

church officials, collect ecclesiastical tithes, and found churches and monasteries in the Americas.

Beginning with Columbus's second voyage, one or more clergymen accompanied every expedition that sailed for the Indies. They converted prodigious numbers of natives, and some championed the rights of the Indians against their Spanish oppressors. But many of the later arrivals preferred a life of ease and profit to one of austerity and service. From first to last, the colonies were a scene of strife between regular and secular clergy about their fields of jurisdiction. The regular clergy were members of the religious orders; the secular clergy made up the ecclesiastical hierarchy from the archbishop to the parish priest. The missionary impulse of the first friars survived longest on the frontier, "the rim of Christendom." The most notable instance of successful missionary effort, at least from an economic point of view, was that of the Jesuit missions in Paraguay.

The Inquisition was established in the Indies by Philip II in 1569. Its independence of other courts, the secrecy of its proceedings, and the dread with which the charge of heresy was regarded made the Inquisition an effective check on "dangerous thoughts," religious, political, or philosophical. Most cases tried by its tribunals, however, concerned offenses against morality or minor deviations from orthodox religious conduct, usually punished with relatively light penalties. Heresy was often punished with burning at the stake and confiscation of property.

The Portuguese crown first governed Brazil through *donatories* or lords—proprietors who were given almost complete authority in their territories in return for assuming the responsibilities of colonization. In 1549, convinced that the system had failed to achieve its ends, the king issued a decree limiting the powers of the *donatories* and creating a central government for all of Brazil. The first captain-general of the colony was Thomé de Souza, and Baía was selected as his capital. Governors, appointed by the king and subordinate to the captain-general, gradually replaced the *donatories* as the political and military leaders of the captaincies.

During the period of the Spanish Captivity (1580–1640), Spain established a Conselho da Índia for the administration of the Portuguese colonies. After Portugal regained her independence, this body continued to have charge of Brazilian affairs. As the colony expanded, new captaincies or provinces were created. In 1763, the captain-general of Rio de Janeiro replaced his colleague at Baía as head of the colonial administration in Brazil, with the title of viceroy. In practice, however, his authority over the other governors was negligible.

Official inefficiency and corruption seem to have been as common in colonial Brazil as in the Spanish Indies. During the reform administration of the Marquis de Pombal (1756–1777) the situation improved but apparently without lasting effects.

The Brazilian church lacked the immense wealth and influence of its counterpart in the Spanish Indies. By comparison with the Spanish monarchs, the Portuguese kings seemed almost niggardly in their dealings with the Church. But their control over its affairs was equally absolute.

In Brazil, as in the Spanish colonies, the Jesuits carried on intensive missionary work among the Indians. The priests aimed to settle their Indian converts in villages completely isolated from the whites, which led to conflict with the Portuguese landowners, who wanted to enslave the Indians for work on their plantations. The clash of interests was most severe in São Paulo, whose half-breed slave hunters bitterly resented Jesuit interference with their operations.

Like their colleagues in the Spanish colonies, the Brazilian clergy—always excepting the Jesuits and some other orders—were often criticized for their worldly lives and indifference to their charges. Yet such educational and humanitarian establishments as existed were almost exclusively provided by the clergy, and from their ranks came most of the few distinguished names in Brazilian colonial science, learning, and literature.

1. THE STRUCTURE OF COLONIAL GOVERNMENT

The shifting pattern of Spain's administration of the Indies in the sixteenth century reflected the steady growth of centralized rule in Spain itself and the application of a trial-and-error method to the problems of colonial government. By the middle of the century, the political organization of the Indies had assumed the definitive form that it was to retain, with slight variations, until late in the eighteenth century. The Mexican historian and statesman Lucas Alamán (1792–1853) included an informative sketch of colonial governmental institutions in his classic History of Mexico. His account, although somewhat abstract and idealized, suggests Alamán's sympathy with the old Spanish regime but also reflects his familiarity with the colonial climate of opinion in which he passed his youth and early manhood.

Among the many kingdoms and lordships that were united in the kings of Spain by inheritance, marriage, and conquest were included the East and West Indies, islands, and Tierra firme of the Ocean Sea, the name given to the immense possessions that these kings held on the continent of America and adjacent islands, the Philippine Islands, and others in the eastern seas. These vast dominions were ruled by special laws promulgated in various

Lucas Alamán, *Historia de Méjico*, 5 vols. (México, 1849–1852), 1:31–34, 40–43. Excerpt translated by Benjamin Keen.

times and circumstances and later brought together in a code called the Compilation of Laws of the Kingdoms of the Indies, authorized by King Charles II on May 18, 1680. At the same time the monarch ordered that all the decrees and orders given to the *audiencias* that did not contravene the compiled laws should continue in force, and that where these laws did not suffice those of Castile, known as the Laws of Toro, should apply.

The discovery and conquest of America coincided with the changes that Charles V made in the fundamental laws of Castile and that his son Philip completed by destroying the *fueros* [privileges] of Aragón. The *cortes* of Castile, Aragón, Valencia, and Catalonia, which formerly had met separately, were transformed and gradually declined in importance until they were reduced to a meeting in Madrid of some representatives or deputies of a few cities of Castile and Aragón, solely for the ceremony of acknowledging and taking the oath of allegiance to the heirs to the throne. All the high functions of government, both legislative and administrative, were vested in the councils, of which there were established in Madrid as many as the monarchy had parts. These councils were in no way dependent upon each other, and had no other relation to each other than that of being under a single monarch. Thus there was the Council of Castile, which was called "royal and supreme" and which the kings had always maintained, though in different forms, to aid them with its advice, and with whose concurrence the dispositions of the monarch had the force of laws, as if they were proclaimed in the *cortes*, a phrase that filled the gap caused by the disappearance of these bodies.

There were also Councils of Aragón, Flanders, and Italy, in addition to those which had jurisdiction over particular departments, such as the Council of the Inquisition, over matters of faith; the Council of the Orders, for the towns that belonged to the military orders of knighthood; and that of the *Mesta*, for the problems arising from the migratory herds of sheep. . . . Although these councils were endowed with great powers, they derived their authority entirely from that of the monarch, in whose name they performed all their acts and who was the fountainhead and first principle of all power.

Although the Indies were incorporated in the crown of Castile, "from which they could not be alienated totally or in part, under any condition, or in favor of any person," its government was not on that account made at all dependent on the council established for that kingdom; on the contrary, particular care was taken to establish for the colonies a government entirely independent and separate from the Council of Castile. In 1542 was created "the Council of the Indies," to which were assigned the same exemptions and privileges enjoyed by that of Castile; the same power of making laws in consultation with the king; and the same supreme jurisdiction in the East and West Indies and over their natives, even though resident in Castile, subject-

ing to it the *audiencia* of the commerce of Seville and expressly forbidding all the councils and tribunals of Spain, except that of the Inquisition, to take cognizance of any question relating to the Indies.

The Council of the Indies, then, was the legislative body in which were framed the laws that governed those vast dominions, it being declared that no law or provision should be obeyed in the colonies that had not passed through the council and had not been communicated by it; it was the supreme court, to which were brought all suits that by reason of the large sums involved could be appealed to this last resort; and, finally, it was the consultative branch of the government in all the weighty matters in which it was judged fitting to hear the Council's opinion. It was also charged with the duty of submitting to the king, through its chamber composed of five counselors, lists of . . . candidates from which were filled the vacant bishoprics, canonates, and judgeships of the *audiencias*. In order to enable it to perform this task more adequately, the viceroys were required to inform the council privately, at stated intervals, concerning residents of the territory under their command who might be worthy of filling these posts. . . .

The first governors [in the colonies] were the conquistadores themselves, either under the terms of their capitulations or agreements with the king, as in the case of Pizarro in Peru, or by choice of their soldiers, later confirmed by the crown, as happened with Cortes in New Spain. Later the governmental authority was transferred to the same bodies that were appointed to administer justice, called *audiencias*. Finally the Emperor Charles V created in Barcelona on November 20, 1542, the two viceroyalties of Mexico and Peru, to which were added in the eighteenth century those of Santa Fe and Buenos Aires, the other provinces remaining under captains-general and presidents, who exercised the same functions as the viceroys and differed from them only in title.

The authority of these high functionaries varied greatly according to the times. In the epoch of the creation of the first viceroyalties it was almost without limits, for the king declared: "In all the cases and affairs that may arise, they may do whatever appears fitting to them, and they can do and dispose just as we would do and dispose . . . in the provinces in their charge . . . saving only what is expressly forbidden them to do. . . ."

In the period we are discussing the power of the viceroys was moderated by prudent compromises, reflected in the participation of other bodies in the different branches of government, although the viceroys retained all the glitter and pomp of their supreme authority. In the arduous and important tasks of public administration . . . they were obliged to consult with the *real acuerdo*, the name given to a sitting of the *audiencia* when it acted as the viceroy's council, although he was not bound to accept the advice of the *oidores* or judges. . . . The viceroy was also subject to the *residencia*, which was a judicial review held immediately at the end of his term of office, and to

which the judge who was appointed for this purpose summoned all who desired to complain of some offense or injustice.

From the decision of this judge there was no appeal except to the Council of the Indies. But although all these restrictions had a very laudable object—to limit and bring within the scope of the laws an authority that bordered on the royal—distance and the very extent of the authority frequently made these precautions illusory. A viceroy of Mexico . . . said in this connection: “If he who comes to govern (this kingdom) does not repeatedly remind himself that the most rigorous *residencia* is that which the viceroy must face when he is judged by the divine majesty, he can be more sovereign than the Grand Turk, for there is no evil action that he may contrive for which he will not find encouragement, nor any tyranny that he may practice which will not be tolerated. . . .”

The period of time that a viceroy could remain in office was at first indefinite, and the first two viceroys of New Spain retained their positions for many years. It was later fixed at a period of three years, which was commonly renewed for those who distinguished themselves by their services, or for those who were the objects of the king’s favor; finally it was increased to five years. . . .

The authority exercised by the *audiencias* in their respective districts may be likened to that enjoyed by the council over all the Indies. These bodies were held in much respect, not only because they possessed great powers, acted as councils to the viceroys with the name of *acuerdo*, and were supreme tribunals from which there was no appeal (save in particular cases, to the Council of the Indies) but also because of their members’ reputation for honesty, their discreet conduct and bearing, and even their distinctive attire on public occasions. . . . This combination of circumstances made these posts very desirable and their holders, objects of envy. Appointments were made according to an established scale, with the judges progressing from less important *audiencias* to those of higher rank.

In order that these magistrates might be entirely independent and devote themselves to the administration of justice without relations of interest, friendship, or kinship in the place where they exercised their functions, they were strictly forbidden to engage in any kind of commerce or business; to borrow or lend money; to own lands, whether vegetable gardens or estates; to pay visits or attend betrothals and baptisms; to associate with merchants; to receive gifts of any kind; or to attend pleasure or gambling parties. These prohibitions also extended to their wives and children. In order to marry they had to obtain a license from the king, on pain of loss of their positions, and if such a license was granted they were generally transferred to another *audiencia*. The number of *oidores* varied according to the rank of the *audiencia*. These tribunals were found not only in the viceregal capitals but wherever else they were necessary.

2. “I HAVE SEEN CORRUPTION BOIL AND BUBBLE . . .”

Corruption became a structural element of the government of the Indies in the seventeenth century. Colonial officials, high and low, prostituted their trust in innumerable and ingenious ways. An audacious adventurer who had an intimate knowledge of conditions in the colonies, Gabriel Fernández de Villalobos, marquis of Varinas (1642?–?), showered Charles II with memorials in which he sought to guide the monarch through the bewildering thicket of official misdeeds and warned him that failure to remedy the corruption rampant in colonial government must lead to the loss of the Indies. Villalobos was rewarded for his pains by imprisonment in a North African fortress. The following extract from one of his memorials illuminates the technique of a corrupt viceroy.

I shall assume that your Majesty has everywhere excellent ministers, conscientious and learned, and that the Indies are today and have often before been governed by viceroys and *oidores* [judges] of notable piety and integrity. . . . And certainly some were distinguished by all the virtues; there was one, in particular, of such zeal and integrity that on departing from Mexico City after completing his term of office he received with kindness an Indian who offered him a bouquet of flowers, saying: “This is the first gift I have received in this kingdom.” A great viceroy was this, my lord, who died so poor that King Philip II (may he be with God) paid his debts out of the royal treasury. And it may be that these virtues (in addition to the merits of his family) later won for his sons the favor of Philip IV, your Majesty’s father.

There were viceroys before and after him who worked in the same righteous spirit. For that reason, in this discourse I shall neither name names nor accuse anyone in particular; I shall speak instead of the evils that I have seen and of the remedies that are necessary. . . .

Your Majesty may assume that a high official driven by an immoderate desire to make his fortune will operate in the following manner:

First, he will utilize or sell (to put it more precisely), for his own profit and at high prices, every kind of judicial office, *alcaldías mayores*, *corregimientos*, commissions, and *residencias*.

Second, he will also sell the rights to *encomiendas*, licenses, and concessions—authorizations to do various things that are forbidden by the laws and ordinances but that the viceroy may allow.

Colección de documentos inéditos . . . de las antiguas posesiones españolas de Ultramar, 25 vols. (Madrid, 1885–1932), 12:226–231. Excerpt translated by Benjamin Keen.

Third, he will dispose in the same way of all kinds of military positions, such as the titles and commissions of lieutenants, captains, generals, recruiting officers, garrison commanders, constables, and many non-existent posts.

Fourth, he will do the same with all that relates to the public finances, selling drafts on the royal treasury (which is the ruin of your Majesty's estate) and disposing of the offices of revenue collectors, of judges appointed to make various investigations, of officials charged with collecting the royal fifth and making financial settlements, of inspectors of the mines and lands, of *alcaldes* with jurisdiction over water rights, and so forth. . . .

Such, my lord, are the articles of faith that your ministers of the Indies observe most diligently.

The minister who does these things, my lord, clearly will be guided not by reason but by his own convenience, and therefore he will surround himself with individuals who will advance his interests; and will encourage these men to commit excesses, while he will always persecute and humiliate the just and virtuous, for these are the only ones he fears.

Such a minister must also seek the good will of superiors as well as inferiors, and share his spoils with them, so that they will write favorably of him to Spain and so that his trickery will be concealed. He must also try to persuade the tribunals to close their eyes to his actions, sometimes through terrorizing them, sometimes by bribing them. . . .

Such viceroys and presidents must also go about in fear and distrust of the people, who see what goes on and murmur, complain, denounce it publicly, and compose satires and squibs. . . .

All these things together, and each one separately, contribute to the total destruction of the Indies, for every item is a source of political offenses and scandalous crimes that cause infinite miseries.

3. THE CORREGIDOR: ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE

The provincial governor—or corregidor, the title he most commonly bore—occupied a key position in the political hierarchy of the Indies. His supreme authority on the local level, under the viceroy from whom he usually bought his position, gave him immense power for good or evil. By common consent, he generally employed that power for bad ends. The worst abuse of his authority arose in connection with the practice of repartimiento or reparto de mercancías, the requirement that Indians in his district purchase goods from the corregidor. The Marquis of Varinas describes in vivid detail the operations of the repartimiento.

Colectión de documentos inéditos, 12:237–239, 245–246, 249–256. Excerpt translated by Benjamin Keen.

This *corregidor* or governor, president or *alcalde mayor*, whose office cost him 10 or 12,000 pesos, must acquire a stock of goods worth 20,000 pesos to sell in his province, in order to make a profit on the money he has expended. . . . He sells this merchandise to his poor subjects at six or eight times its true value, and buys up the products of the Indians and Spaniards at four or five times below the current price of the country, using force and threats . . . to enrich himself and slake his unnatural thirst for money, as soon as he takes up the tasks of government. . . .

The goods that this official receives from the merchants who outfit him, he purchases at steep prices; and he must increase their cost to the Indians accordingly. So the unhappy judge, dragging the chains of his many debts, arrives in his district, which he finds filled with naked Indians and impoverished Spaniards burdened with children and obligations, whose total possessions, if put up at public auction, would not yield 6,000 pesos. Withal, this judge must squeeze out of them more than 30,000 pesos in two years in order to pay his debts, and half as much again if he wishes to make a profit from his office. And if he cannot do this he is beyond salvation (as they say in the Indies), since he is considering only his temporal welfare and forgetting that such a policy may consign him to eternal perdition, as will inevitably ensue if he does not make restitution.

When this judge enters upon his office, his sole concern is to find means of paying off his large debts and to make a profit from his employment; and since time is short, his needs immense, the land exhausted, and his vassals poor, he must use violence and cruelty to attain what equity, moderation, and kindness will not secure.

To this end he must monopolize the products of the land, compelling his miserable vassals to sell all their fruits to him, who, rod in hand, is judge and inspector, merchant, *corregidor*, and interpreter of his own contract. . . .

Let your Majesty's ministers of the Council of the Indies, and your Majesty's confessor, take note that the distribution of goods by the *corregidor*, made to enable him to buy the products of the district, is never carried out by arrangement with the Indians who have to buy this merchandise. The customary practice is for the Spanish governor to turn the goods over to the Indian *alcaldes* and bosses and to fix prices in collusion with them. . . . The Indian bosses never object to the high prices, for they do not have to buy anything; their principal concern is to avoid having to shoulder any part of the burden and to ingratiate themselves with the *corregidores*, so that they may keep their jobs.

~~Having agreed on prices and received the goods, the Indian bosses, who are stupid and heartless, count the people living in each town, they make no exception of the widows or of the poor, sick, and aged, but treat all alike, and assign to them by heads the payment they must make for these goods. They take the merchandise, according to the assessment made by the *corregidor*, to each one's house, place it before him, and tell him the reckoning; he must pay~~

Local government in Brazil

The *captaincies-general* or provinces of the first rank, in Brazil, of which Pernambuco is one, are governed by captains-general, or governors, who are appointed for three years. At the end of this period, the same person is continued or not, at the option of the supreme government. They are, in fact, absolute in power: but before the person who has been nominated to one of these places can exercise any of its functions, he is under the necessity of presenting his credentials to the *Senado da Câmara*, the chamber or municipality of the principal town. This is formed of persons of respectability in the place. The governor has the supreme and sole command of the military force. The civil and criminal causes are discussed before, and determined by, the *Ouvidor* and *Juiz de Fora*, the two chief judicial officers, whose duties are somewhat similar: but the former is the superior in rank. They are appointed for three years, and the term may be renewed. It is in these departments of the government that the opportunities of amassing large fortunes are most numerous; and certain it is, that some individuals take advantage of them in a manner which renders justice but a name. The governor can determine in a criminal cause without appeal; but if he pleases, he refers it to the competent judge. The *Procurador da Coroa*, attorney-general, is an officer of considerable weight. The *Intendente da Marinha*, port admiral, is likewise consulted on matters of first importance; as are also the *Escrivão da Fazenda Real*, chief of the treasury, and the *Juiz da Alfândega*, comptroller of the customs. These seven officers form the Junta, or council, which occasionally meets to arrange and decide upon the affairs of the captaincy to which they belong.

The ecclesiastical government is scarcely connected with that above mentioned; and is administered by a bishop and a dean and chapter with his vicar-general etc. The governor cannot even appoint a chaplain to the island of Fernando de Noronha, one of the dependencies of Pernambuco; but acquaints the bishop that a priest is wanted, who then nominates one for the place.

The number of civil and military officers is enormous; inspectors innumerable—colonels without end, devoid of any objects to inspect—without any regiments to command; judges to manage each trifling department of which the duties might all be done by two or three persons. Thus salaries are augmented; the people are oppressed; but the state is not benefited.

Taxes are laid where they fall heavy upon the lower classes: and none are levied where they could well be borne. A tenth is raised in kind upon cattle, poultry, and agriculture, and even upon salt; this in former times appertained, as in other Christian countries, to the clergy. All the taxes are farmed to the highest bidders, and this among the rest. They are parceled out in extensive districts, and are contracted for at a reasonable rate; but the contractors again dispose of their shares in small portions: these are again retailed to other persons: and as a profit is obtained by each transfer the people must be oppressed, that these men may satisfy those above them and enrich themselves.

The system is in itself bad, but is rendered still heavier by this division of the spoil. . . .

Now, although the expenses of the provincial governments are great, and absorb a very considerable proportion of the receipts, owing to the number of officers employed in every department, still the salaries of each are, in most instances, much too small to afford a comfortable subsistence. Consequently peculation, bribery, and other crimes of the same description, are to be looked for: and they become so frequent as to escape all punishment or even notice; though there are some men whose character is without reproach. The governor of Pernambuco receives a salary of 4,000,000 *reis*, or about 1000 £ per annum. Can this be supposed to be sufficient for a man in his responsible situation, even in a country in which articles of food are cheap? His honour, however, is unimpeached; not one instance did I ever hear mentioned of improper conduct in him. But the temptation and the opportunities of amassing money are very great, and few are the persons who can resist them.

8. LOCAL GOVERNMENT: THE CAPITÃO-MÔR

Away from the few large towns, local government in colonial Brazil in effect meant government by the great landowners, or fazendeiros. In the câmaras, or municipal councils, the power of these rural magnates was sometimes checked by representatives of the crown or of urban interests, but on their vast estates they were absolute lords. To their personal influence the great planters often joined the authority of office, for the royal governors invariably appointed the capitães-môres, or district militia officers, from among them. Armed with unlimited power to command, arrest, and punish, the capitão-môr (captain-major) became a popular symbol of despotism and oppression. The following selection from Koster's book illustrates his comment that "the whole aspect of the government of Brazil is military."

The *Capitães-môres*, captains-major, are officers of considerable power. They have civil as well as military duties to perform, and ought to be appointed from among the planters of most wealth and individual weight in the several *Termos*, boundaries or districts. But the interest of family or of relations about the Court, have occasioned deviations from this rule; and persons very unfit for these situations, have been sometimes nominated to them. The whole aspect of the government in Brazil is military. All men between the

this way the most industrious workman is forever in debt, and the same rights are exercised over him which are believed to be acquired over a purchased slave. I knew many persons in Querétaro, who lamented with me the existence of these enormous abuses. Let us hope that a government friendly to the people, will turn their attention to a species of oppression so contrary to humanity, the laws of the country, and the progress of Mexican industry.

With the exception of a few stuffs of cotton mixed with silk, the manufacture of silks is at present next to nothing in Mexico. In the time of Acosta, towards the conclusion of the sixteenth century, silk worms brought from Europe were cultivated near Panuco, and in la Misteca, and excellent taffeta was there manufactured with Mexican silk.

On my passage through Querétaro, I visited the great manufactory of cigars (*fábrica de puros y cigarros*), in which 3000 people, including 1900 women, are employed. The halls are very neat, but badly aired, very small, and consequently excessively warm. They consume daily in this manufactory 130 reams (*resmas*) of paper, and 2770 pounds of tobacco leaf. . . .

The manufacture of hard soap is a considerable object of commerce at Puebla, Mexico, and Guadalajara. The first of these towns produces nearly 200,000 *arrobos* per annum; and in the intendency of Guadalajara, the quantity manufactured is computed at 1,300,000 *livres tournois*. The abundance of soda which we find almost everywhere at elevations of 2000 or 2500 meters, in the interior table land of Mexico, is highly favorable to this manufacture. . . .

The town of Puebla was formerly celebrated for its fine manufactories of delf ware (*loza*) and hats. We have already observed that, till the commencement of the eighteenth century, these two branches of industry enlivened the commerce between Acapulco and Peru. At present there is little or no communication between Puebla and Lima, and the delf manufactories have fallen so much off, on account of the low price of the stone ware and porcelain of Europe imported at Vera Cruz, that of 446 manufactories which were still existing in 1793, there were in 1802 only sixteen remaining of delf ware, and two of glass.

5. POLITICAL REFORM: THE INTENDANT SYSTEM

The intendant reform was made by Charles III in the interests of greater administrative efficiency and increased royal revenues from the colonies. Among their many duties, the intendants were expected to further the economic development of their districts by promoting the cultivation of new crops, improving mining, building roads and bridges, and establishing consulados (chambers of commerce) and economic societies. The historian Alamán gives a glowing account of the favorable consequences of the es-

tablishment of the intendant system in New Spain and of the accomplishments of two model intendants.

The principal source of profit of the *alcaldes mayores* consisted in the traffic they carried on under the pretext of getting the Indians to work, as was recommended by the laws. They assigned them certain tasks and purchased the product at low prices, paying for it in necessary articles of dress and food that were overpriced. Having all authority in their hands, they compelled the Indians to fulfill these contracts with great punctuality, and reaped large profits thereby. This was particularly true in those districts where there was some valuable product, such as cochineal in Oaxaca, which constituted a monopoly for those officers and for the merchants who equipped them with capital and goods. Meanwhile the Indians were cruelly oppressed. A miserable system of administration was this, in which the pecuniary advantage of the governors was rooted in the oppression and misery of the governed! The Duke of Linares, in his vigorous and concise style, characterized it in a few words: "Although the jurisdiction of the *alcaldes mayores* is most extensive, I can define it very briefly, for it amounts to this: They are faithless to God from the time they enter upon their employment, by breaking the oath they have taken; they are faithless to their king, because of the *repartimientos* they engage in; and they sin against the common Indians, by tyrannizing over them as they do."

The whole order of things, so unjust and oppressive, ceased with the promulgation of the Ordinance of Intendants, published by Minister [José de] Gálvez on December 4, 1786, and limited at that time to New Spain alone, but later extended, with appropriate modifications, to all Spanish America. In it, under the titles of "the four departments of justice, police, finance, and war," were set forth the most comprehensive rules for the administration of the country in these spheres and for the encouragement of agriculture, industry, and mining. The whole territory of the vice-royalty, including Yucatán and the *provincias internas*, was divided into twelve intendancies, which took the names of their capitals. The *corregimiento* of Querétaro was retained for civil and judicial matters, but it was made financially dependent on the intendency of Mexico. To the posts of intendants were appointed men of integrity and intelligence in the performance of their functions. Among those who distinguished themselves by their special merit were the intendants of Guanajuato and Puebla.

Minister Gálvez, at the time when he was in power, sought to place all his relatives in high posts, and their actions justified this preference. Don Matías, his brother, and Don Bernardo, his nephew, succeeded each other as viceroys

Alamán, *Historia de Méjico*, 1:73–76. Excerpt translated by Benjamin Keen.

of Mexico. . . . At the time of the creation of the intendancies, the former was assigned that of Valladolid, where he remained only a short time, being transferred immediately to the more important one of Guanajuato; and Flon was placed over that of Puebla.

The strict and honorable Flon reformed great abuses, encouraged all the branches of industry in his province, and notably beautified its capital. Riaño, of equal integrity but of a mild and affable disposition, had served in the royal navy, and to a knowledge of mathematics and astronomy, natural in that profession, united a taste for literature and the fine arts. These interests, and in particular his delight in architecture, he introduced to Guanajuato; through his influence there were erected, not only in the capital but in all the province, magnificent structures, whose building he himself supervised, even instructing the stonecutters in the art of hewing stone. He promoted the study of the Latin classics of the best Spanish writers; it was owing to his influence that the young men of Guanajuato devoted themselves to the study of the Castilian tongue and to its correct pronunciation.

French, the native tongue of his wife, was spoken in their home, and he introduced among the youth of the provincial capital a taste for that language and its literature, together with an elegance of manners unknown in other cities of the province. He was also responsible for the development of interest in drawing and music and for the cultivation of mathematics, physics, and chemistry in the school that had formerly been maintained by the Jesuits. To that end he zealously patronized Don José Antonio Rojas, professor of mathematics in that school and a graduate of the School of Mines. He also established a theater, promoted the cultivation of olives and vines, and diligently fostered the mining industry, the chief wealth of that province, by encouraging the rich citizens of Guanajuato to form companies for the exploitation of old and abandoned mines as well as new ones.

6. THE MORE THINGS CHANGE . . .

“Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose” could be fairly applied to Spain’s Indian policy. The Ordinance of Intendants promised to inaugurate a new and better day for the Indian by abolishing the offices of corregidor and alcalde mayor and forbidding their successors, the subdelegates, to engage in the infamous reparto de mercancías. Despite Alamán’s contention (see the previous selection) that the old order of things, “so unjust and oppressive, ceased with the promulgation of the Ordinance of Intendants,” other observers came to different conclusions. In Mexico an enlightened prelate, Bishop Manuel Abad Queipo of Michoacán, denounced the entire system of subjugation and segregation of the Indians and mixed castes and flatly stated that the natives were worse off than they had been before the intendant reform.

The population of New Spain is composed of some four and a half million inhabitants, who can be divided into three classes: Spaniards, Indians, and castes. The Spaniards number one tenth of the total population but possess almost the entire population or wealth of the kingdom. The other two classes, forming the other nine tenths, can be divided into two parts castes, the other part pure Indians. The Indians and castes are employed in domestic service, agricultural labors, and the ordinary tasks of commerce and industry—that is to say, they are servants and day-laborers for the Spaniards. Consequently there arises between them and the Spaniards that opposition of interests and views that is typical of those who have nothing and those who have everything—between superiors and inferiors. Envy, theft, and unwilling service are the traits of the latter; arrogance, exploitation, and harsh treatment, the qualities of the former. These evils are to a certain extent common to all the world. But in America they are immeasurably greater because there are no gradations or intermediate states; all are either rich or wretched, noble or infamous.

In effect, the two classes of Indians and castes are sunk in the greatest abasement and degradation. The color, ignorance, and misery of the Indians place them at an infinite distance from a Spaniard. The ostensible privileges which the laws accord them do them little good and in most respects injure them greatly. Shut up in a narrow space of six hundred *varas*, assigned by law to the Indian towns, they possess no individual property and are obliged to work the communal lands. This cultivation is made all the more hateful by the fact that in recent years it has become increasingly difficult for them to enjoy any of the fruits of their labor. Under the new intendant system they cannot draw on the communal funds [*caja de comunidad*] without special permission from the office of the royal exchequer [*junta superior de la real hacienda*] in Mexico City.

Forbidden by law to commingle with the other castes, they are deprived of the instruction and assistance that they should receive from contact with these and other people. They are isolated by their language, and by a useless, tyrannical form of government. In each town there are found eight or ten old Indians who live in idleness at the expense of their fellows and artfully try to perpetuate their ancient customs, usages, and gross superstitions, ruling them like despots. Incapable, by law, of making a binding contract or of running into debt to the extent of more than five pesos—in a word, of any dealings at all—they cannot learn anything or better their fortune or in any way raise themselves above their wretched condition. Solorzano, Fraso, and other Spanish authors have wondered why the privileges granted them have

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José María Luis Mora, *Obras sueltas*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1837), 1:55–57. Excerpt translated by Benjamin Keen.