
Document 1625D

Letter from Governor Silva to the King, dated Manila 4 August 1625

Sources: AGI 67-6-7; translated in B&R 22: 62-78.

Letter from interim Governor Fernando de Silva to Philip IV

Sire:

[The westbound voyage of 2 Spanish ships in 1625]

I advised your Majesty that I left Capulco [sic] on 6 April. That is one of the latest dates on which the ships have set sail, and we were fearful lest we would not make the coasts of these islands, as the weather was contrary—although one can reach them in a voyage of three months, which is the usual duration. When we started, the wind was so light that my fear increased because we did not sail 100 leagues in 13 days. During that time I found that my *almiranta* was sailing very slowly, so that I was obliged to resolve, in order not to risk everything, to leave it behind, with a good supply of food for a longer voyage. Considering how easily the *almiranta* could be wrecked, and that the [Dutch] enemy would be waiting in the [San Bernardino] Strait for a prize of such a great profit; and that if once they sighted the *almiranta*, escape was impossible, while I could not be of any aid, as I was quite without resources: I thought it advisable for your Majesty's service to take out all your silver and that of private persons [from it], trusting that I would not have the enemy any more to windward as had been the case while I was coming. This seems to have been the proper course, for I made the port of Cavite on 8 July. I arrived at such an opportune season that I believe the islands were never in such a great need of a new government and such aid.

...

The Dutch enemy came to this coast with a fleet of 3 large vessels and 2 small ones, while your Majesty had at the port of Cavite 2 galleons of very heavy burden,¹ 3 of 500

1 Ed. note: Later, their names are mentioned as the **San Ildefonso** and the **San Raimundo**.

or 600 tons of the northern sea, 1 patache of more than 250 tons, and 2 galleys, together with many good soldiers and sailors and a goodly abundance of heavy artillery.

...

[The eastbound ships of 1625]

I also changed the appointments to the posts that I found filled for the ships which I am despatching now to New Spain, as those appointments were not made to suitable persons. Such were holding them with their [i.e. the auditors'] followers by illegal means and had no services or qualifications, although there are persons of excellent abilities, as are those who now hold them.

The ships are the best and most suitable that have sailed hence for a number of years past, and are of 500 or 600 tons burden apiece. They are well equipped with artillery and other necessities. They are heavily laden, for, although the enemy was along the coasts in smaller craft than in other years, this year the Chinese came and have brought the Portuguese from Macao. Regarding the danger that might be feared on the coast of New Spain from a Dutch fleet which we heard would pass through the Strait of Magellan, I left the viceroy warned so that, when those ships can reach that coast, he will have a sentinel and lookout at the island of Cedros, in front of the gulf of California—where they are ordered to reconnoiter the enemy's condition, and where the foe never expect them—and with a port to windward of the Cape of Corrientes, which is the place where they may be awaited; with that I trust, God helping, that they will be safe.

Eleven of the 14 Dutch ships [of the Nassau Fleet] that passed [the Strait] this year went to Capulco; they were those which the pirate took from Holland. Seven of them were large ships, and 4 small; three of them were captured in Peru. The reached Ternate with all [sic] of them, and 800 men aboard.¹ Accordingly I believe that they will come here in a few months; and as this state and its conservation depends on maritime forces (as does that of all the islands of the world); and as the building of three ships of the size of these two (which, as it could not be avoided, are going to New Spain) resulted, I hope from the willingness with which the Fathers of the Society offer to make two ships for me in the province of Leyte (where they have their missions), and the Franciscans another in those of Camarines, that they will be provided for me. The condition of the royal treasury and your Majesty's heavy expenses on the point of Cavite require that very urgently.

...

Your Majesty orders me to give you information as to how General Rodrigo de Guilestegui, who is commander of the ships that sail to New Spain this year, may be granted reward. According to his good service here and his great capability, the future succession [to the command of this fort], or that to the post of Master-of-camp, will be very well entrusted to him.

¹ Ed. note: We know from previous documents that they had over 1,200 men, but the number of their ships was about 10-12 ships. If any Dutch ships were captured in Peru, they must have been small ones.

...

The *almiranta* arrived on 29 July, and its being able to get here seems miraculous, as this is the season when there are no *vendavals*.

...

May God preserve your Majesty.

Manila, 4 August 1625.

Fernando de Silva.¹

¹ Ed. note: He had lived in the Philippines before, leaving them in 1621. He was apparently not related to Captain Fernando de Silva who was killed during a voyage to Siam during this period.