
Document 1621D

Letter from Governor Fajardo to the King, dated Manila 10 December 1621

Sources: AGI 67-6-7; translated in B&R 20: 127-155.

Letter from Fajardo to Philip III

Sire:

In the ships which left here this year for New Spain I gave your Majesty a long account of everything which, up to that time, could be related, or which occurred to me, with duplicates of different letters, therefore the most that I have to add today is the reception of your Majesty's letter and your royal decrees.

...

As to what your Majesty wrote to the Marquis of Guadalcazar, former viceroy of New Spain, regarding [the statement] that on the ship **San Nicolás** 330 persons died on account of its late departure from these islands [in 1619], all that I can say is that, since a person of his position and character undertook to write it, he should certainly have first informed himself thoroughly in the matter. Although I was present at the despatching of this ship and went out with it well outside of Cavite, it did not appear to me that, in regard to the people who were going, the ship was carrying half [its usual load]; for at most there are accustomed to go with the officers usually 70 seamen and gunners, more or less, according to the tonnage of the ships, although the number mentioned is for a ship of very large tonnage. With these there usually go as many Indians from this country, as common seamen, and some slaves that the said officers and the passengers are allowed to take with them for their service, paying the duties which are usually paid to your Majesty. The passengers are usually kept down to as small a number as possible; and if so many died as is affirmed in the supposed relation, they were not Spaniards, because of these not many died. They must have been negroes and slaves, who were hidden after embarkation by those who took them aboard, with an eye to the great gain which there usually is in this, by saving the cost and the duties that they owe, when the royal officials at Acapulco are friends of theirs, or those who thus convey slaves are of the household of the viceroy.

...

The brief of the pilot Gaspar Conquero, which treats of the exploration of the island of Oro, which is here called **Rica de Oro**, has been examined; and as soon as he makes this port, or there is any other person suitable for conducting this exploration, and to be given the island as an *encomienda*, I shall do so as your Majesty orders.

...

In accordance with the contents of another decree of 25 August of the past year 1620, it appears that your Majesty has been informed that the reason why the ships [of 1619] left these islands for New Spain later than in past years was because the president and auditors were interested, as principal shippers therein. The truth is, that their not leaving earlier was due to the coming of the enemy with large fleets to these coasts, and to the fact that the ships which bring the merchandise for these shipments were late or did not come for fear of the enemy (as I have already written to you more at length and in detail), and likewise on account of negotiations and agreements between the auditors and the present president. I will swear to it that the report which has been made to your Majesty on this point is untrue, because I was not brought up in the households or under the instruction of merchants, but in the good way of military exercises, as were my ancestors. It must be evident to your Majesty, as the property that I possess could well attest, that it would be very well for me if it were increased by the amounts that are lacking and pledged.

...

On the occasion of the unfortunate event which happened to me on the night of the 12th of May past¹—and it was such an important and serious an affair, as your Majesty already knows, or will learn by the judicial record and papers regarding the matter, which I despatched by way of New Spain and am now despatching via India—they made (although I am their president) no more demonstration against the agents, go-betweens, and apologists who were guilty in this affair than if it had concerned the most wretched and degraded of the Chinamen who go about here. As it was my own case, and as I was satisfied in regard to the principal matter that concerned me (thanks be to God), I did not wish to exercise my authority in the case; but it may be seen to what lengths the blindness of their desires and passions leads them.

...

[Wreck of the 1621 galleon]

As for the stuffs and merchandise which remained to be got out of the ship called **Nuestra Señora de la Vida**, which was wrecked, a great deal more of its cargo has been unloaded than what I informed your Majesty of in the last despatch which I sent by way of New Spain.² All the artillery that was in it was likewise taken out; and I have

1 Alluding to the death, by Fajardo's own hand, of his unfaithful wife and her lover.

2 Ed. note: It appears that, after this galleon was wrecked on Mindoro Island soon after its departure, a patache was sent to Acapulco, but it was destined to turn back.

ordered it to be conveyed to a shipyard in this island, where two ships are being built, which were already necessary to supply the place of old ones.

...

Likewise a large part of the Japanese have been expelled, so that for a long time there have not been so few of them here as now.

...

In the same way we are steadily engaged in repairing and equipping the ships, not only the flagship and the *almiranta*, but the ship which this year came from New Spain [i.e. the San Andrés], and another small ship and three galleys. I do not know whether they can be manned, but everything is being prepared for any emergency that may arise. What we cannot make is money and Spaniards, the lack of the latter being the most serious; and I have many times represented to your Majesty that the aid from New Spain has come in scanty measure, as if from one who was not obliged to give an account of this matter.

...

May God our Lord, for whom it is done, grant us this and all other things, and protect the Catholic person of your Majesty, according to the needs of Christendom.

Manila, 10 December 1621.

...

Don Alonso Fajardo de Tença