
Document 1576B

Letter from the Viceroy to the King, dated Mexico 31 October 1576

Sources: Cartas de Indias, Madrid, 1877, pp. 327-330.

Letter from Don Martín Enriquez to King Philip II

...
On 16 October [1576], a ship [i.e. the **Santiago**] arrived from the Islands of the West. It had departed from there on 8 June, with letters from the Governor, Doctor Francisco de Sande...

What this ship carries for your Majesty would be 100 quintals of cinnamon and a few trifles which I have not yet seen; whatever it may be, will be sent to your Majesty by the fleet. As far as goods belonging to individuals, it carries some quantity of gold, wax, mantles and other things from China, like silks and porcelain ware.

[Loss of the Espiritu Santo]

The ship **Espiritu Santo**, which had left the port of Acapulco on 6 January of this year and carried 11 friars and some soldiers and other necessary things, having arrived at the [Philippine] islands and gotten there faster than any other ship from here had ever gone, since it is understood that it arrived there on 25 April, God was pleased that, when it was 100 leagues from the city of Manila, during a hurricane it hit the coast broadside and broke up into a thousand pieces. All the people were drowned, and a few of those who escaped were killed by the Indians. Until now, it appears that no-one was left [alive], except a small Indian of a young age whom Father Diego de Herrera had brought along as a servant and who was returning with him.¹ They write that the Indians had him prisoner and that the boy had sent a message to the effect that he would try and escape. This has given me a very great sorrow and very much grief, because, in addition to the great loss, they were arriving at an opportune time.

¹ Ed. note: This was a young Filipino whom he had taken along on his second absence from the Philippines.

There were aboard Fray Diego de Herrera with the rest of the above-mentioned religious, and a few of them were leading men whom I had sent almost by force, over 100 men, counting Spaniards and sailors.

It is my intention to despatch once more this ship and the other that I hope is coming¹, with all the care and diligence possible, in order to send aboard them as great a number of people as possible, as it is what they most need there. It will be necessary to look for many ways of getting them out, because, although there is a sufficient number of uneducated and useless people in this country, they are so rooted that more than words will be necessary [to uproot them]. I, one way or another, will try to do so. It is my wish to send 400 men, if possible.

...

I am really short of **pilots**, because five of them had died, and they were the best ones sailing this route, and aboard this ship that was shipwrecked two [more] were lost; one of the latter had made this voyage three times, and the other was also a certified pilot. Since my instructions are such that a ship is never to be entrusted to a single pilot, on account of what has happened more than once, i.e. their dying during the crossing, and should there be no-one to direct it, they would go through many hardships. As for this [ship] that has just arrived, the same thing happened; the pilot died before reaching port. I will have to borrow from those who come with the [Atlantic] fleet, given that the [Pacific] navigation is so well understood that any good pilot cannot make a mistake, because he will be given a well-marked nautical chart by which to take directions, and sailors who know how to recognize the land well. Two remain there in the islands, and they are good pilots who understand well this voyage; I have always taken this care to train them for this navigation, but death does its work.

I will advise the Governor that Y.M. orders me to warn him that it should not come carelessly, and no-one in the world will understand it here. As to the cause of the loss of the ship and the other soldiers who went missing there, suffice to say that not a few rumors abound.

...

From Mexico, last day of October 1576.

From Y.M.'s loyal servant who kisses your royal hands,
Don Martín Enriquez.

1 Ed. note: The San Felipe never arrived as it was lost.