
Documents 1634

Letters from Governor Salamanca to the King, dated Manila 10 August 1634

Sources: AGI 68-6-8; translated in B&R 24: 301-337.

1. Letter to Philip IV on revenue affairs

Sire:

I informed your Majesty by way of India, on 22 October of last year, of the treasury matters...

...

Whenever ships or fleets have been despatched, some advance pay has been given to the regular sailors and soldiers.

...

After many discussions, the citizens [of Manila] had resolved not to lade any goods at present for New Spain. I gave a copy of all this to the fiscal and the royal officials. I resolved [not] to despatch the ships without cargoes, and even to take the boxes and bales from where they should be found and actually put them on board the ships; but the auditors and officials believed that it would be contrary to law to force the citizens. Therefore, I determined to call a meeting of the Audiencia, archbishop, fiscal, and royal officials, in order to determine what ought to be done in this matter. All were of the opinion that the ships should be laded, even though we should postpone the fulfilment of what your Majesty lately ordered,¹ for the damage that would ensue from the ships going empty would be beyond comparison far greater than the gain of the 2%; and that the appeal interposed by the citizens ought to be granted, as it was apparent that the report which the visitor had made was different from what had actually and truly taken place. In accordance with this, the city has given bonds for all the sum to which this duty can amount, now and henceforth, until your Majesty be pleased to provide what

1 Ed. note: Referring to a royal decree ordering the increase in duty from 3% to 5% on goods exported to New Spain.

is most advisable. In order that this may be apparent from the investigations, I enclose herewith a testimony of the acts.

...

I received some decrees in these last ships, which were sent in the year 1632, and others of the year 1633, concerning the treasury, which are being obeyed and will be carried out as is therein contained. When these ships set sail—and that has not been done before as the decrees were received late, and by way of India—I shall give an account of the condition of these matters.

The viceroy of New Spain has sent me 4 companies as a reinforcement, and this camp has 6 others. I have reorganized 5, so that there are now 6 companies in this city, each with more than 100 soldiers, which is the least number that a company generally has.

...

In the ships of last year, and by way of India, I informed your Majesty how expedient it was to charge 5% duty on the silver and *reals* that are sent annually from New Spain, as no remedy has been found whereby that commerce can be adjusted to the permission of only 500,000 pesos, which your Majesty has conceded to these islands.

...

May our Lord preserve the royal person of your Majesty and make you prosper, as we your vassals desire and need.

Manila, 10 August 1634.

Don Juan Cerezo Salamanca.

2. Letter to Philip IV on government affairs

Sire:

...

The jurisdiction of this Audiencia is set at rest from the ecclesiastical forces and the litigations of these inhabitants who, as is seen from the table which I am sending under separate cover, amount in all to 151 married men, 81 single men, 45 widows, and 160 children, besides 50 other men who live in other places. All the rest are paid sailors and soldiers, with whom the Audiencia has nothing to do; and from that one can infer how few affairs of justice arise...

Your Majesty permits only 4,000 Sangleys in these islands, but a greater number has been tolerated because of the advantage of the licences that they pay, and in order not to disturb the trade with China...

In the month of September of the past year, 5 Sangley ships were wrecked on this coast of the province of Ilocos, with a great amount of silver...¹

...
Your Majesty orders me by another decree of the same date [i.e. 26 August 1633]² to see that the ships which are despatched from all these islands to New Spain leave every year from this port in the beginning of June. That is advisable, but it is impossible to establish it this year; for never have these ships left without having to wait for the arrival of the others [from New Spain], in order that [the citizens] answer their agents in regard to their [commercial] relations, and because no other opportunity for this arises during the year. Consequently, although the ships have been, as far as I am concerned, prepared in time with all that is necessary, the inhabitants have not begun to lade them until they have seen those which arrived safely on 20 July. Since that, the fulfilment of this royal decree touching the 2% has been discussed, as appears more in detail from the sworn statement of the acts, which I enclose. From now on, I have commenced to order that the ships in the coming year are to set sail without those which are now departing; and that the royal decree of your Majesty must be inviolably kept and observed; but even with this warning in advance the early despatch has many inconveniences.³

...
As for the kingdoms of **Japan**, I am informed that the persecution of Christians was greater than ever last year, and that more than 20 religious from all the Orders were

1 Ed. note: The Audiencia sent a treasure salver, who brought back little more than 3,000 pesos.

2 Ed. note: This decree was published as Law XXXI in the *Recopilación de leyes de Indias*, lib. ix, tit. xxxv: "It was ordered that the ships that go from New Spain to the Philippines must sail from the port of Acapulco by the end of March, without extending even a day into April. And inasmuch as we are informed that that is inconvenient, we order that the ships be prepared with all that is necessary by December, so that at the end of that month they may leave the said port of Acapulco, so that they may be able to arrive at the said islands, at the latest, some time in March. It is our will that this be executed inviolably, and it will be made a charge of omission in the *residencia* of the viceroys of New Spain; and, if they do not do so, we shall consider ourselves disserved." Note that a complementary law (Law XXXII) reads: "The ships which are to be despatched and to sail from the Philippines for New Spain shall depart in the month of June; for there is great danger of their having to put back or of being wrecked if they sail later...."

3 Ed. note: The King reiterated his wish in an order given to Governor Corcuera, dated Madrid 6 November 1636: "I have determined that the ships which are despatched to New Spain shall sail without fail every year in the early part of June. Don Juan Cerezo tells me that it could not be established in the year of 1634. I charge you straitly to attend to the execution and fulfilment of this, with the earnestness that I expect from your zeal."

martyred, and that even those most carefully concealed were betrayed by their confidants for the reward of 1,000 taels which was promised by edict for each religious.¹

...

By virtue of your Majesty's decree in which you are pleased to grant authority to those governors to take the *residencia* [management audit] of their predecessors, because of the inconvenience experienced in their going away without giving it, the decree was presented to me on behalf of Governor Don Juan Niño de Tavora, deceased. By virtue of it I have taken his *residencia*, and send the same to your Majesty. I have not discovered that there is any charge to make against him, as he has lived honorably, and in the praiseworthy manner that his obligations demanded.

...

The wheat used by the inhabitants comes from China, because these islands do not grow it. Consequently, the common sustenance is rice.

...

The viceroy of New Spain has sent abundant reinforcements this year, with 300,000 pesos in money and the materials for the clothing of the soldiers (the best that have ever seen come here); this has been of great relief for the present needs.

...

May God preserve the royal person of your Majesty, as is needful to us your vassals.
Manila, 10 August 1634.
Don Juan Cerezo Salamanca.

3. Letter to Philip IV on military affairs

Sire:

On 22 October [1633], I informed your Majesty of military affairs. Now I shall do the same in detail...

...

Last year the Audiencia wrote that one galleon and one galley had been finished. It is a fact that more than 30,000 pesos have been spent in their construction, having been commenced in the time of Don Juan Niño de Tavora.

There is nothing of so great importance in this government as that the port of Cavite be well provided with the necessary naval supplies; and that this matter be charged to a competent and very intelligent person; for the other offices are bestowed as favors, but for this one we are looking for a person whom we can ask to accept it. According-

¹ Ed. note: In a 1634 letter found in RAH Jesuit tome 146, n° 13, the story is told of the shogun being sick with leprosy and having summoned Catholic priests out of their jail to ask for a miracle cure for himself. A miracle did not happen; so, this edict may have been the result.

ly, we have found him, in the person of him who is commander of the fort there and shore-master, namely, Captain Juan de Olaz. He has so borne himself that the port has never for many years been found so well supplied and more faithfully administered—which is quite different from the utterly destitute condition in which I found it.

...

May our Lord preserve the royal person, etc.

Manila, 10 August 1634.

Don Juan Cerezo Salamanca.¹

1 Ed. note: A note in margin said that this letter was accompanied by the plans of the old and new city of Manila, but they are not now found in the same file. As for Captain de Olaz, the King, in his answer dated Madrid 11 October 1636, ordered Governor Corcuera to “give him many thanks on my behalf and let care be taken, regarding his person, that favors be bestowed on him when occasion offers.” (B&R 27:43).