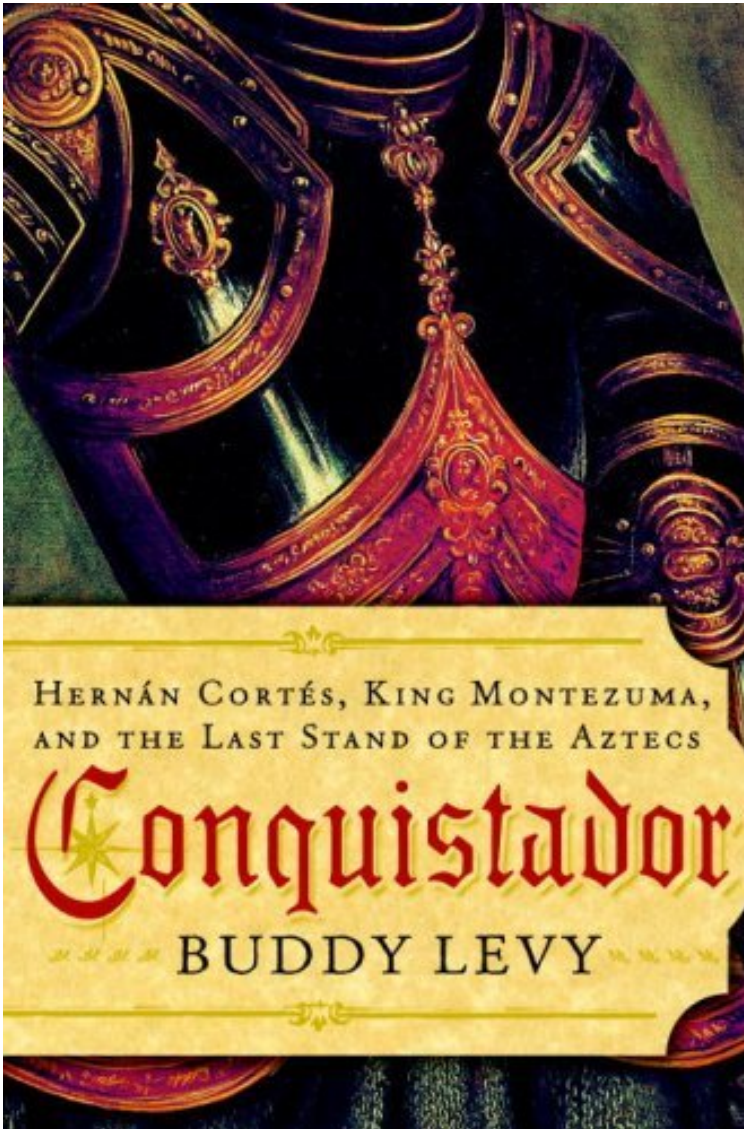


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Conquistador: Hernan Cortes, King Montezuma, and the Last Stand of the Aztecs



Par Buddy Levy
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Par Buddy Levy : Conquistador: Hernan Cortes, King Montezuma, and the Last Stand of the Aztecs before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Conquistador: Hernan Cortes, King Montezuma, and the Last Stand of the Aztecs:

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurIn an astonishing work of scholarship that reads like an adventure thriller, historian Buddy Levy records the last days of the Aztec empire and the two men at the center of an epic clash of cultures. I and my companions suffer from a disease of the heart which can be cured only with gold. Hernn CortsIt was a moment unique in human history, the face-to-face meeting between two men from civilizations a world apart. Only one would survive the encounter. In 1519, Hernn Corts arrived on the shores of Mexico with a roughshod crew of adventurers and the intent to expand the Spanish empire. Along the way, this brash and roguish conquistador schemed to convert the native inhabitants to Catholicism and carry off a fortune in

gold. That he saw nothing paradoxical in his intentions is one of the most remarkable and tragic aspects of this unforgettable story of conquest. In Tenochtitlan, the famed City of Dreams, Cortés met his Aztec counterpart, Montezuma: king, divinity, ruler of fifteen million people, and commander of the most powerful military machine in the Americas. Yet in less than two years, Cortés defeated the entire Aztec nation in one of the most astonishing military campaigns ever waged. Sometimes outnumbered in battle thousands-to-one, Cortés repeatedly beat seemingly impossible odds. Buddy Levy meticulously researches the mix of cunning, courage, brutality, superstition, and finally disease that enabled Cortés and his men to survive. Conquistador is the story of a lost kingdom a complex and sophisticated civilization where floating gardens, immense wealth, and reverence for art stood side by side with bloodstained temples and gruesome rites of human sacrifice. It is the story of Montezuma proud, spiritual, enigmatic, and doomed to misunderstand the stranger he thought a god. Epic in scope, as entertaining as it is enlightening, Conquistador is history at its most riveting. From the

Hardcover edition. Excerpt Chapter One Setting Out for New Spain and the Serendipitous Gift of

Language Hernn Cortés strode to the bow of his flagship Santa María de la Concepción, a one-hundred-ton vessel and the largest of his armada, and scanned the horizon for land. He had much to ponder. His navigator and chief pilot, Antonio de Alaminos, an experienced veteran who had been pilot for Columbus on his final voyage, had been in these waters before on the Ponce de León expedition in search of the fabled Fountain of Youth and he suggested that if they encountered foul weather, the entire fleet should make land and convene on the island of Cozumel, just east of the Yucatán Peninsula's northernmost tip. Since their hurried departure from Cuba, the fleet had been buffeted by foul weather, scattering the boats. Cortés brought up the rear, simultaneously scouring for land and for brigantines and caravels blown astray. A few, perhaps as many as five, had been lost during the night, an inauspicious beginning to such an ambitious voyage. Cortés had staked everything he owned on this venture in fact more than that, for he had incurred significant debt building the ships and stocking them with provisions. His hope to get off to a good start had been slightly compromised when his patron, the fat hidalgo Diego Velázquez, now governor of Cuba, attempted to thwart his departure, even after he had signed a contract officially confirming Cortés as captain-general. Velázquez's behavior was no surprise, given the contentious nature of their relationship. On his arrival in Hispaniola (the modern-day Dominican Republic) in 1504, Cortés had sought out the established countryman and worked under him, initially on a raid to suppress an Indian uprising on the island's interior, and later on an expedition captained by Pánfilo de Narváez to conquer Cuba, which they accomplished easily enough. After this successful venture Velázquez, feeling magnanimous, gifted Cortés a large plot of land with many Indians and a number of viable, working mines on it, effectively making Cortés rich. But the two men were both obstinate, and their relationship was soon fraught with tensions that would ultimately threaten prison, and even death, for Cortés. Both men shared a passion for women, and a disagreement over one Catalina Suárez resulted in the governors having Cortés arrested and placed in the stocks. Cortés escaped by bribing the jailor, and Velázquez had him arrested again, even bringing a suit upon him and threatening to hang him for his refusal to marry Suárez, a snubbing that had sullied her reputation. Eventually Velázquez calmed, and the two men smoothed over their differences, but their relationship remained volatile. At present, in mid-February 1519, Velázquez held the political upper hand, for Cortés sailed under his aegis, as his emissary on a mission to trade, to find gold, and to obtain more Indians to work the mines of Cuba. But the wily Cortés had other intentions as he spotted land and had his pilot make anchor at Cozumel. Cortés's ship was the last to arrive, and on setting foot on the island he found that the local inhabitants had fled at the arrival of the first ships, dispersing into the hills and jungle. Cortés noted their fear, filing it away as useful information. Then he was met with vexing news, and a reason for the local Indians' behavior: one of his most trusted captains, Pedro de Alvarado, had arrived early, immediately raided the first village he encountered brusquely entering temples and thieving some small gold ornaments left there as prayer offerings and then seized a flock of about forty turkeys that were milling around the Indians' thatch-roofed houses, even taking a few of the frightened Indians, two men and a woman, prisoner. Cortés, incensed, contemplated how to handle the situation. He needed to trust

Alvarado, and he respected the fiery redheaded countryman who also hailed from his homeland, Extremadura. Alvarado, already battle-hardened and having commanded the previous Grijalva expedition to the Yucatán, was cocksure and felt justified in making his own independent decisions. Cortés needed him and required a symbiotic relationship with his captains, but he also insisted that they obey his command, and he would tolerate no insubordination. 1 Such behavior, he impressed upon his men, was no way to pacify a country. 2 Cortés rebuked Alvarado by commanding his men to turn over the pilfered offerings and return them to their Indian owners. He also had Alvarado's pilot Camacho, who had failed to obey orders to wait for

Corts at sea, chained in irons. The turkeys had been slaughtered, and some of them already eaten, so Corts ordered that the fowl be paid for with green glass beads and small bells, which he gave to the prisoners as he released them, along with a Spanish shirt for each. Then Corts asked for a man named Melchior, a Mayan who had been taken prisoner during an earlier expedition and converted into something of an interpreter, having been taught some Spanish by his captors. Through Melchior, Corts spoke to the Indians as he released them and sent them back to their families, instructing them that the Spaniards came in peace and wished to do them no harm, and that Corts as their leader would like to meet personally with their chiefs or caciques.*The initial diplomacy worked. The next day men, women, children, and eventually the chiefs of the villages poured forth*Cacique is a Caribbean Arawak word for chief that the Spaniards brought with them from the islands. Many of the chroniclers, including Bernal Daz and to a lesser extent Corts, use the term. The word would have been unknown to mainland Mexicans.from their hiding places in the lowland scrub and repopulated their village, which soon was bustling again. Conquistador Bernal Daz, a soldier under Alvarados command who had been on both the Crdoba and Grijalva expeditions, remarked that men, women, and children went about with us as if they had been friends with us all their lives. Corts sternly reiterated that the natives must not be harmed in any way. Daz was impressed by Cortss leadership and style, noting that here in this island our Captain began to command most energetically, and Our Lord so favored him that whatever he touched succeeded.³The islanders brought food to the Spaniards, including loads of fresh fish, bundles of colorful and sweet tropical fruits, and hives of island honey, a delicacy that the island people nurtured and managed. The Spaniards traded beads, cutlery, bells, and other trinkets for food and low-grade gold ornaments. Relations seemed convivial, and Corts decided to hold a muster on the beach to assess the force he had amassed in Cuba.The ships included his one-hundred-ton flagship plus three smaller vessels displacing seventy or eighty tons. The remaining boats had open or partially covered decks with makeshift canvas roofs to provide shade from the scorching sun or shelter from the rain squalls. The bigger ships transported smaller vessels that could be lowered at ports or some distance offshore, then rowed or sailed to a landing.⁴ The ships were packed belowdecks with ample supplies of island fare: maize, yucca, chiles, and robust quantities of salt pork which had a long shelf life, plus fodder for the stock.The crew of mercenaries comprised chivalrous men bred on war and adventure. Over five hundred strong, these travel-hardened pikemen and swordsmen and lancers had either paid their way onto the voyage or come spurred by the promise of fortune. Corts strode the beach and surveyed the sharpshooters, thirty accurate crossbowmen and twelve well-trained harquebusiers bearing handheld matchlocks fired from the shoulder or chest. Ten small cannons would be fired by experienced artillery-men, who also carried light, transportable brass cannons called falconets. The detail-oriented, highly prepared Corts had the foresight to bring along a few blacksmiths who could repair damaged weaponry and, most important, keep the prized Spanish horses well shod. Extensive stocks of ammunition and gun- powder were packaged carefully in dry containers and guarded at all times. For land transport, Corts brought two hundred islanders from Cuba, mostly men for heavy portaging, but also a handful of women to prepare food and repair and fabricate the wool, flax, and linen doublets, jerkins, and brigandines the men wore.Corts ordered the horses lowered from the ships decks by means of strong leather harnesses, ropes, and pulleys, then had them led ashore to exercise and graze on the islands dense foliage. Curious islanders came forward. They had been observing the general muster, and now they were absolutely entranced by the horsesome islanders running away in fear at the sight of themthe first such creatures they had ever witnessed. Intrigued by the horses impression on the locals, Corts had his best cavalrymen mount the glistening and snorting animals and gallop them along the beach. Artillerymen tested cannons, firing them into the hillsides; the explosions were thunderous, flame and smoke belching from the muzzles. Archers shouldered crossbows and sent arrows whistling through the air at makeshift targets.⁵When the smoke from the military display had cleared and the horses were put away, islanders approached the Spaniards more closely, and tugged at their beards and stroked the white skin of their forearms. A few of the chiefs became animated and gesticulated aggressively using sign language and pointing beyond the easternmost tip of the island. Corts had Melchior brought forward, and after some discussion he reported some extraordin...Revue de presse"For sheer drama, no age compares to the age of exploration, no explorers compare to the conquistadors and no conquistador compares to Hernan Cortes. In Buddy Levys finely wrought and definitive Conquistador, the worlds of Cortes and Montezuma collide and come to life. Five hundred years after the conquest, the Cadillo and his prey have been made human. To read Conquistador is to see, hear and feel two cultures in a struggle to the death with nothing less than the fate of the western hemisphere at stake. Prodigiously researched and stirringly told, Conquistador is a rarity: an

invaluable history lesson that also happens to be a page-turning read."Jeremy Schaap, best-selling author of Cinderella Man: James J. Braddock, Max Baer and the Greatest Upset in Boxing History, and Triumph: The Untold Story of Jesse Owens and Hitlers Olympics "Sweeping and majestic...A pulse-quickening narrative."Neal Bascomb, author of Red Mutiny: Eleven Fateful Days on the Battleship Potemkin"A century before the Mayflower, a single man settled the destiny of the Americas far more momentously than the Puritans ever could....Conquistador offers a fascinating account of the first and most decisive of those encounters: the one between the impetuous Spanish adventurer Corts and Montezuma, the ill-starred emperor of the Aztecs.... [An] almost unbelievable story of missionary zeal, greed, cruelty and courage."Wall Street JournalDrawing heavily on both Spanish and Aztec sources. [Levy stresses] the military strategy, diplomatic initiatives, and personal relationship between Corts and Aztec emperor Montezuma. Well-written. Highly recommended.Library Journal, starred reviewA fateful meeting of civilizations. Cortes is front and center in this book. [Levys] description of the final siege on Tenochtitlan is especially dramatic.Associated PressExplores just how far invaders will go to take what they want.Cape Cod Times