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## PIZARRO

Francisco Pizarro was born in Trujillo, Spain, probably in 1470. As a young boy he worked as a swineherd, but in later life he became a soldier. In 1509, he sailed to the New World with a relative, Hernan Cortes. When Balboa discovered the Pacific in 1513, Pizarro was with him, and when Balboa died Pizarro returned to Panama where he heard many tales of the gold and treasure that could be found to the south. There he met Diego de Almagro, a soldier, and Hernando de Luque, a priest, and the three formed an expedition in 1524 and explored the lands south of Panama. This voyage was a failure, but on a second trip in 1526 they found enough gold and silver in Tumbres, a town in northern Peru. This convinced them they should return. Pizarro went back to Spain where he received Royal permission to go back to Peru and conquer it.



In 1531 the three adventurers set out again, this time with horses, cannons, and about 180 men. They landed in Peru and crossed the Andes. As they travelled, they saw signs of the civil war that was then being waged in Peru. Atahualpa, a favoured son of the old Inca, was trying to take the throne from his half brother Huascar, who had become the new Inca. Finally Atahualpa gained supremacy. The Spaniards saw buildings reduced to smoking ruins, and bodies hanging from trees, but despite their fears they pushed on and reached Cajamarca where they hoped to find Atahualpa. They reached the town on Nov. 15, 1532, and found it completely empty of people. That night Pizarro and his men could see the Inca campfires glowing on the hillsides around the town.



Next day Pizarro sent Hernando de Soto and a small group of men on horseback to see Atahualpa and to try to arrange a meeting of the two leaders. All through their Peruvian journey the Spaniards had seen how awe-struck the Indians were at the sight of the horses. They rode into the Inca camp and found Atahualpa and his large, well-trained army. A meeting between the two leaders was arranged for the next day. As the Spaniards turned to leave, de Soto, who had noticed the Inca chief's interest in the horses, wheeled his horse around and galloped at top speed toward the royal dais. Just before he reached it, he reared the horse up on its hind legs directly in front of Atahualpa and his body guards. Several of the guards cringed in terror but the Inca leader sat without moving a muscle. De Soto then rode away with the rest of his men and later that night the Inca bodyguards who had flinched were put to death for their cowardice.



Next day Atahualpa and his soldiers came to Cajamarca, as had been arranged. The Spaniards hid behind walls and in buildings, and when the Inca and his soldiers were inside the town square, Pizarro dropped a handkerchief as a signal to his men. The cannon was fired. Pizarro and his men rode out on their horses with guns and swords and began slaughtering the confused and terrified Indians. The Inca was captured and 2000 of his people were killed. The royal prisoner offered for his own ransom a large room filled once with gold and another filled twice with silver. For two months the Inca people brought silver and gold from all parts of the empire, and when the ransom had been paid, Pizarro, instead of releasing Atahualpa, had him strangled.



The Inca people, accustomed to obeying their leader and now finding themselves without one, offered little resistance. Pizarro and his Spaniards took over their empire. A few uprisings occurred during the next 30 years, but none were successful.

In 1538 Diego de Almagro, feeling he had been cheated of his fair share of Inca wealth, marched against Pizarro and was defeated and killed. Three years later, in 1541, Almagro's followers led a surprise attack into Pizarro's palace and assassinated him. The man who had conquered and destroyed an empire was dead at the hands of his own people.