



INDEED, LET US APOLOGIZE

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It is not a good argument (and if we cannot offer another) to simply reject the recurring and very dire accusations about the Conquest of the Americas, by saying that the current Hispanic Americans are the descendants of conquerors and settlers of the 16th- and 17th-centuries. It is escapist and leads to a contradiction: If we do not acknowledge the bad, we will not be able to fully claim the good. And, by way of global analysis, there was a lot of good.

Thus, assuming "the account of grievances," as the [grandson](#) of a Santanderian likes to say, and if it is a matter of proven historical facts, rather than demagogic talking points, we would like to offer the Mexican president something to really chew on. Why scold him like any other father might when he hears a spoiled child let loose some impertinence. Therefore, let us accept that ours is a more moral than genetic responsibility, as successors to the nation called Spain.

Therefore:

We apologize that in 1536 [Fr. Juan de Zumárraga](#) founded the College for children of Aztec nobles, paid for by [Viceroy Mendoza](#). The institution was known as [Colegio Imperial de Sta. Cruz de Tlatelolco](#). In it, worked [Fr. Bernardino de Sahagún](#) and [Fr. Andrés de Olmos](#), and this College was replicated in Tepozotlán, Puebla, Guadalajara, Valladolid (Morelia), Texcoco.

Also, we apologize because in 1536, Zumárraga established the first printing press on the continent, in a building that still exists, near the Zócalo.

Likewise, we apologize for founding the University of Mexico, in 1551, under Royal Patronage and which followed the model of Salamanca and Alcalá, with studies in Philosophy, the Arts, Theology, Law, Medicine.

And we apologize for giving you [Fr. Cervantes de Salazar](#) - professor of Rhetoric in Mexico and author of México en 1554. [Crónica de la Nueva España. Túmulo imperial de la gran ciudad de México](#) – in which he brought to you the thought of [Luis Vives](#), the great humanist.

And we apologize for the very gracious attempt by [Vasco de Quiroga](#), Bishop of Michoacán, to establish Thomas More's utopia, which still survives, like the olive trees, now hundreds of years old, that he

planted in [Tzin-Tzun-Tzan](#); the towns he founded to welcome and promote the Indians; and that wonderful altarpiece in the church of Tupátaro, from the 18th-century, indigenous coffered ceiling, square, with ocher and white arcades.

And we apologize for developing livestock, agriculture and mining, which brought about the rise of urban classes that, together with the clergy and the vice-regal bureaucracy, promoted the great public works and construction. And these they are still there, despite the deterioration – Mexico, Morelia, Puebla, Pátzcuaro, Zacatecas, Guanajuato, Querétaro, San Miguel Allende, Veracruz – and which surpass Toledo, Madrid or Seville. In the 17th-century, Mexico City, being now a great economic pole, was home to more inhabitants than Paris, London or Rome. And in Mexico are found four of the most important works of the Baroque: The tabernacle of the [Metropolitan Cathedral](#), the Jesuit College of [Tepozotlán](#), the [convent of Santa Rosa in Querétaro](#), and the parish [church of Sta. Prisca in Taxco](#).

And we apologize for the greatest work of ethnography and archaeology of our 16th-century, in three languages (Latin, Spanish and Nahuatl), [La Historia Universal de las cosas de Nueva España](#) by Fr. Bernardino de Sahagún.

We apologize for the great Mexican scholar, [Carlos Sigüenza y Góngora](#); for [Sister Juana Inés de la Cruz](#); for [Juan Ruiz de Alarcón](#) from Taxco; for the book-poem by [Bernardo de Valbuena](#), [Grandeza mexicana](#) (1604), where he establishes the "Story" of art, letters and prosperity of the city, visible, for example, in the Casa de Comedias by D. Francisco León (from 1597) in which three companies operated.

And we apologize for the [Mercurio Volante](#) (1693), the first newspaper in Latin America, (in 1737 it would be followed by *La Gaceta de México*); and for the Mexican School of Mining (1792), where worked [Fausto de Elhúyar](#), the discoverer of tungsten, and [Andrés del Río](#), the discoverer of vanadium. And there is no space to "relate" the admiration that the country aroused in Humboldt at that time.

And we apologize because the population of the viceroyalty of New Spain (almost six million), in 1776, doubled that of the English colonies of North America because of the economic, technical and cultural development in New Spain exceeded that of the English in all these areas.

So, draw your conclusions about this past that you do not want to remember and which you so

carefully hide. Otherwise, it would be necessary to take responsibility for what has happened since 1821, and not place blame on distant conquerors. For example, instead of crying for the umpteenth time over [Cholula](#), call out by name, [General Jesús González Ortega](#), a good liberal, who in 1857 plundered the [cathedral of Zacatecas](#), or who in the same city (in 1862) handed over the convent of San Agustín to the Presbyterians, who razed it to the ground.

We apologize for having instituted Nahuatl and Otomi as common languages for evangelization, which enlarged their role and rank, as well as their extension to lands that were previously alien to them.

Also, we apologize for having had a king ([Philip II](#)) who, opposed the calls of advisors and viceroys to exclusively impose Castilian, and instead agreed with the friars (who wanted to limit contact with the indigenous people) and favored missionary work to be only in the local languages (Royal Cedula 1565 to the bishops of New Spain), and who even issued this command: "It does not seem advisable to urge them to leave their native language.... Do not provide the parishes with priests who do not know the language of the Indians" (1596). And this was the case until the end of the 18th-century, when in view of the notable problems that multilingualism presented (in the diocese of Oaxaca alone, there were sixteen aboriginal languages) that the Mexican bishops, Fabián and Fuero from Puebla, Alvarez Abreu from Oaxaca and Lorenzana from Mexico, obtained the [Royal Cedula of Aranjuez](#) (May 1770).

We apologize for having been the main players in the global knowledge of the planet, facilitating the interrelation between its various parts, with the Discovery of the New World and with the first circumnavigation of the Globe and establishing communication between the various empires and nations of America that were previously completely isolated.

And, finally, we apologize for enjoying a mole poblano, a pozole taxqueño, some chilaquiles and a chilpachole of crab, although afterwards, given our Spanish stomach – we have to head to the hospital.

But we do not apologize for the disasters in which the triumphant creoles, in their independence, immersed their countries, by breaking the entire vice-regal commercial and administrative systems, to become cacique-holders of millions of square kilometers.

That is enough apologizing for today.

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Translated from the Spanish by N. Dass.

The [image](#) shows a portrait of Antonio Mendoza, Viceroy of New Spain, dated 1535, by an unknown painter.

