
Document 1519G

Letter from the Portuguese factor Sebastian Alvarez to the King of Portugal

Sources: ACL's Alguns documentos da Torre do Tombo, p. 432. Navarrete's Colección de los viages, iv, pp. 153-155.

Letter written in Seville to the King of Portugal by Sebastian Alvarez, his factor, concerning the setbacks suffered by Magellan and the steps and efforts [he] made to convince him and Falero to return to Portugal. He gives notice of the fleets being prepared for other destinations¹

Those who have just returned [from the Court] together to this city are Cristóbal de Haro and Juan de Cartagena, chief factor, and Juan Estéban, treasurer of this fleet, and in the instructions which they carry with them, there are articles contrary to the instruction [given by the King] to Magellan. The officials of the House of Trade having seen them, since they cannot stomach Magellan, they took the side of the newcomers. They called in Magellan, and asked him for the roll of the fleet; and why there was no captain in the fifth ship, except Carvallo who was not a captain, but a pilot. He answered that he wished to have it that way, to carry the lantern and that he would transfer to it now and then. They told him that she was carrying many Portuguese, and that it was not good to carry so many. He answered that he would do in the fleet what he wished

¹ This letter to King Manuel of Portugal is dated Seville, 18 July 1519. It comes from the Collection of Muñoz, who made an extract from the original in Lisbon.

without giving them any account, which they could not do themselves without delegating the task to him. So many words, and bad ones at that, passed between them that the officials ordered the salaries to be paid to the sailors and soldiers, but to none of the Portuguese. About this they have written to the Court.

When I saw an opportunity for me to do what Your Highness has asked me to do, I went to Magellan's inn and found him collecting food items, preserves, etc., and told him that the above was the result of his bad project, and because it was to be the last time I was to speak to him as his friend and as a good Portuguese, he should think seriously about the error he was about to make. [I told him] that his answers in the previous conversations had given me hope that he would not do a thing so much against the service of Y. H., especially such a dangerous undertaking. He answered that it was a matter of principle for him to finish what he had begun. I responded that it was not an honor to gain something unduly, that even the Spaniards looked upon him as somebody base and a traitor against his own country. He answered that he thought he would render a service to Y. H. by not touching anything of his. I told him that it was enough to discover wealth existing within the demarcation of Spain in order to do some harm to Portugal. I omit many other exchanges that passed between us.

He asked me if I had a commission from Y. H. to speak to him. I answered that I did not merit such an honor, but that if he did what he had to do, Y. H. would consider himself well served. Finally, he said that he did not know how he could abandon the cause of the King of Spain who had shown him so much favor. I told him to do what he had to do and not to lose his honor, that it was regrettable that he had left Portugal because of a difference of 100 *reais* in living allowance which Y. H. had not given him in order not to break a royal order¹. With the coming of two instructions sent to him that were contrary to an earlier one, and to what he had contracted to do with King Charles, he would see if this slight would be regrettable enough to make him go and do what he must do, or come for what he had come.

He was really surprised that I knew so much. He then told me the truth: that the mail had already left; that he would not abandon the enterprise as long as none of the things contracted for were broken. So, he wished to know which favors Y. H. had promised him. I responded: What did he prefer? To see other contrary instructions, to have Rui Falero say openly that he would not follow his lantern, that he had to sail to the south, or else he would not go in the fleet? That he thought he was going as Captain general, but I knew otherwise, that he would be told only when there would no longer be any

¹ In the books recording the *moradias* [living allowances] for the Royal House of Portugal for 1512, there can be seen the salary for one Fernão de Magalhães, son of **Pero de Magalhães**, [in his capacity] as a young gentleman, 1,000 rs. per month, and a daily allowance of barley. He signed as having received it on 12 June 1512. Also, in another book is shown that he received 1,850 rs. per month, and a daily allowance of barley, as a gentleman esquire, a promotion from young gentleman. He signed a receipt for same on 14 July 1512. Ed. note: Navarrete is incorrect here, as our Magellan was the son of Rui (not Pero) Magalhães. This other Magellan was still alive in 1525, and possibly in 1540 (See article by Alfredo Pimenta: "*Zweig e Fernão de Magalhães*", in *Bazar* (Sup. lit. de *A Voz*), Lisbon, 25 Feb 1938).



King Manuel of Portugal.
He ruled from 1495 to 1521.



recourse for his honor. That he should not pay attention to the honey that the Bishop of Burgos was putting upon his lips. That now was the time [to decide], that if he were to give me a letter for Y. H., I for his sake would carry it and look after his affair. He finished by telling me that he would not do anything until he had received the reply [he expected to receive] by mail.

I spoke with Rui Falero twice. He never told me anything other than he would not do anything against the King his Lord who was doing him so many favors. This was always his answer to whatever I told him. It seems to me that the tables are turned; if only Magellan could be won over, he would follow.

There are five ships in the fleet. They have 80 very small guns, and are manned with 230 men, most of whom have already received pay, except the Portuguese whom they did not want to hire at one thousand *reales*, etc.¹ The captain of the first ship is Magellan, of the second Faleiro, of the third Cartagena, of the fourth Quesada, a protégé of the Archbishop of Seville. The fifth one is without a captain; her pilot is Carvalho, Portuguese. They say that, once the bar has been crossed, her captain will be Alvaro de Mesquita from Estremoz.

1 Ed. note: See previous Doc. 1519F. If by *reales* is meant *maravedis*, able seamen were offered 1,200 per month, but those classified as ordinary seamen (and ship's boys) only 800 per month.

There go the following Portuguese pilots: Carvalho, Estéban Gomez, Serrão, Vasco Gallego, who has been living here for some time; in addition, Alvaro and Martin de Mesquita, Francisco de Fonseca, Cristóbal Ferreira, Martin Gil, Pedro de Abreu, Duarte Barbosa, a nephew of Diego Barbosa, a protégé of the Bishop of Sigüenza, Antonio Fernandez, Luis Alonso de Beja, Juan de Silva.

Faleiro has his father, mother, and brothers here with him, one of whom he is taking along.

The fifth part of this fleet is [for] Cristóbal de Haro¹ who provided 4,000 ducats.²

The route that they say will be followed is from Sanlúcar straight to Cabo Frio³, leaving Brazil on the right until they pass the line of demarcation, and from there to sail westward and WNW straight to the Moluccas.

Reinel's globe of 1519

As for the said land of Maluco, I have seen it myself marked down upon the globe and chart which the son of Reinel has made here, and which was not finished when his father came here for him; his father completed it, and placed these Molucca Islands [upon it]. It is in accordance with this model that Diego Ribeiro is making all the charts for them, as well as the quadrants and spheres. Between this Cabo Frio and the Moluccas, along this route there are no lands drawn upon the charts that they carry.

Another fleet is being formed with 3 ships, whose captain will be Andrés Niño, and it carries two other small ones in pieces. It is bound for the mainland to the port of Darien. From there, they will go 20 leagues overland to the South Sea, transporting the two ships in pieces, and with them they will go to discover a thousand leagues and no more along the western coast of the land they call Catayo. In these ships, the captain general will be G. G. Dávila, the accountant at Hispaniola.

When the above fleets have gone, another will be made ready with 4 ships to go on the trail of Magellan and to his assistance. It is not known where it will be done; it was ordered done by Cristóbal de Haro.⁴

1 In a letter written in Antwerp to the King of Portugal, in *[AGI, Patronato?, Legajo] 1, [doc.] 21, [ramo] 52*, one can see that Cristóbal de Haro with two other Haros, perhaps his brothers, were residents and traders there, and in 1517 they had contracted with Portugal about trading in Guinea [i.e. West Africa], where they sent a quantity of ships, but the Portuguese sent 7 of them to the bottom, at an estimated loss of 16,000 ducats. They request compensation, plus over 2,000 in damages.

2 Ed. note: See Doc. 1519E. Haro provided exactly 23% of the total costs, i.e. 1,880,126 Maravedis, which, dividing by 375, are about 5,000 ducats.

3 Ed. note: NW coast of Africa.

4 Ed. note: This was to be the Loaysa Expedition and it was prepared at La Coruña, in Galicia.



Allegorical sketch of Magellan coming out of the Strait. *Triumph* appears evident as he discovers the Pacific Ocean. Patagonia is on the right and Tierra del Fuego on the left. (Drawn by John Stradan, and engraved by J. Galle, in 1522. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris)