

strangers into your house. They will cast you out of it and overthrow your rule" (p. 61). While most advisers, we are told, agreed with Cuitlahuac, Moctezuma fatefully decided otherwise. The point for students here is that the supposed religious preconceptions played no role in the debate over strategy, which is also a point that Townsend makes in her article.

The Spanish soldier Bernal Díaz, meanwhile, provided some evidence to explain the emergence of premonitions among various Nahuatl groups that changes might come from the east. In his account of the Spanish expedition along the coast of Mexico in 1519 (the relevant portions of which are reprinted in Stuart Schwartz's 2000 collection of documents, *Victors and Vanquished*), Díaz described the encounter with a Spanish priest, Jerónimo de Aguilar, who had been shipwrecked in the area a decade before, and who had been living among the Amerindians. One may speculate (though Díaz himself does not) that the priest had spoken to his hosts of Spanish ships, guns, horses, beards, and God, thus planting the seeds of what later would be regarded as "prophecy." Perhaps Townsend takes up this thread in her forthcoming book on Malintzin, or "La Malinche," who with Aguilar served as Cortés's translators.

It is worth noting that at least one recent anthology of North American Indian accounts of interaction with whites both reproduces and questions supposed prophecies of the coming of the new group. Peter Nabokov writes in *Native American Testimony* (expanded edn., 1991): "It is possible that some tribes received advance word of early Indian-white meetings, then turned these rumors into predictions" (p. 6). Thus "pre-contact" prophecies in North America, like the "prophecies" Townsend analyzes, may not really have been from the pre-contact period at all.

Townsend and the *AHR* deserve praise for revisiting this important historical issue, which should be of interest not only to specialists but to all teachers of world history, and even of U.S. history. This attention, I hope, will spur changes in how we teach the Spanish conquest of Mexico not only at the college level but in elementary and secondary schools as well.

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CAMILLA TOWNSEND REPLIES:

As a comparativist, it is gratifying to find myself in conversation about the conquest of Mexico with a scholar of U.S. foreign relations. A journal of the scope and caliber of the *American Historical Review* makes meaningful interchange between historical fields, so often isolated from each other, a genuine possibility.

It seems to me that Robert Shaffer is certainly correct that the apocryphal first half of Book Twelve of the Florentine Codex is replete with discrepancies, obvious overlays of Christian imagery, and sticky trans-

lation problems that together undermine a careful reader's confidence in the text as an actual record of events. It is not even necessary to wait for the second part (concerning the military conflict that ensued), the strikingly different tone of which can only be called business-like, before allowing oneself to begin to doubt. In a separate vein, a careful study of varying omens later reported not only by the Nahuas but also by numerous other indigenous groups, most of whom had been exposed to rumors about exploring Europeans, and all of whom held their own complex narratives of political history, might well prove illuminating: I hope to see such studies in future.

I appreciate Shaffer's reading for other reasons as well. He immediately zeroes in on the two major themes of my article that surround the central question of the white gods. First, he shares with me a belief that this issue is important to historians in our relations with both our subjects and our students. It is not merely a yes/no question of fact (i.e., the Indians did think the Spanish were gods, or they did not). It is, rather, a question of human dignity—of allowing it to our subjects and teaching it to our nation's young. In this case, as in most instances of objectification, the objectifiers (those who imagine a less powerful Other) have by no means hated or despised those whom they have rendered less real by denying them complicated views and agendas of their own. On the contrary, they have often been fascinated by the indigenous, even loved them. But in the long run, we do any people an injustice not to allow them to be ordinary or angry or calculating or rational—in short, real. In a worst-case scenario, as Shaffer points out, teaching anything less might allow some of our students to convince themselves that certain peoples "deserve" to be conquered. It seems to me that in light of recent international events—not just sixteenth-century ones—we would do well to give this thought serious consideration.

Secondly, Shaffer recognizes in his first sentence that "how the Spanish were able to conquer the powerful Aztec empire" is ultimately at issue here. Our lack of a completely satisfactory answer to that question has held many of us tongue-tied in the past. The theories of causality that we have advanced have been too full of holes to make it possible thoroughly to discount Aztec religious fatalism as a major factor. We can't, for example, have it that disease was the deciding factor, even as we argue that the Aztecs were effectively defeated not by Spaniards but by their Indian allies, for Indian allies were hit as hard by the microbes as Indian enemies. Traditionally, even those who have brought up technology (one corollary of which is, of course, a greater previous exposure to a range of diseases) have had perforce to beg the question of *why* the Europeans had superior technology in the first place. Plant biologists studying the remains of ancient seeds may be able to liberate us from this conundrum if we will let them. That thought, I know, is anathema to some of my colleagues who understandably fear a return to ridiculous environ-

mental explanations for human behavior. (It was the fertile soil, the warm air, the cold air, etc.) But many who have read the new literature carefully recognize that science is offering us something quite different this time, a theory that merits historians' closest attention. It effectively explains the earlier rise of farming and therefore of technology in Eurasia, providing a context for the drama of conquest that played itself out over and over again throughout the Americas.

In short, we now *can* have it both ways: the Indians had to lose a technologically unequal contest, and yet they were at the same time every bit as intelligent and savvy as any of the Spaniards. Indeed, in some ways, they were more discerning than the newcomers about the importance of the technological differential. This is demonstrated in my article in my close reading both of the Indians' actions and of their forms of expression in the more prosaic and reality-bound sections of Book Twelve—considered in the original Nahuatl, before problematic translations enter into the matter.

For those who are interested in the kinds of questions raised by my article or by Robert Shaffer's commentary, I would like to point out that two major works on related themes appeared within a month of my piece: Matthew Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest* (Oxford, 2003), and Stephanie Wood, *Transcending Conquest: Nahua Views of Spanish Colonial Mexico* (Norman, Okla., 2003). They were unavailable to me at the time I wrote but deserve the close attention of anyone concerned with these issues. Though not in agreement on all counts, our three works, taken together, would seem to indicate that early Mexicanists are relatively united at present in insisting on a rethinking of old assumptions about conquest.

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REVIEWS OF BOOKS

TO THE EDITOR:

In his perceptive review of Klaus Larres's *Churchill's Cold War: The Politics of Personal Diplomacy* (AHR 108 [June 2003]: 918), John Dumbrell overlooks that work's neglect of the World War II years, a neglect that serves to minimize the significance of alternate policy choices presented to the postwar world. As Warren Kimball has pointed out, in contrast to the ever-friendlier approach of Franklin D. Roosevelt to the Soviets during the war, Winston Churchill's longstanding hostility, however muted, persisted (*The Jugger*, 28–31, 37). As the Soviet Union bore the brunt of Adolf Hitler's might, there was an ongoing anti-Bolshevik flavor to Churchill's repeated opposition to the proposed second front, his promotion of secondary alternatives in Africa, Italy, and the Balkans, his

stinginess with decoded military information, his foot-dragging on aid to Russia, and his advocacy of a race to beat the Soviets to Berlin. In all of these matters, he was at odds with Roosevelt and Joseph Stalin.

Toward the end of the war, postwar political concerns intensified Churchill's anti-Soviet posture, as revealed in his interference in developments in Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia, and Belgium and his "secret hopes" for a German capitulation in Italy allowing Allied troops to move to the east (Warren F. Kimball, ed., *Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence*, vol. 3, 609). By early 1945, Churchill openly "suggested to the Americans that military forces be positioned so as to limit Soviet expansion" (Kimball, 523). This and further efforts to establish an Anglo-American alliance directed against Stalin were repeatedly, if carefully, blocked by a Roosevelt anxious to preserve the decisive understandings reached at Yalta. While, on March 1, 1945, Roosevelt called upon Congress and the American people to concur in and support the Yalta accords, a mere six days later, in what Kimball entitled "A British Reversal on Eastern Europe," Churchill "moved away from the spheres-of-influence settlement" reached with Stalin and sought Roosevelt's participation in an attack on Soviet policy in Poland (Kimball, 545). This was the beginning of a campaign that would serve only to discredit Yalta and one that Roosevelt continued to oppose for the few remaining weeks of his life. On March 29, he cabled Churchill, "I consider it essential to base ourselves squarely on the Crimea decisions themselves and not allow any other considerations, no matter how important, to cloud the issue at this time. I have this particularly in mind with respect to the Polish negotiations" (Kimball, 592). The day before he died, he wrote Churchill, "I would minimize the general Soviet problem as much as possible" (Kimball, 630).

There was a crucial distinction between these two national leaders. Roosevelt welcomed the Soviet Union as a true partner, accepted the legitimacy of the Soviet system, anticipated its liberalization over time in a non-threatening world, and placed the wartime alliance at the heart of his postwar hopes. He believed that these differing systems could actually learn from one another, and he envisaged a postwar world of friendly cooperation in which the major powers, while remaining dominant in their own sphere of interest, would work together in an international organization dedicated to human rights, the independence of all nations, and the prevention of wars of aggression. To Churchill, on the other hand, the wartime alliance appears to have been an opportunistic interlude in an ongoing battle against a Bolshevism that threatened Britain and its colonial empire. Churchill's approach was increasingly one of hostile confrontation, and while it is true that this did not necessitate war, it did deny the legitimacy of the Soviet system. Churchill would justify his own use of military force to impose governments on other nations while denying a repeatedly invaded and now devastated Russia the right to

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