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THE NEW EUROPEAN WORLD OVERSEAS : THE SPACE
OF CONTACT AND LIMITS OF COGNITION

The New World emerged in front of the eyes of astonished Europeans not so much from the waters of the Dark Ocean, but from accounts by the first travellers, who described the new reality in terms of their own culture. "Novus Orbis" by Martyr de Anglería and "Nuovo Mundo" by Amerigo Vespucci were the first attempts to put labels on the newly discovered reality, to reconcile it with the European experience and to make it part of the Eurocentric sphere of ideas.[1] Accounts by explorers and conquerors and evidence of encounters, were interpreted by others. The culture shock experienced by the explorers made the task all the more difficult.[2] The contemporary study of such evidence is additionally burdened by the awareness of the fact that encounter[3] turned into *conquista* and the extermination of entire

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[1] The issue is comprehensively dealt with by L. F. B a r r e t o, *Descobrimentos e Renacimento. Formas de Ser e Pensar nos séculos XV e XVI*, Lisboa 1983. Cf. U. B i t t e r l i, *Die "Wilden" und die "Zivilisierten". Grundzüge einer Geistes- und Kulturgeschichte der überseeischen Begegnung*, München 1976, p. 88 ff. and also W. G. L. R a n d l e s, *De la terre plate au globe terrestre. Une mutation épistémologique rapide 1480—1520*, "Cahiers des Annales", vol. XXXVIII, Paris 1980.

[2] The best discussion of the issue is contained in N. W a c h t e l, *La vision des vaincus. Les Indiens du Pérou devant la conquête espagnole*, Paris 1971, p. 22 and *passim*.

[3] The notion of encounter is used in the present study to denote the physical fact of two cultures coming together without the characterization of processes that occur as a consequence. One can imagine this as a set of relations limited to the sphere of the organization of two social systems. Cf. R. A. O r c h a r d, *On an Approach to General Systems Theory*, in : *Trends in General Systems Theory*, ed. G. J. Klir, New York 1972, pp. 212— 218. As a matter of fact, this set of relations has more in common with the

civilizations.[4] Expansion started at the moment of discovery with the attainment of the unknown.[5] Energy released in this process ensured the continuation of expansion forcing encounter to be converted into an entirely different form.[6]

Therefore, encounter with the New World overseas was subjected to immediate modification, which makes it extremely difficult nowadays to study the original state of affairs. We are now increasingly aware of the limited capability of cognition and transmitting impressions by those who made acquaintance with other civilizations. Showing through the crude realism of travellers' tales is their enchantment with New World marvels.[7] This was born out of hope that in line with the chivalrous tradition, the *Enchanted World* would open up a way for the possession of the Treasure, and consequently to the implementation of the Ideal.[8] At the same time, we detect a sharp contrast between the newly discovered reality and the Ideal, between the image and the form of fulfilment. The Ideal sought by the explorers was naturally a form of the European utopia.[9] It assumed various guises. Various justifications were given to it, but its fulfilment always required the use of force.

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philosophical notion of the encounter of two people than with the colloquial sense of the word "meeting". Cf. J. B u k o w s k i, *Zarys filozofii spotkania* [*An Outline of the Encounter Philosophy*], Kraków 1987, p. 154.

[4] In my approach to the conquista I follow to a large extent the suggestions of R. R o m a n o, *Les mécanismes de la conquête coloniale: les conquistadores*, Paris 1972. On the subject of early travels cf. J. K i e n i e-w i c z, *Frühe Indienreisen als Quelle der Kulturgeschichte*, "Studia Maritima", vol. IV, 1985, pp. 7—22.

[5] Attainment seems the best term to render the set of European expansive activities in which elements of one social system, people and the products of their culture, arrive in an area occupied by another society. The issue is discussed in detail in: J. K i e n i e w i c z, *Od ekspansji do dominacji: Próba teorii kolonializmu*, [*From Expansion to Domination: An Attempt at the Theory of Colonialism*], Warszawa 1986, pp. 47—66.

[6] Further discussion on the forms of pre-colonial expansion refers to my book (see footnote 5).

[7] *Carta* of Pero Vaz de Caminha (1 V 1500) in: *Viagens dos descobrimentos*, ed. J. M. G a r c i a, Lisboa 1983, pp. 245—263.

[8] Cf. I. A. L e o n a r d, *Books of the Brave. Being an Account of Books and of Man in the Spanish Conquest and Settlement of the Sixteenth Century New World*, Cambridge Mass. 1949 and remarks of P. C h a u n u, *Les Romans de Chevalerie et la conquête du Nouveau Monde*, "Annales. E. S. C.", II, 1955, pp. 216—228.

[9] J. L a f a y e, *Quetzalcóatl et Guadalupe. La formation de la conscience nationale au Mexique*, Paris 1974, p. 55.

The wonderful nature of the newly discovered world was not synonymous with the fulfilment of hopes cherished by the explorers. Real threats and imaginary dangers were encountered. It soon appeared that the newly discovered societies had limited capabilities of satisfying the rapidly growing needs of the conquerors. The Indians died, were killed, their societies disintegrated and their economies ceased to function. The enchantment was dispelled. The explorers were faced with the spectre of defeat, poverty and famine. The explorers were forced to become conquerors. They again became certain that fulfilment was waiting for them over the horizon. The *Conquista* became possible and necessary only where old state or tribal organisms produced sufficient surpluses.

The explorers and conquerors provided a beginning for the shaping of the New World, however this process occured primarily in Europe. The New World of the Indians emerged in the European awareness due to incoming travellers' accounts. American cultures were brought to a common denominator only due to the conquistadors. Their first fleeting impressions found fertile ground in late medieval awareness. In modern Europe, the New World of the Indians was rooted in the form of a myth. In America itself, the European *Enchanted World* was receding behind the horizon as the *Conquista* progressed, assuming the form of the myth of *El Dorado*.

Expansion required the harnessing of the newly discovered reality. Attainment and discovery implied the use of force. That necessary and basic form of expansion in America assumed the form of *conquista*. It was accompanied by old, equally familiar forms of the exploitation of gains, namely *repartimiento* and *encomienda*.[10] They were encoded in the collective memory of the Castilians, but in the new reality, they assumed specific forms. The activities of the Castilian explorers-conquerors were expressed in the traditional sequence : *descubrir—conquistar—poblar—rescatar*. However, the sense of those notions changed

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[10] L. N. McAllister, *Spain and Portugal in the New World 1492—1700*, Oxford 1984, pp. 157—165. The influence of the Spanish heritage is given by J. Lafaye, *op. cit.*, p. 402.

depending on the situation and was not equivocal for the entire *conquista*.

The nature of that expansion was determined by the degree of the invaders' aggressiveness and the character of the reaction of Indian societies. Thus, one should consider both the catastrophe of the Indians and the success of the Spaniards as well as the survival of the former and the defeat of the latter. Aggression consisted in attempts to penetrate a foreign cultural space and inject it with the European material, energy and information with the intention to take possession of, exploit and transform the social system.[11] The intensity of aggression did not stem solely from the interests and needs of participants in the expansion. The strangeness of cultures encountered by the explorers caused apprehension, which is evident in descriptions of New World marvels. It seems that the decisive role in this respect was played by reactions caused by aggression. 16th century expansion everywhere amounted to the adjustment of the forms of aggression to the type of reaction. At the same time, people of the same stock, or virtually the same people, shaped entirely different models of expansion in Asia.[12] In America itself, one can detect basic differences in expansion in Brazil, Chile and Mexico. However, in this case, I am only concerned with instances of the American *conquista*, in which local structures capable of mounting resistance, had disintegrated. The *conquista* was converted into extermination.[13]

The New Mexican World, as perceived in 1519 by Bernal Diaz and his fellows conquistadors, was not merely a source of enchantment.[14] It made the Spaniards hopeful as to the possibility of attaining their objectives : personal gain, recognition,

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[11] I view the encounter of cultures according to the convention of systems with the use of A. Wierciński's concept *An Anthropological Vision of Culture and Cultural Evolution*, in : *Menschenwerdung-biotischer und gesellschaftlicher Entwicklungprozess*, ed. J. Hermann, H. Ullrich, Berlin 1985.

[12] An early study of the issue J. Kieniewicz, *Contact and Transformation. The European Pre-Colonial Expansion in the Indian Ocean World-System in the 16th—17th Centuries*, "Itinerario", vol. VIII, 1984, 2, pp. 45—58.

[11] The subject is comprehensively discussed by N. Wachtel, *op. cit.*, pp. 134—212.

prominent position and the king's favour. Also in Peru the perfect system of management and riches accumulated there, justified such hopes. The forms of the *conquista*, i.e. an intention to exercise control over land and people, were adjusted to circumstances. Hence, *encomienda* assumed such different forms in Mexico, Peru and Venezuela. However, the attractiveness of the newly discovered world does little to explain two fundamental elements : the explorers' determination and the breaking of resistance.

Determination is ascribed to the sense of alienation and lack of an alternative solution. Indeed, Mexican and Andean cultures could have been regarded by the Spaniards as more remote and threatening that the Asian ones. In the event, in the new-old world of Asia, familiar enemies, the Muslims were encountered. In America, it was difficult to discover a point of reference for the newly discovered reality. Fear intensified the urge to destroy.[15] Hence, the resolve to proceed with immediate Christianization, which contrasted widely with the missionary restraint of the first Portuguese expeditions to India.[16] The conquistadors felt extremely threatened not only because they were at a point of no return or had abandoned the possibility to return. It was because the American reality left them no other choice. Such forms of expansive activities as exchange, trade, blackmail, co-operation, which occurred in Asia at the time, seemed to hit a void in America. Were any attempts made to apply them ? Did the Indian systems reject the possibility of encounter ? It is true that the Castilians did not arrive in Mexico to establish commercial posts. However, striving to create its own cultural space,[17] the *conquista*

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[14] B. D i a z del C a s t i l l o, *Historia Verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva Espana*, México 1968, vol. I, p. 260.

[16] Cf. J. M e y e r, *Les Européens et les autres de Cortés à Washington*, Paris 1975, pp. 109—113.

[16] On the specific nature of the origins of Christianization in Mexico J. L a f a y e, *op. cit.*, p. 52 ff. Cf. R. R i c a r d, *La conquête spirituelle du Mexique*, Paris 1933. On Portuguese postures C. R. B o x e r, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire 1415—1825*, London 1965, Ch. III.

[17] "The space of each social system is a culturally determined set of transmittable communiques", J. K i e n i e w i c z, *Od ekspansji...*, p. 228. Of course, the spatial dimension of culture is closely linked with the area occupied by a social system, but is not identical either with territory (e.g. of a state) or with motherland.

did not rule out the prospect of co-operation. This was proved by the experiences of centuries of Christianity's and Islam's co-existence in the Iberian Peninsula.[18] The Castilians had had a long tradition of exploiting the enemy they fought. Especially in Peru, the determined but passive resistance of the Indians against "aculturation", allows one to conclude that real possibilities for the two cultures' co-existence existed.[19]

The *conquista* was primarily a struggle, often a direct combat, a struggle for survival. In every case, the superior capabilities and military equipment of the Spaniards could be prevailed by the sheer number of the enemy forces. Rugiero Romano gives prominence to the fact that the most highly developed state organisms first experienced the breaking of resistance. On the other hand, the Araucans, who lived in a tribal organization, mounted an extremely effective resistance.[20] Similarly, the Spaniards were forced to wage a regular war against the uprisings of the Chichimecas.[21] However, I do not think that the lack of internal cohesion of empires and the co-operation of the conquered peoples with the Spaniards, could be the decisive argument.[22] Similar situations occurred in all conquests, but only in America did they bring such a catastrophe. The capture of Tenochtitlan and the annihilation of Tawantinsuyu can be described as a disintegration of bonds. Those organisms ceased to exist.[23] Psychological break-down preceded the demographic catastrophe. Irrespective of the differing estimates, the latter finally sealed the fate of the Indians. Their life lost its meaning. No attempts were made to find ways out of the disaster.[24] No empires that had the most complex system of government, the ability to adjust and

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[18] Cf. T. F. G l i c k, O. P i - S u n y e r, *Acculturation as an Explanatory Concept in Spanish History*, "Comparative Studies in Society and History", vol. XI, 1969, pp. 136—154.

[19] Cf. N. W a c h t e l, *op. cit.*, pp. 32, 135.

[20] *Ibidem*, pp. 289—295. Cf. A. J a r a, *Guerre et société au Chili. Essai de sociologie coloniale*, Paris 1961.

[21] J. H. P a r r y, *The Audiencia of New Galicia in the Sixteenth Century*, Cambridge 1968.

[22] R. R o m a n o, *Os conquistadores da América*, Lisboa 1972, p. 14.

[23] N. W a c h t e l, *op. cit.*, p. 132 ff. M. L. P o r t i l l a, *Los antiguos mexicanos a través sus crónicas y cantares*, México 1970.

[24] T. Ł e p k o w s k i, *Historia Meksyku* [*History of Mexico*], Wrocław 1986, pp. 104—116.

become adapted to new circumstances, turned out to be the weakest. On the other hand, the Spanish rapidly adjusted to local conditions. Also, nomadic Indians demonstrated, an ability creatively to imitate military equipment and methods of waging struggle. It looks as though all forces of the empires and their capabilities of development were absorbed and no means was found to make a change adequate to the threat.[25] Was this caused by the necessity to maintain ecological equilibrium? Was the limited capacity of the psyche of a society prevailed by the burden of responsibility for the fate of the Universe, at stake? The issue is still a source of doubts, all the more so that even waging fierce struggles, the Indians seemed only capable of reproducing old structures.

The character and consequences of expansion was also determined by the rapid pace of destruction caused by the Spaniards. One is clearly aware of the transitory nature of forms the conquistadors applied to further and strengthen their objectives. It could seem that the momentum and effectiveness of aggression that destroyed Indian social systems deprived the conquistadors of the necessary foothold. The disintegration of the Indian state organization left a void, which enabled, but also forced the Spaniards to fill it with their own system of government. This was meant to be the creation of a truly New World ensuring the conquistadors the desired reward. However, it could be achieved as a result of the subjugation and exploitation of the Indians working the land. Meanwhile, the disintegration of the Indian empires ruled out the possibility of exploiting the existing farming system. At the same time, the enemy had disappeared. The borderland situation could not be perpetuated. A society ready to wage struggle had been developing for generations in the Iberian Peninsula. Its institutions and system of values were transferred to the New World.[26] However, the transfer required the durability of a corresponding situation, whereas the *Conquista*

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[25] N. W a c h t e l, *op. cit.*, p. 301; S. N. E i s e n s t a d t, *Some Observations on the Dynamic of Traditions*, "Comparative Study of Society and History", vol. XI, 1969, pp. 453—464.

[26] Cf. E. L o r i e, *A Society Organized for War: Medieval Spain*, "Past and Present", 1966.

had ended before the generation of the conquistadors disappeared.

It seems to me that it was the too rapid course of developments that prevented the social structure reproduced from the collective memory of the conquerors, from taking root. The sense of a constant threat had disappeared too early. The crown's officials were able easily to replace the conquistadors with civil servants. New Spain, New Galicia, New Grenada and Peru became areas of controlled colonization and exploitation.[17] The conquistadors could become the *señores* of estates they were granted, respectable citizens, more or less noble *hacendados*. They could either serve God or the king. They were unable to carry on the *conquista*. Their time did not even last half a century. Its end was marked by the king's decisions of the 1565 - 1573 period. However, they had lost at the very beginning when victory meant the elimination of an enemy that justified the need to perpetuate their system.

Original forms in which the success of the conquerors was to be manifest are covered by the notion of exploitation. Only Indians working the land could ensure the status of landowners for the conquistadors. However, the rapid decrease of the number of the Indian population created a new situation at the moment when the monarch started exercising his rights. The conquistadors' community stood a chance of survival just like it had in Old Castile centuries before, provided that it faced a constant threat. The moment that the Indians came to be treated as nothing but a labour force, which was in short supply, a prospect for the implementation of the Andalusian model opened up. It was beneficial for the privileged group, but ruled out political and administrative independence.

The town was of course an inseparable element of the *conquista*. The conquistadors started out by founding towns.[18] They were meant to serve as a refuge, separating them from the alien

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[17] Cf. J. M. Qts de Capdequi, *El Estado Español en las Indias*, La Habana 1975.

[18] A. Wyrobisz, *La ordenanza de Felipe II del año 1573 y la construcción de ciudades coloniales españoles en la America*, "Estudios Latinoamericanos", vol. VII, 1980, pp. 11—34. Cf. I. Wolf, *Regierung und Verwaltung der Kolonialspanischen Städte in Hochperu*, 1538—1650, Köln 1970.

world outside. The towns determined an area controlled in military and administrative terms. However, first and foremost, they ensured the maintaining of an identity that was constantly threatened in the struggle against the Indians, old forms of getting organized for struggle, including *campaña/compañia, cabalgada* and *entrada*, proved their worth. However, they were unable to ensure the satisfying of psychological and social needs. This goal was served by the town. After all, a participant in a exploratory-acquisitive expedition not only risked his life, but in the inevitable meeting with the Indians, he risked the salvation of his soul. Only the town could offer him identity and advancement (the town in the sense of a built-up area and institutions, as well as freedoms and forms of life characteristic for it). Last but not least, the founding of a town was a legitimizing measure, confirming the conquistadors' independence. In towns, their role as the *pobladores* was fulfilled. The example of town life was meant the best to influence the Indians they had been assigned.[29] The first American towns and cities were not geared to the servicing of people busy with exploitation, war and trade. Their most important goal was to re-create a fragment of the European reality as a system of reference for the conquistadors' personal success.[10]

Another European form that imposed order on the situation stemming from the *conquista* was *encomienda*. To be precise, it is impossible to distinguish *encomienda* from the *conquista*, for it accompanied it and was a condition of its success. Inherent in this relationship was a contradiction which, it seems to me, caused the concept of the World of the conquistadors to collapse. In Mexico and Peru, *encomienda* was meant to perpetuate the existing organization of production to ensure the conquistadors' survival and social status.[11] Thus, the rights of individual

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[29] *Ordenanzas de descubrimento, nueva población y pacificación de las Indias dadas por Felipe II, el 13 de Julio de 1573*, § 137, Madrid 1973, p. 102.

[10] On the specific features of the process cf. J. G a u t i e r D a l c h é, *Historia urbana de León y Castilla en la Edad Media (siglos IX—XIII)*, Madrid 1979.

[11] S. Z a v a l a, *De Encomiendas y Propiedad territorial en algunos regiones de la America espanola*, México 1940, p. 241, 297. Various aspects of encomienda were discussed by D. A m u n á t e g u i S o l a r, *Las encomiendas indígenas en Chile*, Santiago de Chile 1909; F. A. K i r k-

ownership and community ownership were not infringed upon. This was not out of respect for the king's decisions, which were meant to restrict the positions of the conquistadors—*encomenderos*.[²²] Irrespective of the numerous acts of violence, this was in the interests of the conquerors. Nevertheless, the process of destruction also covered villages before measures defining new agrarian relations could prevent it from happening. It was the demographic catastrophe, the disintegration of traditional forms of economy and political interests that led to the expansion of great landed estates with prevalent animal husbandry.[²³] Thus, *encomienda* was not conceived as a tool of the *conquista*, but it became a means of the overwhelming.[²⁴] What was more, in the

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patrick, *The Landless Encomienda*, "The Hispanic American Historical Review", vol. XXVI, 1942, pp. 765—777; J. Miranda, *La función económica del encomendero en los orígenes del Régimen Colonial. Nueva España (1525—1531)*, "Anales del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia", vol. II, 1941—1944, México 1947; L. B. Simpson, *The Encomienda in New Spain. The Beginning of Spanish Mexico*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1950; E. Arcila Farias, *El régimen de la encomienda en Venezuela*, Sevilla 1957.

[¹²] S. Zavala, *op. cit.*, p. 291.

[²³] F. Chevalier, *La formation des grandes domaines au Mexique. Terre et Société aux XVIᵉ—XVIIᵉ siècles*, Paris 1952. Cf. a diagram concerning changes in population density in: G. Kubler, *Population movements in Mexico 1520—1600*, "The Hispanic American Historical Review", vol. XXII, 1942, No. 4, p. 622 *passim*. The issue of the demographic catastrophe was discussed at length in works by Cook, Simpson, Borah, criticized by W. T. Sanders and N. Sanchez-Albornoz among others. Cf. B. H. Slicher van Bath, *De historische demografie van Latijn Amerika. Problemen en resultaten van onderzoek*, "Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis", vol. XIII, 1979, pp. 527—556, esp. p. 543 ff.

[¹⁴] I use the notion of overwhelming to differentiate the use of force to achieve an advantage at the expense of an organized partner from violence as an individual use of force against the subject. I devote much space to this issue in the already quoted work *From Expansion to Domination*. In an earlier study I used the term "overwhelmingness", which seems incorrect, *Contact and Transformation...*, *op. cit.* In a paper presented at 2nd International Conference of Indian Ocean Studies in Perth in 1984 I used the following phrase: "Overwhelming is the permanent application of force in some sphere of social organisation, where this force is essential to attain goals which would be unttainable by the means proper to this sphere", *Overwhelming and Exchange: Forms of Contact in the Portuguese Expansion in the Indian Ocean World-System during the Sixteenth Century*. Such a phrasing departs from definitions proper to force as "the exercise of physical or intangible power or influence to effect change". I do not contradict the approach to violence as the willful application of force in such a way that it is intentionally injurious, T. Paullin, *Introduction to Non-Violence*, Philadelphia 1944, p. 6. The

conditions of the breakdown of Indian social and state organization, in the face of the collapse of order and rules of conduct, *encomienda* rapidly ceased to play its role. *Encomienda* was meant to produce frameworks separating the Indians from the Spaniards, guaranteeing the latter the means of existence and the foundation of superior power. At the same time, it deprived the former of support in previously accepted principles. The Indians rejected the prospect of hired labour, whereas the Crown declined to accept slavery. In this situation *repartimiento de los indios* was considered the optimum solution.[15] The conquistadors acquired the required position. However, the Indians did not adjust themselves to the form of life imposed on them. Subjected to intensified exploitation and deprived of their previous way of life, they became apathetic. Their bonds were undergoing accelerated erosion.[16]

The attempt to make use of the experiences of Castilian towns from the period of *reconquista* did not mean the questioning of royal powers. The short struggle waged in the defence of gains was directed against methods. It rejected the social dimension of reforms, just like in the case of Castilian *comuneros*.[17] The borderland was shifted to the South and North of the continent. It became a fringe and not an area shaping the way of life.

Of vital significance for such a course of Spanish expansion in America were developments that caused the destruction of the Indian social system. Inherent in the nature of expansion was a determination to impose the terms of communication on the partner. Aggression consisted in forcing one's presence in a foreign space. Its point was not to cause destruction. In the practice of the *conquista*, aggression and a tendency toward separation strengthened each other. While forming their own

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introduction of an artificial English term to denote the notion stems from the fact that "force" means both violence and strength. "Power" has a number of meanings, but does not fit the context, let alone "coercion" which is an element of overwhelming.

[15] L. N. McAllister, *op. cit.*, p. 166 ; Arcila Farias, *op. cit.*, p. 56. Cf. also S. Zavala, *Orígenes coloniales del peonaje en México*, *Estudios Indianos*, *México*..., p. 318, 319.

[16] N. Wachtel, *op. cit.*, pp. 302, 314.

[17] Cf. J. Pérez, *La révolution de "Comunidades" de Castille (1520—1521)*, Bordeaux 1970.

space separating them from the Indians, the Spaniards made no attempts to create a place for themselves in the existing world.[18] Aggression was not only manifest in struggle. Other relations, primarily sexual relations and Christianization [19] possessed that character. Mutually conditioned forms of overwhelming were meant to introduce the Indians to the European civilization, in fact separated them from the Spaniards. In the newly created cultural space, the Indians could find themselves only under the terms defined by overwhelming.

The principle of building a world in a void separating the conquerors from the enemy-partner was brought to America as part of the conquistadors' cultural imports. It was in Castile that co-existence had been determined by the definition of zones that were impossible to cross. *Reconquista* meant persistence in the struggle of always separate worlds. Only the Christian community developed the concept of a nation, from which all others were excluded. In America, the vanquished and assigned Indians, treated as subjects, and above all baptised, ceased to be enemypartners, without at the same time becoming participants in the emerging system,[40] in which Indian cultures and economies did not exist as economic entities. The Indians could either be as-similated individuals or a passive mass of a slave status. Both the former and the latter were the object of conquerors' activities. The Conquista deprived Mexican and Peruvian Indians of their subjectivity to the narrow extent they had enjoyed in the destroy-ed state organisms. Can one also speak about the loss of identity ? It seems that the incorporation into the new organism as separate and dependent elements at any rate signified the severing of continuity in the development of their cultures.

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[18] N. W a c h t e l, *op. cit.*, p. 241.

[19] L. N. M c A l l i s t e r, *op. cit.*, pp. 166—176. Cf. also P. B o r g e s, *Métodos misionales en la cristianización de América, siglo XVI*, Madrid 1960 ; P. D u v i o l, *La lutte contre les religions autochtones dans le Pérou colonial : "Extirpation de l'idolâtrie" entre 1532 et 1600*, Lima 1971 ; L. G ó m e z C a n e d o, *Evangelización y conquista : Experiencia francis-cana en Hispanoamérica*, Mexico 1977.

[40] N. W a c h t e l, *op. cit.*, p. 314 considers refusal to be a form of reaction, resistance to acculturation. Cf. M. F r a n k o w s k a, *Aculturación de los Indios de México*, "Estudios Latinoamericanos", vol. I, 1971, pp. 101—154.

Trying to interpret European expansion, I proposed the need to distinguish and classify those forms of activity which formed the structure of this specific phenomenon. I am referring to structure for I view expansion as a system, i.e. a set of people and their actions, mutual relationship and relations with the surroundings. I divided those complexes of activities according to their function in the structure, describing them as attainment, contact, implementation and consolidation.[41] They followed one another in a logical sequence. To some extent they conditioned one another, but not always and not everywhere in the same manner. In turn, those complexes are impossible mechanically to separate at a given moment and place. Thus, expansion appears as a continuous process.

Expansive activities undertaken in order to seize, exploit and transform a foreign social system through entry into its cultural space, are referred to as contact in the present study. In 16th century expansions, overwhelming was a characteristic form of contact. It is easy to notice that the *conquista* differed significantly from other forms of overwhelming to the extent that according to a number of authors it should be classified as conquest. The difference consisted in the fact that the conquistadors did not enter the Indian world but created one of their own. However, it should be noted that contrary to conquest, the *conquista* destroyed the Indian world instead of bringing it under control. It could be assumed therefore that the *conquista* was a transitional or intermediate form of contact in between overwhelming and conquest. It was a unique form.

The *conquista* was unable to introduce the conquerors into the Indian world for it had destroyed it. However, it created its own cultural space. In this space, a new system was built with the use of elements of the destroyed Indian world. Such a type of cultural space can be described as the space of contact, in the sense that contact occurs not in the space of one of the cultures, but in an entirely new one produced by the expansion. In this case, this was a culturally determined set of communiques serving the conquistadors to reconstruct their world. Apart from

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[41] J. K i e n i e w i c z, *Od ekspansji...*, pp. 36—202.

the New World of the conquistadors, there was nothing else.
Organisms that survived and people who remained independent
were pushed beyond the horizon to areas again penetrated by
expeditions in search of their illusions. The Spaniards viewed this
exclusivity as something obvious. Now the point was for the
subjugated Indians to accept it in the same way. The space of
contact was meant to be, and in essence was, entirely European.

A unique phenomenon of European expansion in America was
the role of the space of contact. In other cases, in the period
preceding colonial conquest and in conquest itself, various forms
of contact led to the creation of a common space, in which
exchanges and conflicts could lead to the confrontation of systems
of values.[42] Confrontation cannot be detected wherever the
resistance of the local social system forced the Europeans to adapt
themselves to the situation. That was how the Indian cultural
space shaped Portuguese expansion in Malabar in the 16th
century. Confrontation did not occur either when overwhelming
led to the destruction of the structure of the system that became
the object of expansion. This was the case during the American
conquista.

Of, course, I have no intention once again to describe, let alone
interpret, the phenomenon of the *conquista*. The aim of the
present paper is to put developments in a certain order to explain
the aforementioned phenomena : the catastrophe of the giant
American social systems and the failure of the conquerors'
plans.

Conquista started with the annihilation of an immunological
barrier, i.e. with the elimination of safeguards protecting the social
system from stimuli threatening its functional balance. It seems
that relations ensuring the homeostasis of the Indian systems
were extremely overburdened. The very force of the stimulus
(the appearance of the Spaniards) does little to explain erroneous
assessments, slowed-down reactions and the domination of con-
servative postures among the rulers and their attendants. Circum-

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[42] J. K i e n i e w i c z, *L'Asie et l'Europe pendant les XVI*ᵉ*—XIX*ᵉ
*siècles. Formation de l'état arriéré et confrontation des systèmes des
valeurs* in : *L'histoire à Nice. Actes du colloque franco-polonais d'histoire*,
vol. III, Nice 1983, pp. 217—229.

stances in which the Spaniards arrived in America, the violation of existing political-military relations and the introduction of new elements of struggle was enough to cause chaos in the sphere of the organization of the Indian system. It was as if the information circulation were disrupted. The system become disorganized.

At that time, the conquistadors found themselves in the physical area of those social systems and were destroying the main centres. They managed to destroy or paralyse vital control organs. Former power ceased to function. A vision of the world collapsed. In that phase of the *conquista*, it was important to paralyse natural defensive actions. The struggle was on, but the system was not being reconstructed. Individual elements were being reconstructed, but they appeared incapable of working together. The conduct of the conquistadors triggered further independent destructive processes. Only part of them, admittedly very important ones, such as epidemics, were not caused deliberately and due to their nature could not be contained. In other cases, it seems to me that the structure of Indian systems, the matrix reproducing the identity of societies had ceased to operate. This process is correctly referred to as the disintegration of structure or destructuralization, meaning that relations controlling the work of the system ceased to function.

Elements of the disintegrating system no longer played their functions. Institutions and people acted in a chaotic manner. Values were losing their sense. The social organization seemed devoid of autonomous capabilities, replicating ineffective activities. The process of disintegration was spreading far beyond the direct sphere of influence of the conquistadors, whereas incapability of adaptation and resignation in the face of catastrophe was also evident within the area organized by the conquistadors. Beyond that area, the struggle went on.

The new organization recreated from memory by the conquistadors tried to absorb whatever remained of the Indian world. That was how the area of contact emerged, formed by physical, economic and spiritual aggression. Physical aggression covered military operations, violence, sexual coercion, destruction and plagues. Economic aggression was expressed in plunder, new forms of production, exploitation and division as well as new

principles of relations between people. Spiritual aggression consisted mainly in Christianization, which was not even an acculturation attempt, but a charming away of spells and the soothing of conscience. Adding to that was the influence of new notions, principles, way of thinking and communication brought in by the European civilization. The separation of the Indians did not change the fact that they were covered by the newly created space irrespective of their intentions and the interests of the conquistadors.[48] A system of triple rule, covering the political, economic and ideological sphere, was shaped, which was a virtual totalitarian formula. However, it meant a failure on the part of the conquerors. The Brave New World was not conquered, but was disappearing in front of their eyes like a wizard's castle. In the building of their own world, they were deprived of the partner. For the lack of struggle, the conquerors were no longer necessary. The essence of the *conquista* is probably contained in the process of disintegration. The collapse of the structure entailed the inability to produce a new transformation and thus an adaptation even at the cost of the loss of identity. The Indian social system was ceasing to exist.

Thus described in a nutshell, American spaces of contact differed widely from the colonial reality in the 19th century defined by means of the notions of dependence and backwardness. In colonial India, societies were forced to change and consequently to adapt and alter their identity. Their structures adopted external, dominant elements, which assumed control over management processes. The *conquista* clearly ruled out such prospects.[44] The New World preserved overwhelming as an inevitable factor within its space.

This leads one to suggest that the true New World created by the *conquistadors* was a European one. However, it lasted for a very short time. It eliminated the Indian social systems reducing them within the scope of triple aggression to the level

[41] J. d e M a t i e n z o, *Gobierno del Perú*, Paris—Lima 1967, p. 82 ff.
[44] M. M i m l e r, *Some Problems in Re-defining European Expansion as a Historical Discipline : Taking Stock*, "Itinerario", vol. VII, 1983, No. 1, p. 136.

of village organization,[45] which was also subjected to overwhelming that paralysed its ability to autonomous activity. The New World stemmed from the *conquista*, but its scope was also limited to it. The Spanish model, which was in essence European, was unable to replicate evolution due to the lack of the enemy-partner. This inevitably opened up the prospect of subjecting the New World to Spain and including it in the European World-Economy in the role of a new periphery.[46] Both the rulers, i.e. the descendants of the conquistadors, and the ruled, i.e. the descendants of Indians deprived of their identity, found themselves in this role. That was why the New World gradually lost its European character and its autonomy. Although it was governed from Europe and ruled by the Europeans, accepting and reproducing the patterns of European culture, it increasingly lacked features that would determine its European character, e.g. liberty. It was not until generations later that the New World became an American one and demanded independence for its own structure. The elements of crushed Indian cultures played a vital role in this process. However, overwhelming exerted a lasting imprint on the process of American synthesis.

Hence, the Iberian expansion in America occurred in the area of contact constructed according to European principles. Overwhelming entailed the destruction of overburdened defensive relations and the collapse of structures. Disintegrated elements were incorporated into an entirely new organization. The new situation appeared to be a lasting one. The evolution of *encomienda*, African slavery, the development of extractive industries and animal husbandry defined the new frameworks of life in the 16th century.[47] The conquistadors' New World overseas

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[45] N. W a c h t e l, *op. cit.*, p. 302; A. J a r a, *Estructuras coloniales y subdesarrollo en Hispanoamérica*, in : *Sviluppo e Sottosviluppo in Europa e fuori d'Europa dal secolo XII alla rivoluzione industriale, Atti della "Decima settimana di studio" (7—12 aprile 1978)*, Prato 1983, p. 628 ff. Cf. J. S z e m i ń s k i, *Tendencias de desarrollo del ayllu peruano (siglos XIV—XX)*, "Estudios Latinoamericanos", vol. I, 1971, pp. 259—288.

[46] Cf. Ch. V e r l i n d e n, *Où sont les périphéries*, in : *Sviluppo...*, *op. cit.*, p. 244, 248 ff.

[47] M. C a r m a g n a n i's voice in discussion in : *Sviluppo...*, *op. cit.*, p. 514 and also L. B. S i m p s o n, *Exploitation of Land in Central Mexico in the Sixteenth Century, Ibero-Americana*, vol. XXXVI, Berkeley 1952.

did not fulfil their wishes, but was perfectly suited to disguise the reality. Disguised behind the baroque façade was the reality of the Americas, which were neither Indian nor European, a reality of overwhelming perpetuated by generations. It was this overwhelming that bred the New American World that rejected the superiority of the metropoly, but remained dependent on the Core of the World System.

Such a view of the reality of the New World at the period of its creation through the *conquista* obviously leads one to consider the capabilities and limits of cognition. The point is primarily to study a degraded reality subjected to destruction without yielding to the visions of *Leyenda Negra*. I have in mind the possibilities to interpret the evidence of conquest. It seems that reflection on cognition on the part of the conquistadors, i.e. on the limits of cognition in a space defined by European triple overwhelming, seems even more necessary. This issue is vital for the process of absorbing the remains of the Indian heritage. It is surely very important to know what exactly survived, what was included in the new edifice and what remained outside. However, equally important is the need to define conditions in which this occured and to reconstruct transformations to which the heritage was subjected under the pressure of aggression. Judging by the proposed approach to the *conquista*, the possibilities of cognition within the New World were limited. Postures and intentions of people who recorded reality were of secondary importance. The unusual explosion of writings trying to capture the historically unique process also belonged to the cultural sphere dominated by overwhelming.

Cf. discussion on the topic I. W a l l e r s t e i n, *The Modern World System II. Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World Economy 1600—1750*, New York 1980, *passim.*