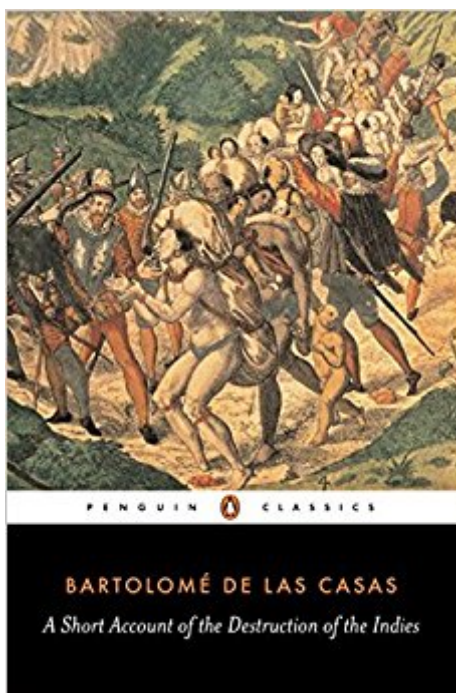


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# A Short Account Of The Destruction Of The Indies



## Synopsis

Bartolomé de Las Casas was the first and fiercest critic of Spanish colonialism in the New World. An early traveller to the Americas who sailed on one of Columbus's voyages, Las Casas was so horrified by the wholesale massacre he witnessed that he dedicated his life to protecting the Indian community. He wrote *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* in 1542, a shocking catalogue of mass slaughter, torture and slavery, which showed that the evangelizing vision of Columbus had descended under later conquistadors into genocide. Dedicated to Philip II to alert the Castilian Crown to these atrocities and demand that the Indians be entitled to the basic rights of humankind, this passionate work of documentary vividness outraged Europe and contributed to the idea of the Spanish 'Black Legend' that would last for centuries. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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## Customer Reviews

Bartolome de las Casas was born in Seville around 1484. At the age of eighteen he left for the New World, where he participated in the conquest of Cuba and witnessed the first full-scale massacre of an Indian community. He became a priest and entered the Dominican order. He dedicated himself

to the protection and defence of the Indians. Anthony Pagden teaches in the Department of History at John Hopkins University, Baltimore. He is the author of *The Fall of Natural Man and Spanish Imperialism and the Political Imagination*. Nigel Griffin read modern languages at Oxford and was a Fellow of New College in the 1970s. He now concentrates on writing and translating and has worked for both the UN and the World Bank.

This book was a quick, though not easy read. I highly recommend it. Here is an excerpt: They forced their way into native settlements, slaughtering everyone they found there, including small children, old men, pregnant women, and even women who had just give birth. They hacked them to pieces, slicing open their bellies with their swords as though they were so many sheep herded into a pen. They even laid wagers on whether they could manage to slice a man in two at a stroke, or cut an individual's head from his body, or disembowel him with a single blow of their axes. They grabbed suckling infants by the feet and, ripping them from their mothers' breast, dashed them headlong against the rocks. Others, laughing and joking all the while, threw them over their shoulders into a river, shouting: 'Wriggle, you little perisher.' They slaughtered anyone and everyone in their path, on occasion running through a mother and her baby with a single thrust of their swords. They spared no one, erecting especially wide gibbets on which they could string their victims up with their feet just off the ground and then burn them alive thirteen at a time, in honor of our Savior and the twelve Apostles, or tie dry straw to their bodies and set fire to it. Some they chose to keep alive and simply cut their wrists, leaving their hands dangling, saying to them: 'Take this letter' -meaning that their sorry condition would act as a warning to those hiding in the hills. The way they normally dealt with the native leaders and nobles was to tie them to a kind of griddle consisting of sticks resting on pitchforks driven into the ground and then grill them over a slow fire, with the result that they howled in agony and despair as they died a lingering death. It once happened that I myself witnessed their grilling of four or five local leaders in this fashion (and I believe they had set up two or three other pairs of grills alongside so that they might process other victims at the same time) when the poor creatures' howled in agony and despair as they died a lingering death. It once happened that I myself witnessed their grilling of four or five local leaders in this fashion (and I believe they had set up two or three other pairs of grills alongside so that they might process other victims at the same time) when the poor creatures' howls came between the Spanish commander and his sleep. He gave orders that the prisoners were to be throttled, but the man in charge of the execution detail, who was more bloodthirsty than the average common hangman (I know his identity and even met some relatives of his in Seville,) was loath to cut short his private entertainment by throttling them

and so he personally went round ramming wooded bungs into their mouths to stop them making such a racket and deliberately stoked the fire so that they would take just as long to die as he himself chose. I saw all these things for myself and many others besides. And, since all those who could do so took to the hills and mountains in order to escape the clutches of these merciless and inhuman butchers, these mortal enemies of human kind trained hunting dogs to track them down - wild dogs who would savage a native to death as soon as look at him, tearing him to shreds and devouring his flesh as though he were a pig. These dogs wrought havoc among the natives and were responsible for much carnage. And when, as happened on the odd occasion, the locals did kill a European, as, given the enormity of the crimes committed against them, they were in all justice fully entitled to, the Spanish came to an unofficial agreement among themselves that for every European killed one hundred natives would be executed."

A great read about the injustice the Spanish inflicted on the Tainos of the Caribbean and the Aztecs of Mexico and the natives of South America in general. Imagine torturing a native with fire for his source of gold that is unknown, and of little value to him. His incessant denial meant his death. Worse yet, imagine a gibbet, a gallows of sorts, with 10 natives dangling from it with feet just above wood and kindling. This is a terrible death that awaited them. The massacres, the atrocities ...most without reason. It is a great book to be aware of the terrible end that awaited the natives at the coming of the Spaniards. They were very cruel, considering they were supposedly civilized, and worse yet, Christians. Fray De Las Casa, to some extent participated in the conquest, but seeing the injustice, repented, and came to protect the Indians. It's a great summary of loss and destruction

must be a complete idiot. Does that scum of a reviewer know there are NO indigenous peoples left in the West Indies. They all, men, women, and children were systematically butchered so the Spanish conquistadores could prove to el Rey de España that these land masses were unoccupied and this could be claimed for España. Also GOLD became the god of the Spanish "explorers." I will say that the author did exaggerate as to the amount of innocent peoples murdered and butchered. It is a hard read, but I am happy I read it and passed it around among friends and family. I hope that the present Spanish government has the balls to teach in their history classes the truth of their hideous history..

If you ever had any doubt about the destruction and slavery that Spain and the Catholic Church wreaked upon the indigenous people of the Americas, then this book will set you straight. Spain

and the Catholic Church set out to give the world Christianity, in return they took back gold and silver. With no respect to humanity they slaughtered tribes by the thousands. This is an account written by a person that witnessed the destruction and tried to change it. A must read but not for persons with a weak stomach. Jack Dyer(researcher)

I had grown so tired of hearing about Cortes, the Pizarros and all the Spaniard bands of merry murderers in a good light, and how BRAVE they were. What Las Casas witnessed in the new world takes center stage as one of the greatest atrocities ever committed against other human beings. You will not believe the suffering inflicted on the indigenous people here by the invading Spanish forces. It's beyond human comprehension. And it's all true. And the beauty of it all, is that it was all done in the name of GOD and Religion. (Or was it, greed and avarice?) I have no axe to grind here, to the contrary, as I'm pure 1/2 Spaniard blood, so I am judging this in a totally objective light. This book should be mandatory reading in history class in every school, and possibly followed by the true story of Columbus, another invading murderer who actually enslaved thousands of indigenous people but yet we honor with his own special holiday. Who would have thought?

This book reveals the true horrible nature of European character.

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