

CORRESPONDENCE

To the editor:

In the May 1970 issue of the *HAHR* there appeared a statement relative to certain editorial changes made in my article, "The Black Legend Revisited," *HAHR* (November 1969), 703-719. Because a part of this statement purports to speak for me, readers of the *HAHR* may assume that the statement was made with my approval and in response to my wishes. In fact this is a unilateral statement of the then Managing Editor of the *HAHR*, Robert E. Quirk.

The statement correctly notes that I saw the changes to which I objected in galley proofs, but omits pertinent details. Gallies were sent to my Mexico City address, but they were not accompanied by author's copy, without which I could not properly check and correct the proofs. Moreover, they arrived on the very eve of the deadline for their return (through no fault of the *HAHR* staff but because of an inexplicable delay in the mails). As a result, I made a hasty check for typos and other routine errors and sent them back that same day without attempting to determine the extent or seriousness of errors.

On my return to the States I carefully compared the printed text of the article with an earlier draft and was able to determine that editorial hands had made two changes that seriously altered meaning or interpretation.

The semantic complexity of the term "Black Legend" required that I use it with the utmost precision. Choosing my words very carefully, I had written that the core of the Black Legend concept was "a presumed tradition of defamatory criticism of Spain and the Spaniards." This wording left open the question of whether the Black Legend was in reality defamatory, something which I proposed to disprove. The revision, however, declared that "the essence of the Black Legend is defamatory criticism of Spain and the

Spaniards"—which conceded the very point in question!

More serious was the addition of two closing lines to my text. These lines, at first glance a harmless rhetorical flourish, in reality introduced a serious ambiguity into the article. They read: "A traditional function of historical scholarship has been to exorcise myths wherever they have occurred. Let us have done with legends about the Spanish Empire, both black and white."

Now, a major thesis of my article is that the substance of the so-called Black Legend is no legend at all, but the statement of an ugly reality. Consequently, there is no myth here to "exorcise." The matter stands differently with the White Legend, which I describe as "a thoroughly misleading counterlegend of Spanish altruism and benevolence to the Indians." To ascribe to me an attitude of "a plague on both your houses" with regard to these two divergent interpretations of Spain's Indian policy is to distort my position. In the words of a perceptive young scholar who read these lines and wondered about them: "The last two lines weaken the article and leave everything hanging."

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The managing editor replies:

The statement in the May 1970 issue did indeed come from me and not from Benjamin Keen. I resisted opening a public discussion on the editorial changes in his article, because I would need to call attention to the condition of the manuscript when we received it. The problem arose because Keen's manuscript seemed hastily prepared, and perhaps not well thought out. All of the readers noted the errors, as did Keen himself in correspondence with us. The first sentence cited by Keen illustrates one difficulty with the wording of the manuscript. For ambiguities in the use of "concept" see Fowler, *Modern English Usage*, second edition, p. 102; Follett, *Modern American Usage*, p. 102; and Bernstein, *The Careful*

Writer, p. 113. We inserted the concluding sentences at the express suggestion of a reader and clearly set them apart, so that the author could make his own emendations on the galley proofs.

We too regretted the fact that Keen,

being in Mexico, was unable to make necessary corrections. When he returned the galleys, approved, we were not aware that he had been unable to consult his original manuscript. For that reason I inserted the statement in the May 1970 issue.