
Document 1621B

Letter from Governor Fajardo to the King, dated Manila 31 July 1621

Sources: AGI 67-6-7; translated in B&R 20: 44-75.

Letter from Governor Fajardo to Philip III

Sire:

Although at present, up to the 19th of June, the ship **San Andrés**, the flagship, has not returned from New Spain, even at this late date, which is the one that I despatched last year to that province, and I have no letters from your Majesty to answer, I am making a beginning of this one in order to gain time in the despatching of those ships, so that it may be somewhat earlier than usual in past years—although at present, having the war on our hands which we have, and as the ships from China are later than is usual, and there will be more difficulty and labor in the despatch.

According to the despatch which the said ship carried, measures were to be taken to secure its preparation and departure from Acapulco for this country without waiting into the month of April, or without delaying more than 2 or 3 days in that month; and it was not to depart later...¹

In command of these [1621] ships is placed Don Fernando Centeño Maldonado, who has served in the position of commander of the galleys both there and here, and has served many years in these islands (most of the time in the Moluccas); his services are of high repute, as are his merits and good qualities. I am sure that your Majesty has been informed of them, on account of the favors which he has received from your royal hand; and in the same way I am certain that you know of the good qualities of Captain Francisco de Salazar, who is filling the office of admiral on the said ships.

²
...

1 Ed. note: The Governor had also given sealed orders for the return route, to be opened only upon nearing the coast of the Philippines, indicating to which secret port to go.

2 Ed. note: The Governor complains of having so few soldiers to fight the Dutch-English fleet.

The reason for there being so few troops is, that after the year 1616, when a ship called the **Angel de la Guarda** came, in the following year, 1617, there came no reinforcements of infantry, but only a patache called the **San Gerónimo** with the archbishop Don Fray Miguel García and a number of friars; and in that year there died in the engagement which Don Juan de Ronquillo had with the enemy, and were drowned in the six galleons, more Spaniards than I brought in 1618. Since my arrival I have sent almost 400 soldiers to Ternate, and this number has not come in the two reinforcements from New Spain which arrived in the past years of 1619 and 1620.

...

The enemy... thus far, thanks be to God, has taken nothing more than 5 Sangley ships from that country. One of these disappeared with the guard which he had placed on it, and they have not been able to find it again, and another of them was burned, so that he has not taken more than 3, and 2 of them of almost no value, and the other not very valuable; for the rich ones remain in China, and those that dared to come kept to the course which I marked out for them, and have arrived safely, making ports in this island.

...

[Legazpi's grandson]

The income which your Majesty orders me to give to Don Miguel de Legaspi, grandson of the former Miguel López de Legaspi, I have now given him, assigning him an *encomienda* with what appeared to be a sufficient number of Indians.

...

With this I will end this letter, leaving it in this state until it is time to seal it, in case anything should occur to be added.

[P.S.] When I had written this, and the despatch of these vessels was so far along that they would, with the help of God, pursue their way when moon and weather should favor the voyage, His Divine Majesty (to whom be thanks) was pleased to rejoice and encourage this land by bringing safely to a port of this country, near the point of Bolinao, in this neighborhood,¹ the flagship **San Andrés** which was expected from New Spain. Although thus far we do not know how much money comes in her on your Majesty's account for the maintenance of affairs here, with it in this country, however little it may be, things will go much better than without it, and with the anxiety over its delay.

The reinforcement of soldiers is so scant that, even if all went to Ternate, there would not be many; for the enlistments of those who came in two companies do not amount to 110, besides 70 convicts who come for service, and I know not how many galley slaves... With this, and the knowledge of the misfortune and loss of the fleet which was coming to help us, we have already ceased to consider what we may have to bear. But nevertheless, with the help of God, I hope that the enemy, when they come here as they have hitherto done, may lose more than they gain.

1 Ed. note: North of Manila and west of Lingayen Gulf.

...
The letters of your Majesty have not [yet] arrived, but we are waiting for them and hope that in time they will come, and that these ships will not lose the favorable weather necessary for their voyage, on account of the great importance of securing it. If they should come with the promptness with which I charged the person whom I sent for them, I shall answer them in the most important matters. If not, I shall do so as soon as possible, as befits the importance of what is contained in them, and the service of your Majesty.

...
May God protect the Catholic person of your Majesty in accordance with the needs of Christendom.

Manila, 31 July 1621.

Don Alonso Fajardo de Tença.¹

1 Ed. note: It is strange that the Governor does not mention the arrival of the first nuns in 1621. There were 8 of them, Sisters of St. Clare. They must have been impressed by the sight of the Ladrone Indians, and vice versa (see B&R 22:107).