DIEGO VELÁZQUEZ, FIRST GOVERNOR OF CUBA

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DIEGO VELÁZQUEZ, FIRST GOVERNOR OF CUBA

I. BACKGROUND

When Diego Velázquez was born in Cuéllar, province of Segovia, kingdom of Castile, in 1465,¹ Spain was at the threshold of its career as one of the greatest empire-builders of modern history. True, Castile was yet the battleground of noble and king; the Moors still held Granada; the unification of the peninsular states by Ferdinand and Isabella had not begun, their marriage was not to occur for four more years; Spain was only a geographical entity. There were, nonetheless, deep-rooted evidences pointing toward an era of unparalleled military and colonizing success.

The long warfare directed at driving the Moslems from the country had infused into the Christian inhabitants a traditional love of fighting, and placed an emphasis upon the rewards of military success. The era from 711 to 1492 witnessed the joint occupation of the Iberian peninsula by Christian and Mohammedan,

¹Various dates between 1460 and 1470 are cited by authorities for the birth of Velázquez. The date cited above is the word of José A. de Luna of the Archivo General de Indias at Seville. Enciclopedia Italiana, XXXV, 20.
a period during the first part of which the Moslems ruled peacefully and the country prospered; then, with the crusading fervor sweeping Europe, the Spanish inaugurated their own domestic crusade against their infidel enemies. By 1465 when Velázquez was born, only the Moorish kingdom of Granada remained to be conquered. By that time the Spanish military tradition was deeply established in the temperament of the people.

The wars against the Moors had, besides the political objective of regaining territory, a religious purpose, namely, to wrest the peninsula from the control of an enemy of Christ. A Spanish temperament of intolerance was bred by this religious warfare. It made the Spaniard more fanatically devout to his religion than was any other European. The crusading spirit was strong in Spain in 1492 when Granada was conquered and the infidel driven back to Africa.¹ This same crusading spirit motivated, in part, the conquistadores in the New World as they fought for an empire for God and their King. Diego Velázquez was a conquistador.

Thus the Spaniard became, more than anything else, a fanatical Christian warrior. By the time

¹Sweet, A History of Latin America, 15-17.
Velázquez was born, this was the cardinal interest of every ambitious Spaniard. His extreme emphasis on arms, honor, and the glories of fighting made him look with contempt upon ordinary manual labor, an attitude which tended to reduce the economic life of his land to a low level. These things help us to understand the psychology of the Spanish conquistador of the sixteenth century and explain many of his actions.

In 1474 Isabella ascended the throne of Castile; her husband, Ferdinand, became King of Aragon five years later, in 1479, when Diego Velázquez was a youth of fourteen. Their joint reign witnessed the beginnings of the transition of Spain from a medieval, anarchistic group of states to a modern, unified, institutionalized nation. Elements tending toward decentralization and disorder were brought under control and life in its institutional phases approximated ours today; Spain was ready to enter upon a career of conquest and the status as a world power.¹

To unify the nation and centralize authority, the Catholic Kings, as Ferdinand and Isabella were

called, began vigorous action against their traditional enemies, the nobles. When three hundred horsemen rode into Galicia in 1480 and destroyed forty-six castles, restored tributes to the crown once more, and permanently established the royal power, it was indicative of similar action in other parts of Spain.\(^1\)

The two rulers were successful in their effort to extend their authority over the petty nobles and thereby accomplish political unity.

Ferdinand, pursuing a vigorous foreign policy, entered Spain into European politics on a greater scale than ever before. Velázquez as a young man before he sailed to America served with the Spanish army in Naples.\(^2\) The Canary Islands were captured by Spain in 1494 and Melilla, North Africa, was taken in 1497.

In harmony with the religious temperament of their subjects, Ferdinand and Isabella undertook to expel all non-Catholic elements from their realm. The Inquisition, long in Aragon, was created in Castile in 1478. In 1492, at

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\(^1\) Chapman, A History of Spain, 203. Hereafter "Chapman" will refer to this work.

\(^2\) Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada, LXVII, 675.
the time Velázquez had returned from Naples and was living at Seville, the Jews were ordered to leave Spain. The economic damage to the nation by the loss of these financial and industrial leaders was irreparable. It was intensified ten years later when Isabella forced either conversion or exile upon the mudéjares, or Moors, the farmers and cattle raisers of Spain.

Other developments showing the policy of the Catholic Kings toward unity and internal reorganization of the country are: the incorporation into the crown of the masterships of the three military orders of Spain; in municipal life, the increase of royal authority and the tendency toward unity; the decline of the Cortes of Castile and that of Aragon; the modernization of the army and the harmony between papal and royal interests.

In extending royal authority throughout Spain and over the municipalities certain institution such as the residencia, pesquiza, and veedor were used. When Spanish government

1Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada, LXVII, 675.
2Chapman, 219-227.
was extended over the New World, these institutions were an important means of sustaining the authority of the mother country.¹ Diego Velázquez, as governor of Cuba, had many experiences with these institutions of royal control.

Although as the sixteenth century dawned, Spain was emerging as the greatest European state, guided by the two vigorous sovereigns, the economic life of the nation was not healthy. Chapman says that although the Catholic Kings dealt energetically with economic problems, they were hampered by theories of economic medievalism which persists longer in material affairs than in other institutions; and that the belief of the crown that legislation and state intervention would provide a panacea for economic evils was a survival of false economic ideas from the past.² Following this philosophy, protection and excessive regulation were practised, but Spain throughout the era of its greatness had an artificially stimulated industrial life and an unprogressive agricultural one.³ The contempt which the Spaniard had for labor is one big reason why Spain

¹ Chapman, 220.
² Ibid., 228-29.
³ Ibid.
produced so little real wealth.

The Spanish people were, by temperament and organization, well-fitted for their supreme role as conquerors of a New World.
II. VELÁZQUEZ CONQUERS AND SETTLES CUBA

The life story of Diego Velázquez is bound closely to the story of the earliest explorations and settlements made by the Spaniards in the New World. No documentary evidence has been discovered for this paper concerning his early life, ancestry, education, occupations, or any of the facts concerning his early life in Spain. All we know is that he was a Castilian, born at Cuéllar, province of Segovia, in 1465. As a young man he served the Spanish army in Naples; returning from there, he lived in Seville.

Velázquez early in 1493 must have been stirred by the excitement caused by the return of Columbus to nearby Palos from his voyage of discovery. We know at least that when the Admiral sailed from Cadiz that September on his second voyage, Diego Velázquez, then twenty-eight, accompanied the expedition.¹ He never saw his native Spain again.

Velázquez stayed on the island of Española

¹Enciclopedia Italiana, XXXV, 20; Herrera, General History of America, I, 291, hereafter "Herrera."
when Columbus returned to Spain. He survived the early hardships which befell the settlers under the administration of Columbus’ brother, Bartolomé Colón, who governed the island from 1493 to 1500. Colón must have thought well of Velázquez for, on at least one occasion when he was absent from the island he named Velázquez temporary captain-general of the Indies, the title of the ruler of Española. Velázquez, on his part, it is said, endeavored to make himself worthy of that confidence.¹

Nothing is said about Velázquez’ relations with Francisco de Bobadilla, governor of the Indies from 1500 to 1501; but we know that he was a favorite of Governor Nicolás de Ovando who served from 1501 to 1509 when Diego Colón, son of the great discoverer, replaced him.²

Diego Velázquez first distinguished himself in the Indies by his suppression of a native revolt on the island of Española. It was in 1503 when he was already thirty-eight years old. The rebellion was that of the natives of

¹Diccionario Enciclopédico Hispano-Americano, XXIII, 261.
²Ibid.; Herrera, I, 291.
two provinces, one on the northwest cape and one on the west coast of Española. Ovando sent Velázquez and another captain to subdue the Indians, Velázquez being sent to the northwestern extremity of the island, known as Hanyguayaba. After a brief, ineffectual resistance, the Indians fled, only to be hunted down by the Spaniards. The revolt was quelled by the capture of the native king of the region.¹

Ovando, pleased with Velázquez, ordered five new towns built on Española. Velázquez founded at least three of the towns: (1) Salvatierra de la Zabana on the southern coast of Hanyguayaba, his port of embarkation several years later when he sailed to conquer Cuba, (2) Yáquimo, on the same coast, and (3) San Juan de la Maguana, perhaps a hundred miles² west of the city of Santo Domingo. These towns, along with two others founded at the same time, were placed under the lieutenantship of

¹Las Casas, Historia de las Indias, II, 31, hereafter "Las Casas"; Herrera, I, 291; Gomara, Conquista de México, 297, hereafter "Gomara". Gomara tells of Cortés joining Velázquez in subduing a rebellion in Hanyguayaba and other provinces, but Cortés did not leave Spain until 1504.
²Reckoning the league at three miles.
Velázquez. It was indicative of the high favor with which he was held by Nicolás de Ovando.\(^1\) The good clérigo, Las Casas, does not fail to impress upon his reader that the towns were built with forced Indian labor, which was against the express orders of the Catholic King.\(^2\)

Only a short distance to the west of Española lay the island of Cuba, discovered by Columbus on his first voyage, explored by him but unmolested by the Spaniards while the settlement of Española was being carried out. It was long considered a peninsula of the mainland until the year 1508, when Sebastian de Ocampo circumnavigated it. It is a fertile island, of charming natural beauty.

Ferdinand expressed interest in the island in 1509 when he directed Admiral Diego Colón and his treasurer, Miguel de Pasamonte to send "able and experienced persons" there to determine whether or not there was gold to be found on the island.\(^3\)

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\(^1\) Las Casas, II, 31; Herrera, I, 251.
\(^2\) Las Casas, II, 32.
Early in 1511\(^1\) Diego Colón appointed Velázquez as his lieutenant to carry out the conquest of Cuba. By that time Velázquez had become the richest man in Española and was highly esteemed among all the old settlers, of which he was one.\(^2\) Wright, who has scoured the archives at Seville, says that Colón must have been influenced strongly in the decision by the royal treasurer in Española, Miguel de Pasamonte, a court favorite unfriendly toward Colón; and Lope de Conchillos, the royal secretary. There is no documentary evidence for this but it is known that contemporaries gossiped about them, and through Pasamonte, Velázquez early established direct communication with the crown, thus slighting his superior, Colón. Moreover, the king was suspicious of Diego Colón.\(^3\)

Velázquez' qualifications for the task of conquering Cuba were several.

"By the Spaniards who served under him he was admired because of his fine figure, fattening then but still handsome, and because of his graceful presence, his fair face and blond hair; they liked him

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\(^1\) Wright infers that it was in 1510, 23.
\(^2\) Las Casas, II, 200.
\(^3\) Wright, 23-24.
for his amiability and for his style of conversation (on topics appreciated by young men not overly well disciplined.) They respected him because when occasion demanded he could demonstrate his authority. He was, in fine, a man well equipped by character, experience and fortune, for further leadership."1

In the summer of that same year, 1511, King Ferdinand informed Colón of his hearty approval of the choice of Velázquez to effect the conquest of Cuba. The king, moreover, ratified Colón's promise to Velázquez that the crown would repay him all he should spend from his private fortune.2 There is no documentary evidence that the king did repay him.3 Velázquez' cousin, Cristóbal de Cuéllar, the royal accountant, or contador, in Española also aided him in preparing his expedition.4

No copy of Velázquez' commission from Colón seems to exist.5 But we do know that Ferdinand sent instructions of his own to Colón's lieutenant and he ordered Admiral Colón not to

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1 Wright, 23, Cf. Las Casas, II, 200-01; Herrera, II, 9.
3 Wright, 25.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid., 24.
oppose these. ¹ The king ordered that a policy of kindness be carried out toward the Cubeños, the aborigines of Cuba. ² There may have been further instructions.

When news of the appointment of Velázquez spread through Española, many men gathered to go with him, some out of love for him, others because they were financially distressed. About three hundred men gathered at his town, Salvatierra, located on the northwest extremity of Española, just across from Cuba. Velázquez assembled three or four ships and the expedition embarked. ³ The date of the departure is not certain, but it was probably early in 1511. ⁴

The expedition landed at a port called de Palmas, in the native province of Maycó. They were immediately resisted by the natives of the region who, although aided by Indian fugitives

¹ Col. Doc. Ined... Ultramar, V, page CXV of "Ensayo Histórico sobre la Legislación de los Estados Españoles de Ultramar," a sort of index by Antonio María Fabié.
² Wright, 23.
³ Las Casas, II, 201; Herrera, II, 9.
⁴ Wright, 23; Herrera says November 1511; II,16; Las Casas says "at end of 1511," II, 211.
from Española, proved to be no match for the arms of the Spaniards.\textsuperscript{1} They were led by a chief known as Hatuey, formerly a cacique, or chief in Española, who had maintained an effective spy system in that island and was thereby able to warn the Cubeños of the coming of the Spaniards.\textsuperscript{2} Their bows and arrows proving no match for Velázquez and his men, the natives fled into the woods and mountains pursued by the Spaniards. Finally, after about two months of fighting, Hatuey was betrayed into the hands of the aggressors and the resistance of Maycé province came to an end. The cacique's followers were taken captives by the Spaniards, but Hatuey was burned at the stake. It was Hatuey who, as he faced death, refused Christian conversion lest in dying he should go to heaven only to find Spaniards there.\textsuperscript{3}

Although Velázquez did not possess the authority of repartidor from the king or Colón, he immediately began to allot captured Indians to his men as permanent servants. These were

\textsuperscript{1}Las Casas, II, 211.
\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., 201, 202.
\textsuperscript{3}Ibid., 211-12; Herrera, II, 16.
known as "piezas" and were not to be sold or traded, but these instructions were not obeyed.¹

Velázquez exceeded his authority in this action but pleased his men.

Young Pánfilo de Narváez, whose later history is linked so closely with that of Velázquez, arrived in Cuba from Jamaica bringing thirty expert archers with him to aid in the conquest of Cuba. He was an admirer of Velázquez, having been born in Valladolid, near Cuéllar, Velázquez' home town. The future conqueror of Cuba received his friend gladly, making him second in command and allotting "piezas" to him and his men.²

Preparatory to a more formal and more complete commending of the Indians of Maycí, Velázquez then founded the first settlement in Cuba. It was called Baracoa and was situated on the northern coast near the eastern extremity of the island.³ Until Santiago was founded four years

¹Las Casas, II, 211-12; Herrera, II, 16.
²Las Casas, II, 212.
³Ibid., 212-13.
later, Baracoa was Velázquez' base of operations and the chief town of the island. Here he built a fort. Other buildings were constructed — humble bohios, or native huts, of bamboo, palm and adobe. Although none is reputed to be found in the vicinity today, the men of the expedition found gold in the nearby rivers.¹

While most of the men were engaged in making Baracoa a liveable town, Velázquez sent Narváez with twenty-five or thirty men into the rich, level Bayamo province, about 120-150 miles due west of the newly-established base of operations. Narváez rode a mare; the rest walked.² Velázquez, in his instructions to his young lieutenant urged him to treat the Indians kindly and to inform them of the allegiance they owed the king of Spain. Perhaps Velázquez was repeating his own commission in these instructions; at least they were in accordance with the royal policy of the time.³

Upon receiving word from Narváez that the attitude of the Indians was menacing, Velázquez sent

¹Wright, 26.
²Las Casas, II, 213; Wright says: a force of one hundred infantry and eight horsemen, 27-28.
³Wright, 28.
reinforcements to him.\textsuperscript{1} Las Casas, the authority for the conquest of Cuba, says that the natives received the men with gifts of food, but were frightened by the nervous actions of Narváez' mare.\textsuperscript{2}

While Narváez was in the Bayamo region, Velázquez was forced to suppress a revolt headed by one Francisco de Morales, a lieutenant of his over one of the conquered districts, and a favorite of Colón, it seems. Dissatisfied with Velázquez' allotting of Indians, Morales arbitrarily captured and used the natives of his district. Although the king even side-stepped Colón to issue orders directly to Velázquez urging him to proceed immediately with all rigor against Morales, December, 1512,\textsuperscript{3} Velázquez shipped the malcontent to Españaola to be dealt with by Colón.\textsuperscript{4} Morales' followers decided to appeal their case in Españaola.

To make the perilous canoe trip to Españaola, they chose one of their number, a very brave man, Hernán

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[1]{Wright, 28; Las Casas, who accompanied the expedition, does not mention these reinforcements.}
\footnotetext[2]{Las Casas, II, 215.}
\footnotetext[3]{Col. Doc. Ined.... Ultramar, I, 32-34.}
\footnotetext[4]{Las Casas, II, 214; Wright, 40.}
\end{footnotes}
Cortés, the secretary of Velázquez. The latter learned of Cortés' defection just in time to seize him as he was embarking. He was for hanging his faithless servant but, moved by the intercessions of Cortés' friends, he pardoned him.\footnote{Las Casas, II, 214-15.} Later their early friendship was renewed only to be ruptured permanently by the crafty Cortés when Velázquez sent him to Mexico. The relationship of Velázquez with Cortés has, more than anything else, made him of interest to posterity.

Shortly after this, Velázquez received word from Narváez that the natives had ambushed him and that he had found it necessary to fight them. Narváez added that the province of Bayamo, nevertheless, had been brought into tranquil service of the king. This must not have been true for Velázquez himself soon left Baracoa for Bayamo where he found it necessary to "reassure" the natives.\footnote{Wright, 29.} Las Casas tells of Narváez scaring all the natives out of Bayamo
into Camaguey province about 150 miles northwest, so that when Velázquez arrived, he found only aged and sick Cubeños there.\(^1\) Wright, a modern scholar writing from new documents, is more probably correct.

After a few days in Bayamo, Velázquez received word from the Indians that a Spanish vessel had arrived at a port called Xagua,\(^2\) about 400 miles away, on the south coast. Velázquez, via Indian messengers, told the Spaniards to come to Bayamo. The leader of the stranded men was Sebastian de Ocampo, who, returning to Española after having taken provisions to Darien, was forced to beach his unseaworthy ship on the south shore of Cuba. Receiving Velázquez' message, he left three casks of wine and four Spaniards at Xagua and came with about a dozen men in a canoe to Velázquez who received him cordially.

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\(^1\)Las Casas, II, 214.
\(^2\)Modern Cienfuegos, Cuba.
\(^3\)Las Casas, II, 216.
A short time after the arrival of Ocampo, news reached Velázquez that his cousin, Cristóbal de Cuéllar, now treasurer of Cuba, had arrived at Baracoa with his daughter, María de Cuéllar. Already the two men had completed arrangements for the marriage of Velázquez and Doña María. Leaving fifty men at Bayamo under the command of his young nephew, Juan de Grijalva, assisted by Fray Las Casas as adviser until the return of Narváez, Velázquez hurried back to Baracoa for his wedding.¹ He was also afraid that a recrudescence of disorder, such as that of Morales, might occur or that his men might leave the island.² One Sunday, early in 1513,³ Velázquez and Doña María were married in the groom’s new town on the shores of Cuba. But the next Saturday Doña María died and Velázquez was a widower. Las Casas says, "The sadness and mourning was twice as great as the joy had been."⁴ There is no record that Velázquez ever married again.

¹Las Casas, II, 216-17.
²Wright, 41.
³The date is given by Wright, 41.
⁴Las Casas, II, 217.
Meanwhile Narváez had returned to Bayamo; the Cubeños of the province also returned, having been forced from Camaguey by the natives there, who feared a famine.¹ Having decided to push the conquest farther into the island, Velázquez ordered Narváez and his men, together with those left under Grijalva, to march into Camaguey and more distant provinces, taking possession of all that country for Velázquez in the name of the king. He also ordered Las Casas to accompany him, probably because of the clérigo's success in dealing with the Indians.² For Narváez and the men, it was frankly a gold-hunting expedition.³

On Las Casas alone we must rely for the account of Narváez in Camaguey. The benevolent padre tells of friendly natives, unjustified Spanish attacks, his own deeds of mercy, and the return of the natives to the region after having fled the hated Spaniards. Due to the bias of Las Casas, it is difficult to draw the line

¹Las Casas, II, 217.
²Las Casas, II, 218; Herrera, II, 45.
³Wright, 30.
between fact and fiction in these accounts.¹

Marching toward the west, Narváez had word from the Indians informing him of two Spanish women and a man being held captives by the natives in Havana province, farther west. Las Casas immediately sent word to these Indians telling them to send him the three without delay, or he would be angry.² When Narváez informed Velázquez of this, the governor³ sent from Baracoa a light, well-provisioned brigantine west along the north coast. He told Narváez to be on the lookout for the missing persons and the brigantine.⁴ It was while Narváez and his men were living at a north shore Indian town, which they called Casaharta (meaning "house replete") for its abundance of food, that a party of Indians arrived from the west bringing the two women. The Spaniards listened to their story of being ship-wrecked with a party that was fleeing

¹Las Casas, II, 218-22.
²Ibid., 223.
³Really the lieutenant of the governor Colón, i.e., "teniente del gobernador." Wright, 35.
from Hojeda's starved settlement at Urabá, and of seeing the natives wash gold from a stream in Havana province. Las Casas married them to two members of the expedition and the party left Casaharta for the gold of the western rivers.\(^1\) Narváez and his men made their way into Havana province. Here they rescued the captive Spaniard\(^2\) and found gold as the women had said. As they were encamped on the north shore of Havana province, Velázquez' brigantine arrived with orders from Velázquez.\(^3\)

While Narváez had been marching almost the length of the island, Velázquez had been busy getting Baracoa established, allotting Indians to those whom he chose, especially favoring himself, his relatives, and close friends. All were anxious to use their encomiendas for the search and extraction of gold. He wanted Narváez to meet him at Xagua.

\(^1\)Las Casas, II, 223; Wright, 35-36.
\(^2\)Las Casas, II, 224-25.
\(^3\)Wright, 35-36.
for the Christmas holidays, 1513; the trip westward would give him the chance to see the country and choose the best places for further towns he had in mind. These orders he sent to Narváez in the light brigantine mentioned above.¹

As Velázquez proceeded to Xagua, November, 1913, he stopped and founded the town of Bayamo.² He selected the site because of the fertility of the land and its value for crops and cattle raising.³ Leaving Bayamo in construction, the party continued on to Xagua. Along the route Velázquez stopped to compel allegiance of the numerous caciques who had not yet demonstrated their obeisance to the king of Spain. The expedition proceeded Velázquez by canoe along the shore, and the rest of the men marched on foot overland. On December 18, 1513 they arrived at the port of Xagua.⁴

It will be remembered that Ocampo had left four Spaniards and three casks of wine at Xagua the year before. It was at this same port that Velázquez and Narváez joined to celebrate the Christmas season that

¹Las Casas, II, 225; Wright, 36.
²Not on the site of the present city, however.
³Wright, 44.
⁴Ibid., 57, 58.
year, 1513.\footnote{Las Casas, II, 225. The fate of the four Spaniards and the three casks of wine left by Ocampo is not known. Dare we hope that Ocampo's men spared the wine for Velázquez Christmas celebration?}

Narváez had brought with him the cacique who was charged with drowning the castaways of the expedition from which the two women and the man only were saved. Velázquez reproved him, gave him gifts, and released him.\footnote{Wright, 37.}

After the holiday season at Xagua, the Spaniards went out looking for gold. Velázquez sent men up the Arimao river. Gold was found here and the Spaniards set the natives to panning it for them. Pleased with the yield, Velázquez built his next town here, in well-populated native territory although the port was not very good. The town was about fifty miles east of Xagua; Velázquez named it Trinidad.\footnote{Ibid., 58; Las Casas, II, 225-26.}

In February, 1514, while Velázquez was yet at Trinidad, two caravels for which he had asked the king arrived at Bayamo from Seville. Because the Trinidad region was facing famine, he sent one of the ships to Jamaica to bring a cargo of cazabi bread back to the new settlement. The
other caravel he sent to Española for cattle, mares, corn and other things. The records say that he was very slow in paying for these things.\(^1\)

Soon after dispatching the two caravels, Velázquez and Narváez separated, Narváez going westward to complete the conquest of the island, Velázquez returning eastward to attend to the administrative duties waiting for him at Baracoa. On the south shore, near modern Batabano, Narváez founded a settlement which, after many vicissitudes, became the city of Havana.\(^2\)

From there Narváez went to the north shore, added the brigantine there to his expedition, and then pushed into the far western end of the island, today called Pinar del Río province. This completed the conquest and occupation of Cuba by the Spaniards.\(^3\)

Velázquez meanwhile had returned eastward. On the way back to Baracoa, he ordered another town, Sancti Spiritus, to be founded inland midway between the north and south shores.\(^4\) Thus at least by the

\(^1\)Wright, 58; Col. Doc. Ined.... Ultramari, I, 34-35.
\(^2\)Wright, 37, 59.
\(^3\)Ibid., 37; Las Casas, II, 227. Las Casas says all this happened in 1513.
\(^4\)Las Casas, II, 226, 316.
summer of 1514, five towns were established in Cuba: Baracoa, Bayamo, Trinidad, Havana and Sancti Spiritus. The method Velázquez used was to choose the location, name the vecinos\(^1\) for each, and then commend the Indians to work for them.\(^2\) He had been named repartidor of the Indians of Cuba a year earlier.\(^3\)

Ever since the beginning of the conquest of the island, King Ferdinand had been solicitous for the welfare of the natives of the island. Perhaps he considered it to be bad business rather than unrighteousness, for the decimating of the indigenous populations of Española and Puerto Rico had created a need for the importation of slave labor.\(^4\) He seemed to be pleased with Velázquez' Indian policy; at any rate, he was not slow to praise him for his treatment of the Indians under his authority.\(^5\)

To satisfy the demands of his men, especially those who had stayed behind at Baracoa during the summer of 1512, Velázquez found it necessary to

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\(^1\) Vecino was a resident landowner, holding the land in perpetuity. Wright, 47.
\(^2\) Las Casas, II, 227.
\(^3\) Infra, p. 30.
\(^4\) Wright, 42-43.
initiate in those early days on the island a mild sort of repartimiento on his own authority. It seemed to be his only way out of the dilemma. Many of his men had not shared the pleasures of the expedition, either with Narváez or with him when he entered Bayamo for several months in 1512-1513. They threatened to return to Española. Besides, the same kind of a repartimiento had been used in the early days on Española when he was living there.¹

The repartimiento method Velázquez devised in 1512 was purposely mild, that he might protect himself against royal displeasure. He assigned the Cubeños for one-month periods only and with pay. After that they were permitted to return home. His policy was to allot mostly the Indians of the Mayci district where the Spaniards had encountered the stiffest resistance, called by them a "rebellion." Velázquez maintained that he made special efforts to see that the Cubeños were well-treated. In reporting on this preliminary repartimiento Velázquez made the rather equivocal declaration that the Indians returned

¹Wright, 39-40.
'very happy' to their bohios and that the Spaniards were 'satisfied' and lost the discontent they had had. Considering the greedy natures of the Spaniards, one can imagine how pleased they must have been to see their workers leave the mines or other labor after a month of service. For in Española the permanent repartimiento was already in use.¹

In the spring of 1513 Velázquez received the coveted commission, that of repartidor of the Indians of Cuba. There are two royal cedulas granting him this prerogative, both are from Valladolid, one dated April 3, 1513, the other May 8, 1513.² They both recommend that in his commending of the Indians he favor first, the royal officials, then the first settlers and "discoverers", then those carrying royal cedulas and after all these have been served, those who he thinks will best teach and treat the Indians. Ferdinand ordered Diego Colón not to interfere with Velázquez' repartimiento of the Indians of Cuba.³ In cedulas that April the king also ordered Colón not to place any impediment in the passage of the wives of the settlers of Cuba over

¹Wright, 42-43.
³Ibid., VI, 3.
to that island.¹ To further indicate his pleasure with Velázquez, he granted him a substantial subsidy, that of warden of the fortress at Baracoa with a salary of 20,000 maravedíes per year,² "a profitable sinecure which Velázquez enjoyed all his life."³

These royal decrees reached Velázquez while he was busy at Bayamo that spring. They were in reply to some letters he had written to the court through Pasamonte. They revealed that Ferdinand was disposed to recognize Velázquez as considerably independent of the authority of Diego Colón.⁴

Ferdinand gave Velázquez no specific instructions as to the terms on which repartimientos were to be made. As repartidor Velázquez was responsible to the crown only, and the king told the officials of Española this. But they, he added, might furnish Velázquez with written advice as to the methods to employ in making encomiendas.

Upon receiving his appointment, Velázquez had it proclaimed at Baracoa and Bayamo. Then he began to allot encomiendas, beginning with the king's treasurer and his own cousin, Cristóbal de Cuéllar,

¹Col. Doc. Ined.... Ultramar, VI, 3.
²Tbid., I, 39. According to Chapman, 225, the maravedí was one-sixth of a cent. That would make the sinecure amount to $33 per year.
³Wright, 45-46.
⁴Tbid., 45.
to whom he gave 200 Indians. The men of his ex-
pedition were also served first. The method he
used was to assign a specified cacique and all the
inhabitants of his village, these to serve during
the governor's pleasure. They were non-transfer-
able. The Spaniard who received them was obligated
to feed, clothe, and teach them Christianity.
Velázquez was now clearly the most powerful man in
Cuba. It was in his power to make or break any
other Spaniard in the island.¹

Spaniards were swarming into Cuba, eager to
receive land and Indians. They almost emptied
Española, just as Cuba was later deserted for a
more profitable mainland. In Cuba the primary
desire was to use the Indians to mine gold for
them.² While Velázquez may have served the inter-
est of many of them to their satisfaction, he
was always careful to advance himself first. He,
like everyone else, was eager for wealth. His
life is more understandable when that fact is re-
membered. He made choice allotments to his business
partners all over the island but between him and

¹Wright, 46,47.
²Ibid., 49.
these associates "Veﬂázquez seems to often have gotten the best of the bargain."

In 1513 the crown issued several letters recommending encomiendas to court favorites.\(^1\) One ordered that Colón be given Indians just the same as the other officials. Another ordered the repartidor to give eighty Indians to Gil Gonzales de Ávila if he is married, if not, he will be obligated to marry within two years and bring his wife to Cuba!\(^2\)

Cuba in 1514 was in a state of quiet and peace. We have already described the final conquest of the island accomplished early that year by Narváez; and the settlements made by Velázquez at Trinidad and Sancti Spiritus at the same time.\(^3\) Herrera adds that fresh mines of good gold were discovered daily and that the Spaniards gathered the gold and farmed.\(^4\)

The year 1514 seems to have been occupied in the multitude of things that are necessary in developing a new region. Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, an old friend of Velázquez on Española, companion of Narváez for two years as the latter

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\(^1\) Col. Doc. Ined.... Ultramar, VI, 3-4.
\(^2\) Supra, 22-24.
\(^3\) II, 74.
conquered Cuba,\textsuperscript{1} author of the basic narrative of the conquest of Cuba, and recipient of an encomienda with Pedro de la Rentería near Trinidad early in 1514,\textsuperscript{2} suffered a change of heart that same year and decided to renounce his Indians.\textsuperscript{3}

He went to Velázquez and told him of the sin of the encomienda and that he was returning his Indians to the governor. Velázquez, astonished, said that he would not hear of it. He told Las Casas, "I am giving you two weeks to think it over well, after which you can come back and tell me what you have decided." But the priest was firm and made Velázquez promise not to betray the secret. On the Feast of the Assumption, August 15, 1514, Las Casas from his pulpit revealed the surprising fact himself.\textsuperscript{4}

The padre then decided to go to Spain to secure legislation against the unjust repartimiento system. To prevent Velázquez and the settlers from obstructing his departure, he spread word that he was going to Paris to study and graduate. The Spaniards,

\textsuperscript{1} Las Casas, II, 212.  
\textsuperscript{2} Ibid., 226; Wright, 63.  
\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., 216-218.  
\textsuperscript{4} Ibid.
Velázquez included, were deceived by this subterfuge and Las Casas left for España the same year to plead the cause of the Indians at the court of the Catholic King, Ferdinand.\(^1\) It was September, 1515, before he cleared from the city of Santo Domingo for Spain.\(^2\)

In October, 1514, the king wrote to the governor of Cuba charging him to make new towns, beautify the town of Trinidad, endeavor to supply Castilla del Oro with bread and meat, treat the Indians well and return fugitive Indians from España to that island.\(^3\).

That same year, 1514, rich mines were discovered on the north central shore of the island. The governor gave them, along with encomiendas of the natives there, to members of the king's council, like the Bishop of Burgos and secretary Conchillo.\(^4\) The gift strengthened the favor with which Velázquez was held at court and further cemented his friendship with the powerful Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca, Bishop of Burgos and president of the Consejo de Indias (Council of the Indies).

\(^1\)Las Casas, II, 322-25.
\(^2\)Ibid., 326.
\(^3\)Col. Doc. Ined. ... Ultramar, VI, 4.
\(^4\)Las Casas, II, 320.
By 1515 the governor seems to have been, at least in outward appearance, independent of his superior, Diego Colón, who had sent him to Cuba and whose lieutenant he was yet supposed to be. Velázquez' contact with the crown was direct, as one can tell by the cedulas and actions of the governor that year. At the beginning of that year, Velázquez sent Miguel de Pasamonte, the royal treasurer, to the court to ask that he, the governor, be released from the obligation of having to inform Colón of his conduct. As a present he sent Ferdinand a map of Cuba. The king issued a cedula from Medina del Campo on February 22, 1515, acknowledging receipt of the map and praising Velázquez' deeds but silent on that which must have been of cardinal importance to the governor of Cuba. We now know that as the king dispatched the cedula he was intending to subject Velázquez and the royal officials of Cuba to the routine residencia. Being genuinely satisfied with Velázquez, however, he countermanded the residencia order in July.

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1 Diccionario Enciclopédico Hispano Americano, XXIII, 261.
3 Ibid., 59-60; Wright, 65.
By the middle of April, 1515, the site of Santiago was probably determined. The king urged its founding that it might serve as a supply base for the promising colony at Castilla del Oro. It was on the best harbor of the southern coast of the island and the only settlement in Cuba during these early years that was not founded for the purpose of mining nearby gold.\textsuperscript{1} It soon became the chief city and capital of the island.

In July Pánfilo de Narváez and Antonio Velázquez were sent to Spain as authorized procuradores (proctors or representatives) by the town councils to present the king various demands on behalf of the settlers of Cuba. The inhabitants were already prospering and fitting out ships to trade and hunt slaves. Among other things, Narváez and Velázquez asked Ferdinand to make the encomiendas perpetual, to declare non-residents ineligible for encomiendas, and to make Velázquez governor of Cuba immediately. They carried to Ferdinand 12,437 pesos in gold as the quinto real or "royal fifth" and promises of more. It was the first large consignment of Cuban gold sent to the king, who responded by allowing Cuba only half of the items

\textsuperscript{1}Wright, 59-60.
the settlers requested as necessary to produce still more of the precious metal.¹

By August, 1515, Santiago had been founded. There were then seven towns in Cuba: Baracoa, Bayamo, Trinidad, Sancti Spiritus, Havana, Camaguey and Santiago.²

Highly pleased with Velázquez, the king wrote his agents at Seville that they should cooperate with Velázquez in his admirable policy with regard to Cuba... 'no man could act more wisely in affairs of that island than he.'³

The outstanding event of the year 1516 was the death of Ferdinand in January of that year and consequent readjustment in the affairs of the Indies carried out by the regent for young Charles, Cardinal Francisco Ximénez de Cisneros. Las Casas since his arrival in Spain the year previous had been importuning the crown to ameliorate the condition of the native races of the Indies. He complained that Velázquez was writing to Conchillos and Fonseca against him.⁴

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¹Wright, 68-69; Las Casas, II, 323; Herrera, II, 75. Herrera misdates this as occurring at the end of 1514. They were representatives of the cabildos of Cuba, not personal representatives of Velázquez.
²Wright, 59.
³Ibid., 65.
⁴Las Casas, II, 327.
Las Casas was successful in convincing Ximénez that a change should be effected in the administration of the Indies. In July the regent appointed the Jeronymite order to care for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the natives of the Indies. In November, 1516, four Jeronymite friars sailed from San Lúcar for Santo Domingo where three of them constituted a court dealing especially in matters relating to the diminishing native race of Cuba.  

It is difficult, however, to find evidence that they ever influenced the condition of the Cubenos.

Velázquez was informed of their mission and told to favor them in it. As repartidor, he now was under superiors.

Narváez and Antonio Velázquez were still in Spain directing their petitions to the crown on behalf of the residents of Cuba. Their petitions relative to encomiendas were referred to the Jeronymites. In May, 1516, a Rodrigo de Villarroel was commissioned at Madrid as vedor or inspector of the gold and the melting house (fundición) at

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1 Las Casas, II, 330-32; Herrera, II, 101; Wright, 70.
2 Wright, 71.
3 Ibid, 70.
4 Ibid. 69.
Santiago.\textsuperscript{1}

Cuba in 1517 was a flourishing place. Many settlers were coming to the island from, not only Spain, but from other portions of the Indies. Commerce was considerable; the ships of the colonists frequented the ports of the New World and crossed the Atlantic Ocean to Spain. Ships from Seville entered Santiago harbor with cargoes of clothing, trinkets, food and other merchandise. The mines were productive. Hog and cattle raising thrived. The greatest colonial trade was with Darién.\textsuperscript{2} Velázquez was rich. His connections with the crown were so strong that even Diego Colón could not have removed him from office.\textsuperscript{3} Baracoa declined and Santiago became the civil and ecclesiastical capital of Cuba. Velázquez and the royal officials moved their residences there.\textsuperscript{4} The governor initiated crop cultivation on the island\textsuperscript{5} and built roads and trails.\textsuperscript{6} He laid out each town in traditional style: plaza de armas, church, official residence, and town hall. He appointed vecinos and established their town government, appointing

\begin{footnotes}
\item[2] Wright, 79-82.
\item[3] Ibid., 65, quoting Oviedo.
\item[4] Wright, 64.
\item[5] Ibid., 43.
\item[6] Ibid., 82; Col. Doc. Ined.... Ultramar, I, 73.
\end{footnotes}
the three regidores and two alcaldes, comprising the cabildo, or municipal council.¹

In the fall of 1517 the governor sent two caravels to Seville with 15,000 pesos for the king and requests for ornaments for the seven churches, two caravels of forty tons, tools and other things.² That year the crown again decided to hold the residencia of Velázquez. The Jeronymite fathers were provided with authority to hold the investigation but apparently they never used this power.³

¹Wright, 61-62.
²Col. Doc. Ined.... Ultramar, VI, 12.
³Wright, 95.
III. EXPEDITIONS PREVIOUS TO THAT OF CORTÉS

Cuba by 1517 was prosperous and its governor was rich. It should have been the happiest period of his life. But he stood at the threshold of tragedy. Had he devoted himself solely to his administrative duties in Cuba, given his efforts to the encouraging agriculture and cattle industry, his life story might have been different. But he had an overpowering desire to extend his authority, conquer new lands, gain a greater fame and wealth. From 1517 until his death in 1524 his life was bound, not to Cuba, but to the mainland west of Cuba. The story of the tragedy of Velázquez follows.

As early as 1514, while he was at Trinidad, Velázquez showed his desire to explore regions adjacent to Cuba. There, hearing of 'isles to the north' he asked permission of the king to discover them. The king refused, saying that he should content himself with Cuba and with building up trade between Cuba and the settlement at Castilla.
del Oro.  

By the summer of 1615, the native population had already diminished to such an extent that expeditions from Cuba began to man-hunt on the neighboring islands. The keys off Xagua, populated by refugees from Cuba itself probably, were specifically mentioned.  

Velázquez' policy with respect to the nearby islands was this: if the islands had gold, the Indians there would be kept there to work the mines; if there was no gold, the islands were "useless" and the natives would be taken as slaves to the settled districts. 

When Narváez and Antonio Velázquez sailed for Spain as the representatives of Cuba in the summer of 1615, they carried petitions to the king asking (1) that the king prohibit the exportation of Cubanos, (2) that due to the great expense of slave-hunting expeditions the king reduce his share of profits from a one-fifth portion to one-tenth, (3) that the king permit slave-hunting expeditions to nearby gold-producing islands (inconsistent with

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1Wright, 59.  
2Wright, 57-58.  
3Las Casas, II, 356.
Velázquez' policy for some reason or other), (4) that the king grant authority for Cuba to equip and send out ships 'to explore, with Diego Velázquez' advice', certain neighboring islands. At least half of these were referred to the Jeronymite court.\textsuperscript{1}

Whatever the tribunal of Jeronymite friars might have said, throughout 1516 Spaniards from Santiago engaged in profitable man-hunting expeditions\textsuperscript{2} to the Lucayos and other places.\textsuperscript{3} Juan Ponce once complained that Velázquez had 'scandalized all the land of Bimini and Florida' by taking 300 slaves from there.\textsuperscript{4}

It was in hunting slaves that the first governor of Cuba first came to know of the gold lands to the west, in a country known as Yucatan. Six years of effort to gain control of this land were to cost him his health and the greater part of his fortune. A slave ship returning from the Guanaja Islands, south of Cuba and near Tierra Firme, or Yucatan, revolted as the vessel lay off the south

\textsuperscript{1}Wright, 71-72.
\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., 71.
\textsuperscript{3}Las Casas, II, 347.
\textsuperscript{4}Wright, 79.
shore of Havana province. Gaining control of the ship, the Indians sailed home putting in danger the lives of twenty-five Spaniards who had been left there. When Velázquez heard of the revolt, he hurriedly sent ships to the rescue of the endangered Spaniards and, as he wrote Colón, 'from there to discover other islands and lands by which our Lord and their highnesses might be served by bringing the native population of them into our holy Catholic faith'. The expedition arrived too late to rescue the Spaniards but when they returned to Santiago, they brought back another load of natives, and what was more important, 20,000 pesos in gold, one-fifth as much as all Cuba was producing annually.\(^1\) The imagination of every gold-hungry Spaniard must have been excited by the reports of this new land where gold was to be had for the taking.

The next expedition to the region of the Guanajes and Yucatan was that of Francisco Hernández de Córdoba, which sailed in February, 1517. The initiative in forming the expeditions seems to have been on the part of three vecinos of Cuba,

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\(^1\)Las Casas, II, 347-49; Peter Martyr, De Orbe Novo, II, 22, (hereafter "Martyr"); Wright, 71-72. Peter Martyr's account varies a little from that of the others.
Córdoba being the leader. Despite Bernal Díaz's insistence that the purpose of the expedition was not that of slave-hunting,¹ such seems to have been one of the purposes of the expedition. Both Las Casas and the magistrates of Vera Cruz later said that it was.² The men received permission from Velázquez to explore, and Córdoba was commissioned to take possession for Velázquez in the name of the king of any new lands he might discover.³ The trading desire, so prominent in the following expeditions seems not to have motivated Córdoba and his men. Velázquez had a financial interest in the fleet, perhaps a fourth share.⁴

Córdoba and his men fared badly at the hands of the Indians of Yucatan, whose war-like nature had little in common with the gentle temperaments of the Cubanos. The weary expedition returned to Puerto de Carenas (later Havana) with a wonderful story of a country where dressed people built houses of lime and stone and cultivated corn. Moreover, they possessed gold, which they seemed to hold

¹Bernal Díaz, The True History of the Conquest of Mexico, 23, hereafter "Bernal Díaz."
²Las Casas, II, 357; Colección de Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de España, I, 422-23, hereafter "Col. Doc. Ined.... España."
³Las Casas, II, 357.
⁴Col. Doc. Ined.... España, I, 422-23.
in slight esteem. Córdoba, near death from the wounds he had received, wrote Velázquez from Carenas telling him of the promising country he had discovered. While Córdoba's men were dispersing throughout the island to recuperate and tell wonderful stories of their experiences, Córdoba went on to Santiago to see his governor.

"Velázquez received grief at hearing of the deaths of so many Spaniards and wounds of the rest, but the news of a great, rich land and many people and buildings of stone and mortar, all offered him inestimable hope, recompensing the grief with immense joy." 

Velázquez wrote to his patron, the Bishop of Burgos, president of the Consejo de Indias, of his great discovery and his expenses. Complained Bernal Díaz characteristically, "For all which he obtained fame and credit with his Majesty, but not a syllable was said of the poor soldiers who had expended their properties, and lost, or risked their lives in the expedition." 

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1 Las Casas, II, 362; Bernal Díaz, 36; Col. Doc. Inéd., España, I, 424; Gomara, 298.
2 Bernal Díaz, 36.
3 Wright, 73.
4 Las Casas, II, 362.
5 Bernal Díaz, 37.
As soon as he learned of Córdoba’s return, Velázquez began preparation for another expedition to Yucatan, this time especially to trade. The survivors of the Córdoba expedition were requesting that another expedition be sent "to bargain gold, for there must have been much there". To obtain further authority for this new expedition, he sent as proctor to the court his relative, Gonzalo de Guzmán, of whom we shall hear more later. Guzmán carried to the crown a report of the Córdoba expedition and the governor’s petition that he be made adelantado and governor over the new land with powers to conquer it at his own cost. Narváez was, at this time, still active as the agent of Cuba in Spain. Comtemporaneously he sent Hernan Cortés and Diego de Orellano to the fathers of San Jerónimo in Santo Domingo asking permission to explore and trade in the new lands. By mid-January, 1518, having received the permission of the Jeronymites, although no word had come from the court, Velázquez hurried to arm three ships and a brigantine, and

\[1\text{Col. Doc. Ined.... España, I, 424.}\]
\[2\text{Ibid., 425; Wright, 74.}\]
\[3\text{Ibid., 424; Ibid.}\]
to name his young nephew, Juan de Grijalva, to command the expedition. Córdoba, not yet dead, complained bitterly of this insult and protested that he should rightfully have been named. His physical condition, however, never could have stood it, for he died shortly afterwards of his wounds.¹

As captains of the other ships, the governor named Francisco de Ávila, Francisco de Montejo, and Pedro de Alvarado,² the latter two of which trio gained fame later as captains of Cortés. Several hundred men³ made up the expedition which sailed from Santiago in January, 1518.⁴

From the time Grijalva sailed from Cuba, Velázquez was unusually apprehensive and anxious for news from him. Receiving no word from the party, he despatched a small vessel commanded by a soldier, Cristóbal de Olid.⁵ Meanwhile Grijalva, who had been trading with the natives along the coast of Yucatán and northward, sent his captain, Pedro de Alvarado, back to his uncle with the treasure that

¹Col. Doc. Ined.... España, I, 425; Las Casas, II, 362; Wright, 74.
²Martyr, II, 12; Las Casas, II, 387.
³The chroniclers disagree on the exact number.
⁴Wright, 74; Herrera, II, 120, says April 8.
⁵Gomara, 299; Bernal Díaz, 48.
had so far been bartered from the Indians. The arrival of Alvarado greatly relieved the governor. More important than that was the treasure which the caravel brought back. Velázquez showered favors upon the fortunate Alvarado.¹

Whether Olid returned at the same time Alvarado did or whether he did not make port again until Grijalva had returned is not agreed upon by the early writers. The voyage had been a stormy one and Olid probably returned sometime later to Santiago at the conclusion of a fruitless search.²

Despite the fact that the treasure sent back with Alvarado pleased Velázquez, the governor was becoming displeased with his nephew. Not only had Alvarado carried complaints against Grijalva³ but Velázquez himself, seeing the results of Grijalva's bartering was irked that such small profit had been gained.⁴

At all events it is a fact that Velázquez was angry with his nephew by the time the latter returned to Cuba that fall. Whether it was due to his dis-

¹Bernal Díaz, 47; Las Casas, II, 395, Gomara, 299.
²Bernal Díaz, 48; Gomara, 299; Wright, 75; Herrera, II, 143.
³Las Casas, II, 395.
⁴At least that is the testimony of those unfriendly to Velázquez. See Col. Doc. Ined.... España, I, 429.
pleasure in Grijalva for not establishing a settlement on the mainland, or because of his irritation at what he considered weakness of character in his relative, or because of his annoyance at Grijalva for not having gained more profit, is a point of disagreement among the early writers. Knowing the governor’s passion for financial gain, we are probably safe in saying that only money could have caused such an intense displeasure as Velázquez showed toward Grijalva upon his return.\textsuperscript{1} It is likely that later, when Cortés had won Mexico, the governor’s anger toward his nephew became based on the fact that Grijalva had given up the opportunity of making a settlement for him. But he had not been ordered to make a settlement.\textsuperscript{2} Nor was Cortés a few months later ordered to make a settlement.\textsuperscript{3}

On his return voyage Grijalva put in first at the port of Matanzas where he found a letter from the governor for him telling him to inform his men that he, Velázquez, was preparing a new expedition and those who wanted to return to the new land should wait in Havana where he would support them from a

\textsuperscript{1}Cf. Gomara, Bernal Díaz, Las Casas, Letter from Magistrates of Vera Cruz in Col. Doc. Ined.... España.
\textsuperscript{2}Bernal Díaz, 39; Las Casas, II, 387.
\textsuperscript{3}Col. Doc. Ined.... España, I, 385-406.
ranch he had there. As for Grijalva, he told him to hurry to Santiago.\textsuperscript{1} When Grijalva arrived in Santiago, his uncle treated him rudely. According to Grijalva later, his uncle gave him little thanks, argued with him and insulted him.\textsuperscript{2} But although the governor was displeased with the profit, it amounted to 20,000 crowns, according to Bernal Díaz.\textsuperscript{3}

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\textsuperscript{1}Las Casas, II, 397. \\
\textsuperscript{2}Ibid.; Martyr, II, 21. \\
\textsuperscript{3}Col. Doc. Ined.... España, I, 430; Bernal Díaz, 50.
\end{flushright}
IV. VELÁZQUEZ - CORTÉS RELATIONS

Already, before Grijalva had returned, Velázquez, eager to follow up his advantage, was preparing the third fleet to send to the new lands to the west. To insure sufficient authority and royal approval he again sent an agent to the court of the Jeronymites; this time Juan de Saucedo went to petition the license. He was successful. To the court of Spain he sent his chaplain, Benito Martínez, with letters for his patron, Fonseca, and for others powerful in the affairs of the Indies, the friendships of all of whom he had been wooing with gifts in Cuba. Along with gold from the newly discovered lands, Martínez carried Velázquez' petition that he be given the commission to trade and conquer the promising region.

The governor of Cuba was at a loss as to whom he should appoint to command his new fleet. The facts in the story of his ultimate choice of Cortés,

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1 Gomara, 300; Las Casas, II, 397; cf. Col. Doc. Ined.... España, I, 430, in which the magistrates of Vera Cruz inferentially deny that Saucedo was sent.  
2 Las Casas, II, 397; Bernal Díaz, 50.
indeed, the entire Velázquez-Cortés affair, are unfortunately submerged in a welter of bias.\(^1\)

Velázquez was undecided for some time as to whom he should appoint. Although the soldiers in general favored Jrijalva, Velázquez naturally turned to consider other men. He considered Vasco Porcallo but was afraid that he was too independent and would revolt. He considered several relatives but did not approach them.\(^2\) His close friend, Baltásar Bermúdez, he asked to accept the appointment but Bermúdez asked too many conditions for his acceptance. It is said that Velázquez "got angry with him and threw him out, perhaps with his customary unbridled words."\(^3\)

Meanwhile, it seems, Hernán Cortés, an alcalde of the city; Amador de Larens, the royal contador; and Andrés de Duero, the governor's secretary, concerted together to influence Cortés' appointment for their mutual profit. The two officials were successful in inducing the governor to offer Cortés the commission which he gladly and quickly accepted.\(^4\)

\(^1\)Gomara supports Cortés; Las Casas, Velázquez; Bernal Díaz is probably the most neutral.
\(^2\)Bernal Díaz, 51.
\(^3\)Las Casas, II, 396; see also Gomara, 300.
\(^4\)Bernal Díaz, 51; Las Casas, II, 396; cf. Gomara, 300 and Col. Doc. Inéd.... España, I, 430.
Velázquez and Cortés were already well acquainted with each other. As has been narrated before, Cortés was the governor's secretary in the early days at Baracoa until he lost the confidence of his chief by his role in the Morales insurrection.\(^1\) Velázquez later lost his ill-feeling against Cortés, made him one of the first repartimientos of Indians and treated him well. When Cortés married,\(^2\) Velázquez served as groomsman at the wedding. At the baptism of Cortés' child he was god-father.\(^3\) The governor, moreover, appointed his former enemy alcaldé of Santiago. Thus the two men had become reconciled.

As plans for the expedition went forward, Velázquez suffered a change of heart toward Cortés. Just when this happened is not agreed upon by the trio who comprise our source material.\(^4\) Gomara, Cortés' biographer, makes it early in the preparations and says that Velázquez was powerless due to Cortés' defiant attitude and host of friends.\(^5\)

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\(^1\)Supra, 18-19.  
\(^2\)Gomara, 297, gives a long story of Velázquez forcing Cortés to marry a certain girl after Cortés brazenly fronted Velázquez and intimidated him back into friendship. Las Casas, II, 215, calls the story a falsedad, not in harmony with the unequal ranks of the two men at the time.  
\(^3\)Las Casas, II, 215-16; Bernal Díaz, 51; Gomara, 297.  
\(^4\)Gomara, Bernal Díaz, and Las Casas.  
\(^5\)Gomara, 300.
Las Casas, crying "falsedades" at nearly everything
Gomara says about this incident, keeps the two men
friends until the insistent pleadings of the govern-
or's relatives and the prophetic jest of a buffoon
change his mind. Cortés learned of Velázquez' in-
tention to replace him in command and that very
night he engineered a secret departure, his fleet
under-manned and ill-provisioned. The governor
saw Cortés as he was embarking but even then both
men feigned friendship. Bernal Díaz, who joined
Cortés several days later, follows Las Casas closely. Cortés sailed from Santiago on November 18, 1518.

On October 23, 1518, Velázquez had drawn up
and notarized detailed instructions for Cortés. These he gave to him at the time he left Santiago. He instructed Cortés to seek Grijalva and Olid, neither of whom had yet returned to Cuba when he
drafted the instructions, and if unsuccessful in
that "you can surely go and penetrate alone in your
search all those island and lands and know the
extent of them and do all that might perform the

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1Las Casas, II, 398-400.
2Bernal Díaz, 52-53.
3Las Casas, II, 400; Gomara, 300.
5Ibid., 386.
service and agree with that of their Highnesses, and for that purpose I decided to commend you, Fernando Cortés. . . ."¹ Furthermore, he ordered Cortés to send him as soon as possible a ship with news of the expedition and "all things, gold, pearls, precious stones, spices, animals, fruits, birds and all the other things you may have had."² Besides making regulations for the morality of the expedition and treatment of the Indians, Velázquez asked (was he serious?) Cortés to inquire of the Indians about the tribes with great ears, and those with faces like dogs, and the location of the Amazons.³ About establishing a settlement on the mainland, nothing was said.

After Cortés left Santiago he sailed west along the south shore of the island gathering provisions. The governor meanwhile, finally convinced by his relatives and a mad astrologer named Juan Millan, who persistently reminded him of Cortés' former infidelity, his unexplained departure and hisconcerting with Lores and Duero, decided to appoint Vasco Porcallo to supercede Cortés. The governor

²Col. Doc. Ined....España, I, 404.
³Ibid., 403.
therefore sent to Trinidad, where Cortés would stop for provisions, two confidential persons with letters for the alcalde mayor, who was Francisco Verdugo, Velázquez' brother-in-law, and others, ordering them to take the fleet from Cortés' command. When Cortés arrived at Trinidad, he learned what had happened, and with the marvelous capacity for making friends he won over those upon whom the governor was relying and persuaded Verdugo of the danger that would result from any violent measures against him. One of the messengers even enrolled under Cortés. The other agent returned to Velázquez carrying a letter from Cortés expressing in the strongest terms his devotion to him and surprise at what had happened.¹ At Trinidad Cortés was joined by one hundred of Grijalva's men who had been waiting there in conformity with the advices that had been received from the governor through the hands of Grijalva.²

When Velázquez learned that Verdugo had neglected his orders, he became violently angry. He reproached Duero and Lares for having deceived him.

¹Bernal Díaz, 55-56.
²Las Casas, II, 402.
He sent a confidential agent, Garnica, to his lieutenant at Havana, Pedro Barba, with orders to him and Velázquez' friends on the fleet asking them to stop the fleet and send Cortés prisoner to Santiago.\(^1\) To Cortés he sent letters asking him to delay, that he had information of interest for him.\(^2\) Garnica, arriving at Havana found Cortés living at Barba's house. The future conqueror of Mexico had already learned of Garnica and his message; Barba, frightened, wrote back to Velázquez that he dared not execute the orders. He was sure that if he should attempt it, Cortés would sack the town and carry away all its inhabitants!\(^3\) Cortés himself again wrote to the governor professing eternal devotion to his interests. The fleet sailed from Havana on February 10, 1519.\(^4\)

There is no agreement as to the shares of Velázquez and Cortés in equipping the fleet. Contemporary statements range from Velázquez equipping the entire fleet to his contributing nothing. It is safe to say that whatever favorable his enemies said about him must have been true. There seem to have been no estimates by disinterested observers.

\(^1\)Bernal Díaz, 57.
\(^2\)Gomara, 301.
\(^3\)Bernal Díaz, 59.
\(^4\)Ibid.
An approximation to the truth is that the governor contributed about one-third of the funds and that three of the ten ships were sent by him.\textsuperscript{1} Velázquez also sold provisions to the expedition; Cortés' men, it seems, never tired of complaining of his ruinous prices and charging that he had subverted an expedition for his own personal gain.\textsuperscript{2}

The governor of Cuba however had other things besides Cortés to think about during these months. A series of cedulas issued by Charles V from Zaragoza late in 1518 inform us of the administrative aspect of Velázquez' governorship at this time, permitting us an intimate view perhaps into the problems of an insular Spanish colonial governor of the period.\textsuperscript{3} After recommending Pánfilo de Narváez to Velázquez for his good services rendered at the court, the king ordered Velázquez to pay Narváez' salary for the period he was gone. Father Las Casas, in Spain pleading the cause of the Indians, also pleaded his own cause before the king; the result was that Velázquez was ordered to

\textsuperscript{1} Col. Doc. Ined.... España, I, 430, 491.
\textsuperscript{2} Ibid., 487, 430, 494-95; Martyr, II, 48.
\textsuperscript{3} Col. Doc. Ined.... Ultramar, I, 77-89.
give the _clerigo_ fully satisfactory recompense for the two and a half years that Las Casas had served in the conquest of the island. In other cédulas the king ordered that Velázquez' personal silver service be released through the _Casa de Contratación_ duty-free; that the Cubans might build up to ten ships for trade with other islands and Tierra Firme; that Velázquez and the officials suggest likely candidates for the office of _regidor_; that the _vecinos_ of Cuba might arm ships to discover new lands; that certain necessities from Spain be shipped to Cuba for one year tax-free; and that Velázquez favor an emigrant from Spain, Francisco de Soto, a former chamber servant of the Queen.

In 1518, Juan Quevedo, first Bishop of Darién, went to Spain via Cuba. Las Casas charges that Velázquez greased Quevedo's hands in return for which the bishop was to try to get Velázquez named as governor of Tierra Firme and protector of the Indians there. Las Casas was not sure that all this had happened but it appeared so to him. At all events, Quevedo died that same year in Barcelona.
Velázquez never received the appointment.¹

Sometime before mid-summer of 1519 the governor learned from Spain² that the petitions of his chaplain Benito Martínez had been received with favor at the court and that he was now adelantado of the new lands to which Cortés had been sent, Velázquez now possessing full privileges of conquest, settlement and government of the territory.³ It must have been joyful news for Velázquez; it was the commission he had long been coveting; it seemed as though his fame and fortune were assured. He had not yet learned of Cortés' infidelity to him.

Oblivious of the turn of affairs on the mainland, the governor sent to his servant, Hernán Cortés, ships with aid. One of these ships, commanded by a Francisco de Saucedo, brought the news of Velázquez' appointment as adelantado.⁴ Other ships sent by the governor arrived later; they were all converted by a defiant Cortés to his own use.

Cortés, meanwhile, in the first half of 1519, had repudiated the authority of his master, Diego

¹Las Casas, II, 381, 470. No other sources mention the affair.
²Narváez and Guzmán returned from Spain in 1514. Wright, 88. Perhaps they brought the appointment.
³Las Casas, II, 421-22.
⁴Cómar, 323; Bernal Díaz, 107.
Velázquez, founded the town of Vera Cruz, and forged inland upon the conquest that was to make him one of the greatest conquistadores. For his former chief, the governor of Cuba, it was to spell only ruin. On July 16, 1519, Cortés dispatched to the court of Spain two messengers, Francisco de Montejo and Alonso Hernández Puértocarréro, bearing to their sovereign news of the expedition, a rich present of gold for him and a long letter written by the magistrates of the new town. The letter was crammed with complaints against Diego Velázquez and contained the petition that he be deprived of office, that he be put to an investigation and that Cortés be made governor of New Spain, as the new land was called.2

Although Montejo and Puértocarréro had been ordered by Cortés to avoid Cuba on their way to Spain, these orders were disobeyed. Montejo persuaded the pilot Alaminos to put in for provisions at El Marién, where the former had an estate. There they revealed to a man the cargo of gold, stole some

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1 Las Casas calls them falsedades, II, 420.
2 Vedia, Historiadores Primitivos de Indias, I, 10-12, hereafter "Vedia;" Col. Doc. Ined..., España, I, 457-59; Las Casas, II, 419-20; Comará, 359.
Indians and departed immediately, August, 1519, making toward the Lucayos, or Bahamas. The governor’s cousin, Juan de Rojas, wrote Velázquez from Havana and told him what had occurred.  

Velázquez, eager to intercept the emissaries of his rival, despatched two ships to pursue the fleeing Montejo and Puertocarrero. Commanding one of the vessels was Gonzalo de Guzmán; he and Narváez had returned earlier that year from the court bearing royal commissions as treasurer and accountant, respectively, of New Spain. The governor apparently saw that his chances of catching the fugitive ship were slim, for he had given Guzmán two letters, one addressed to the king and the other to an unnamed person, perhaps Fonseca, both relating what had happened and asking that Montejo and Puertocarrero be seized in Spain. 2 And so it happened that Guzmán, seeing no trace of his prey, continued on to Spain with the letters, while the second ship sent out by Velázquez returned with the news that the pursuit had been unsuccessful. Velázquez was

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1Bernal Díaz, 110; Wright, 87; Col. Doc. Ined.... España, I, 473.
sadder than ever.\textsuperscript{1} Velázquez immediately formulated his plans to send a fleet under Narváez to New Spain to seize Cortés, and threatened to go there himself, if necessary, and remedy the situation.\textsuperscript{2}

Bernal Díaz says that at this time Velázquez registered complaint against Cortés before the Jeronymite fathers, but that they, favoring Cortés, refused to hear him. This "vexed the governor so much, that from being very fat, he grew quite lean".\textsuperscript{3}

An interesting question is: "Did Cortés disobey Velázquez in making a settlement at Vera Cruz?" Velázquez' orders made no mention of settlement but did give Cortés blanket powers to do as he saw fit "conforming to the instructions".\textsuperscript{4}

Montejo under oath declared in Spain that it seemed to the men of Cortés' expedition that Velázquez had given them more power than just to trade.\textsuperscript{5}

Benito Martínez said in Spain that Cortés was to settle where it seemed best to him.\textsuperscript{6}

When Puerto carrerero and Montejo reached Seville

\textsuperscript{1}Gomara, 359; Bernal Díaz, 110.
\textsuperscript{3}Bernal Díaz, 110.
\textsuperscript{4}Col. Doc. Ined.... España, I, 403-04.
\textsuperscript{5}Ibid., 489.
\textsuperscript{6}Ibid., 407.
that autumn with their letters and gifts for the king, they immediately ran into Benito Martínez, who was preparing to return to Cuba with an appointment as abbott of New Spain. Learning of Cortés' revolt against Velázquez, his master, he notified Fonseca, who ordered the officials of the Casa de Contratación at Seville to seize the letters and gifts which Cortés was sending to the Emperor Charles V. Fonseca confiscated the letters, appropriated most of the presents and then wrote to the emperor, who was then in Flanders, representing the affair in a most favorable light for his favorite, Diego Velázquez.¹

Bernal Díaz says that the king (or emperor) also received at this time letters from Puertocarrero, Montejo, Cortés' father and friends of Cortés and that the date of the king's receipt of these letters marks the shift of royal favor from Velázquez to Cortés. Fonseca, finding himself in the disfavored ranks, was more furious than ever against Cortés.²

There followed two years of litigation in

¹Las Casas, II, 420; Bernal Díaz, 111.
²Bernal Díaz, 111.
Spain between the agents of Velázquez and Cortés on the behalf of their masters. Waiting ostensibly for both parties to prepare their cases fully, but perhaps really to see who actually won the struggle (and the gold), the crown decided that the decision be delayed.¹

Velázquez' preparations for the fleet which he was to send against Cortés were completed early in 1520. The punitive expedition consisted of a huge armada of eighteen or nineteen ships carrying about one thousand men armed with both light and heavy artillery. Narváez was under orders to seize Cortés and assume the government of the territory in the name of Diego Velázquez, the lawful adelantado of New Spain.²

When the Jeronymite friars learned of these plans, they appointed licenciado Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón, oidor of the audiencia of Santo Domingo to go to the governor of Cuba to forbid his sending the fleet against Cortés.³ When Ayllón arrived at Santiago early in 1520, he learned that Velázquez was already

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¹Bernal Díaz, 416-19; Martyr, II, 48.
²Bernal Díaz, 110, 213; Gomara, 359.
³Gomara, 359.
Guaniguanico on the far western end of the island apparently preparing to lead the expedition himself. Narváez had not yet arrived there. Ayllón proceeded to Guaniguanico, where he pleaded with Velázquez. In his journey the length of Cuba, Ayllón had noticed with dismay that the island was in danger of depopulation and a consequent Indian uprising because of Velázquez' preparations. The oidor tried to persuade Velázquez that with these conditions existing the fleet should not be sent. When this argument failed, Ayllón advanced a new one, namely, that the governor should send his fleet on other missions rather than against Cortés. In a letter to the king, Ayllón said that he proposed this compromise out of consideration for the Adelantado Velázquez, who had already spent a great fortune in assembling the fleet.

He suggested that Velázquez send two or three ships to New Spain, bearing several peaceable men who should reason with Cortés. These men should not argue with him; if he proved obstinate, the king would hear of it.

Ayllón further suggested to Velázquez that an
expedition be sent to discover new lands, and that a small settlement be established on Cozumel, a small island just off the peninsula of Yucatan. This base, Ayllón argued, would serve as an intermediate point between Cuba and the mainland.

The final argument of the interim was that the small boats of the expedition be used for the coastwise trade of Cuba and if one of the remaining ships were large enough, it should be used in navigation between the Indies and the mother country.\(^1\) Ayllón pleaded with Velázquez and then wrote to the king that "this all seemed good to him and he said that he wanted to do it".\(^2\)

Learning of his decision to give up his plans for bringing Cortés to his knees, the friends of Velázquez begged him not to disgrace himself by abandoning his life's dream at the instance of Lucás Vázquez de Ayllón. They even maintained that the audiencia of Santo Domingo did not have power to send Ayllón on his mission. Bowing with the wind that blew the hardest, Velázquez changed his mind and declared with finality that the fleet should

\(^1\)Col. Doc. Ined... *España*, I, 476-77. These are Ayllón's letters to the king.
\(^2\)Ibid., 484.
sail. Ayllón's final argument convinced Velázquez that for the welfare of the island, its governor should remain there. Velázquez probably thanked Ayllón for showing him a good reason why he should stay at home. At any rate, the fleet was ready; he ordered Narváez to sail.¹

Ayllón, finding no other recourse, decided to sail with Narváez and perhaps yet avoid a clash between the two Spanish expeditions. He realized that, although Velázquez had instructed Narváez that if Cortés refused to receive him, the expedition should proceed farther along the coast to discover and settle, the situation was conducive to fighting and that was what he had been sent out to prevent.² It appears that Velázquez and Ayllón had really worked out a compromise. That Velázquez should have expected Cortés to meekly submit himself to Narváez is utterly unexplainable, considering all that Cortés had done up to that time against him.

The Narváez' expedition proved a failure, a disastrous failure for Velázquez. Cortés defeated

¹Col. Doc. Ined.... España, I, 484-85.
²Ibid.
Narváez at Zempoalla, won over his men with promises and gold, and took all the equipment for himself. The financial loss to Velázquez must have equalled Cortés' generalship. "The Narváez episode cost Velázquez much money, Narváez his honor and an eye, and the lives of many Indians."\(^1\)

Ayllón, having proved an impediment to Narváez, was seized by the latter and sent in a ship destined for Cuba. Ayllón convinced the mariners to take him to Santo Domingo instead, but while passing the island of Cuba, he dispatched a letter to Velázquez informing him of Narváez' insult and the bad fortune of the expedition.\(^2\)

Thus was Velázquez cheated of his great prize. He had depleted his own fortune and had emptied Cuba of money and men. Many probably went willingly, but it is said that he compelled others to go by threats and by taking their encomiendas from them.\(^3\)

Diego Colón, still Velázquez' superior, now made the most of the governor's misfortunes. Displeased by the independence Velázquez had shown

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\(^1\)Gomara, 362.
\(^2\)Col. Doc. Ined.... España, I, 508.
\(^3\)Wright, 86.
in Cuba during the early prosperous days there, he decided to hold Velázquez' residencia and replace him by another as his lieutenant in Cuba.¹ The story of this episode comprises our history of Velázquez for the year 1521.

The licenciado Alonso de Zuazo was accordingly appointed by Colón to supercede Velázquez as governor of Cuba. Zuazo came to the island in January, 1521.² Velázquez, still retaining the more powerful prerogative of repartidor, immediately protested against Zuazo in the least infringing on his authority as repartidor, which office he meant to keep. The royal authorities on the island also made things difficult for Zuazo by complaining to the crown about him -- Zuazo's underlings were boarding arriving vessels in front of the royal officials!³

Although Velázquez had already equipped two armadas, he was probably yet financially comfortable. During Zuazo's administration he seems to have been busy raising another expedition. Herrera says that Velázquez sailed from Cuba leading personally this

¹ Wright, 89.  
² Ibid.  
³ Ibid., 91-92.
third expedition (fourth if the Córdoba expedition is included) but had to turn back without landing on the territory over which he held the empty title of adelantado. This may have been true for he was absent from Santiago at various times that year.¹

In a royal order from Burgos, September, 1520, Zuazo was ordered to discontinue the residencia he had begun to take of Diego Velázquez. The reason was that he himself was being subjected to a similar investigation in Santo Domingo and therefore he had no authority to use the powers given him by Diego Colón.² That December four cedulas from Spain informed the royal officials that Zuazo's commission as governor's lieutenant and judge of residencia had been disapproved and that Diego Velázquez was ordered to reassume his former office. Actions of Zuazo dispossessing Manuel Rojas, Gonzalo de Guzmán, and Juan Bono de Queixo of their encomiendas were voided.³

¹Wright, 93.
²Col. Doc. Ined.... Ultramar, I, 107-09. If Wright's dates for the Zuazo administration are correct, this cedula is incorrectly dated 1520; perhaps an editorial error.
³Ibid., 110-16.
In 1522 Guzmán, Velázquez' procurador at court against Cortés and Colón, returned to Cuba. He was replaced by Juan Mosquera, who served the residents of Cuba much more disinterestedly, obtaining for them many favors from the king.¹ The king must have been pleased with him too, for in April, 1522, he ordered Velázquez not to change the fortune of Mosquera during the latter's stay at court.² By the end of 1522, Velázquez was heavily in debt to the crown. In view of his services, the king ordered leniency in collections from him.³

During 1522 the litigation between Velázquez and Cortés was brought to a close in Spain. For two years the case had been on the docket. As events in the New World succeeded each other, additional enemies of Cortés joined the Velázquez-Fonseca group.⁴ Fonseca's authority as president of the Consejo de Indias was great. The emperor at last ordered that the case be settled. He formed from among the members of his royal council a court of inquiry to hear the charges and come to a decision. The court after a short sitting declared in favor of Cortés.⁵ It seems that Velázquez¹

¹Wright, 104-05.
²Coll. Doc. Ined.... Ultramar, 1, 119.
³Wright, 93.
⁴Gómez Díaz, 416.
⁵Ibid., 421; Gomara, 403.
chief error had been to disobey the orders of the audiencia of Santo Domingo by sending Narváez against Cortés. The case for Cortés is not explained but we suppose, knowing the Spanish political morality of the time, that the Mexican gold which he sent to Spain had sufficed to outweigh all his errors.

Copying the verdict of the court of inquiry, Charles V sent out from Valladolid, October 22, 1522, cedulas naming Cortés adelantado, repartidor, and governor of New Spain. Velázquez was removed as governor of Cuba and commanded neither to go to Mexico nor send any further expedition to trouble Cortés; he might, however, recover by process of legal action whatever he could show Cortés owed him. Fonseca also was deprived of the office he had held since 1493 as the principal figure in the administration of the Indies.

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1 Bernal Díaz, 416; Martyr, II, 178.
2 Bernal Díaz, 415, 421; Gomara, 403; Wright, 96. Bernal Díaz makes Pope Adrian VI a central figure in the execution of the verdict.
V. DECLINE OF VELÁZQUEZ

The royal orders were carried to the Indies by two relatives of Cortés, Rodorigo de Paz and Francisco de las Casas.\footnote{Bernal Díaz, 421; Gomara, 404.} The sentence against Velázquez was proclaimed by the crier in the streets of Santiago, May, 1523. The career of Diego Velázquez was almost ended. The early writers say that he died shortly afterward, a sad and impoverished man.\footnote{Ibid.; Ibid.} The truth is that he lived another year, retaining all the while his office as governor until a successor should arrive. He continued to play a prominent part in the affairs of the Indies.

During the summer of 1523, Francisco de Garay, governor of Jamaica, stopped at Cuba en route to founding a settlement in the Pánuco region of Mexico. What really happened is not clear; accounts vary. Cortés had already occupied the region; he wrote to the king that fall that Velázquez, Diego Colón, and Garay were conspiring to take the region from him by force.\footnote{Vedia, I, 100. Fourth letter of Cortés.} Herrera says that Velázquez
advised Garay to come to an agreement with Cortés.\textsuperscript{1} Wright, a scholar of the present century and probably correct, says that Garay wrote to Velázquez and Zuazo, who was in Cuba then, the upshot being that Zuazo went to see Cortés as an agent of Garay.\textsuperscript{2} Perhaps Velázquez was instrumental in engineering this futile mission.

Velázquez' health was failing him during the summer of 1523.\textsuperscript{3} In October the Pope and the king authorized the removal of the cathedral from Baracoa to Santiago.\textsuperscript{4} Although the first bishop for Cuba had been appointed in January, 1518,\textsuperscript{5} as late as 1524 no bishop had yet come to the island.\textsuperscript{6}

The immense popularity which Cortés was enjoying must have galled his former chief greatly. Too, many were leaving Cuba to go to Mexico where opportunity seemed so much greater.\textsuperscript{7} Welcoming an opportunity to strike at Cortés, Velázquez plotted with his former servant Olid when the latter came to Havana in the spring of 1524 on his way to explore and settle Honduras for Cortés.\textsuperscript{8} The two planned that Olid should

\textsuperscript{1}III, 325.
\textsuperscript{2}Wright, 95.
\textsuperscript{3}Ibid., 93.
\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., 122.
\textsuperscript{5}Col. Doc. Ined.... Ultramar, I, 76-77.
\textsuperscript{6}Ibid., 129.
\textsuperscript{7}Wright, 88.
\textsuperscript{8}Vedia, I, 114. Cortés' fourth letter to the king.
renounce Cortés and take Honduras for Velázquez. This Oíd did, having arrived at Honduras in May, although at first he remained outwardly loyal to Cortés.\(^1\) When Cortés learned of the plot, he wrote the king condemning the treachery of Velázquez, and asking permission to go to Cuba, seize Velázquez, and send him to the court of Spain.\(^2\) Cortés sent two captains to Honduras. These two men finally killed Oíd.

Diego Velázquez died on June 11 or 12, 1524, as he was apparently preparing to go to Spain to present his case before the court. He requested that he be buried by the altar steps in the cathedral of Santiago. His king composed him an epitaph in Latin poetry in consideration of his service to the crown of Spain. It is believed that Velázquez was buried as he had requested. This belief is supported by the discovery of a tablet during excavations made there in 1810; it is said to be his memorial stone.\(^3\)

Even before Diego Velázquez had expired, the

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\(^1\)Bernal Díaz, 390-401; Romera, 406-07; Vedia, 140.
\(^2\)Vedia, I, 114.
\(^3\)Wright, 96-97; Hilario Cisneros, "Death of Diego Velázquez," Magazine of American History, I (October, 1877), 822-29.
crown had named his successor and begun proceedings for his residencia. On May 20, 1524, a royal cédula was dispatched from Burgos naming the licenciado Juan Altamirano to conduct the residencia of Velázquez and other officials, and conferring upon him the government of Cuba for two years.¹ Altamirano was in Cuba the next spring. He had the residencia proclaimed in all the villages of the island, declaring that by royal order the investigation would last but eighty days, starting Monday, April 23, 1525.² The order was cried in Santiago's public plaza on March 14 and the following day Altamirano fixed it on the door of his house so that all could see it.³

The day after the residencia began, Altamirano ordered Velázquez' heir, Gonzalo de Guzmán, to name an attorney for Velázquez; Guzmán named Pero Páez.⁴ Then Altamirano, the juez de residencia, or judge of residencia, ordered Velázquez' executors to submit an inventory of the dead governor's estate, so that it could be determined whether he had enough

²Ibid., 139-40.
³Ibid., 142.
⁴Ibid., 143-44.
possessions to meet the orders and judgments that might be made against him.¹

On June 13 Altamirano ordered his clerk to notify Guzmán and Pérez of the charges that had resulted against Velázquez from the investigation. The accusations were about eighteen in number and, for the most part, of a trivial nature. Altamirano then gave the heirs and attorney of Velázquez three days to answer these charges after which he declared the case closed.²

The residencia resulted in fines amounting to 10,000 maravedí and 35 pesos de oro. Guzmán, in the name of Velázquez' estate, paid the royal contador this sum on July 5.³ With the termination of his residencia, the career of Diego Velázquez de Cuéllar, governor's lieutenant in Cuba, repartidor of the Indians of Cuba, and adelantado of the newly discovered lands, may be considered at a close.

Many things have been said about the character of Diego Velázquez. It is difficult to synthesize

¹Col. Doc. Ined.... Ultramar, I, 144-45.
²Ibid., 195-200.
³Ibid., 418.
them into a portrait of the man. Some contempo-
rary descriptions of his character have already
been given. Here is our picture of the first
governor of Cuba after a brief acquaintance with
him.

He was a poor judge of men, although a
capable executive. He was weak-willed and often
swayed by the opinions of others. He liked to have
others do his difficult tasks, that is, he had a
proclivity for delegating labor but not authority.
He was pleasant, likeable but easily angered. He
was excessively fond of money; his desire for gain
often transcended all other considerations, in
fact, it seems to explain most of his otherwise
irrational actions. He was not a vigorous man. As
conquistador he was not great, but was clever in
financial transactions. He knew how to buy friends
and maintain court prestige. He erred in colliding
with Hernán Cortés.

As an historical figure, Diego Velázquez is not
of great importance. Outside of his connection with
Cortés, he has probably been forgotten. It is said
that even in Cuba there is no monument to Diego
Velázquez.\textsuperscript{1} He is perhaps most valuable to us as a type, the studying of which leads us to a better appreciation of the early Spanish civilization in America.

\textsuperscript{1}Wright, 97.
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