

Free essay about how truthful was captain de cuellar's account of the spanish arm...

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The confrontation between Britain and Spain in 1588 was the result of two different religious systems: Protestantism and Catholicism. England was ruled by Queen Elizabeth I. Spain had a strong King Philip II. Both countries had a big fleet. The Spanish Armada was the most powerful in hat times¹. The Spanish Armada went into the sea. Its target was the invasion of England. Few believed that the Armada could fail, but its defeat was complete and final. To this day, historians try to answer to the question, why the fleet crashed near the Ireland? Was the account of the Captain De Cuellar about the Spanish Armada and its shipwreck in Ireland truthful? Francisco de Cuellar was the captain in San Pedro. The ship took part in the events in 1588. The historians underline that the account of the Captain Cuellar is the most detailed. It helps to understand the reasons of shipwreck and political circumstances of the conflict. There were also letters from other participants of the battle, which ships crashed near the coast of Ireland. Some of them found there a salvation or reached Spain later. Many of their letters and documents were lost or remained unpublished.

Elizabeth encouraged adventurers such as Francis Drake, who attacked and extorted Spanish ships with treasures from Spanish colonies². For 20 years

the Queen provoked Spain, and the relations of the two countries were at the point of a war. Besides, Philip II supported English Catholics³. While the British hoped to spread the religion of Protestants in Europe.

According to the plan of the Spanish King, Armada should have passed the English Channel and pool resources with the Duke of Parma. One army had to enter the English Channel on the ships of the Armada. The other waited in the Spanish Netherlands. After the unification, both armies supposed to land in the British Isles and move into the direction of London. Philip expected English Catholics to leave their Queen. Elizabeth knew about these

1Stokesbury, James L. Navy and Empire

²Carlton J. H. Modern Europe to 1870.

³Stokesbury, James L. Navy and Empire.

plans but could not stop Spain. However, on the practice, the Philip's plan was not thought-out well. According to Rupert Matthews, the Spanish king counted on God's providence, but didn't take into account the power of the English fleet and shallow waters. It did not allow vessels to approach the shore and take on board troops of the Duke of Parma⁴.

On 29 May, 1588, the Spanish Armada that had 160 ships sailed in the direction of Britain. The only protection of Britain was in the ships of the Royal Navy. The vessels of a new generation were more streamlined, flexible and fast, while the Spanish Navy consisted of high-sided vessels, with many low-range guns. They were well adapted to the close battle and assault attack.

The day when the Spanish Armada entered the English Channel they seemed

to be lucky. The area of high pressure formed in the Northwest and the wind that blew from the West helped Spain. English ships anchored at anchor near Plymouth were a still target. With the change of stream, English fleet went into the sea and occupied strategic positions. Going against the wind, the British had freedom to move, and began to attack the enemy. Spanish ships could have only reflected the attacks. A few days later, the Spaniards became able to take the positions of a crescent, which they often used to protect their trading ships. It was possible to attack only the flanks with the largest ships. The British using long-range weapons failed to sink any Spanish ship. Waiting for a response from the Netherlands, the Spaniards anchored near Calais⁵. The British used the vulnerable position and sent the ships with flammable materials and explosives to the Spanish fleet. As a result, the positions of Spanish ships opened, and they became easy targets. For the first time, the British managed to approach the enemy close. Only after they opened fire at a close range, the Spanish vessels began to suffer serious damages and losses. The British received the advantage. Under a hail

⁴Matthews, Rupert. *The Spanish Armada: A Campaign in Context*.

⁵Mattingly, Garrett. *The Defeat of the Spanish Armada*.

of fire, Spaniards had no choice but to go out into the open sea. However, due to a strong wind Spanish ships were moving to the shores of the Netherlands. Favourable wind took the Armada to the North Sea⁶. Once there, spurred by tailwind Spanish ships could no longer go back. The Spaniards had to revise their plans. They changed plans and decided to go back to Spain, after going around the British Isles to the North. The captain

thought that the fleet is moving into the west. In fact, it was moving to the south captured by the stream. The fleet was taken to the shores of Ireland and got shipwrecked.

Armada took all attempts to avoid a crash, but the shores of Ireland are high and rocky. According to Patrick Gallagher's research ' God's Obvious Design: Papers from the Spanish Armada Symposium', " with regard to number of survivors, the sources contradict each other frequently; nevertheless, they all agree in a very high death-toll" 7. There were many testimonials of crashes near the coast. According to the account of Cuellar, the ships lacked food, water and suffered from disease⁸. During the battle, many ships were damaged and had problems to return to Spain. Some ships went missing. Many of them shipwrecked off the coast of Ireland. According to Patrick Gallagher, " Thanks to Cuellar we have a detailed account of the wrecking on Streedag Strand of the vessels: the Lavia (236 men), the Juliana (395 men) and the Santa Maria de Vison (307men)" 9. The ship San Pedro that belonged to f Francisco de Cuellar crashed near the shores of Ireland. From his account it is known that he survived thanks to the crew of Lavi ¹⁰. De Cuellar wrote that they spent " four days without being able to make any provision or do anything" ¹¹.

⁶Mattingly, Garrett. The Defeat of the Spanish Armada.

⁷Gallagher, Patrick. God's Obvious Design: Papers from the Spanish Armada Symposium, Sligo, 1988 : With an Edition and Translation of the Account of Francisco De Cuéllar.

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Only half of the ships returned to Spain. Thousands of people drowned or died from wounds and disease on the way home. Britain believed in the providence of God. According to Peter Kemp Kemp, “ the campaign of the Spanish Armada in 1588 was one of the great climacterics of European history” 12. The defeat of the Armada raised confidence in the hearts of the Protestants of Northern Europe.

It is amazing that the account written by Francisco de Cuellar arrived to modern times. The document contains a lot of detailed information about the historical event that has significant importance for the world. Francisco de Cuellar presented all information and data. He described his adventures after the crash of his ship and gave people useful information about the political, social and religious situation on the continent.

12Kemp, Peter Kemp. The Campaign of the Spanish Armada.