicholas de Ovando, Comendador may of Aleantara, at the time when he went to the islands and mainland of the Ocean Sea, decreed that the Indian inhabitants and residents of the island of Espanola are free and not subject …and as now we are informed that because of the excessive liberty enjoyed by said Indians they avoid contact…with the Spaniards to such an extent that they will not even work for wages…and cannot be had by the Christians of said island…may not lack people to work their holdings for their maintenance, and may be able to take out what gold there is on the island…and because we desire that the said Indians be converted to our Holy Catholic Faith and taught its doctrines; and because this can better be done by having the Indians living in community with the Christians of the island, and by having them go among them and associate with them, by which means they will help each other to cultivate and settle and increase the fruits of the island and take the gold which may be there and bring profit to my kingdom and subjects.  
  
…I command you our said Governor that beginning from the day you receive my letter you will compel and force the said Indians to associate with the Christians of the island and to work on their buildings, and to gather and mine the gold and other metals, and to till the fields and produce food for the Christian inhabitants and dwellers of the said island; and you are to have each one paid on the day he works the wage and maintenance which you think he should have…and you are to order each cacique to take charge of a certain number of Indians so that you may make them work wherever necessary, and so that on feast days and such days as you think proper they may be gathered together to hear and be taught in matters of the faith…This the Indians shall perform s free people, which they are, and not as slaves. And see to it that the said Indians are well treated, those who become Christians better than the others, and do not consent or allow that any person do them any harm or oppress them.  
 - I, The Queen.  
  
**Source C: Spanish kindness outweighs harm done to Native Americans**  
By Juan de Solorzano y Pereyra, Spanish colonial official in the Americas  
  
“I do not wish to excuse completely the wars that must have been fought against the Indian without reason in the early days of the conquest, nor the many injuries that have been and are still being done to them.

However, I still make bold to insist that these actions cannot wipe out all the good that has been accomplished in the conversion and instruction of these nonbelievers by church people. Even less can these actions wipe out the great piety and zealof our kings in this cause. With great care and without taking into account costs or difficulties of any kind, our kings have tried to provide for the conversion of the Indians in a kind and

Christian manner.

In addition, in many places the Indians gave cause for their mistreatment or for war to be made against them. Either they practiced their savage customs or they attempted to commit treason against our people. Furthermore, it is not the Spaniards who have killed them, but their own vices and drunkenness or the earthquakes and repeated epidemics of smallpox and other disease, which God, in His mysterious wisdom, has seen

fit to send to reduce their numbers.”

Source: “A Seventeenth-Century Defense of Spanish Treatment of the Indians.” By Juan de Solorzano y Pereyra, from *History of Latin American Civilization*, edited by Lewis Hanke and published by Little, Brown, 1973.

**Source D: Bartolome de Las Casas: On the Destruction of the Indies**

In 1518 the so-called Christians set about stealing from the people and murdering them on the pretence of settling the area. And from that year until this--and it is now 1542-the great iniquities and injustices, the outrageous acts of violence and the bloody tyranny of these Christians have steadily escalated, the perpetrators having lost all fear of God, all love of their sovereign, and all sense of self-respect. Even now, in September 1542, the atrocities get worse by the day, it being the case, as we have said, that the infernal brutality and utter inhumanity of the acts committed have readily increased as time has gone on.

Among other massacres was one which took place in Cholula, a great city of some thirty thousand inhabitants. When all the dignitaries of the city and the region came out to welcome the Spaniards with all due pomp and ceremony, the priests to the fore and the high priest at the head of the procession, and they proceeded to escort them into the city and lodge them in the houses of the lord and the leading citizens, the Spaniards decided that he moment had come to organize a massacre (or "punishment" as they themselves express such things) in order to inspire fear and terror in all the people of the territory. This was, indeed the pattern they followed in all the lands they invaded: to stage a bloody massacre ofthe most public possible kind in order to terrorize those meek and gentle peoples. What they did was the following. They requested the local lord to send for all the nobles and leading citizens of the city and of all the surrounding communities subject to it and, as soon as they arrived and entered the building to begin talks with the Spanish commander, they were seized without anyone outside getting wind of what was afoot. Part of the original request was they should bring with them five or six thousand native bearers and these were mustered in the courtyards when and as they arrived. One could not watch these poor wretches getting ready to carry the Spaniards' packs without taking pity on them, stark naked as they were with only their modesty hidden from view, each with a kind of little net on his shoulders in which he carried his own modest store of provisions. They all got down on their haunches and waited patiently like

sheep. Once they were all safely inside the courtyard, together with a number of others who were also

there at the time, armed guards took up positions covering the exits and Spanish soldiers unsheathed

their swords and grasped their lances and proceeded to slaughter these poor innocents. Not a single soul

escaped.

**Source G: Hernan Cortes: from Second Letter to Charles V, 1520**

This great city of Temixtitlan [Mexico] is situated in this salt lake, and from the main land to the denser parts of it, by whichever route one chooses to enter, the distance is two leagues. There are four avenues or entrances to the city, all of which are formed by artificial causeways, two spears' length in width. The city is as large as Seville or Cordova; its streets, I speak of the principal ones, are very wide and straight; some of these, and all the inferior ones, are half land and half water, and are navigated by canoes.

There are all kinds of green vegetables, especially onions, leeks, garlic, watercresses, nasturtium, borage, sorrel, artichokes, and golden thistle; fruits also of numerous descriptions, amongst which are cherries and plums, similar to those in Spain; honey and wax from bees, and from the stalks of maize, which are as sweet as the sugar-cane; honey is also extracted from the plant called maguey, which is superior to sweet or new wine; from the same plant they extract sugar and wine, which they also sell. Different kinds of cotton thread of all colors in skeins are exposed for sale in one quarter of the market, which has the appearance of the silk-market at Granada, although the former is supplied more abundantly. Painters' colors, as numerous as can be found in Spain, and as fine shades; deerskins dressed and undressed, dyed different colors; earthen-ware of a large size and excellent quality; large and small jars, jugs, pots, bricks, and endless variety of vessels, all made of fine clay, and all or most of them glazed and painted; maize or Indian corn, in the grain and in the form of bread, preferred in the grain for its flavor to that of the other islands and terra-firma; patés of birds and fish; great quantities of fish---fresh, salt, cooked and uncooked; the eggs of hens, geese, and of all the other birds I have mentioned, in great abundance, and cakes made of eggs; finally, everything that can be found throughout the whole country is sold in the markets, comprising articles so numerous that to avoid prolixity, and because their names are not retained in my memory, or are unknown to me, I shall not attempt to enumerate them.

Every kind of merchandise is sold in a particular street or quarter assigned to it exclusively, and thus the best order is preserved. They sell everything by number or measure; at least so far we have not observed them to sell anything by weight. There is a building in the great square that is used as an audience house, where ten or twelve persons, who are magistrates, sit and decide all controversies that arise in the market, and order delinquents to be punished. In the same square there are other persons who go constantly about among the people observing what is sold, and the measures used in selling; and they have been seen to break measures that were not true.