
Document 1617

Jesuit annual report for 1617-1618

Sources: RAH Jesuits Papers, Tome 84, N° 7; transcribed by Navarrete in his Col. doc. (1973), vol. 5, fol. 193 et seq.; translated in B&R 18: 65-92.

Events in the Philippines, from June 1617 to July 1618

Last year I informed you at length of the naval battle, and of the signal victory which our Lord was pleased to give us over the enemy, the Hollanders, who came to these islands with the largest force that has ever been here. They brought 10 galleons well equipped with men, artillery, ammunition, and other implements of war. Of these 10 galleons they lost 3 in the battle—one, the admiral's ship, was sunk, and two were burned. Four of the remaining seven fled to the Moluccas, badly damaged. So many of their men were killed and wounded that, although they had set out with a large number, they arrived with scarcely 100. These were messengers of an event most disastrous for them but fortunate for us. The other ships fled to Japan.¹

...
As I informed you in my report of last year, two other [Dutch] galleons, called **Leon Rojo** [Red Lion] and **Fregelingas** [i.e. Vlissingue, or Flushing], had separated from the rest of the fleet near the coast of Ilocos, a province of the island of Manila, in order to plunder, to more advantage and with less risk, the Chinese who were accustomed to steer for that coast. For this reason, they took no part in the naval battle... When these learned of the destruction of their fleet, they made haste to return to Japan, where they arrived on 17 July 1617... On the day of the blessed apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, a furious storm overtook them while they were in the port of Cochi [Koshi, near Hirado]. The **Leon Rojo** ran aground and filled with water; the **Fregelingas**, through loss of mainmast and rigging, was badly shattered... With infinite labor and expense they hauled off the **Leon Rojo** and, as best they could, they took it to the port of Firando [Hirado]. They were compelled, however, to give it up and leave it here for lost, because

¹ Ed. note: See The Diary of Richard Cocks, vol. 1, pp. 259-281 for comments on the 1617 campaign by these Dutch and English ships.

the leak was so great that it was impossible to stop it. They took the **Fregelingas** also to Firando, where they quickly repaired it.

...
Having completed this very successful exploit,¹ on 15 October [1617] they despatched for Holland the **Leon Negro** [Black Lion] with 1,600 boxes of changeable silk... In the ship **Fregelingas** the Dutch general returned to the strongholds of the Moluccas... The other two ships, the **Sol Viego** [Old Sun] and the **Galeaça** [Galeass], warned us that they intended to come to the coast of Manila about April [1618], in order to plunder at once the ships which come to this city at that season. This has really happened, because for almost two months two Dutch ships have been in the place [i.e. Ilocos coast]... Last year, [this city] furnished such a powerful fleet, because it then had galleons with which to defend itself. Now it has none, because 6 galleons were sent to other islands in order that the injuries that they had received in the late battle might be repaired. On 11 October [1617], a furious hurricane overtook the ships and [Note in margin: since they had been pierced by balls in the battle] they parted in the middle and sank in the sea. The 24 pieces of artillery which the galleons carried (4 in each galleon) were lost with the ships. They were, however, neither very large nor of much value. Most of the people escaped by swimming, or upon some rafts; but as many as 400 persons, including Spaniards, Indians, and Chinese, were drowned. And some of those who had escaped from the storm by means of the rafts perished from hunger out at sea, after the storm subsided. In this event the justice of God was evident, because it is said that many had embarked upon these galleons with their concubines, purposely to live with them in the holds of the ships, without fear of either God or man; therefore, our Lord permitted men and galleons to run aground.

[Not only was the city deprived of these six ships, but] it must be added the information received from his Majesty that the fleet of galleons formed in Cadiz to come here, by way of the Cape of Good Hope, had been sent [instead] to Savoy to impede the expedition of Count Mauritius to that dukedom. This city, seeing itself thus deprived of the forces that it had and of those that it expected, resolved at once to build six galleons and some galleys; this they are doing with all speed. But as these ships have not yet been finished (and cannot be very soon) they were worthless to oppose these two Dutch vessels that have been along the coast of Ilocos, a province of the island of Manila, and have plundered at will everything within their reach. According to some, they have despoiled of silks and other merchandise 12 or 13 [Chinese] ships. Thus only the smallest number escaped falling into their hands, and then only by the merest chance. However, on the night of the 18 May, the Dutch ships were in danger of shipwreck. There arose a strong wind, a *vendaval*, which obliged them to take care of their own ships and to release the Chinese vessels that they had with them. Four of these, delighted at this good

1 Ed. note: Having bribed their way at court and gotten permission to keep the silk and other goods looted from 18 Chinese junks that had been on their way to Manila.

opportunity, resolved to flee, and as the winds were favorable, they set out on the return voyage to China.

The Dutch carried on this pillaging with little risk, and without fear, because they had learned, through some prisoners who had escaped, of the loss of our galleons. With these spoils they returned, I think, to Japan, where they will again be received as they were last year. And the worst of it is that they will delight in coming [every year to inflict as much more damage; and therefore the Chinese will not dare to come] to this city with their ships, and trade will cease. Everything will then be lost, because **the prosperity of these islands depends solely upon trade with China**. May God prevent this with his powerful hand.

...

[A Jesuit who had come to Manila from Ternate to get food supplies, Fr. Manuel Ribeiro, met with a tragedy while at Oton or Panay Island on the way back home. The master of the ship, named Juan de Ochoa, led a mutiny and escaped to Japan with the ship.]

The Father started out to beg alms from the inhabitants of the town [of Arevalo]; and in a short time he got together an abundant supply of rice, wine, and meat for one year, for all responded liberally to relieve a necessity that had so moved them to pity. The Father set sail with all this in another ship, and we trust that, with God's help, he is already in the Moluccas. **This is the same ship that had been despatched this year [i.e. 1617] for New Spain as *almiranta***. It left port so heavily laden that it was necessary to put back into harbor to unload part of the merchandise, so as to be able to make the voyage. This done, they set out a second time from the port; but they encountered such violent storms that, after sailing entirely around the island of Manila [counter-clockwise], losing the masts, and imperilling their lives, they returned to Manila on 7 October 1617. Afterward the vessel was used [for Ternate] in the manner indicated above.

...

[Spanish Augustinian monks driven to murders, or, the King's wayward brother does not get away with murders]

I will conclude this account with one of the most singular events that have ever happened in the world. Although it is discreditable to the Order of St. Augustine, it should be related here with all truth, because it is so public and will be so noised about through the world. When Fray Vicente de Sepulveda,¹ first cousin of Father Juan Laurencio, rector of the college of Mexico, finished his term of 3 years as provincial, the fathers of St. Augustine met in chapter in a convent near the city of Manila, to elect a new provincial. They chose Fray Gerónimo de Salas,² not without dissensions and discords between the two parties into which they are divided. This provincial died 20 days after his

1 Ed. note: He arrived in the Philippines in 1606 and was a missionary in the Province of Pampanga. He was elected provincial in 1614.

2 Ed. note: He had arrived in the Philippines in 1595. The Augustinian histories state, falsely, that he was elected provincial unanimously in 1617, and soon died of an acute illness.

election. He died, as some say (and this opinion seems not without foundation, as we shall see further on), from **poison** that they gave him, and consequently his death was very sudden. By the death of this Fray Gerónimo de Salas, Fray Vicente de Sepulveda returned to the office of provincial, as their regulations provide. It seemed to some religious who were not of his party that it was too much for him to govern three more years, so they planned to cut the thread of life for him—by means of poison—since this would not betray them. They gave it to him more than 8 times in his food and drink—in his chocolate, and even in the wine with which he was consecrated. The poison was ground glass, and it resulted in eruptions over his entire body and in illness for several days, but it did not produce death.

When the conspirators saw that their attempts so far had been unsuccessful, four of them planned to kill him with their own hands. The affair was so public that not only was the conspiracy noised about among the friars but also among the laity of Manila. Thus it came to the ears of the provincial himself, who had not lived as prudently as he should have done for the safety of his person. After this, he was very careful about his food and drink; he locked himself in at night, and entrusted the key of the apartment to only a few.

He ordered one, who was the author of the treason (and he was the one who was suspected), that in virtue of his [the provincial's] holy precept, he should not come into the convent of Manila, but that he should prepare to embark for New Spain where they should take the cowl from him. Thereupon the individual, Fray Juan de Ocadiz—who was a native of Madrid, a priest, and one of long service in his Order—formed an agreement with three others, all young men about 20 years of age, who had been ordained to preach. These were Fray Juan de Quintana and Fray Andrés Encinas (both natives of Manila), and Fray Ignacio de Alcaraz, born in New Spain in a place near Acapulco, called I think, Quatulco.¹ Fray Ignacio was companion and secretary to this provincial, and so he had the opportunity of making a key to the apartment, by first making an impression of the key in wax.

On 31 July 1617, the day of our Father Ignatius [de Loyola], at 11 at night, the four opened the door of the provincial's apartment with the key that had been prepared for the purpose. The provincial heard the noise immediately, and suspecting what it might be, rose from the bed, and went shouting to meet them. At this juncture the three evangelists repented of what had been begun, and talked of withdrawing from it. But Fray Juan de Ocadiz, bolder than the rest, since he had already begun the work, told them that if they deserted he would have to stab them. Thereupon all four together attacked the provincial, threw him upon the bed, and held his mouth. The three evangelists held his arms and legs firmly, and Fray Juan de Ocadiz, putting his knees upon his stomach, choked with his hands. While the friar was choking him, the provincial begged for confession. Fray Juan said: "Father, repent of your sins, and in token of this, clasp my hand." The provincial took his hand, and the murderer absolved him, adding: "Trust,

1 Ed. note: Huatulco was relatively far from Acapulco, in Tehuantepec.

Father, in our Lord, who will pardon your sins." Upon this he seized his throat, and finished choking him. Then with diabolical cruelty, in order to be more certain [that he was dead] they twisted his neck against the bed in such a way that they disjoined the bones, so that the head fell from one side to the other as if he had been a dead fowl. All this tragedy was committed in the dark, so they went for a light, cleansed the provincial's body of the blood that had gushed from his mouth, changed his bed-linen and garments, and set everything in good order, that it might appear that he had died of some sudden accident. They did not take into consideration the many discolorations upon his body, or the twisted neck, that must soon give testimony of the hideous crime. Fray Andrés Encinas took all the bloody clothing and threw it into the closets. The others closed the door from within, with a cross bar, and jumped through a little window.

Although the provincial had given many loud cries, and other friars lived near the apartment, nothing was heard in the convent—a thing that seems impossible. After the crime was completed the bells rang for matins, for which it was now time. The murderers, or rather patricides, with great craftiness went to prayers. Morning came, and the hour arrived at which the provincial was accustomed to open his apartment; but he did not open it. They waited a little, but he did not come out. They knocked at the door, but he did not respond; they knocked louder, but in vain. The prior and the other friars, who were ignorant of the affair, determined to break down the doors. They did so, entered, and then beheld the crime, and saw that the provincial had been killed with violence. The prior, a certain Fray del Rincón, hastened to the president of the royal Audiencia [i.e. Licentiate Alcaraz] and to Don Gerónimo de Silva, Captain General, in order that they might give him help of which he was destitute because there was such a great tumult in the convent. They soon came with men. First the president ordered that all the friars should go one by one to kiss the hand of the dead man, in order that he might note the countenance of each. Finally, they buried the provincial, and every one can well infer what would be said of the whole Order; for people will forget that in the apostolic college there was a Judas and in Heaven a Lucifer, and yet the other apostles and the angels did not fall on this account.

Reports of the affair were transmitted to the Bishop of Cebu, Don Fray Pedro de Arce, of the Order of St. Augustine, and at that time governor of the archbishopric of Manila. He imprisoned some and tortured others; and in a short time, and with little trouble, the criminals were discovered. He made all the investigations, prepared the case, and handed it over to the *definitorio*, which, as they said, had by jurisdiction in the matter. The *definitorio*, which was composed of nine of the most prominent friars of their Order, advised with the other Orders as to whether, without consulting the Pope, it could condemn the criminals to actual degradation and deliver them over to the secular arm. The Society [of Jesus] avoided, as far as it could, giving its opinion upon an affair that was of such moment, and that must create such a sensation. In the decision of the affair, whether wise or unwise, it was best for us not to interfere. The authors were examined, and upon the advice of wise and learned men, the *definitorio*

resolved to give the sentence. It was read to the criminals from the pulpit of the church of St. Augustine, on 19 September 1617, before all the people who had congregated to witness a spectacle so extraordinary. Immediately they took from them the cowl, and left them with only some short cassocks such as are worn by clergymen. They delivered them to the Bishop, who was already prepared for the degradation. He immediately began to degrade them, and then delivered them over to the secular arm. They were taken to jail by the strong guard of soldiers that had been in the church ever since the criminals had been removed from the prisons to hear the sentence. But it was possible to execute this sentence against three only, because **Fray Andrés Encinas had escaped the night before**, in company of a lay brother who was guarding him. With chains and all, the lay brother removed him from the prison at 12 at night and, placing him upon his back, carried him along an unfinished wall of the convent, with great danger to both of falling and killing themselves. He took from him the chains and, together with another lay brother of their Order, they jumped from the wall and fled in great haste.

On the 22nd of September of the same year 1617, the secular tribunal pronounced the sentence of death upon the three. They were taken from the jail amid a great retinue of religious of all orders, who were assisting, and of soldiers who were guarding the prisoners. At 10 o'clock in the morning, **they were hanged** in the square before the largest assembly of people, I think, I have ever seen in my life. They died with suitable preparation.

I am unwilling to omit the account of a very peculiar circumstance. Twenty years ago, they were hanging in Madrid an Augustinian friar because he wished to make a pastry cook king of Portugal, and to marry him to Doña Ana de Austria, the mother of Fray Juan de Ocadiz.¹ As she was watching the proceeding, suddenly she began to scream and weep. When asked the cause of this she replied that she fancied she saw on the gallows her son, who was an Augustinian friar.

Followed by a large crowd, they took the bodies of these three men who had been hanged, to the convent of St. Augustine for interment, where they will remain with their provincial until God calls them to judgment.

The friars then very diligently searched for the one who had fled, in order to execute upon him the same sentence. At first they did not find him. And afterward, although they might have captured him, they did not, because they did not feel obliged to revive the painful remembrances and cause to all, and specially to his mother and the relatives whom he has here, the grief and distress that the first three deaths occasioned.

Besides these there were found guilty in the affair Fray Joseph de Vides, a native of Mexico, who had been instructor of the novices; and Fray Pedro de Herrera, a native of Medina del Campo, who had professor of theology, and who now was prior of a convent. As there two were not so guilty as the others the friars took from them the cowl, and sentenced them to 6 years at the galleys in the Moluccas, and to suspension

1 Ed. note: It appears that this Doña Austria had been the fourth, and last wife, of King Philip II. Therefore, this Fray Ocadiz was the brother of the ruling king, Philip III.

[from mass] for one additional year, on account of the reverence that is due to such a high and divine mystery. They were handed over to the secular tribunal, and were put upon galleys. But in a few days they escaped, and embarked upon a small ship in company with Fray Encinas and the lay brother who had freed him from prison. All four set out together upon the return to Malacca, in order to go from that place to Goa, Spain, and finally to Rome. Such is the unfortunate event which was reported last year to the Pope, the King, and the whole world alike. This year, report will be made of the justice meted out to the malefactors. And as more than four lies will be written, I have thought it best that your Reverences should know the affair just as it occurred, nothing being added or omitted...¹

[A private ship lost]

To this may be added the fact that the admiral Heredia had made, at his own expense, a beautiful, though not very large, ship with which to serve his Majesty whenever occasion might offer. Just as soon as it was launched upon the sea, it was overtaken by a storm so severe that it foundered and was lost.

[The failed eastward voyage of 1617]

I forgot to say that one of the two ships that were despatched last year [1617] for New Spain but did not arrive there, were separated from the other. It must be known that a certain de Sequeira, a Portuguese of the Order of Christ, went in it as captain. He had come as General of the fleet² which five years ago the King sent by way of the Cape of Good Hope, and he carried a letter from his Majesty to the effect that they should send him back at once by the same route. Instead, they detained him four years in this city, much against his will. At last they sent him as captain of this ship in order that he might go to Spain by way of New Spain. They loaded upon this ship goods of high value, although not a great quantity of them, because the vessel was small. He began his voyage with favorable winds astern, and when he had reached the latitude of more than 30°, he saw that he might turn toward India; but, the breezes beginning to vex the ships, he ordered the return and, upon arriving at these islands, disembarked some Spaniards whom he carried but who did not wish to go with him. He steered for Malacca and India, in order to go, they say, to Spain upon the voyage which his Majesty had ordered. He arrived at Malacca and died, I think, in Cochín. Nothing more is known [about him so far], nor what will be done with the goods that he carried.³

1 Ed. note: Apparently, the Pope thought that the affair should have been concealed from the beginning, by the Augustinian Order in Manila, so as not to create the scandal that it did create.

2 Ed. note: Ruy Gonzales de Sequeira, commander of the fleet of 5 caravels that arrived at Manila in 1612.

3 Ed. note: In spite of what is said here, a third ship made it to Acapulco that year. It was the galleon **Espiritu Santo** that returned in 1618. Hernando de los Rios was aboard and he says in his Brief of 1621 that the crossing took 5 months and a great many people died (See B&R 19:272). There is also a direct reference from one of 21 letters by Father Francisco de Otaço (he was aboard the ship that made it to Acapulco in 1617) in RAH Jesuit Tome 129, n° 153 (new number 9/3702), folios 809-846).

[The Fajardo fleet of 1618]

The ships from New Spain arrived very late, at the beginning of July. It was fortunate that the *vendavals* were very much delayed this season; for, if they had begun when they usually do, it would have been impossible for the ships to reach these islands this year. But God chose to bring to us the Governor who was so much desired. A grand reception, with many costly triumphal arches, was prepared for him in Manila. But he embarked from the port of Cavite in a galley, and entered quietly into the palace through a postern gate nearby, and therefore the whole reception fiesta was a failure. And when they desired him to go out of the city again, in order that he might enter with solemnity, he said that he did not wish them to carry him in procession as if he were a penitent, and so he remained there.