

*In the
Footsteps
of
Explorers
and
Conquistadors*

JOHN VLACHOPOULOS

El mar dará a cada
hombre una nueva
esperanza,
como el dormir le da
sueños

The sea will give every man a new
hope,
as sleep gives him
dreams

Cristóbal Colón

Christopher Columbus

In the Footsteps of Explorers and Conquistadors

PROLOGUE

The catchy old rhyme that most American schoolchildren learn, "In fourteen hundred ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue. He had three ships and left from Spain; He sailed through sunshine, wind, and rain," belies the momentous events that transpired. There was really no indication on the evening of August 3, 1492, when Columbus departed from Palos de la Frontera (Spain), that the entire world was going to be remade.

After Columbus, the conquest of the Aztecs was led by Hernán Cortés. He was assisted by Malintzin (aka La Malinche), a young slave woman who served as Cortés' interpreter and advisor. Francisco Pizarro conquered the Inca Empire of Peru. Cortés and Pizarro were not interested in exploration. Their greed for gold was greater than their unbridled ambition.

More than 50 million indigenous people, perhaps 100 million, were already living in the Caribbean, North, Central, and South America. They had their own languages, cultures, religions, and lifestyles, but in two centuries, the native population was going to be reduced to just ten percent of its pre-colonization level, due to violence, enslavement, and Euro-African diseases.

This travelogue is a slightly edited version of my Facebook posts, starting from the islands in the Caribbean, to Mexico, Central America, Colombia, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, and Venezuela. Landscape descriptions and pictures are from my own travels and collection. The historical information is based on what I had read in books and the internet or heard from numerous YouTube documentaries. Three books were very useful for this task: William Least Heat-Moon's "*Columbus in the Americas*" (Wiley, 2002), Laurence Bergreen's "*Columbus: the four voyages*" (Viking, 2011), and Bernal Díaz del Castillo's "*The True History of the Conquest of New Spain*" (Hackett Publishing, 2012).

I have added some personal observations and opinions in my attempt to make my narrative both informative and interesting.

John Vlachopoulos

Burlington, Ontario, Canada

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**John Vlachopoulos, *In the Footsteps of Explorers and Conquistadors*.
Polydynamics Inc, Canada (2023)**

ISBN 978-1-7782525-1-8 (Book)

ISBN 978-1-7782525-0-1 (Electronic book)

Published by:

Polydynamics Inc, Dundas, ON, CANADA

www.polydynamics.com





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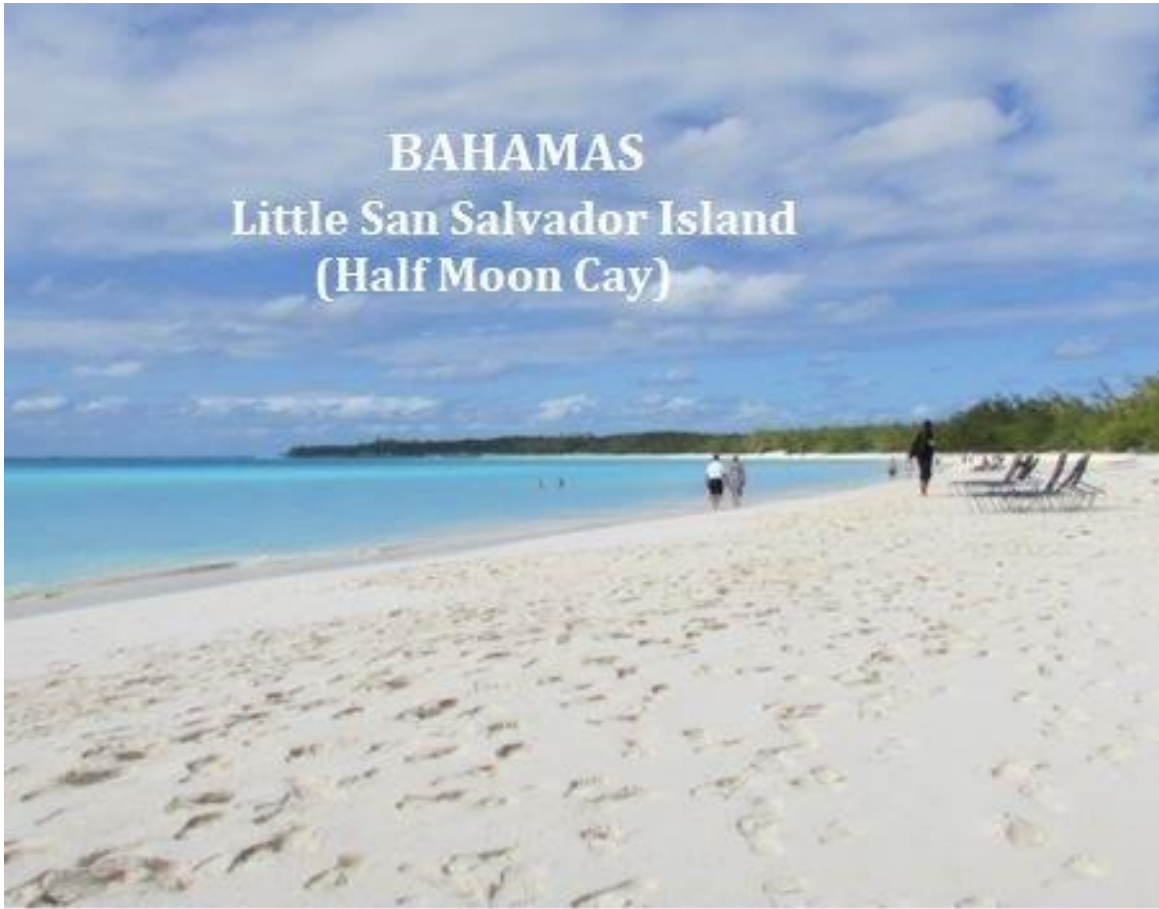
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BAHAMAS



I am starting this travelogue from Bahamas, where **Christopher Columbus** (Cristóbal Colón, in Spanish) arrived on October 12, 1492. He named the island San Salvador, the indigenes called it Guanahani.

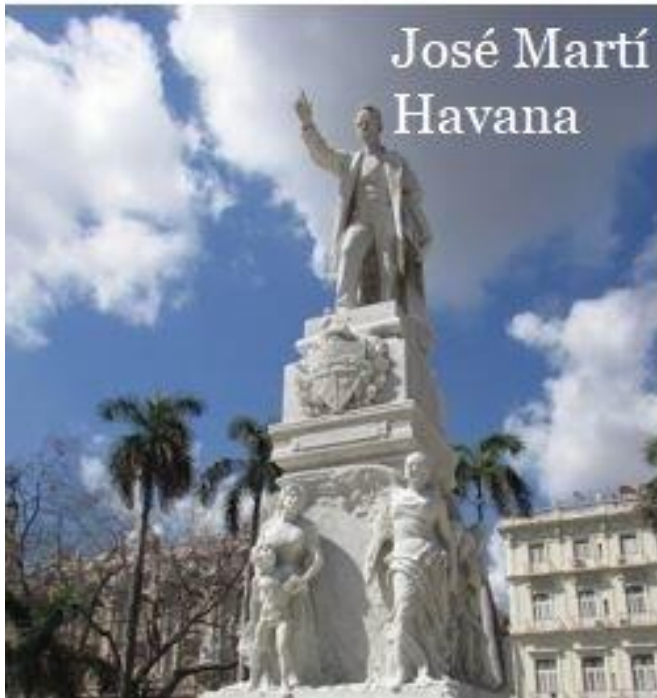
It was believed that Guanahani was what is now called Cat Island, about 25 kilometers from the Little San Salvador Island, where Columbus arrived at. However, based on more recent historical evidence the name San Salvador was transferred in 1925 to Watling's Island, some 100 kilometers southeast. There are a couple of other islands with claims for the first landing, with Samana Cays the most credible. Little San Salvador (aka Half Moon Cay) is a private island visited by cruise ships, but the beach looks probably similar, to what Columbus saw upon his first arrival.

There is mystery, tales, and enigmas about Columbus origins. According to mainstream historians, he was **born in Genoa**, Italy. The fact that Columbus lived in the Greek island of Chios, in the late 1470s supports this hypothesis, because Chios was ruled by Genoa. However, the intrepid navigator, who discovered America for the Europeans, never uncovered his own identity. Based on linguistic and other evidence, modern historians have proposed several other hypotheses. These include but not limited to Catalan origin, Catalan-Jewish origin, Spanish nobility origin and Portuguese nobleman father-Jewish mother.

If he had Jewish roots, he had a good reason not wanting to reveal his identity. A few months before departure for his first voyage on August 3, 1492, Jews were ordered to leave Spain (or convert to Catholicism) by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabela, who were Columbus' sponsors for his voyages. Of course, he would also have a good reason to hide his identity if he was a Catalan pirate (according to another hypothesis) who had fought against the Castilian (Spanish) crown or if he was born illegitimate.

Greek philosopher and astronomer **Eratosthenes** had estimated the size of the earth's circumference with an error of about 2%, way back in the 3rd century BC. However, Columbus confused the Arabic miles, given in his main source of information, with the shorter Roman miles. He concluded that the earth's circumference was 25% smaller. So, when he arrived in Bahamas, he thought he had reached India. The term West Indies was introduced by Europeans to distinguish from the real "Indies."

CUBA



Columbus left San Salvador on October 15 and with his 90 crew in three ships (the Niña, the Pinta and the Santa Maria) he visited several other Caribbean islands. Upon landing at each island, he would claim possession, in the name of the Spanish Queen and King.

He heard from the natives about a very big island and he thought that it ought to be Cipango (Japan). He arrived at the northeastern coast of Cuba, near the town of Gibara, on October 27, 1492. Gibara is some 600 km east of the resort town of Varadero, which is about 120 km east of Havana. He was very impressed by the bright sunlight and the contrasting colors of intense green vegetation and beautiful blue sea. He wrote in his diary “this is the most beautiful land that human eyes have ever seen”.

The natives, called **Tainos**, were somewhat more advanced than those of the Bahamian islands. The interactions were friendly after initial distrust by the natives. But he did not find what he was looking for: gold. He did notice that the natives “men and women take in smoke of weeds.” This is the first ever reference to tobacco by a European. As W. Least Heat-Moon put it, in his book on Columbus, “that commodity is a kind of revenge, for tobacco would one day sicken and kill more Europeans and their descendants than all the natives the conquistadors laid low.”

Cuba was a Spanish colony from 1492 to 1898. Poet and philosopher **José Martí** started a revolutionary movement against the Spaniards in 1892, but he was killed in 1895. After the Spanish-American war of 1898 Cuba was occupied by the USA and became a republic in 1902. In 1952 Fulgencio Batista took power after a military coup. He was overthrown by the revolutionary forces of Fidel Castro and Ernesto Che Guevara, which entered Havana on January 8, 1959. The Batista dictatorship was replaced by the dictatorship of Fidel Castro.

The promised egalitarian socialism and prosperity remain a distant dream, sixty-three years later. They have been successful in education and healthcare, but the economy has been perennially anemic and poverty is obvious. The Cuban government blames the US trade embargo, but it is perhaps the lack of private initiative. They have been following Soviet economics rather than China's or Vietnam's economic models, which has lifted one billion people out of poverty.

Tourism is a major source of foreign exchange, with Canada being the largest market. Americans were not (and still are not) allowed to visit Cuba explicitly for tourism. As opposed to other Latin American countries, where safety and security is a major concern for tourists (and everyone else), Cuba is as safe as the USA, but less safe than Canada or the EU countries. Despite the struggle to meet everyday needs, Cubans are wonderful people full of joie de vivre and hope for a better future.

HAITI, HISPANIOLA



Columbus left Cuba in search of gold. He made contact with Tainos in the northwest corner of the island that he named Hispaniola, on December 12, 1492. It is a big island, now shared by Haiti in the west and Dominican Republic in the east. The island was lush with vegetation and the surrounding sea was abundant with fish. There were five “kingdoms”, each one ruled by a cacique (if a woman, cacica). When Columbus arrived, Guacanagari was the ruler of one of the chiefdoms, another was ruled by Anacaona.

According to Spanish chroniclers, in the **Taino society** there were four social classes: Caciques (at the top), nobles, healers/spiritualists and commoners. Polygamy was practiced by both men and women, usually with two or three spouses. Cuacanagari had 20 wives. Caciques lived in rectangular large dwellings, with their wives and many children. Other Tainos lived in communal round dwellings, usually 10-15 families together. Women were responsible for food from crops and plants. Men were fishing and hunting. Kinship was determined through the female line (matrilineal). Upon the death of a cacique the chiefdom usually would be passed on to a son of his older sister. Anacaona was a talented poet and she became cacica after her brother died.

The Tainos of Hispaniola were peaceful people and life was simple, easy and good for them. They had one enemy, the Caribs of the Lesser Antilles, who were known as tough warriors and gruesome cannibals. Columbus was welcomed soon after his arrival and became good friends with cacique Guacanagari. The Tainos hoped that the Spaniards could protect them from the Caribs.

Up to this point Columbus first voyage was more like a... Caribbean cruise, in a medieval context. However, in the early hours of December 25, the largest of the ships the Santa Maria struck a coral reef, not far offshore. Attempts to save her proved fruitless. Guacanagari came for help with many canoes and men and helped salvage the goods.

Columbus was planning for his return but he could not fit the entire crew in one ship, the Niña. The Pinta, captained by Martín Alonso Pinzón, had already left. 39 volunteers decided to remain behind and they built a settlement, named it Puerto de La Navidad (Nativity), with help from the Tainos, using timber of the Santa Maria. Columbus sailed from La Navidad on January 4 on his way back to Spain. There were no apparent signs of the calamity that would befall on the Tainos after Columbus return.

I have visited Hispaniola in February 2013, in the Dominican Republic side of the island. I have also travelled on a cruise ship through the Windward Passage, between Cuba and Hispaniola, in January 2019.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, HISPANIOLA



Columbus encountered very rough seas on his way back, but he made it first to Lisbon, Portugal and then to Spain. He showed off to Queen Isabela and King Ferdinand pieces of gold jewellery

from the natives, tobacco, pineapples and 6 Tainos he had kidnapped. For the **second voyage** he had a fleet of 17 ships, with about 1200 men, weapons, horses and specially trained war dogs. He left Spain on September 25, 1493 and visited islands of the Lesser Antilles, before reaching La Navidad in Hispaniola, on November 27.

The entire settlement was burnt down and none of the 39 Spaniards that he had left behind was alive. Details of the events he learned later from his trusted friend Casique Guacanari. The Spaniards had formed rival gangs and were raiding Taino villages stealing and robbing the natives of food, gold jewellery and women. Each Spaniard ended up having four or five women. Casique Caonabo started killing them one by one and when their numbers were significantly reduced, he attacked and burned down the settlement with some of them inside.

Columbus decided to build another settlement, that he named La Isabela, some 120 km to the east of La Navidad, in what is now the north coast of the Dominican Republic. One his first despicable acts was to capture 500 Tainos and send them as slaves to Spain. There was some gold in Hispaniola but not easy to find. Columbus forced the Tainos to work in search of gold and he set a quota for each native over the age of 14 or they would have one hand cut-off. Some kind of flu and other diseases infested the Isabela settlement and killed about 40% of Spaniards. A tropical paradise was transformed to a colonial hell, during Columbus second voyage.

Many Tainos (50,000 according to Columbus) committed suicide by jumping off cliffs or eating poisonous weeds. Many others died of the imported European diseases or killed by the Spaniards and their vicious attack dogs. Cacica Anacaona was captured on suspicion of planning an insurrection and was hanged (aged probably 29). Cacique Caonabo was captured and sent to Spain to stand trial, but he perished in a shipwreck. Of an estimated 500,000 inhabitants in 1492 “an enumeration in 1508 showed 60,000 alive and by 1548 [historian] Oviedo doubted whether 500 remained”. African slaves were brought to work in the plantations. There are no Tainos left on Hispaniola today, but there is Taino DNA mixed with African and European.

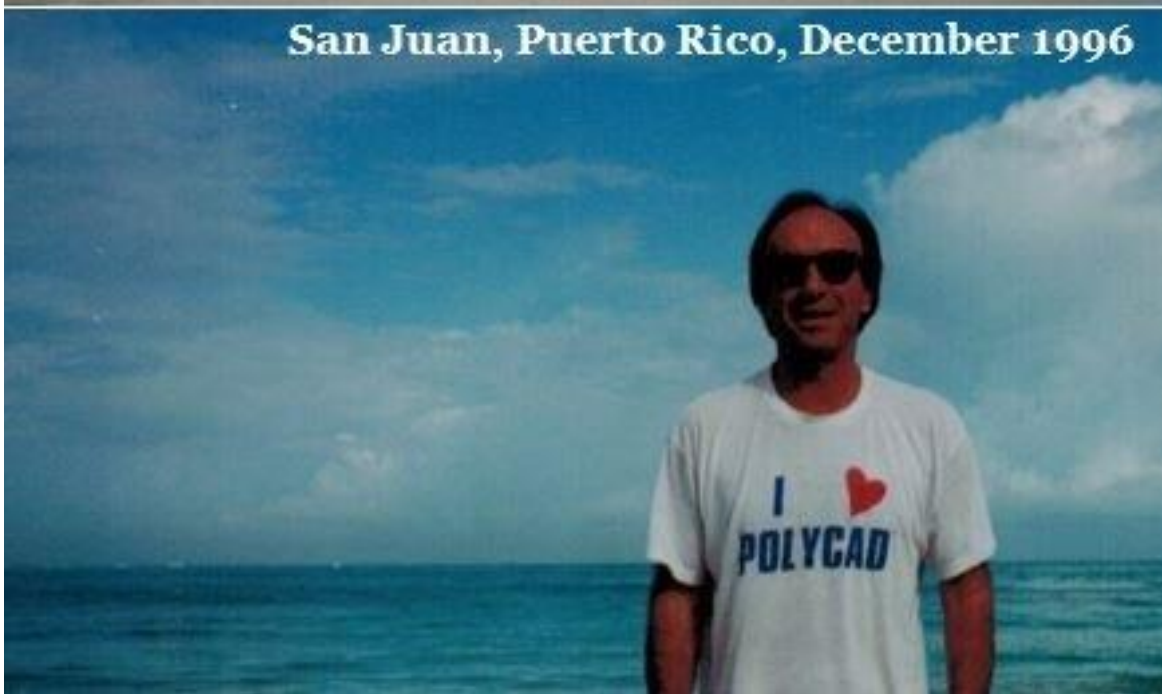
In **Haiti**, the French Revolution inspired a revolution of the slaves against the French masters. Independence was proclaimed in 1804. In fact, Haiti was the first country in the world to recognise Greek independence in 1822. Recent Haitian history has been marred by the corrupt and brutal Francois (papas doc) Duvalier dictatorship (1957-1971), followed by that of his son Jean-Claude (baby doc) Duvalier (1971-1986). The political instability that followed and the self-exile of the majority of educated Haitians has resulted in Haiti being the most impoverished country in the Western Hemisphere (population 11. 5 million, French speaking, 95% Afro-Haitians and 5% European-Haitians).

The **Dominican Republic** declared independence from Spain in 1844. Recent history was marred by Trujillo’s corrupt and brutal dictatorship from 1930 to his assassination in 1961. Political instability and US intervention followed “to prevent another Cuba.” Since 1996 Dominican Republic is a stable democracy and it is the country that attracts the largest number of tourists in the Caribbean (population 10.6 million, Spanish speaking, 71% self-identify as mixed, 16% black and 13% white

PUERTO RICO



San Juan, Puerto Rico, December 1996



Columbus' **second voyage** lasted for more than 2½ years (1493-1496). He landed in Puerto Rico on November 19, 1493, to take on fresh water and stayed for a few days. The native **Tainos** disappeared upon seeing the Spanish ships. The Spaniard whose name is linked with Puerto Rico is **Juan Ponce de León**. He was a scion of nobility and joined Columbus in his second voyage as a 19-year-old. He distinguished himself in Hispaniola in the early 1500s by crushing a rebellion of the natives. He was authorized to explore Puerto Rico and was appointed its first governor in 1499.

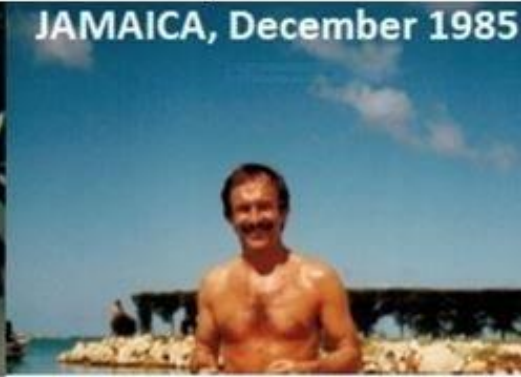
In Puerto Rico the natives believed that the Spaniards were of divine origin and did not try to harm them. A chieftain (cacique) wanted some kind of a proof and ordered that a soldier be drowned to see if he would survive. Diego Salcedo was lured to a river where his head was submerged and held under water, till he was dead. Having heard about resurrection in three days from Catholic missionaries, the Tainos waited and then they launched a rebellion (1511). The Spaniards easily prevailed, due to their superior weapons and military tactics. Spanish trained-to-kill war dogs terrorized the naked Taino warriors. One dog owned by Juan Ponce de León, named Becerrillo (little calf), reportedly killed 33 natives during a battle. Becerrillo was killed in another battle three years later by an arrow.

Juan Ponce de León went on a voyage northwest, landed a few miles north or south of Daytona Beach and named, what he thought was an island, La Florida (flowery). Actually, he is better known for searching for the legendary "fountain of youth". Myths of a fountain of longevity and youthfulness go back to Herodotus and his story of Macrobian, somewhere in Africa. Also, a Japanese tale of a fountain of youth has been told in a book by Lafcadio Hearn (<http://hdl.handle.net/11375/27486>). It is doubtful whether Ponce de León actually went on such a wild search, but historians wrote about it and the legend has stuck.

Puerto Rico was a Spanish colony till the Spanish-American war of 1898, when Cuba, Puerto Rico and The Philippines were ceded to the USA. It is now a US territory and Puerto Ricans have US citizenship since 1917, but they do not pay federal taxes and they do not have the right to vote. Plebiscites were held a few times. In the most recent, the statehood option was the most popular. The plebiscites were not binding. The question of statehood is a partisan one. As a US state, Puerto Rico would be represented by two senators who, most likely, are going to be Democratic. Spanish is the dominant language spoken by 95% of the 3.3 million inhabitants (60% identify as white, 12% black, 28% mixed or other race, many have Taino DNA).

POLYCAD was a computer software package developed and marketed by my company Polydynamics Inc.

JAMAICA



Columbus visited Jamaica during his **second voyage** in 1493. The native Tainos did not appear to have gold, so it was not of much interest to the Spaniards. During his fourth voyage, Columbus was shipwrecked in Jamaica and had to wait for a year for rescue to arrive. The relations with the natives were not very amicable, but he was relying on them for food through bartering of European trinkets, like mirrors, bells, glass and pieces of clothing. After several months there was not much left to barter and finding food for his marooned crew was a major concern.

Among a few books that Columbus had with him was an Almanac, where it was indicated that a lunar eclipse would occur on February 29, 1504 and it would be a blood moon, with its color turning reddish. Columbus invited the Taino chiefs for a meeting and, through an interpreter, told them that the Christian god in heaven would punish them for not providing food to his children stranded on their island. They would soon see what was going to happen to the moon. Sure enough, when the chiefs saw the eclipse and the moon turning bloodred, they were terrified because they thought that Columbus not only predicted, but also caused the eclipse. They begged him to stop the impending calamities and were eager to supply food and help him anyway they could.

I took the moon eclipse pictures when I was on a cruise very close to Jamaica on my way to the Panama Canal, in the evening of January 20, 2019. I laid flat on my back on the top deck of the cruise ship and enjoyed viewing a spectacular lunar eclipse in a clear Caribbean sky.

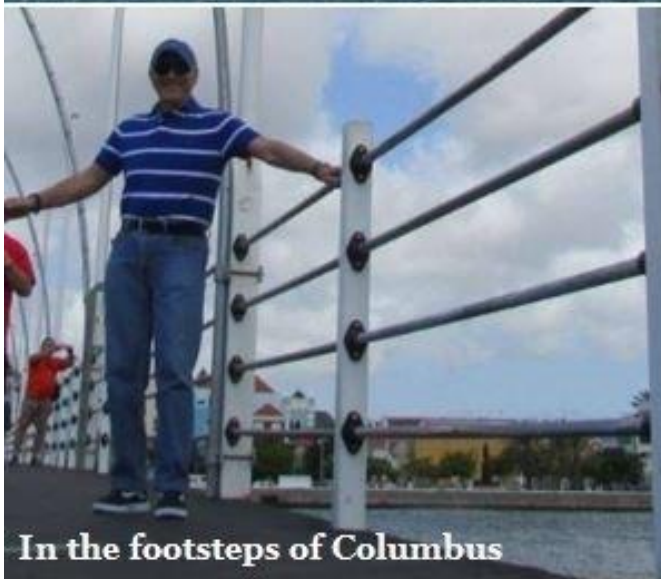
Jamaica was a Spanish colony till about 1655. As the Taino population was dying from European diseases and forced labor, African slaves were brought to work in the plantations. Some slaves escaped to the interior, got mixed with the remaining Tainos and formed the so-called Maroons. The British invaded and Jamaica was fully under their control after the battle at Ocho Rios in 1657. More African slaves were brought by the British and many of them escaped and increased the population of the Maroons.

Several rebellions and unrests occurred till full independence in 1962. The population is now about 3 million, the official language is English and the ethnicity is 92% Afro-Jamaican. There is a large Jamaican diaspora in UK, USA and Canada. I have had a few students from Jamaica at McMaster U. In fact, one of them, Michael Lee-Chin became a billionaire in mutual fund management. According Forbes Magazine, he is the 1630th richest person in the world with a fortune of \$1.8 billion. He has African-Chinese-Jamaican parentage.

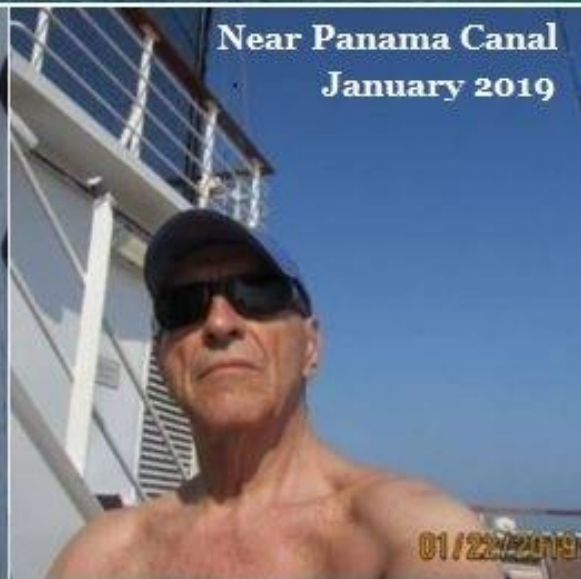
CURAÇAO



Willemstad, Harbour, Curaçao



In the footsteps of Columbus



Near Panama Canal
January 2019

01/22/2019

Columbus in his **third voyage** (1498) headed south to Trinidad just off the coast of Venezuela. He was looking for an exit to open sea to reach India. He also sailed further south and reached the Orinoco delta. He was very impressed by the beautiful landscape and the fertile soil and concluded that it must be the entrance to the Garden of Eden (!). But still, he could not accept the possibility that there could be a continent between the Atlantic and the Pacific Ocean. He thought that he was visiting islands and Asia was not too far. He could not find an exit to open sea and headed north to Hispaniola.

On his way to Hispaniola, he sailed near the ABC islands (Aruba, Bonaire, Curacao) but he did not land there. One of Columbus' captains, Alonso de Ojeda, visited these islands in 1499. Ojeda's troops captured most of the natives and send them to Hispaniola as slaves for forced labor. The Spaniards were colonial rulers of the ABC islands till 1634 when the Dutch gained control. Aruba and Curacao are now independent countries, within the kingdom of the Netherlands. The weather is hot, but due to low humidity pleasant and the islands attract a lot of tourists in the winter months.

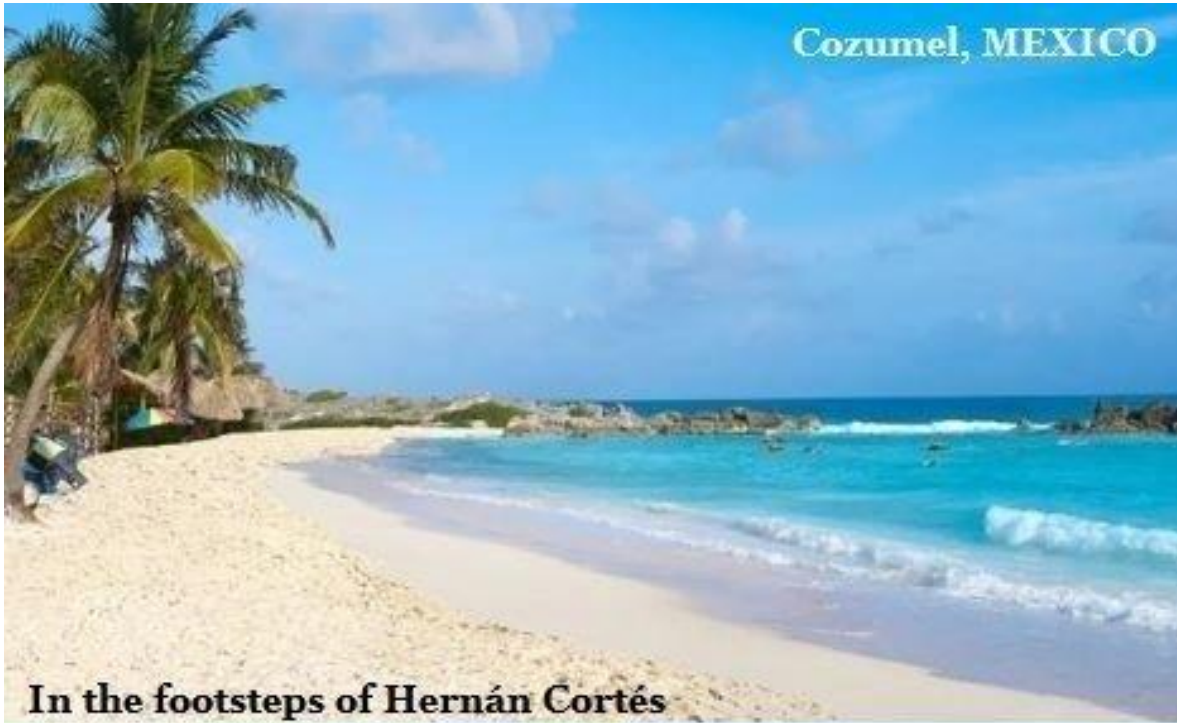
In his **fourth and final voyage** (1502-1504) Columbus searched again for a passage to the Indian Ocean, which he thought was near the Caribbean. He first visited Martinique in the eastern Caribbean, where Lafcadio Hearn spent two years in the late 1880s (<http://hdl.handle.net/11375/27486>). Columbus predicted an impending hurricane and docked his ships in the relative safety of a harbor in Hispaniola. After the hurricane, he headed to the coast of central America and visited Panama, before returning to Spain, where he died in 1506.

Columbus undoubtedly had an enormous impact in the history of the world. His voyages to the Caribbean opened the way for Europeans to settle in the Americas. However, the brutality of the conquistadors and the colonial policies caused the world's worst genocide. Estimates of the native population before 1492 are between 40 and 100 million in the Americas. By 1900 the native population had declined to about 5 million.

In the Caribbean, the Taino indigenous people, their culture and language were exterminated by Euro-African diseases, war, forced labor and enslavement. A tropical paradise turned to hell in just a few years. As the Taino were dying African slaves were brought to work in the plantations. Words like canoe, barbecue, hammock, hurricane, and tobacco are of Taino origin.

The top picture shows a pontoon bridge moving on boats to allow the cruise ship to enter the port. I am standing on this bridge at bottom left. The picture at bottom right was taken on the cruise ship on the way to Panama.

COZUMEL, MEXICO



In the footsteps of Hernán Cortés



C

Hernan Cortes was born to a hidalgo (lower nobility) family in Spain, in 1485. He had studied Latin for a couple of years and trained as a notary before sailing to Hispaniola in 1504, in search of fame and fortune. He worked in administrative/political positions in Hispaniola and Cuba before being given the command of an expedition to explore and colonize Mexico. He had no military training, except that he knew how to ride horses and use a sword. He left Cuba in February 1519 without permission from the governor accompanied by about 400 men in 11 ships and his first stop was Cozumel.

Cozumel is an island located about than 20 kilometers from the eastern coast of Yucatan Peninsula, across from modern day Playa del Carmen. Cortes was received peacefully by the indigenous **Maya**. He heard from them that two “bearded men” had shipwrecked and were living among the Maya of Yucatan. He sent Maya messengers to deliver a letter inviting them to come meet him in Cozumel. The “bearded men” were later identified as Jerónimo de Aguilar and Gonzalo Guerrero. They and ten other Spaniards had survived a shipwreck on Yucatan as they were sailing from Panama to Hispaniola, eight years earlier.

The Maya were practitioners of human sacrifice to appease their gods. Five of the shipwreck survivors were sacrificed, five others died, Aguilar and Guerrero escaped and were captured by a different Maya tribe. They eventually gained their freedom. Guerrero got married to a Maya princess, became a war chief to a local cacique, fathered three of the first mestizo children and was happy with his life in Yucatan. Aguilar kept his celibacy vows as a Franciscan friar, did not want to get married and was eager to meet with other Spaniards.

Aguilar arrived in a canoe, accompanied by a six Mayas, on the coast of Cozumel. When he first met the Spaniards, he asked them whether it was a Wednesday, but it was a Sunday. During eight years he kept counting the dates and he was off by just three days. Cortes was very happy to hear that Aguilar was fluent in the local Maya dialect. He had found the interpreter that he really needed in his quest for exploration and colonization of what is now Mexico.

For me, it was a four-hour non-stop flight from Toronto to Cozumel, in February of 2010. I left Toronto at temperatures below -10°C and I spent four weeks in Cozumel in very nice sunny and warm weather. It is a rather large island about 45 km long and 15 km wide. It is very flat surrounded by coral reefs and it is considered as one of the best scuba-diving locations in the world. Like all Caribbean locations it can be in the path of hurricanes. Cozumel and Yucatan were hit by hurricane Wilma in October 2005, which resulted in a few deaths and significant property destruction, especially at Cancun, 80 km north on the Yucatan.

CANCUN and COBA, YUCATAN, MEXICO



In the Footsteps of
Hernan Cortes



East of the Yucatan Peninsula is the Caribbean Sea. Northwest is the Gulf of Mexico, where 66 million years ago an asteroid of about 11km in diameter struck the earth with estimated energy of 5 billion times the nuclear bomb dropped at Hiroshima. It resulted in the extinction of the dinosaurs as well as of numerous other animal and plant species. When Hernan Cortes arrived at Cozumel in 1519, Yucatan was inhabited by Maya people living simple lives in independent, and frequently hostile to each other, city-states. Unlike the Aztecs in northern Mexico and the Incas in Peru the Mayas had never had an integrated central state or empire.

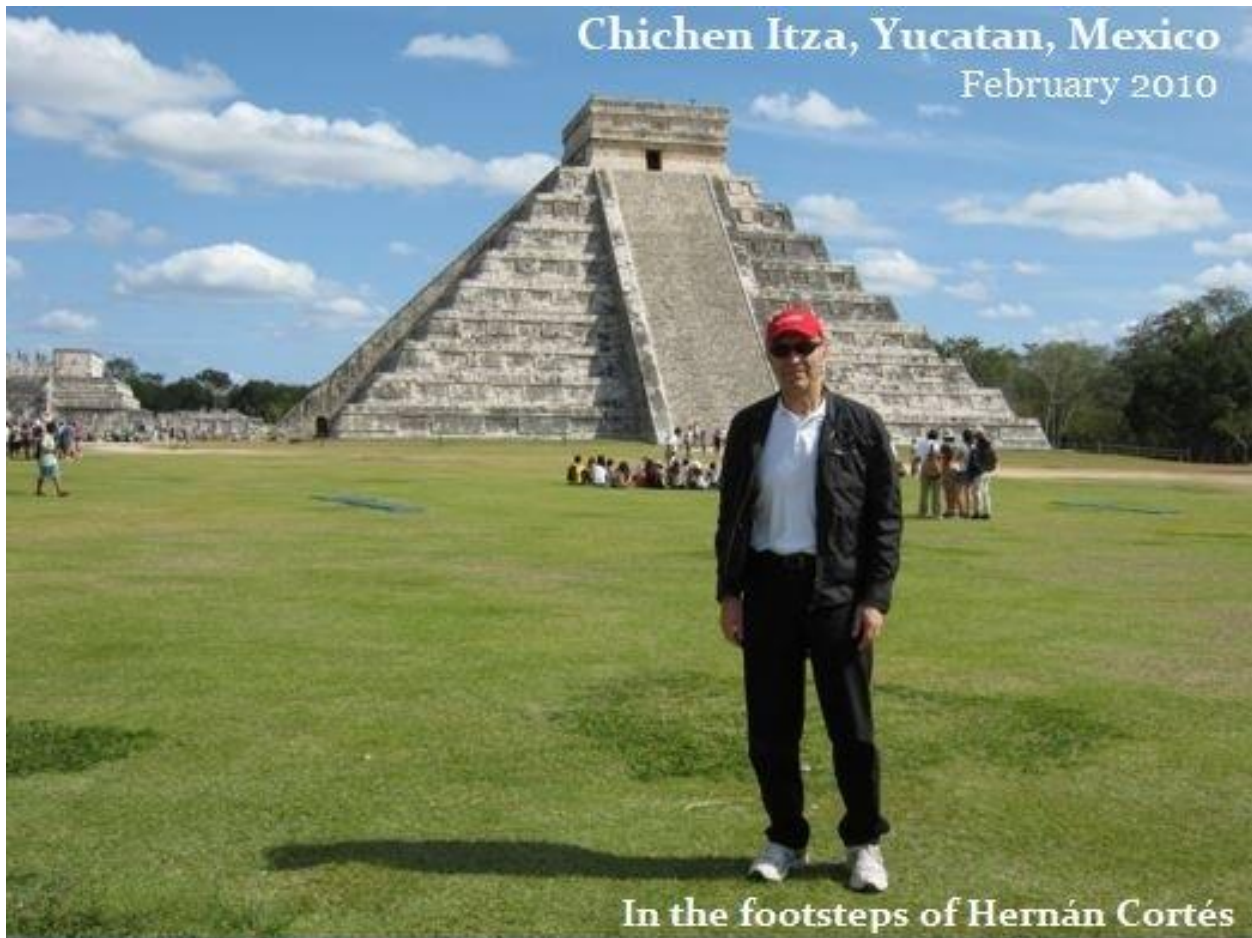
The Maya civilization had collapsed 500 years before the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors. The question is why a civilization that had lasted for 2000 years collapsed in just 100 years (around 850 to 950 AD). According to the prevailing theory there were several reasons. The soil was thin on top of a porous limestone platform and agricultural production was never plentiful. Overpopulation made a bad situation worse. Due to climate change, there was a period of extended drought which resulted in famine and starvation. Tribal warfare and rebellions of the lower classes against the ruling elite led to the complete breakdown of organized society.

During the years of greatest prosperity, the Maya lived in perhaps 40 cities. Tikal (60 km south of the Mexican border, in modern Guatemala) was comparable in splendor to the greatest cities in Europe and Asia. The Maya had invented writing (hieroglyphics) and made significant achievements in astronomy and mathematics. However, they had not invented the wheel. It is amazing that they could build several enormous stepped-pyramids in Yucatan. The Coba pyramid is 42 meters high (as much as a 14-story building). There were no large mammals, like horses or oxen, for pulling wheeled vehicles. Sharp tools and weapons were made of obsidian, which is a volcanic glass.

The jungle reclaimed the territories of the abandoned cities of the Maya. Not much was known about Maya civilization till 1839, when travel writers J. L. Stephens and F. Catherwood arrived, visited several locations of ruins and wrote popular books.

The tourist developments from Cancun to Tulum started in 1970s. The eastern coast of Yucatan from Playa del Carmen south to Tulum, known as Riviera Maya, is home to many all-inclusive resorts. Hernan Cortes sailed in the Caribbean Sea, shown in the picture behind me, on his way from Cozumel to the western coast of the Gulf Mexico. I have visited this area on ten different occasions, on winter vacation and once for a scientific conference. At Cancun it is always windy and the red flag (warning for dangerous waves) is an almost permanent fixture.

CHICHEN ITZA, YUCATAN, MEXICO



Hernan Cortes sailed in front of present-day Cancun and then around the nose of the Yucatan Peninsula (towards the left in the picture). He did not visit the ruins at Chichen-Itza, some 100 km west of Cancun, which currently attracts over two million tourists per year. His objective was gold and he had heard that there was not much in Yucatan, but abundant in central Mexico.

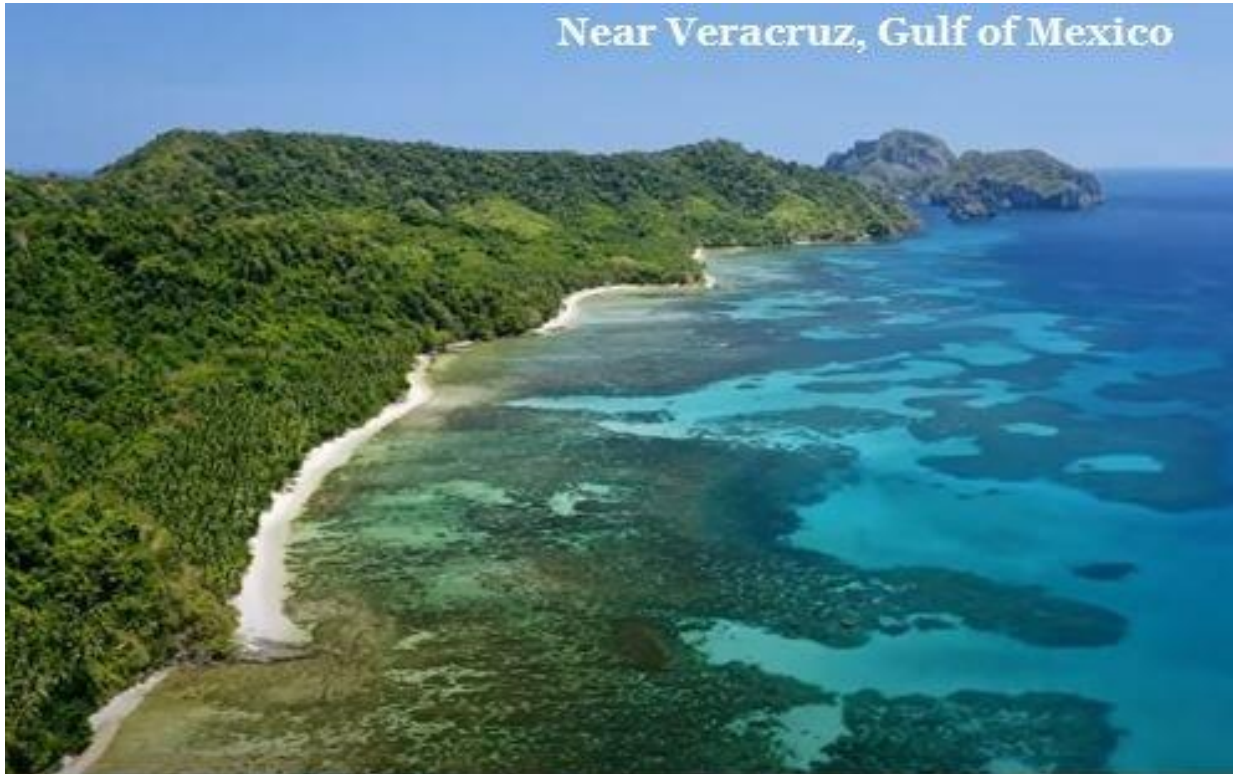
Chichen-Itza was a regional center of political, cultural, and economic activities. It blossomed after the collapse of the Maya civilization in the south (900s) till about 1200 AD. It was conquered by one of Cortes' captains, Francisco de Montejo, in 1526.

It is now a very large archeological site with the 30-meter tall stepped- pyramid as its centerpiece (known as El Castillo). Each one of the four sides has 91 steps and with the top platform there are 365, equal to the number of days in the Mayan solar calendar. They had another calendar lasting for 260 days. Why 260? The numbering system was base-20 and they had cycles of 13 days to determine religious and ceremonial events, $20 \times 13 = 260$. The two calendars were synchronized every 52 years or $52 \times 365 = 18980$ days $= 73 \times 260$. During the spring and autumn equinoxes (March and September), when both daylight and darkness last 12 hours, the shadow falls in the shape of a serpent. The pyramid was dedicated to the feathered serpent god Kukulcan.

Another interesting landmark is a ballcourt which measures 168 by 70 metres (551 by 230 feet). A heavy rubber ball of about 4 kg was used. The players were hitting the ball with their hips, upper thighs or elbows trying to put it through a stone loop. The ball game was associated with the human sacrifices practiced by the Maya. During my visit, a Spanish speaking guide told us that the winning team was sacrificed, strange as it may sound. From an internet search, I concluded that there is no clear evidence as to which team or team captain was sacrificed. One historian wrote that it was "perhaps the losing team". The sacrifice ritual was grisly: Decapitation followed by heart extraction.

There are several natural large water caves (sinkholes. called cenotes in Spanish). They were formed by the shock waves generated by the impact of the asteroid which struck the earth about 100 km northwest from Chichen-Itza, 66 million years ago. Hernan Cortes, as he was sailing along the northern coast of Yucatan, passed by the impact site.

NEAR VERACRUZ, MEXICO



Hernan Cortes with his 600 men in eleven ships landed near the Tabasco River delta, between Yucatan and present-day Vera Cruz. Immediately, a fight broke out with the indigenous Maya. Cortes's expeditionary force was composed of soldiers and adventurers looking for a quick fortune. Their weapons included swords, cannons, arquebuses (matchlock guns), 15 horses and war dogs. The Spaniards were protected by steel body armor. The Mayas had bows and arrows and their body armor was designed for intimidation rather than protection (eagle's feathers or jaguar skins).

The Mayas realized the futility of fighting a losing war and decided to make peace offering gifts to the Spaniards, including 20 young women, which was an ages-old custom in Mesoamerica. The twenty slave women were baptized and given Christian names. Cortes offered them to his captains and officers. The one with the most notable presence and appearance, baptized Marina (later known as **Malintzin** or **La Malinche**), was assigned to Alonso Puertocarrero, who was the most socio-politically connected of the captains.

Cortes sailed along the coast and the next landing was near Vera Cruz. A few days after disembarkation two emissaries from the supreme ruler of the **Aztec Empire** arrived bearing gifts, including gold, at the officers' tent. Jeronimo Aguilar who had joined Cortes in Cozumel as interpreter Spanish/Mayan, was unable to understand what the emissaries were saying. Malinche came to the rescue: She started speaking with the emissaries in their native Nahuatl language and translating to Mayan and then Aguilar to Spanish. Cortes told the emissaries that many of his men were suffering from a disease, which could only be cured with gold. They said they had a lot in their capital **Tenochtitlan** (present day Mexico-City), unbeknownst to them that it was a huge mistake.

Malinche was born to a concubine of a local chieftain and had a privileged upbringing till the age of about 12. After her father died, her mother got remarried and the young girl was given away so that she would not interfere with the inheritance rights of her new-born half-brother. Her native tongue was **Nahuatl** which was also the language of the Aztecs. She was further sold as a slave to Mayas living near the Tabasco River delta and learned Mayan as well.

Cortes apprehended a potential mutiny among his men. Some of them wanted to return to Cuba. To dissuade them from such attempts, Cortes scuttled 10 of his 11 ships. On the remaining ship he sent a lengthy letter to King Carlos I of Spain (aka Karl V (Habsburg) of the Holy Roman Empire) to establish direct connection rather than having to report to the governor of Cuba. He had decided to go the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan and on the way there he received more gifts from another indigenous tribe including eight young women, who were members of the local nobility. He gave one of them to Puertocarrero and took Malinche from him. Malinche was destined to play an extraordinary role in the conquest of the Aztec empire.

PASO DE CORTES, MEXICO



Cortes's troops had to march through a mountain pass (now called Paso de Cortes) at elevation of about 3,400 m, on their way to Tenochtitlan (present-day Mexico City), between **Popocatepetl** (5426 m) and Ixtaccíhuatl (5230 m). Popocatepetl is an active volcano and its name means smoking mountain (most recent eruption in February 2020). Ixtaccíhuatl is a dormant volcanic mountain and it is frequently referred to as *Mujer Dormida* (sleeping woman). However, the troops did not take the shortest route. They went north in search of allies.

Tenochtitlan was the capital of the Aztecs (actually, their name was Mexicas, with the accent on the i). The empire was dominating a large area all the way south to Guatemala. It was a collection of vassal states paying tributes to the central government. Through Malinche, Cortes was informed that many of the vassal states were very unhappy with the heavy burden imposed by the Aztec overlords. There was also one independent state surrounded by the Aztec empire, **Tlaxcala**, and Cortes headed in that direction to the north. The Tlaxcalans had successfully resisted several attempts to be conquered by the Aztecs. The troops were trained not to kill but to capture soldiers of the opposing side for ritual sacrifices. The sacrificial rituals of the Aztecs were even more grizzly than those of the Mayas in the south: Heart extraction from live victims, followed by cannibalism. The Tlaxcalans had good reason to fear the Aztecs.

When Cortes arrived with about 500 troops war broke out. Four dozen Spaniards were killed and two of their horses. At some point the Tlaxcalans started negotiating through Malinche in Nahuatl and Aguilar, who was translating from Maya to Spanish. Malinche was doing more talking than just translating word for word. She managed to convince the Tlaxcalans that it was to their benefit to join forces with Cortes to fight against the Aztecs. Eventually, the Spaniards were welcomed in Tlaxcala and stayed for several days to recuperate.

The combined Spanish and Tlaxcalan forces headed to **Cholula**, a city with population of about 100,000 at that time, now part of modern-day Puebla. The story goes that Malinche went to the market and befriended several people. A noblewoman took a liking to her and warned her that the Cholulans were preparing for an attack "To save your life, you should abandon the Spaniards and marry my son". Malinche told that to Cortes. He agreed to meet with leaders and prominent citizens of Cholula in the central square, where instead of a ceremonial gathering, he ordered his troops to carry out a brutal pre-emptive attack. Estimates of dead Cholulans range from 3,000 to 6,000 and this is known as the Cholula massacre (October 1519). His next target would be the capital of the Aztec empire, not far from the end of the mountain pass.

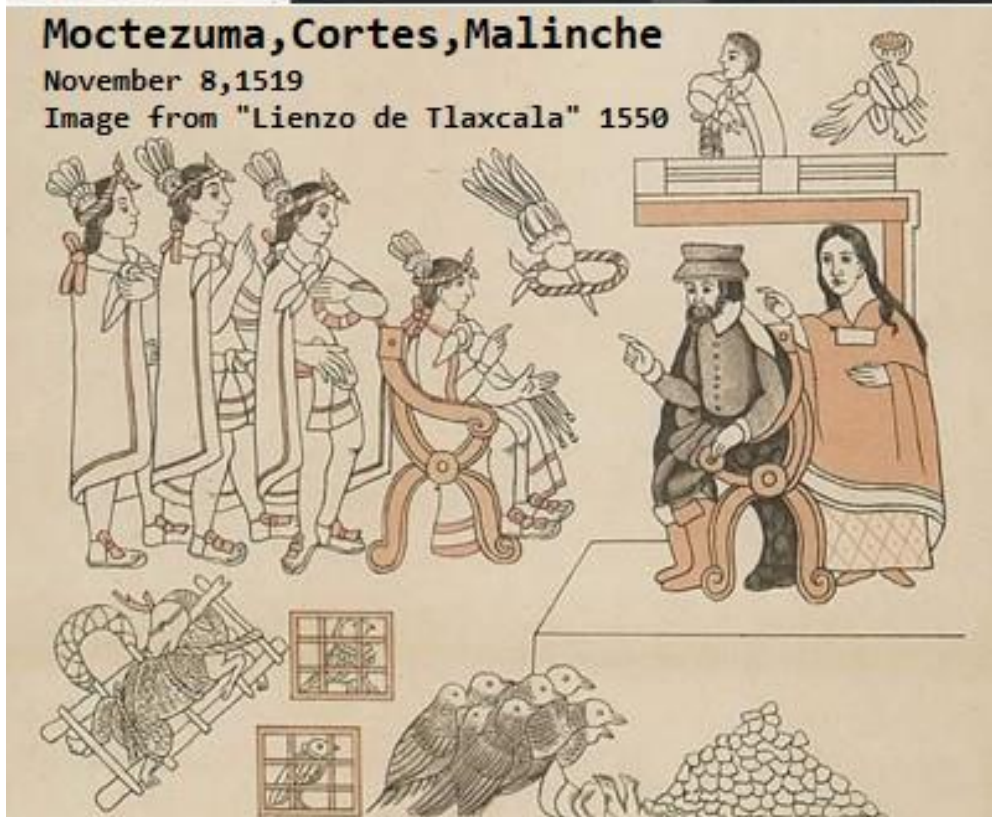
MEXICO CITY



Moctezuma, Cortes, Malinche

November 8, 1519

Image from "Lienzo de Tlaxcala" 1550



Tenochtitlan had a population of about 250,000 and was one of the largest cities in the world. It was an island city in a lake, some sort of Mesoamerican Venice. According to conquistador and writer Bernal Díaz del Castillo, it was more impressive than Constantinople or Rome. The lake has been drained and its basin is now occupied by Mexico City (population 22 million). Zocalo is the central square, which was the ceremonial center of Tenochtitlan in 1519.

Moctezuma II (also spelled Montezuma) was the emperor of the Mexica (**Aztecs**), since 1503. Chroniclers reported that eight omens were foretelling an impending catastrophe. One of them was about a woman walking in the streets at night weeping for her children (La Llorona). Another was a comet which could be seen in the dawn. Also, it was the 52nd year when the 260-day religious and the 365-day solar calendars happen to coincide (see page 20, Chichen Itza) and Moctezuma believed that an exiled god was expected to return.

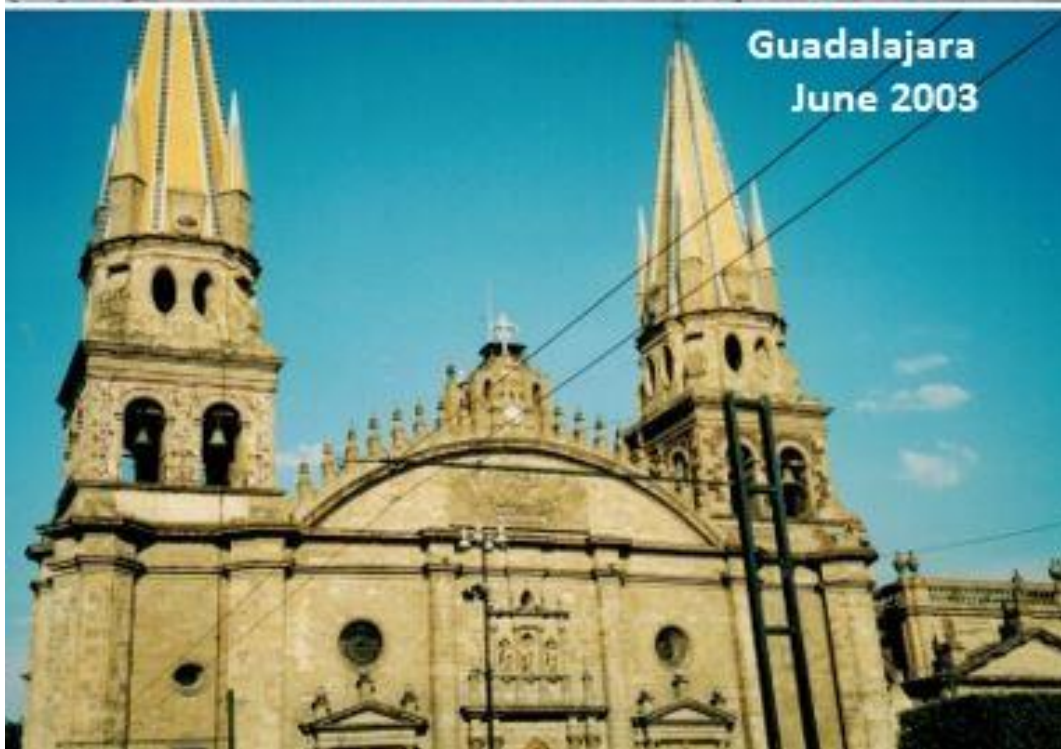
Moctezuma welcomed Cortes and his troops on November 8, 1519 on the main causeway in Tenochtitlan. He was shocked when an 18-year-old former slave woman, **Malinche**, was staring at him in the eyes and doing most of the talking, in his own Nahuatl language. Only nobility was allowed to look him in the eyes. Commoners had to prostrate themselves on the ground, in his presence. Moctezuma offered lodging to the Spaniards at his father's large palace.

Cortes, with Malinche's help, managed to convince Moctezuma to come for a "private visit" and took him as a prisoner, a week after the first encounter. Moctezuma was allowed to perform his duties under supervision. In April of 1520 Moctezuma informed Cortes that a large expeditionary force had arrived in the gulf coast. Cortes immediately understood that it was sent by the governor of Cuba, for the purpose of containing him. He left immediately with about 300 troops, leaving about 100 behind to control the emperor and Tenochtitlan. Cortes managed to defeat the much larger expeditionary force and convinced the soldiers to join him. He returned to Tenochtitlan with about 1,300 Spaniards on June 24, 1520.

The Aztecs, in Cortes's absence had rebelled against the occupation forces. Moctezuma was forced to appear on a palace terrace asking his people to calm down. They started jeering him and throwing stones and Moctezuma was seriously injured and died. During "La Noche Triste" (night of sorrow) of June 30 to July 1, 1520 several hundred Spaniards and thousands of their indigenous allies were killed.

Cortes was forced to leave Tenochtitlan and retreated to Tlaxcala. With help from his indigenous allies, he built 13 ships and used them when he returned to lay siege, accompanied by tens of thousands of Tlaxcalans. Before the siege an epidemic of smallpox was spreading. Tens of thousands of Aztecs died or were killed. They surrendered on August 13, 1521. The city was in ruins. The surviving Aztecs were enslaved, forced to destroy the remaining structures and started building a new city renamed **Ciudad de Mexico**.

GUADALAJARA, MEXICO



After the destruction of Tenochtitlan, King Carlos I (aka Karl V) appointed Hernan Cortes governor of New Spain (central Mexico). Building of Mexico City was underway on Aztec ruins. Cortes had a son with Malinche, named Martin, born in 1523. Martin was sent to Spain at an early age and grew up with his relatives. Cortes had at least 10 children with other women. One of them was Moctezuma's daughter. There are descendants of Cortes and of his son Martin living in Mexico today. I have viewed a couple of video lectures by distinguished archeology professor Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, who is a descendant of the emperor. Malinche married one of Cortes's officers, Juan Jaramillo, and had a daughter, Maria. Malinche died probably at the age of 29 and her daughter was brought up by Jaramillo and his second wife.

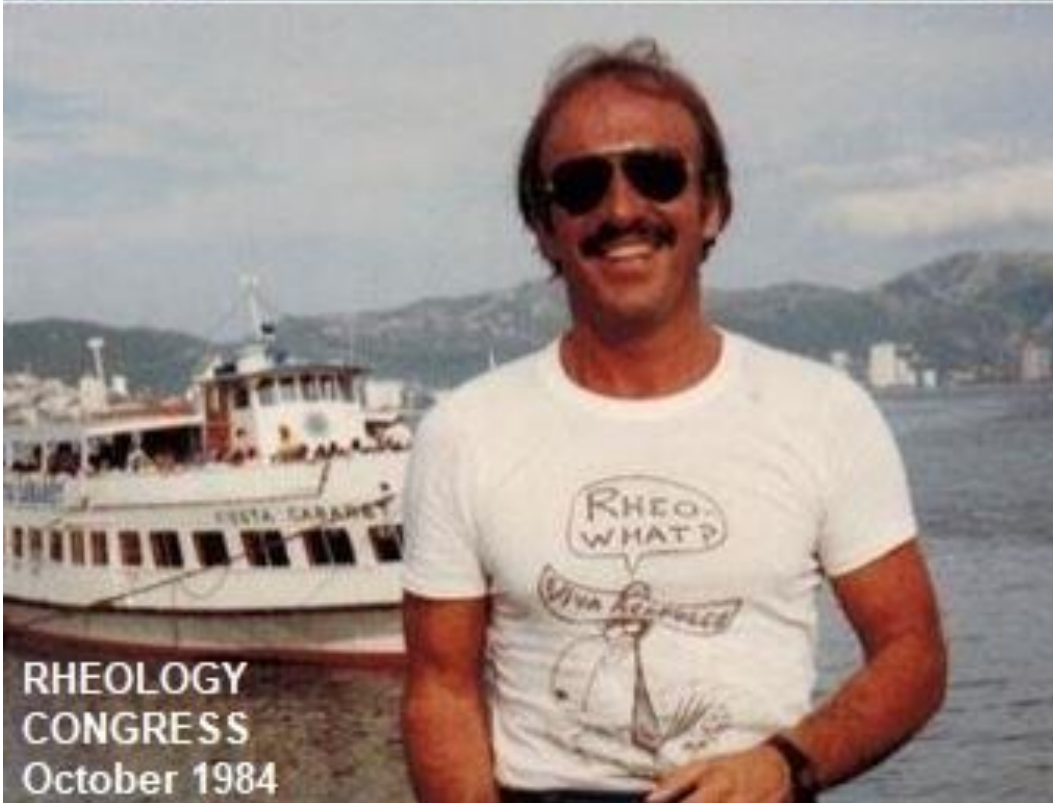
La Malinche remains a controversial legend in Mexico. Sometimes referred to as "La traductora y traidora" (the translator and traitor). In my Spanish-English dictionary malinchismo is defined as 'prejudice in favour of things foreign'. A close examination of her life's history reveals a young woman of extraordinary abilities and a very determined survivor. To Spanish speakers I strongly recommend a 90-minute video: Malintzin: La Historia de un Enigma https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2P58qu_pZo.

The Spanish crown, fearing that Cortes may declare himself king of New Spain, sent several administrators to oversee his activities and reduce his authority. One of them (Nuño de Guzmán) and his fellow officers are credited as the founders of Guadalajara in 1531. Guadalajara is a city of some 5.5 million people today with a very strong technology and business sector. I visited in June 2003 and gave a 3-day rheology/extrusion course at a manufacturing plant. It was modern and very well organized and operated.

In the early morning hours of Sunday, September 16, 1810, Catholic priest Miguel Hidalgo issued a call to arms in the small town of Dolores (**Grito de Dolores**, cry of Dolores). This marks the beginning of the **war of independence** (lasted till 1821) from Spain and celebrated as Mexico's National Day. The seat of the first revolutionary government was established in Guadalajara. In the USA, many people think that Cinco de Mayo (May 5) is related to Mexico's independence, but it is not. May 5 commemorates the victory of a small Mexican force against a larger French, in 1862, but it is not much of a celebration in Mexico.

Like other Mexican cities Guadalajara has had its share of crime and violence. In May 1993, Cardinal Juan Jesús Posadas Ocampo was murdered by 14 bullets and his driver by 11 bullets, while inside their car in a parking lot, at Guadalajara airport. Five other persons were killed. The official explanation is that it was a case of mistaken identity in a shootout between the Tijuana and Sinaloa (El Chapo Guzman) drug cartels.

ACAPULCO, MEXICO



Hernan Cortes went to Spain in 1528 and was given titles and honours by the king, even though his ambitions were viewed with suspicion by the establishment. However, when he returned to Mexico in 1530, he found that his power was diminished. He remained in Mexico till 1541 doing explorations of the pacific coast, before his second return to Spain. He died near Seville, in 1547, aged 62. His remains were eventually interred in Mexico in accordance with his wishes. It is amazing that Cortes, who left Cuba with about 600 fortune hunters in 1519, destroyed and conquered an empire of 8 million people in just two years. Aztecs, who were not killed during the years of violence, were enslaved. Most died from smallpox and other European diseases brought to Mesoamerica by the Spaniards

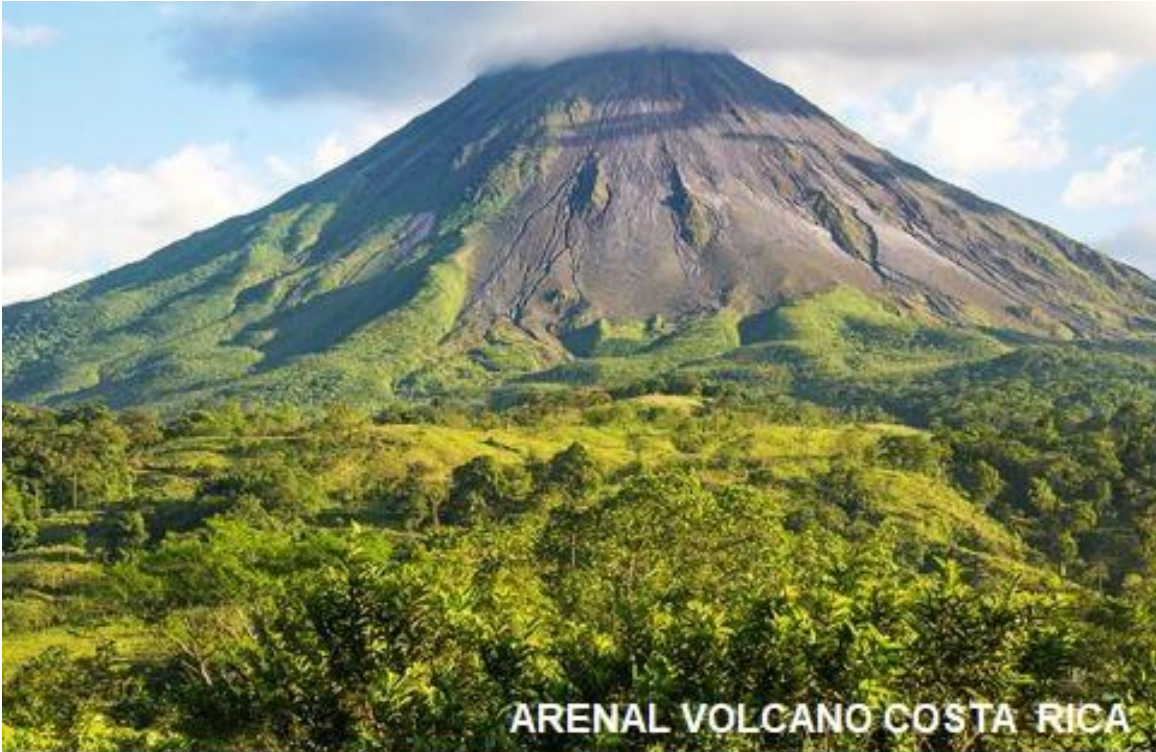
Mexico, after the formal declaration of independence in 1821, experienced political instability. In 1836, following a 13-day siege, Mexican troops under President General Santa Anna captured the Alamo (San Antonio, Texas). The Mexican -American war lasted two years 1846-1848. Porfirio Diaz was the de facto dictator for 35 years, 1876-1911 (known as Porfiriato). A series of armed conflicts broke out starting in 1910 which lasted till 1920, known as the **Mexican Revolution**. Among the revolutionary leaders **Emiliano Zapata** and **Francisco (Pancho) Villa** are perhaps the best known for their depictions in popular movies, books, and music.

Acapulco was founded by explorers sent by Hernan Cortes in the 1520s and 1530s to the coast of the Pacific Ocean. It became an important trading port with the Philippines, when Spain was “El imperio donde nunca se pone el sol” (the empire where the sun never sets). After the Mexican war of independence, Acapulco’s importance declined. In the late 1940s the beautiful semicircular bay, surrounded by mountains, was discovered by Hollywood movie stars and jet-setters, from John Wayne to John F. Kennedy. Huge hotels were built and the population swelled from about 10,000 in 1940 to one million today.

The 1984 International Congress on Rheology was a memorable event both for scientific and cultural activities. During the congress banquet we were entertained by indigenous ‘voladores’ (flyers) dancing, climbing and rotating while descending from a 30-meter-high pole. We also went and watched the cliff divers at **Quebrada**.

From the early 2000s Acapulco experienced a reversal of its fortunes. Turf wars between rival powerful drug cartels gave Acapulco an unwanted accolade: one of the world’s deadliest cities. According to Statista, a market data company, Acapulco is no. 2 in the 2022 list of cities with the highest number of homicides, after Tijuana (located at the Mexico/ California border). In the infamous top 10 list, there are 5 cities in Mexico, Caracas and Ciudad Guayana in Venezuela, Natal and Fortaleza in Brazil and Cape town in South Africa. International tourists stay away from Acapulco, despite excellent low-cost accommodations. Most visitors come from Mexico City, which is some 400 km to the north.

COSTA RICA



Maya were most of the natives in the countries south of the Mexico's Yucatan peninsula (**Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua**), at pre-Colombian times. In 1524, Hernan Cortes asked Malinche to accompany him in an expedition to Honduras, where she could translate from the local Maya dialect. These countries did not rebel against Spain, but declared independence after the end of Mexico's "Guerra de Independencia" on September 15, 1821.

In the 1800s attempts were made to form some sort of federal republic of Central America, which proved unsuccessful. Disputes, conflicts, and numerous military coups followed, with or without US intervention." La guerra del Fútbol" was an armed conflict between El Salvador and Honduras. The roots were deep, but the spark was ignited during a qualifying match for the 1970 soccer world cup. The war lasted 100 hours, July 14-16, 1969 with over 2,000 dead. The term "banana republic" was first applied to Honduras, for being controlled by United Fruit Company. CIA instigated the ousting of democratically elected president Jacobo Arbenz of Guatemala, in 1953. In Nicaragua the Sandinistas replaced the Somoza dictatorship with their own authoritarian regime, with the habit of jailing opposition leaders before elections.

I have visited Costa Rica twice (in 2008 and briefly in 2019). The name (rich coast), was coined by Columbus who landed in the eastern coast during his fourth voyage and saw natives wearing lots of gold jewellery. However, not much gold or silver was found by the conquistadors who followed. In fact, this part of central America was considered as the most impoverished Spanish colony, due to lack of gold and silver resources and sparse indigenous population. To some extent this was a blessing in disguise. Costa Rica did not experience violence and indigenous enslavement like Mexico and other Mesoamerican countries. The colonists had to work on their own in the farms and specialized in agriculture of coffee, bananas, and pineapple.

Costa Rica has borders with Nicaragua in the north and Panama in the south. It is governed by democratically elected governments since 1948. Also, the army was abolished in 1948. The funds originally allocated for defense were diverted to health care and education. The national goal is to live in harmony with the natural environment. The expression "Pura Vida" is the country's ubiquitous motto. It means much more than the literal translation (pure life). It is a way of happy, good, and long life. In fact, the Nicoya peninsula was identified as one of five "**Blue Zones**" in the world, where people live active lives beyond 90 years. The other four being: Sardinia in Italy, Icaria in Greece, Okinawa in Japan, and Loma Linda in California.

The only thing that I did not like during my month-long visit in Costa Rica in January 2008, was lack of safety and security. Affluent people reside in gated communities. High fences, guard dogs and barbed wire are common in San Jose, the capital city. Costa Rica is safer than other countries in Central America, but not safe enough.

PANAMA



Columbus visited the isthmus of Panama in 1502, while searching for a straight to the Indian Ocean. He never believed in the existence of the Pacific Ocean. His goal was to reach Cipango (Japan) and India going west and he thought that the world was smaller.

The first European to reach the Pacific was **Vasco Nunez de Balboa**. He left on September 1, 1513 from the Atlantic coast, with 200 Spaniards and about 1,000 friendly natives. He marched through dense jungles and he reached a hilltop from where he could see the immense expanse of the Pacific Ocean, on September 25, 1513. On his way, he defeated hostile native tribes in several battles, frequently using his ferocious war dogs. The biblical aphorism 'for all who draw the sword will die by the sword' applied to Balboa. He was accused as traitor and usurper of royal territories and he was executed in 1519. He is the national hero of Panama and as a matter of fact the Panamanian currency is called Balboa.

Panama was a Spanish colony of significant importance because it was at the crossroads of gold and silver transport from Peru to Spain. It acquired independence together with other Mesoamerican countries in 1821 and became a province of Gran Colombia.

Ferdinand de Lesseps, of Suez Canal fame and fortune, was the first to attempt to construct a canal, beginning in 1881, with money from many thousands of French investors. Lesseps, despite his previous experience, underestimated the challenges of construction in a tropical climate, with a long rainy season and tropical diseases. More than 20,000 workers died, mostly due to yellow fever and malaria, but also from accidents. The venture went bankrupt by 1889 and Lesseps was accused of embezzlement.

US President Theodore Roosevelt was interested in purchasing the French rights and equipment, but the Colombians were reluctant to give their permission. Roosevelt decided to support Panamanian independentist rebels and sent gunboats. Panama became independent from Colombia in a bloodless coup and relinquished its independence to the US on the same day.

The construction of the 80-kilometer (50 miles) Panama Canal lasted from 1904 to 1914. The success was due mainly to two men, who had direct access to president Roosevelt: Construction engineer John Stevens and medical doctor William Gorgas. Stevens decided to construct two sets of locks for elevating ships 27 meters from the Atlantic to the artificial Gatun Lake and two sets of locks down to the Pacific. The ships are pulled by locomotives. Gorgas implemented preventive measures against yellow fever and malaria, by draining swamps, fumigation, and mosquito netting. These diseases were practically eradicated from the canal zone and this allowed the completion of the project. A third set of locks was constructed from 2007 to 2016.

I visited the canal on a cruise in January 2019. The cruise ship entered the locks from the Atlantic and reached Gatun Lake, where we stayed overnight, and then returned to Colon for the voyage back to Florida.

COLOMBIA



Before 1500 AD the greater Colombia area was inhabited by indigenous tribes speaking different languages. The first attempts at colonization by the Spaniards were made in the early 1500s. **Cartagena** was founded in 1533 and became the main port for exporting silver from the mines of Peru to Spain. The importance of Cartagena eventually attracted the attention of pirates from France and England. Francis Drake attacked in 1586, with large number of troops, and burned down hundreds of homes. He left after a ransom was paid. The Spaniards built very long protective walls in the 1500s and 1600s.

The cruise ship that I was on, made a stop for a full day and I walked around the city in January 2019. I visited a very impressive fortress, similar, to those in Europe, and the old town. Present-day Cartagena is a beautiful city of about one million inhabitants and attracts many tourists.

Gran Colombia declared independence from Spain in 1819, after a successful rebellion led by Venezuela-born **Simón Bolívar**. It included present-day Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Panama, northern Peru, and part of Brazil. During the 19th century, Colombia experienced bloody civil wars and violence. In the 20th century the situation was even worse, especially from the 1960s. Leftist guerilla groups were involved in armed conflict against government forces and right-wing paramilitaries. From the 1970s drug cartels were producing and exporting narcotics to the USA and other countries around the world. The armed groups were also involved indirectly (through taxation of the cartels) or directly in the narcotics trade.

More than 250,000 people were killed during 60 years of violence. The M-19 guerilla group attacked the Palace of Justice in Bogota in 1985 and took hostages, some 300 lawyers and judges. When the Colombian armed forces stormed the palace over 100 people died, including 11 of the 21 supreme court justices. The FARC guerilla group signed a peace agreement with the government in 2016.

The notorious leader of the Medellin cartel, Pablo Escobar, orchestrated the bombing of a passenger aircraft in 1989, which resulted in 110 deaths. However, the intended victim, Cesar Gaviria, was not aboard and he went on to become president of Colombia. Escobar negotiated with the government and was “jailed” in a luxurious mansion that he had built. When the government tried to move him to a conventional jail, he escaped and was killed by the police in 1993.

Bogota is the capital and largest city with population of over 8 million people. It is located at an average elevation of 2640 meters above sea level. Although just north of the equator, the high elevation is responsible for a pleasant climate, with average temperature varying usually between 20°C during the day and 10°C at night, year-round. In September 2014, I visited a manufacturing plant in Bogota, as a consultant. It was operated as well as any industrial facility in North America or Europe, but with a difference: women working there were very well dressed, as if going out for dinner to a fancy restaurant.

PERU I



Francisco Pizarro was the illegitimate son of an infantry officer and a poor peasant woman. Through his father he was second cousin to Hernan Cortes. He spent his childhood at his grandparents' home and worked as a swineherd. He had little education and he could neither read nor write. Apparently, he took part in some local wars in Spain before going to Hispaniola (present day Dominican Republic and Haiti), in 1502. In 1510 he went to Colombia and in 1513 he accompanied Balboa in his crossing of the Isthmus of Panama. Balboa and Pizarro were the first Europeans to reach the shores of the Pacific Ocean.

In Panama, rumors (better said legends) were circulating among the conquistadors about a land in the south rich with gold. In the mythical **El Dorado** a king was supposed to be 'bathing' in gold dust. Pizarro decided to explore the Pacific coast of Panama and led an expedition in 1522. From the natives he encountered, he heard about a great land called Peru. He heard more about Peru during a second expedition in 1524. The governor of Panama refused to allow a third expedition. Pizarro was obsessed and undeterred. He left for Spain in 1528 to meet personally with the king and ask for his permission to conquer lands in the name of the Spanish crown.

Peru was the central part of the **Inca Empire**, which was occupying an area of 2 million square kilometers from southwestern Colombia to including half of Chile (7 times the area of Italy). The imperial state was less than 100 years old when the Spaniards arrived. The Incas had not invented the wheel, had no knowledge of iron or steel, no written language, no money, and no market economy. They knew how to work with gold, silver, and bronze. Their impressive monumental architecture was based on perfectly fitting large stones (megaliths, some more than 100 tons). For record keeping and enumeration purposes, they had an elaborate method of knotted strings. They started using Spanish letters to write their language (Quechua), after the conquest. **Machu Picchu** is an Inca citadel built in the 15th century on a 2430-meter mountain ridge, about 70 km northwest of **Cusco**, the capital of the Inca Empire.

I visited **Lima** in June 1987 for a conference. At that time, the armed forces were fighting against Sendero Luminoso (shining path), a communist guerilla group. Curfew was in effect from 10.00PM to 5.00AM. My picture was taken at a winery, a couple of hours drive south of Lima. Getting out of Lima on a bus, we had to go through a security checkpoint and then again on our return. The owner of the winery was an older kind-hearted gentleman living inside the walled complex with his young wife and children together with all the workers and their families, numbering about 100. They appeared to be having a happy communal lifestyle of privilege.

A conference dinner was held at a horse racetrack in Lima. The club area was truly opulent and the club members appeared well-heeled. However, the bus from the hotel to the racetrack passed by a shanty town of perhaps 100,000 people.

PERU II



All was not quiet in the Empire of Peru, while Pizarro was making his plans for the conquest. Emperor Huayna Capac died in Quito (Ecuador) in 1524, probably from smallpox. His son Huascar succeeded him in the capital Cusco. His other son **Atahualpa** became governor of Quito. Rivalry between the two brothers led to a bloody civil war. Atahualpa prevailed and Huascar was captured by Atahualpa's forces.

Pizarro had gone to Spain accompanied by Pedro de Candia, a few natives, llamas, gold, and silver to appeal to king Carlos I (aka Karl V, of the Holy Roman Empire) for authorization to proceed with his conquest plans. Pedro de Candia was a Greek born in Heraklion Crete, which was called Candia by the Venetians. The king and the queen were easily convinced. It was conquest "on the cheap" so to speak, risking very little. The conquistadors were authorized to raise a sufficiently equipped force on their own, conquer the western part of what is now South America and the crown would receive one fifth of any loot in gold and silver. Pizarro was named governor of the territories to be annexed and Candia commander-in-chief of the artillery.

Pizarro arrived with 187 troops in the coast near Tumbes (67 were on horseback) in 1532. To the natives, the barbed Europeans with their body armour appeared as coming from another world and, perhaps, of divine origin. Atahualpa dispatched emissaries and spies to investigate. The chief spy reported to Atahualpa that the foreigners are not gods, because they get sick and die. However, they have some kind of a medicine man that rejuvenates them. They go in his tent and they are coming out looking much younger. He was... the barber.

While Pizarro was marching slowly along the mountain route south, he received an invitation to meet with Atahualpa in **Cajamarca**. Atahualpa had about 80,000 troops in the outskirts, but decided to go to the central square of Cajamarca with about 8,000 troops wearing ceremonial costumes. Pizarro sent a friar and an interpreter to speak with Atahualpa. The friar gave a copy of the bible to the emperor and asked him to join the Catholic faith and pledge allegiance to the king of Spain. Atahualpa vehemently rejected the proposal and threw the bible to the ground. Pizarro immediately ordered Pedro de Candia to fire his cannons and the horsemen and foot-soldiers to attack. It is estimated that over 6,000 Incas were killed and Atahualpa was taken prisoner.

Atahualpa proposed to pay ransom for his release, one room full of gold and two rooms full of silver. In a few months the rooms were full. Instead of being released, Atahualpa was convicted for ordering the death of his brother and for plotting against Pizarro, and was executed. After arrival of more forces, the Spaniards also captured **Cusco**. Pizarro was killed in 1541 and Candia in 1542, both by conquistador Diego de Almagro II. Peru was a Spanish colony till July 28, 1821 when **Jose de San Martin** liberated Lima and declared independence

SANTIAGO, CHILE



Santiago, Chile



Palacio de la Moneda, Santiago

SALVADOR
ALLENDE
GOSSENS
(1904-1973)

Spaniards from Peru went south and one of Pizarro's lieutenants, Pedro de Valdivia, is credited with founding Santiago in 1540. Valdivia faced strong resistance from native Mapuche tribes in south-central Chile. Chile was a Spanish colony till the forces of **Bernardo O'Higgins** and **Jose de San Martin** crossed the Andes, defeated the royalists, and proclaimed independence in 1818. Chile fought against Peru and Bolivia for territory and there were some tensions with Argentina in 19th century.

In the first half of 20th century Chile experienced several years of political instability. In 1970, leftist **Salvador Allende**, a medical doctor, was democratically elected President. His socialist policies included nationalization of banks, copper mines, steel and chemical industry and advancement of workers rights. Businesses and wealthy Chileans withdrew bank deposits and the Allende government was forced to start printing money to finance public spending. The financial situation worsened with application of credit restrictions by the USA. The CIA planted operatives to destabilize the government. The Chilean air-force bombed the presidential palace, la Moneda, in the morning hours of September 11, 1973 and Allende committed suicide.

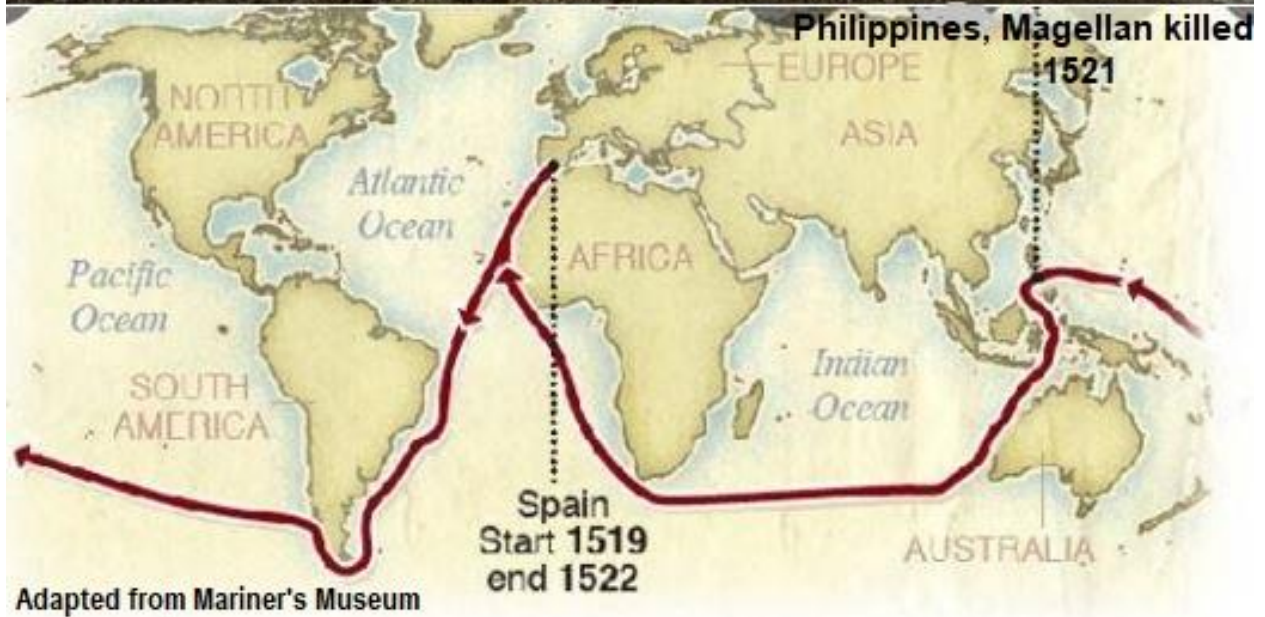
A military junta led by General Augusto Pinochet took control of the country. During the first years of the military dictatorship, more than 3,000 people were brutally killed and about 40,000 were imprisoned and tortured. Chile was one of the countries involved in "Operation Condor" of South American right-wing dictatorships with US backing for political suppression and assassination of leftists. Pinochet became president for an 8-year term after a controversial plebiscite in 1980. During the Pinochet 17-year long dictatorship many multinational corporations returned to Chile. The economy was largely planned by Chilean "Chicago boys." They were former students of economist and Nobelist Milton Freedman. The country's economy improved but also the gap between the rich and the poor widened.

Pinochet lost the elections in 1988 (44% to 56%) and Chile transitioned to democracy. He was kept under house arrest in London from October 1998 to March 2000, after an indictment by a Spanish judge for crimes against Spanish citizens. Pinochet's family and friends have also been accused of enriching themselves with public money. He was indicted for various crimes and fraud in Chile, but he died in 2006 before standing trial.

Chile, with population of nearly 20 million, is considered as the most developed country with the highest per capita GDP in central and South America. Thirty-six-year-old leftist Gabriel Boric of Croatian and Catalan decent was elected President in March 2022, after defeating his far-right opponent (56%-44%) Jose Kast, whose father was a German officer during WW II, member of the Nazi party and of strong family connections with the Pinochet regime.

Allende's statue is located just outside of La Moneda presidential palace, pretty much as shown in the assembled picture. The Gran Torre de Santiago of 300 meters was completed shortly before my visit in December 2013, but unfortunately the observation deck had not been opened.

STRAIT OF MAGELLAN, CHILE



Magellan and his crew were the first Europeans to step on what is now Chile, in October of 1520. Magellan was born in Portugal, as Fernão de **Magalhães**, and had served as a naval officer with the Portuguese forces in Asia. After returning to Portugal, he tried to convince King Manuel I to support his plan to reach the “Spice Islands” (Moluccas, east of Indonesia) by sailing west. But Manuel refused and Magellan went to Spain, where his proposal for an expedition was accepted by King Carlos I. The circumference of the earth had been determined by Greek philosopher Eratosthenes way back in the 3rd century BC. However, a confusion between Arab and Roman miles led Magellan to believe that it was 10,000 km shorter.

Magellan assembled a squadron of 5 ships with a crew of 247 and sailed from Seville. There were 148 Spaniards (including Castilians, Basques (29), Galicians), 28 Portuguese, 27 Italians, 15 French, 8 Greeks, 5 Flemish, 3 Germans, 2 Irish, 1 English, 1 Malaysian and 9 of unknown nationality. One of the Italians was Antonio Pigafetta, who kept a meticulous chronicle of the circumnavigation of the globe. The Malaysian was a slave named Enrique de Malaca, who was a servant and interpreter to Magellan. He became the first person to complete a voyage around the world, when he reached Indonesia where he deserted. The Greeks were from Naxos (3), Nafplio (2), Rhodes (2) and Corfu (1).

After sailing along the coast of Africa, the squadron crossed the Atlantic and reached the coast of Brazil. Near present day Rio de Janeiro they received a very friendly welcome from the natives. After 13 days and nights of debauchery with native women, they sailed south. Before reaching the channel, now known as Strait of Magellan in the southernmost part of Chile, one of the ships ran aground and another returned to Spain after a mutiny, with 55 crew. When Magellan saw the calm waters of the vast sea in the west, he exclaimed “**Que mar pacífico**” and that is how the ocean got its name.

With the remaining crew on three ships Magellan sailed north along the coastline of Chile and then crossed the Pacific and reached the Philippines. He was killed, during a battle against the natives. From the original 247 mariners, 18 returned to Spain on a ship captained by Basque Juan Sebastian **Elcano**, in September of 1522. The second in command was Francisco Albo as shipmaster (from Naxos) and the third was Miguel de Rodas as pilot (from Rhodes). The survivors included 10 Spaniards, 2 Italians (Pigafetta was one of them), one German, Nicolao el Griego (from Nafplio) and Miguel Sanchez from Naxos. Felipe de Rodas returned to Spain after having been held captive by the Portuguese at Cape Verde, with 11 other mariners. Juan Griego from Nafplio and Mateo Griego from Corfu deserted in Borneo and never heard of again. Simon de Naxos had returned with the mutineers, in May 1521, without crossing the Pacific.

I have visited Chile in late December 2013/ January 2014, but I have not travelled south to the Strait of Magellan.

BUENOS AIRES I, ARGENTINA



La Casa Rosada, December 2013



It is believed that the Italian navigator **Amerigo Vespucci**, was the first European to set foot on what is present day Argentina, in 1502. The area was sparsely populated by various indigenous tribes. It became a Spanish colony, which included parts of the surrounding countries. Independence was declared on July 9, 1816 and **Jose de San Martin** is considered the “libertador” of Argentina, Chile and Peru. Years of territorial and constitutional disputes followed till the election of Bartolome Mitre as the first president (1862-1868) of the unified country.

Mitre was descended from a Greek named Ventura Mitropoulos, who came to Buenos Aires from Venice. The family traces its roots to Himara (northern Epirus, present day Albania). Mitre was a charismatic leader, army general, historian, poet, politician, and journalist. He never visited Greece but he spoke excellent Greek and he translated The Odyssey from Greek into Spanish. He also founded La Nacion one of the most important newspapers in South America, still published today. His descendant, forty-year-old actress Esmeralda Mitre, is member of the board of directors.

During my visit in December of 2013 in Buenos Aires, I happened to spot an Argentine navy warship named Spiro (corvette, with about 100 crew). After a quick internet search, I discovered that it was named after Pedro Samuel Spiro, born on the island of Hydra or possibly on Mytine, hero of the war against the royalists (1814). From my Facebook friend [Cesar Augusto Villamayor Revythis](#), I discovered that there were other Greek mariners who have fought heroically for Argentina. Colonel Nicolas Jorge Kolmaniatis (1784-1866) was also from Hydra. Frigate captain Constantino Jorge (1830 -1896) was from the Island of Tinos. Yalour Islands of Antarctica were named after Navy officer Jorge Yalour (originally Yalouris), who was involved in the rescue of a Swedish Antarctic expedition in 1903.

Significant numbers of immigrants arrived in the late 1800s and early 1900s. By 1908 Argentina was ranked the 7th country in the world in terms of per capita GDP. It was a very attractive country for Europeans to immigrate to. Among them was shipping tycoon **Aristotle Onassis** who started building his fortune in Buenos Aires in the late 1920s. Economic and social decline of Argentina began after the crash of 1929, with a military coup.

Juan Peron was an army colonel who had spent sometime in Italy just before WW II, where he observed Mussolini and fascist populism. After a military coup in 1943 he was appointed minister of labour. He became popular with workers and labour unions for championing workers rights and social welfare benefits.

Peron met his future wife Eva Duarte during a fundraiser for the victims of the 1944 San Juan earthquake, which had claimed more than 10,000 lives. He was elected president in 1946 and again in 1951. His wife, who was fervent supporter of his populism and very passionate political campaigner, died of ovarian cancer in 1952, aged 33.

During the filming of the 1996 movie Evita, Madonna stood and sung “Don’t cry for me Argentina” on a balcony of the Casa Rosada. It was the one, exactly behind me in the picture, from where the real **Evita** delivered fiery speeches (but did not sing).

BUENOS AIRES II



Teatro Colon, Buenos Aires



Caminito, Buenos Aires

After Evita's death things went bad for Juan Peron. The economy was worsening, there was social unrest and Peron's popularity was declining. On June 16, 1955 Argentine navy aircraft bombed the presidential palace of **Casa Rosada**. Over 350 civilians were killed in the adjacent **Playa de Mayo**, who were demonstrating in support of the President. Peron escaped but he was deposed three months later by a military junta and fled to Spain.

After several years of military rule, Peron returned to Argentina and was elected president in 1973 with his third wife Isabel as vice-president. Peron died in 1974 and Isabel Peron assumed the presidency to be deposed by yet another military coup (1976). Political instability, civil unrest and conflict continued, involving left-wing urban guerillas like the Montoneros and state-sponsored terrorism (Guerra sucia, dirty war). Operation Condor was coordinated by the dictatorships of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay, with US backing, for the elimination of guerillas, socialists and other dissidents. Some 30,000 left-wing activists were tortured, killed, or disappeared without a trace. The mothers of the Plaza de Mayo have been congregating since 1977 holding signs with the names and pictures of their "los desaparecidos".

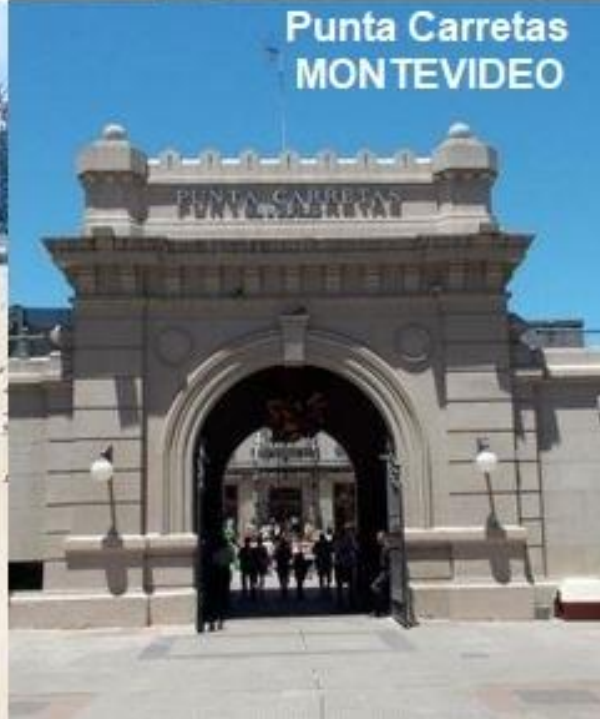
General Leopoldo Galtieri was the leader of the military junta for five months when, on April 2, 1982, he ordered the invasion of the **Falklands (Islas Malvinas)**. He was trying revive the sagging fortunes of the junta, by appealing to the patriotic feelings of Argentines for the islands, which they consider their own. The British, who have been occupying the islands since 1841, responded by dispatching a naval task force of some 150 ships.

The Argentinian warship General Belgrano was outside the declared war zone when hit by two of three torpedoes, launched from a British nuclear submarine. 368 Argentines died and some 700 were rescued after battling freezing waters for many hours. Two days later an Argentinian fighter jet fired a French-built Exocet missile and sank HMS Sheffield with 20 dead. The Argentines had only 9 Exocets and nearly all had deadly hits on British navy vessels, but not enough to turn the war outcome to their favor. 649 Argentinian military personnel and 255 British, perished during the 74-day war.

Following Argentina's defeat, Galtieri was removed from power and General Cristino Nicolaidis (with roots from Chalki, Dodekanese) became the chief of the army. The four-man military junta was replaced by a democratically elected government in December 1983. After the restoration of democracy four Peronist presidents have been elected: Carlos Menem (with roots from Syria, 1989-1999), Nestor Kirchner (of Swiss and Croatian descent, 2003-2007), Cristina Kirchner (wife of Nestor, 2007-2015) and Alberto Fernandez (from 2019, with Cristina Kirchner as vice-president).

During my visit in 2013, Buenos Aires appeared to me more like a European city than a Latin American one. Some 60% of Argentinians trace their ancestry in full or in part to Italy, including General Galtieri, footballer Lionel Messi and Pope Francis (Jorge Mario Bergoglio).

URUGUAY



The delta of the Parana River empties into the **Rio de la Plata** and then to the Atlantic Ocean. I took a ferry boat from Buenos Aires to Montevideo, some 200 km east, in January 2014. Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive in what is present-day Uruguay in 1512. The prominent native tribe at pre-Colombian times was Charrua. There is currently a debate in Uruguay whether any Charrua still exist. They were exterminated by soldiers ordered by the first President of Uruguay, Fructuoso Rivera, during the Matanza de Salsipuedes (Massacre of Get-out--if-you-can) on April 11, 1831. Of course, Charrua DNA remains, mixed with European, but their language and culture has been wiped out.

During the 19th Century, Uruguay faced intervention by Brazil and Argentina. In the early part of the 20th Century the economy had periods of boom and bust. In the 1960s an urban left-wing guerilla movement was formed called Tupamaros, initially robbing banks and business and giving money to the poor and subsequently involved in kidnappings and other forms of terrorism. Their tactics were met with very repressive measures and savagery by the government, which affected a large segment of the population. CIA agent Dan Mitrione, reputed as a political manipulator and torture-trainer, was kidnapped by the Tupamaros, and executed. Costa Gavras' French movie "Etat de siege" is based on this story (starring Yves Montand, music by Mikis Theodorakis). A version with Greek subtitles (Κατάσταση πολιορκίας) and another with Spanish subtitles (Estado de sitio) are available for viewing on YouTube.

Punta Carretas is now an upscale shopping center with some 200 stores. In the 1960s and 1970s it was a prison. On September 6, 1971, 101 Tupamaros and 5 common prisoners escaped by digging a tunnel to the living room of an English teacher. Among them was a Tupamaro leader named **Jose "Pepe" Mujica**. He was recaptured, tortured, and spent 14 years in prison. He was released 1985 after the restoration of democracy. Mujica served as minister for agriculture and senator, and was elected President (2010-2015). His wife served as Vice-President (2017-2020). Mujica was living and still lives with his wife in a farm, was driving an old VW beetle and was giving away to charity 90% of his US \$12,000 monthly presidential salary. Uruguay had left-wing governments for 15 years (2005-2020). Current President Lacalle Pou is making efforts to liberalize the economy and to control the power of trade unions.

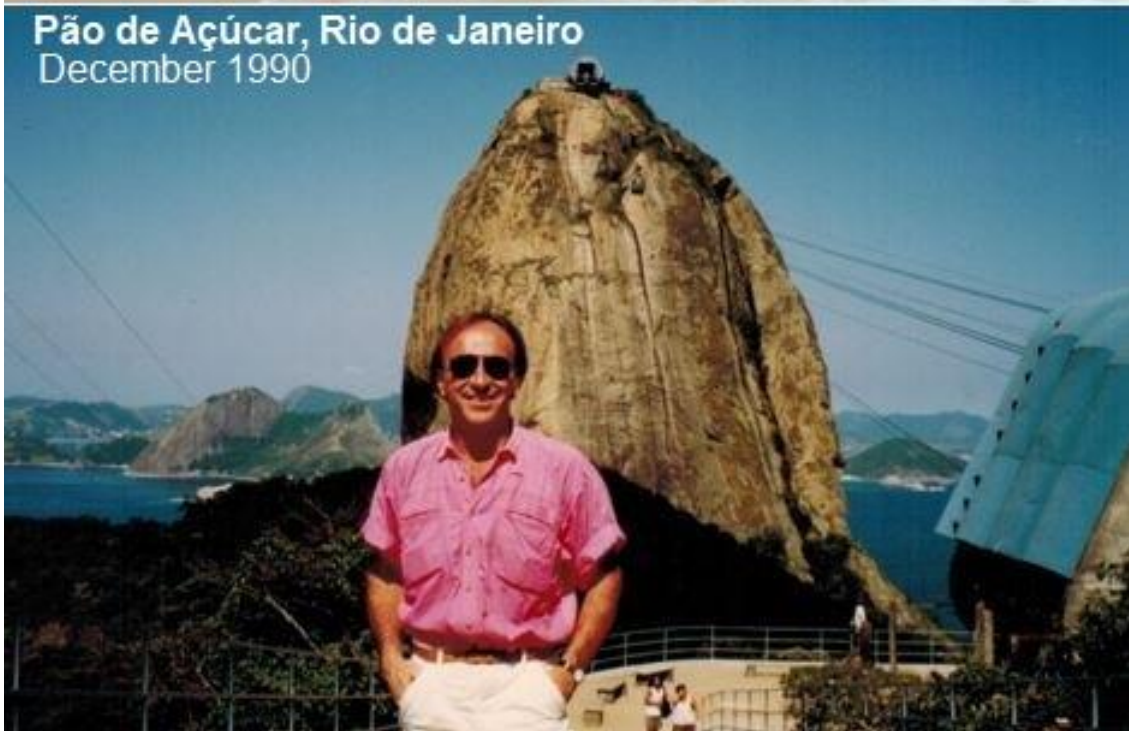
La Rambla is a 25-kilometer promenade and avenue along Montevideo's coast. It is a wonderful area for walking, jogging, bicycling and for other activities. During my three-week visit in 2014, I was staying at a hotel near Punta Carretas and La Rambla, and I went for several long walks along the magnificent waterfront.

Punta del Este is a popular tourist town frequently referred to as the "St. Tropez of South America". Popular landmarks in the area include **La Mano** (or Los Dedos) giant sculpture, where my picture was taken, and the Santorini-styled complex Casapueblo, just a few kilometers away.

RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL



Copacabana



Pão de Açúcar, Rio de Janeiro
December 1990

The **Treaty of Tordesillas** (1494), signed by the Pope, divided the lands of the new world into Portuguese and Spanish territories. Although the geography was not known, east of a Meridian passing through Brazil was allocated to Portugal and west to Spain. Pedro Alvarez **Cabral** arrived in the north-coast of present-day Brazil, in April 1500, and claimed the land for the Portuguese crown. At the time of Cabral's arrival there were numerous indigenous tribes, speaking different dialects with an estimated population between 3 and 7 million. Brazil today has a population approaching 220 million occupying about half of South America.

It was in December of 1990, when I decided to fly to Rio for my first of five trips to Brazil, after some lecturing in Venezuela. It took me about 5 hours of flying time to reach Caracas from Toronto, but about 6 hours from there to Rio, which is a good indication of the size of the country. My hotel was at Ipanema beach, which had become popular after a famous song and a movie in the 1960s, "The Girl of Ipanema". **Ipanema** beach borders to **Copacabana**, shown in the picture. From the roof-garden of the hotel, I had a magnificent view of Copacabana and Pão de Açúcar (sugarloaf). The giant statue of Cristo Redentor (Redeemer) is less than 5 km away, as the crow flies, at **Corcovado**. Behind the hotel there is a small scenic lake (Lagoa Rodrigo de Freitas). It took a bit over an hour for me to jog around it. The shoreline length is probably less than 10 km.

Brazil was a Portuguese colony till the early 1800s. Cane sugar and coffee were the main exports and enslaved Africans were brought to work in the plantations. The conditions aboard slave ships were so abhorrent that an estimated 15% of the slaves would die during the voyage. Due to disease, harsh work, and accidents their life expectancy was just 23 years, according to a lecturer from Brazil. The Portuguese were bringing more and more slaves to keep the plantations running. About 5 million slaves were brought to Brazil compared to about 500,000 brought by the British to the USA. Today about 47% of Brazilians self-identify as White, 43.5 % as Mixed (White, Black, Amerindian), 8% Black and 1% as East-Asian and 0.5% as Indigenous.

During the Napoleonic wars the royal court moved from Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro. Independence was declared on September 7, 1822 with Dom Pedro I as the first Emperor of Brazil. He returned to Portugal abdicating his Brazilian throne in favor of his young son Dom Pedro II. His reign lasted for 58 years till 1889. He was popular not only for being a kind-hearted gentleman and honest ruler, but also for significant achievements, which laid the foundations of modern Brazil. Republic was declared on November 15, 1889 (national holiday). Compared to other countries in the Americas, there was less conflict in Brazil during the years of transition from colony to independent republic.

SALVADOR and more, BRAZIL



Salvador, Bahia, located northeast of Rio, has a population of 4 million and it is the third largest city in Brazil. **Amerigo Vespucci** arrived on November 1, 1502 (All Saints' Day) and named the bay for the Saviour (Salvador). About 30% of Salvadorans self-identify as Blacks and about 50 % as Mixed (with partly African ancestry). Pelourinho is the historic center of Salvador and its main tourist attraction. The name in Portuguese has roughly the same meaning as the English word pillory. It was named after a post where enslaved people from Africa were tied and publicly beaten, as punishment for alleged misdeeds.

Sao Paulo (which I visited in 1995) is the economic engine and Rio de Janeiro is what most foreigners identify with Brazil. Salvador is at the center of African cultural heritage. During two scientific conferences (1997 and 2007) the social programme included Capoeira performances. It is an Afro-Brazilian dance based on martial arts movements with punches and kicks that never land on the opponent. It is a very spectacular show of strength, precision of movement and artistic grace.

Rio de Janeiro is Brazil's best-known city. The statue of Cristo Redentor is 30 metres high, excluding its 8-metre pedestal. It weighs 635 tons, and is located at the peak of the 700-metre Corcovado mountain overlooking the city.

From 1880 to 1930 about 4 million European immigrants arrived in Brazil, mostly from Portugal, Italy, Spain, Germany, Ukraine, and Poland. Most of the Italians were from northern Italy, while those who went to the USA, were from southern Italy and Sicily. The official language is Portuguese, which gives to Brazilians a distinct identity from the rest of Latin America.

Democratic rule lasted till 1930, when Getulio Vargas, supported by the military, became president in 1930 and de facto dictator till 1945. There were democratically elected presidents till 1964. The presidency of Juscelino Kubitschek (1956-1961, whose mother was of Czech descent) is known for years of prosperity and the construction of the new capital, **Brasilia**. The gigantic development project was led by urban planner Lucio Costa, renowned architect Oscar Niemeyer and landscape designer Roberto Burle Marx.

Brutal military rule was imposed from 1964 to 1985, which included torture and assassinations, with US backing for "Operation Condor". After the restoration of democracy, distinguished sociologist and scholar F. H. Cardoso served as President (1995- 2002). He is a scion of a prominent Portuguese family, with some black African ancestry. He was succeeded by metalworker and trade unionist Lula da Silva (2003-2010) and then by his protégé Dilma Rousseff (whose father was born in Bulgaria) till she was impeached and removed in 2016. Former army captain and right-wing politician Jair Bolsonaro (mostly of Italian descent) served as president 2019-2022. He was defeated 49/51 by Lula, in the October 30, 2022 elections.

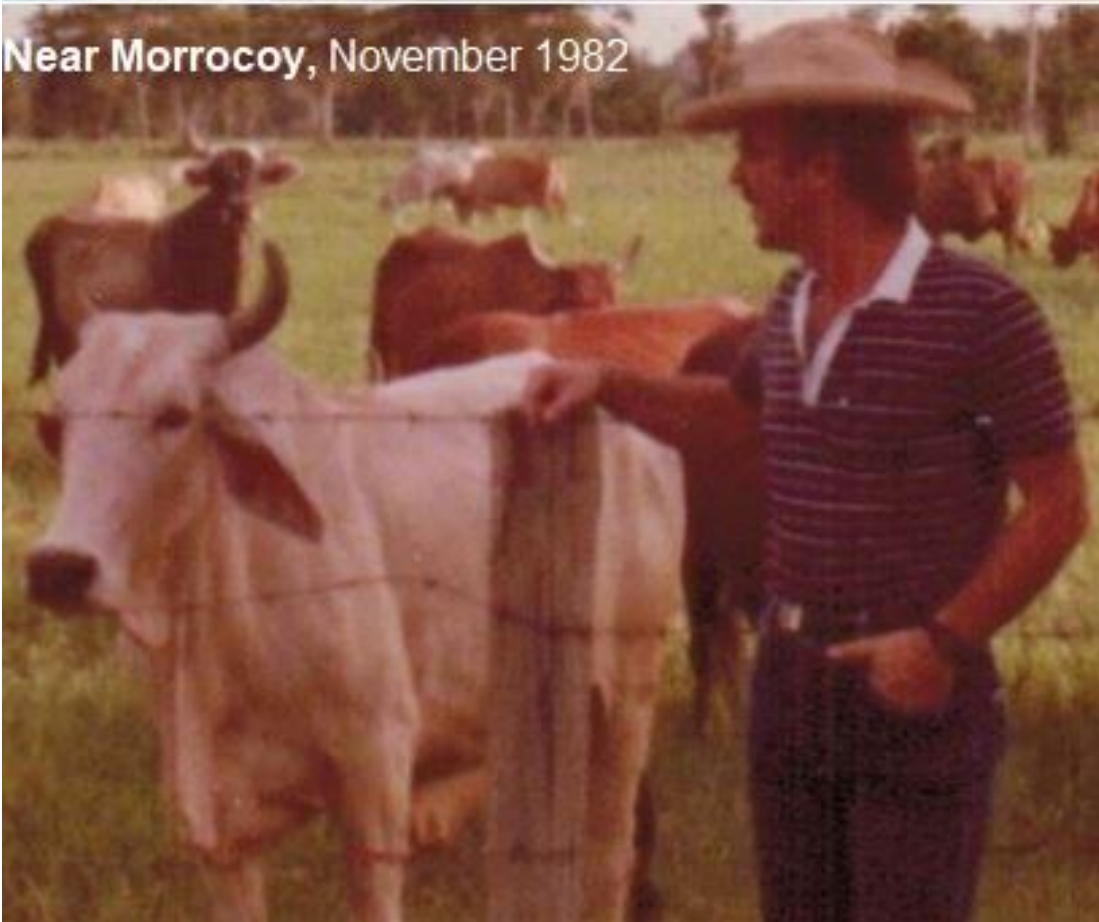
Brazil is one of the world's largest producers of agricultural and mining products and has a strong industrial sector (food processing, aerospace, chemicals). Unfortunately, the Brazilian society suffers from economic inequalities, endemic corruption, and crime.

VENEZUELA

Morrocoy, Venezuela



Near Morrocoy, November 1982



Columbus was the first European to reach Venezuela, in his third voyage in 1498. At the Orinoco Delta (near the border with Brazil) the abundance of fresh water and lush vegetation made him think that it was paradise on earth. German explorers arrived in 1528 near **Maracaibo** and searched for El Dorado, the mythical country of gold. Gold of a different color (black) was discovered in the shores of Lake Maracaibo in 1914. Venezuela has the largest proven oil reserves in the world (estimated at 300 billion barrels, Saudi Arabia second with 275 and Canada third with 170).

In November of 1982, I was invited to present a couple of lectures at Simon Bolívar University, in Caracas. On my way there, I flew to New York's JFK Airport and I noticed huge suitcases, the largest I have ever seen, being checked for **Caracas**. Venezuela was the most prosperous country in Latin America and its currency was very strong. The wealth was mainly due to oil production and high oil prices, even though corruption was thriving.

I visited Venezuela again for lecturing at the invitation of a corporation in December of 1990 and in February of 1992. In fact, I arrived in Caracas two weeks after Hugo Chávez's failed military coup of February 4, 1992. Chávez was jailed for a couple of years, released, and eventually rose to political prominence. He was President from 1999 until his death in 2013. Chavez used future oil production as collateral to borrow money. And he spent it as if it was going out of style, in Venezuela, in Cuba and elsewhere. In the USA he was providing free heating oil to some 200,000 households in 23 states, through Venezuelan owned Citgo petroleum Corporation. The extraordinary largesse did not last, because oil prices dropped and the US imposed sanctions. His administration mismanaged the public finances so badly that an economist coined the term "venezuelaization", meaning disastrous management of the economy.

A year after Chavez's handpicked successor Maduro took over as president, the oil price dropped a lot and mismanagement spiraled out of control. In less than 20 years the country with the world's largest oil reserves had shortages of gasoline (!), and in 2020 imported oil (!) from Iran. At peak production, Venezuela was producing 3.5 million barrels per day. By 2020 production dropped to 0.31 million barrels per day (which was about half of domestic consumption). Inflation? In some countries people complain for 10-15% but in Venezuela it reached 200,000 % if not more. Oil workers quit their jobs because their salaries were worthless. It is estimated that 7 million Venezuelans left the country.

Water, electricity, and serious food shortages are frequent. Many cattle farms, like the one that I visited in 1982, have gone out of business. With so many poor people, crime is rampant. Caracas is the third most dangerous city in the world after Tijuana and Acapulco, Mexico.

In 2022 the economy has slightly improved. Oil production is 0.65 million barrels per day and the 7 million Venezuelans, who left the country, are sending money back.

“Can Lecture - Will Travel”



Lecturing in Lima (first time in Spanish), Peru at Hotel Crillon.

In the bottom picture of the delegates, I am standing at far left.



Costão do Santinho Resort, Florianópolis, BRAZIL

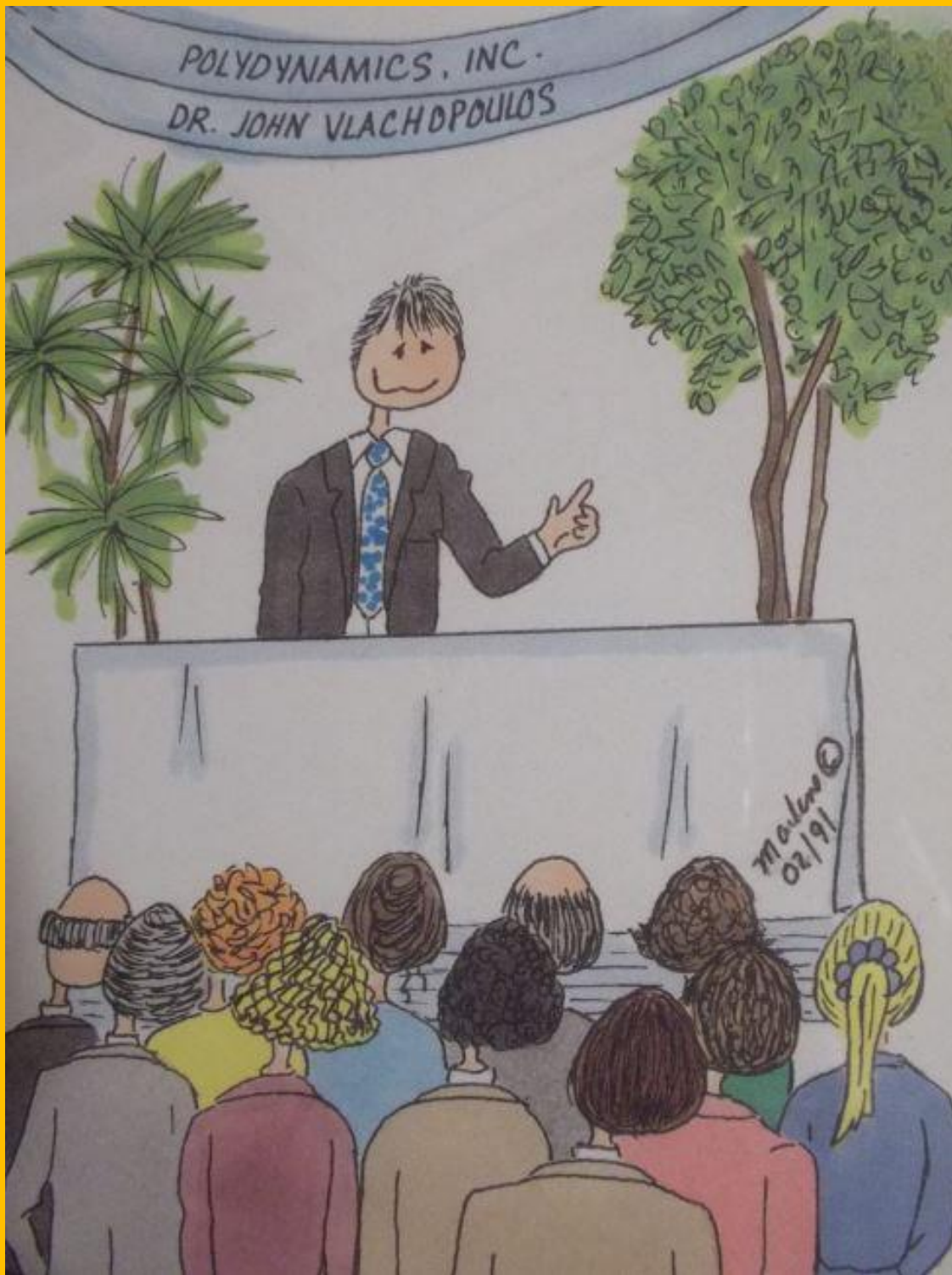


Lecturing in Portuguese (mixed with Spanish) at a Polymer Processing Society (PPS) Conference held at Costão do Santinho Resort



PPS33, December 2017. To my left is my former PhD student Dr. Marianna Kontopoulou, Professor at Queen's University, Kingston, Canada, next to her is my former PhD student Dr. Evan Mitsoulis, Professor at Ethnikon Metsovion Polytechnion (EMP), Athens, Greece and next to him my former Postdoctoral Fellow Dr. Shih-Jung Liu, Professor at Chang Gung University, Tapei, Taiwan.





This sketch was commissioned to an artist by the secretary of my company. Of course, she was well-aware of my many trips around the world for lecturing at various locations. Unfortunately, my principal employer, **McMASTER UNIVERSITY**, is missing from the banner, even though it was the sponsor of a significant fraction of the funding.

