

The Failed Capture of Guam in 1898, Through the Personal Narrative of Pedro Duarte

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The document that forms the centerpiece of this article shows the unique value of private letters as historical sources. Written on November 3, 1898 by Captain Pedro Duarte, secretary to the Spanish Governor of the Mariana Islands, the letter was addressed to Duarte's brother José in Madrid. Its conversational tone, marked by the candor typical of correspondence between siblings, vividly recounts the American takeover of Guam. Duarte describes the use of a false-flag ruse, a "sham parley," and his subsequent capture as a prisoner of war. Beyond its substantial contribution to understanding the true military operation from a perspective traditionally overshadowed by the victors' narrative, the letter provides a rare glimpse into the political consequences of the event. More importantly, it reveals the emotional and psychological experiences of those directly involved, adding depth and humanity to historical record.¹

Private letters are among the most interesting written sources that historians can encounter. Unlike official communications and reports, which are typically formal and filtered through bureaucratic lenses, letters are mainly private or semi-private, more clearly reflecting the author's preferences, prejudices, and moods. They offer insights

¹ This article is an English translation of the original Spanish letter, with a much expanded contextual analysis, originally published by: Madrid, Carlos. "Una fuente inédita para el estudio de las Islas Marianas. La captura de Guam en 1898, narrada por uno de los oficiales españoles protagonistas". In Rafael Rodríguez-Ponga, Miguel Angel Barbero (Coords.) *500 años de un océano llamado Pacífico*. Universitat Abat Oliba CEU. Barcelona, 2023. Pp. 179-199. The English translation presented here includes one paragraph of the original letter that was missing in the said Spanish article.

that are rarely found in official records, providing a more intimate and detailed account of events. Such informal communication captures the texture of daily life, revealing small but significant details like food prices, social relationships, and personal experiences. These elements are invaluable for constructing what is often referred to as the “history of private life,” as they provide a richer, more nuanced understanding of the past.¹

The author

Pedro María Duarte y Andújar is undoubtedly one of the key figures in the final years of Spanish colonial administration in the Mariana islands and the early American colonial period in Guam. Born in Manila to Spanish parents on February 2, 1862, Duarte, like his brothers José and Juan, joined the Spanish Infantry Academy at the age of 15, successfully completing his studies in 1881. At the age of 25, he was assigned to the Mariana Islands as a third aide, for one year.² This first experience in the islands likely made a deep impression on him, as he met his future wife, María Millinchamps, and decided to make Guam his permanent home.

Since then, except for temporary assignments elsewhere in the Philippines, Duarte remained in the Mariana Islands, becoming one of the most knowledgeable officers in the region, according to various Spanish governors. During his time in the Philippines, he became involved with a Masonic lodge and played an active role in organizing new lodges across different cities. The Filipino revolutionary Apolinario

¹ The works of historians Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Philippe Ariès, and Georges Duby, are representative of History of Private Life.

² This biographical sketch is based on the information of his military record, at Archivo General de Segovia, signature 1^a D-1207.

Mabini later recalled meeting him in Guam, referring to him as “an acquaintance I met in Manila.”¹

In 1895, Duarte was appointed as secretary to the governor of the Marianas. During the Filipino Revolution of 1896, when Masonic networks were under heavier suspicion, authorities became wary of him. Despite being the only Mason in Guam, Duarte managed to secretly safeguard his Masonic belongings by placing them on a whaling ship run by fellow Masons before it departed.

“Capitán Duarte,” as he was known by the people of Agaña,² played an influential role in the social life of Guam during the early American colonial period. William Edwin Safford, the distinguished American officer, botanist, and linguist who wrote about his stay on the island in 1901, mentioned him several times in his diary, *A Year on the Island of Guam*. Safford noted Duarte’s continuous support to the new administrators and highlighted his helpful knowledge in the Chamorro language, medicine, and even engineering, despite not having formal training in that field.

¹ Mabini, Apolinario: *La revolución Filipina*. Tomo II. Manila 1931. Is noticeable that he did not refer to Duarte as “friend”. Just as “acquaintance”.

² I acknowledge the importance of adhering to Guam’s official spellings, such as CHamoru, Hagåtña, and Guåhan. However, in this article, I have retained the spellings found in archival documents of the era to preserve the original context and meaning as understood at the time.



Don Pedro Duarte in his later years. Photo Courtesy of Ms. Barbara Gilman.

In 1898, while still serving as the governor's secretary, the American fleet arrived in Guam, capturing Duarte and the other Spanish military personnel, experiences he describes in the letter translated in this article. The arrest caused significant distress to his wife, María Millinchamps, pregnant at the time, and she lost the baby due to the stress of the incident.¹ After the signing of the Treaty of Paris, Duarte decided to resign from his commission in the Spanish army where he had served for 21 years and returned to Guam with his family.

In 1905, Duarte became one of the founding members of the "Philanthropic Society Susana Hospital," which expanded the María Schroeder Hospital in Agaña.² In

¹ Safford, W. E. (2016). *A Year on the Island of Guam 1899-1900: Extracts from the Notebook of Naturalist William Edwin Safford*. Guam: Guamology Publishing. P. 28.

² *Index of Guam Judicial Records*. Micronesian Area Research Center. 1807-1920 Court Cases. 1172, Dyer, McNamee Mink, Palomo, Duarte.

1909, when an earthquake destroyed the Dulce Nombre de María Church in Agaña, Duarte designed the new structure.³ Since 1904, he also served as the postmaster for the Guam Post Office, holding the position until 1915, when he was removed from office under accusations of embezzlement. He was succeeded by James H. Underwood.

Some members of the Duarte family left Guam in the late 1920s.⁴ Visiting Manila on November 4, 1935, at the age of 73, Captain Duarte passed away after suffering a heart attack while walking past Manila City Hall. He was laid to rest in the Cementerio del Norte.⁵

The Spanish-American War in Guam

By June 1898, the Spanish-American War was nearing its end. Manila remained under siege, locked by land by the surrounding Filipino revolutionary forces, and by the US ships under Admiral Dewey. Following the Spanish defeat at the naval battle of Manila Bay, on May 2, the remnants of the Spanish fleet in the Philippines consisted mostly of small, scattered vessels, concentrated primarily in the Visayas. With nearly the entire island of Luzon under Aguinaldo's control, the American fleet understood that, after defeating the Spanish forces, they would eventually face the Filipino revolutionaries. To reinforce the troops already deployed in Cavite, President McKinley

³ Sullivan, Julius, OFM Cap. *The Phoenix Rises*, p. 104.

⁴ Personal communication to the author by Ms. Barbara Gilman, greatgranddaughter of Pedro Duarte, Guam, March 26th, 2004.

⁵ *The Guam Recorder*, US Naval Government of Guam. 1936. Volumes at the MARC Library, University of Guam. P. 320.

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ordered the dispatch of a division under General Anderson's command, on board of three transports, *City of Sydney*, *City of Peking* and *Australia*, escorted by the *USS Charleston*. En route to the Philippines, his commander Captain Henry Glass was to follow orders and seize Guam from the Spanish government.

Administered as a distant province of the Philippines by a Lieutenant Colonel of the Spanish army, the archipelago of the Mariana Islands was a remote, sleepy outpost with approximately 6,000 residents scattered across five of the largest islands as far as the Spaniards in the Philippines was concerned. These islands were inhabited by the Chamorros, who were mixed descendants of the ancient inhabitants, along with settlers from the Caroline Islands, a small group of Spanish Europeans, and other Westerners. The civil and military colonial presence in such a distant territory was small, limited to what was needed for public administration in the context of Spanish Philippines. There were military and civil medical doctors, priests, local mayors, teachers, a governor with his staff, and a fully functional civil society only bounded by logistical limitations and lack of resources. As far as military presence was concerned, it was just a garrison of 50 men and four officers that constituted the sole defense force for a province located 378 leagues from Manila. Since April 18, 1897, the province's appointed governor was Lieutenant Colonel Juan Marina Vega.

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The USS *Charleston* is depicted at the center of this Allen Ginter chromolithographic postcard. The US flag at the top mast was replaced prior to the attack on Guam's Fort Santa Cruz, -a false-flag ruse reported by various sources and further confirmed in the letter by Pedro Duarte.

On June 21, 1898, five American ships arrived at Guam. Passing by Hagatña, the small fleet headed to Apra. The USS *Charleston*, the only warship in the group, was also the only vessel to enter the harbor, while the others anchored outside, and prepared to bomb the old Fort Santa Cruz, whose ruins stood on an islet inside the bay. The ship fired its 6-inch cannon and prepared the boats for unloading, as described in his reminiscences by Joseph DeBurgh, a soldier of the Second Oregon Volunteer Infantry

aboard the transport ship *City of Sydney*.¹ While he and the other soldiers outside the harbor did not realize until later that the fort was abandoned, Captain Glass was close enough to observe the true state of the fort — completely empty, and in ruins — as the *Charleston* had anchored near San Luis Point,² approximately 6,000 feet from Fort Santa Cruz. The fort had been abandoned by many years.

To enter Guam, Capt. Glass made use of a “false flag” tactic. This is mentioned in all Spanish accounts of the incident, and further corroborated by Capt. Duarte’s writing. In his letter, Duarte recounts how Dr. Romero Aguilar and Captain García Gutiérrez reported seeing a “splendid Spanish flag” flying from one of the USS *Charleston*’s masts as they approached the ship. It is possible they mistook the red and yellow of the Spanish flag for the red and white of the Japanese flag, as mentioned in a few American accounts documenting this ruse.

Despite the lack of mention in any official account written by Capt. Glass, this undignified “false flag” tactic is supported by other American sources. For instance, USS *Charleston* paymaster James S. Phillips later recalled to his grandson, J. P. Berkeley, that the *Charleston* flew Japanese colors when entering Guam. In 1980, Berkeley, by then a retired U.S. Navy Lieutenant General, shared with Fr. Thomas B. McGrath of the Micronesian Area Research Center: “My grandfather always told of the *Charleston* standing into Guam under Japanese colors.”³

While in Guam waters, a journalist aboard the USS *Australia*, writing for *The Sun*, questioned Capt. Glass’s decision: “It seemed at first a bit humiliating to show an alien flag.” Some professional soldiers defended the ploy as legitimate under

¹ DeBurgh, Joseph, “A Few Reminiscences of the First Expedition of American Troops to Manila”, *The American Oldtimer*. Vol VI, No. 6. April 1939, 23-29, and Vol VII, No. 1. November 1939, 26-30, 45-48.

² As recalled by Duarte, recounting these events fifteen years later. Duarte, Pedro María: “The Capture of Guam by an eye witness” *Guam News Letter*, October 1913. P. 11.

³ Letter from retired U.S. Navy Lieutenant General J. P. Berkeley to Fr. Thomas B. McGrath, Micronesian Area Research Center, University of Guam, March 15, 1980, MSS 0120. Credit and gratitude are due to German scholar Paul Druschke of Leipzig University for bringing this source to my attention.

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international law.⁴ That was not entirely accurate, though. Although U.S. military regulations did not explicitly prohibit the use of a false flag, such tactics were still considered “opposed to the highest military honor and courtesy.”⁵ Western international practice at the time explicitly banned “improper use of a flag of truce, the national flag or military ensigns, the enemy’s uniform, or the distinctive badges of the Geneva Convention.”⁶

Any references to this ruse during the so-called “conquest” of Guam were likely removed, ignored, or conveniently forgotten in subsequent American accounts, perhaps due to the ease with which the defenseless island was captured.

If war had really been declared between the two countries, Governor Marina, bound by Spanish law, could not board an enemy ship, so he proposed a truce-bound meeting, or “act of parliament,” in Piti. Captain Glass accepted, replying that he or a trusted officer “would be at 9 o’clock in Piti.” The letter of Duarte confirms the main elements of the story as seen from Spanish perspective, adding elements of color: the following morning, he and the other three Spanish officers arrived at the Piti pier at the designated time, completely unarmed and dressed in white, expecting a peaceful truce. Instead, they were met an hour later by over 25 heavily armed soldiers who practically surrounded them. Instead of Captain Glass, ranking interlocutor of Governor Marina, it was the third officer in command, fully armed as well, who greeted them. This officer compelled Marina to respond to Glass’s demands and then proceeded to detain Marina as he was about to leave the encounter, properly defined by Duarte as a “sham parley.”

⁴ “Our Flag at Guam” at *The Sun*. New York, August 8, 1898. P. 1.

⁵ Elbert Jay Benton, *International Law and Diplomacy of the Spanish-American War*. Baltimore, 1908. P. 142.

⁶ *Idem*. P. 142. It was mentioned in Art. 13 of the 1874 Declaration of Brussels; and Art. 8 of the 1880 Code of Laws of War written by the Oxford Institute of International Law.



Lieutenant W. Braunersreuther, the navigator of the USS *Charleston* and sent by Captain Glass as interlocutor of the Spanish Governor in the Piti encounter described in the letter.

The entire operation was an undeniably effective way to claim possession of Guam swiftly, in “one or two days.”¹ It was a conveniently quick approach to capture the Spanish officers of Guam, even if it meant sidestepping established laws of war.

Duarte's letter notes that Glass asked the Spanish officers to confirm whether “a garrison of 54 Spanish soldiers” was stationed on Guam, suggesting that he likely had prior knowledge of the island's weak defenses.² Thus, Glass's over-caution upon

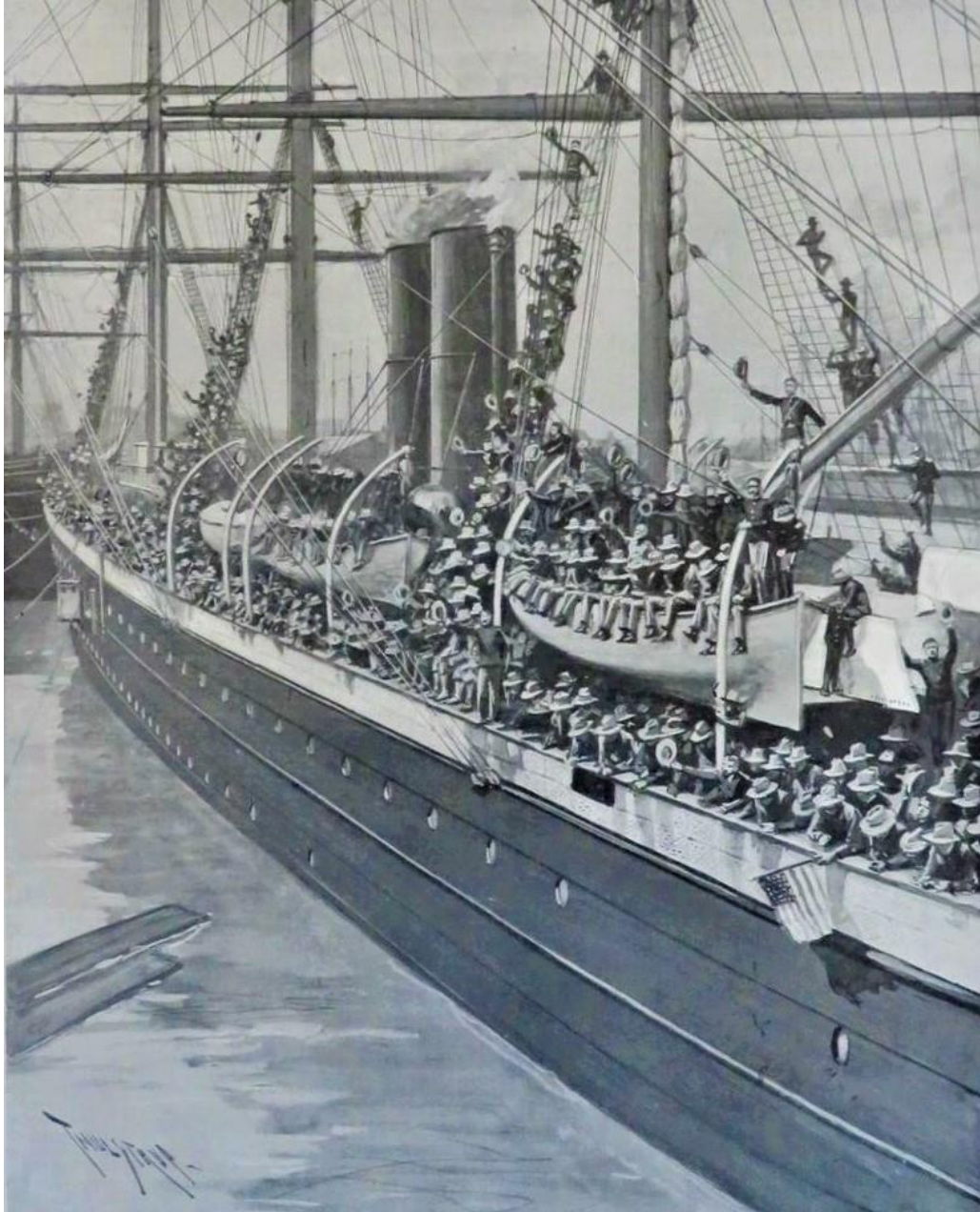
¹ Rogers, Robert F.: *Destiny's Landfall*. University of Hawai'i Press. Hawai'i 1995. P. 109.

² This suggestion is further supported by the recollections of Sr. D. Juan Marina Simo, the eldest of the few surviving grandsons of the last Spanish governor of the Marianas. In an interview conducted by me in Madrid on November 21, 2002, he recounted that his grandfather, while aboard the *Charleston*, recognized a man among the crew or officers who had previously been in Guam. Spanish official reports of the episode do not provide additional support to Marina's account.

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reaching Guam, may have been a precautionary measure to account for any unexpected changes under the usual military conditions of the island. The notion that the U.S. Navy had some knowledge of Guam's military situation is further supported by the recollections of Sr. D. Juan Marina, the eldest grandson of the last Spanish governor of the Marianas. I interviewed him several times before his passing in 2005, and during a conversation on November 21, 2002, he recounted a family story. His grandfather had shared that upon boarding the *Charleston*, he recognized a man among the crew who had been in Guam not long before. This anecdote suggests a potential intelligence link that was part of the U.S. Navy's understanding of the island's vulnerable conditions.

Captain Duarte's letter highlights several noteworthy aspects of the first American occupation of Guam. As he noted and sincerely appreciated, the sense of pragmatism of Capt. Glass did not prevent him nor the other American officers on board the *Charleston* and the *City of Sydney* from treating him and the other Spanish officers with exceptional respect and hospitality. Captain Duarte and Dr. Romero, both English speakers, maintained a friendly rapport with some of the American officers even after they reached Cavite in the Philippines.

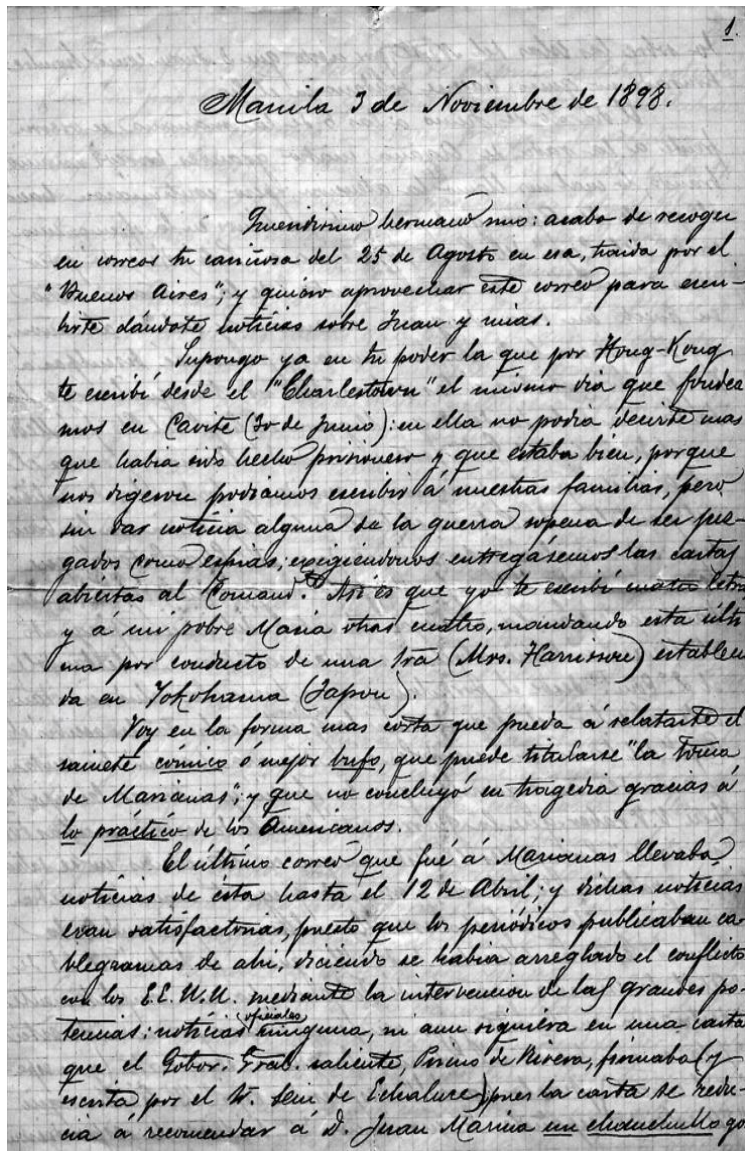


The US liner *City of Peking* leaving San Francisco. Harper's Weekly June 11, 1898.

Another key aspect the letter confirms is that, after Glass failed to leave an interim authority in place, the Spanish Administrator of Public Funds, José Sixto, naturally stepped in and regained control of the government with the support of local Chamorro troops. The figure of Sixto, often vilified in American narratives, should be re-evaluated within the broader analysis of primary sources, as should the rest of this historical episode.

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Besides the events about the attempted capture of Guam and its aftermath, in his letter Duarte also provides the perspective of a Spanish family with moderate liberal views, detailing the chaos that ensued after the Spanish surrender of Manila. By the time the letter was written, the Spanish administration had relocated to Iloilo, and an independent Republic of the Philippines was still a possibility.



First page of the original letter, property of the Duarte family in Spain.

The manuscript

The letter was handwritten in Spanish on both sides of nine and a half sheets of well-preserved paper in black ink. It is dated in Manila on November 3, 1898, with a brief addition at the end of the letter dated two days later. The original is held in the family archive of the descendants of José Duarte, the letter's initial recipient.²⁰ His grandson José Antonio Duarte digitized it for me in August 2001. I then forwarded it to the Spanish Documents Collection at the Micronesian Area Research Center, University of Guam, on November 27 of that year, along with a photocopy of a report written by Governor Marina I found at the Spanish *Servicio Histórico Militar*.

In the English translation of Duarte's letter provided here, I retained the underlining of words and phrases that its author used for emphasis. Minor adjustments were made to paragraph structure and word spelling to enhance readability. Duarte's original words are preserved in (parentheses), and sentences I have completed are noted in [brackets].

English Translation Of The Original Letter:

Manila, November 3 of 1898.

My dearest brother:

I just received your affectionate letter dated August 25 brought by the *Buenos Aires*, and I want to take advantage of this mail giving you news about Juan and me.²¹

²⁰ Gratitude is due to Antonio Duarte and his cousin Jose Antonio Duarte for their kind support, and to journalist Domingo del Pino for facilitating initial contact with them.

²¹ Juan was the third of the Duarte siblings, married to a Filipina and living in Manila at the time. References to him are easily distinguishable from those to the Spanish governor of the Marianas, Juan Marina, as Duarte consistently refers to his brother simply as "Juan" and to the governor as "Don Juan".

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I assume that you have already received, via Hong-Kong, the letter I wrote you from the *Charleston*²² the same day that we anchored in Cavite (June 30). In that letter I could not tell you much except that I was imprisoned, and that I was well, because we were allowed to write our family but with the condition that no mention about the war be made, under the penalty of being judged as spies, requiring us to hand over the letters opened to the Commander. So I wrote you few words, and another few to my poor Maria.²³ I sent this last one through her aunt (Mrs. Harrison) who lives in Yokohama (Japan).

I will be as brief as possible in relating to you the one-act comic farce, or better yet, the burlesque, which can be entitled: “The Capture of the Marianas”, and which did not end in tragedy thanks to the practical sense the Americans have.

The last mail that left for the Marianas brought news about this [city] until April 12. Such news were satisfactory as the newspapers published cablegrams of April saying that the problems with the U.S. had been settled through the intervention of the great powers. They were no official news, not even in a letter signed by the outgoing Governor-General Primo de Rivera (written by Señor Luis [Sein] de Echaluze), letter that was basically a recommendation for Don Juan Marina for a big fraud about the Northern Islands.²⁴ Don Juan, being an honest man, did not want to participate in such a mess.

On June 20 at six in the morning, four big ships were seen maneuvering in front of Agaña Bay, which drew our attention. However, they continued toward Apra Harbor.

²² The *USS Charleston*. Protected cruiser built in 1888, originally the flagship of the South Seas squadron of the United States. Was assigned to escort the three transports, *City of Sydney*, *City of Peking* and *Australia* that carried the 2,500 men destined to the Philippines. Naval History Department, Department of the Navy, *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, Vol. 2, Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1963.

²³ María Victoria Millinchamps, wife of Pedro Duarte. Born in Guam, daughter of Henry Millinchamps and Emilia Anderson. She died in San Francisco around 1953.

²⁴ Luis Sein de Echaluze served as the secretary to Fernando Primo de Rivera, Captain General of the Philippines during his second term, from March 1897 to March 1898. The “big fraud” concerning the Northern Islands likely refers to the proposed private lease of the islands of Pagan and Agrihan in the Marianas group to a Spanish creole born in Agaña, for commercial exploitation, a matter that had been under discussion in the preceding months.

After a little while, we received a letter from the Port Captain, who resided in Piti,²⁵ saying more or less: "...at this very moment, eight in the morning, an American warship has entered the port and fired a gun salute. I am going to verify this visit, as soon as possible I will try to excuse You for not replying to these salvos".²⁶

This calmed us down until one in the afternoon when the Port Captain and the Doctor came to the governor's office. I was called and we listened as the two related the story of their visit to the ship. The two left the Piti pier aboard the captain's boat with the national flag abaft, heading for the *Charleston*, which had a splendid Spanish flag raised up above the mainmast. Upon arriving at the side of the cruiser, the Doctor asked if there were any health news. From the port door, the Second Commander replied that health was good on board and proceeded to invite them to go on board. They did so, and on deck they were received by the Captain of the ship and were led to his cabin. They were made to sit down and light a cigarette that he offered them. Then, the Captain told them, "You ought to know that the war between our nations has been declared".

The visitors replied that in the Marianas, they had heard nothing of such a thing; and puzzled, he [Glass] asked when they had last received news and of what date. They answered him the truth, then the man told them, "The war was declared on April 25, the Spanish squadron in the Philippines has been completely destroyed in Cavite and I come to take possession of this island in the name of my government; the war will be short (and in correct Spanish) "God will do it!". Then he said:

"Do you have 54 Spanish soldiers garrisoned here?"

"Yes sir," they replied. "And what forces do you bring?"

²⁵ Situated in close to Apra Harbor, Piti is separated of Agaña by 8.5 kilometers approximately.

²⁶ Quotation marks were used by Duarte not implying literal wording, but to refer to statements made by others.

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On a piece of paper, he then wrote a note, which he gave to those he was talking to. The note stated:

“Protected cruiser *Charleston*, Captain Henry Glass, with 2 canons of 20 centimeters, 6 of 15 centimeters and even 14 minor calibers, and 600 men.

–Liner *City of Peking*.

–Liner *Australia*.

–Liner *City of Sidney*.

–Leading an American military division under the command of General Anderson”.

When asked about the gun salutes he had fired, he said they were not salutes but shots fired at the former Fort Santa Cruz, inviting a fight, thinking it was defended. After concluding the conference and as the Doctor and Port Captain were about to leave, he said, “Please tell the Governor that, as a military officer and a gentleman, I wish to confer with him here.”

Imagine the effect that the above story would have on the good D. Juan Marina in particular and on everyone in general. Don Juan decided to write to the Commander of the *Charleston* telling him that his duty prevented him from going on board, but that wishing to hear what he had to say, he would go to Punta Piti for the conference to take place there. He assured Glass that if he wished to come ashore, he could return safely to his ship. The letter was carried aboard by the [Spanish] Ensign, Commander of the Marine garrison, who was perfectly attended. Mr. Henry Glass replied that he would descend to Piti at 9 the following morning or send a trusted officer to express his intentions.

At night and with the knowledge of this reply, the governor called together those of us who were military men in his office, with the objective of seeing if anyone had any idea on any means to defend the island with any probability of success. Of course, we all had

to surrender to the evidence that there was not a single reasonable probability of success defending the island. We had only 54 trusted men armed with Mausers, and these with no more cartridges than those each individual had, it would not be possible to arm the Chamorros for lack of functional weapons. This was all the result of what had happened during the time of Don Jacobo, when 600 Remington rifles with ammunition were requested, so if there was a need to arm the people, it could be done. But we had not received any reply from the General Captaincy. (By the way, here [in Manila] on the other hand, the rifles were granted, only to be turned against us shortly after).

[In Guam] there is not a single fort. As you know, the island is small, it is therefore illusory to seek refuge and defense in the mountains, where in a couple of days we would be hunted given the numerical superiority of the enemy (their forces were not less than 4,800 or 5,000 men, including troops and sailors). Support for us was out of the question, how could we expect any when two months have already passed since the war started and we were not even notified of its declaration? In short, we had to admit our impotence for any sheer success, yet (here the noble man of La Mancha comes in²⁷), we resolved to defend ourselves at all costs—some even invoked Sagunto and Numancia!²⁸ Don Juan Marina thanked us for our good wishes and reserved his decision, pending the following day's conference.

Needless to say, that night was a trial for me, as I spent it running from one place to another. Don Juan's spirits dropped somewhat, understandable in a man nearing retirement who suddenly found himself facing such a misfortune. I therefore had to take charge of extraordinary duties and, worse yet, calm the townspeople, who, out of fear of the unknown, were taking to the mountains.

²⁷ Duarte keeps his earlier comparison with a comic farce, now parodying the over patriotic reaction of some of the officers like if the well-known Spanish character Don Quixote was entering the stage.

²⁸ Sagunto and Numancia, two icons of the Spanish ancient military history and prototypes of resistance against invasions. The city of Sagunto in 218 a.C. resisted more than 8 months a siege by Hannibal, and the ancient city of Numancia resisted for 11 years the arrival of the Romans to the Iberian Peninsula.

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At 4:30 in the morning I went home, and by 7 o'clock I was already in the Government to accompany the Governor to Piti. He had ordered that the Port Captain and the Doctor accompanied him too, since they were on board the cruiser, and I, as the Secretary, all of us going unarmed and in white suits.

[At Piti] At 9:30 o'clock we saw a boat coming with an American flag in the stern and a white one in the bow. From this boat several armed men jumped over the pier and formed a semi-circle around us. A Naval Lieutenant, 3rd of the "Charleston", came forward with a sheet of paper which he handed to the Governor. At the same time he took out his watch he said to him in a somewhat abrupt manner and in bad Spanish:

"You have 30 minutes to answer".

The Governor replied that he did not have time since the city was 8 1/2 kilometers away and he could not come and go in half an hour, and the American replied:

"Answer right here".

In the paper, Captain Glass limited himself in saying: "When I left America, my government ordered me to seize this island, therefore it is necessary that You with the officers and military men at the service of Spain surrender, giving in your armaments, ammunitions and flags. The officer, messenger of this communication, has the order to wait for only thirty minutes".

The good Don Juan wanted to have more time, but the American officer stood on his ground, so the governor had to reply right there and then. In the first piece of paper he could find at hand he wrote more or less as follows:

Having received your communication dated yesterday, without defenses of any kind, or elements to oppose with probability of success to those that you bring, I see myself in the sad precision of surrendering; although protesting the act of force

that is conducted against me and the way it has been done, since I have no news from my government that war has been declared between our two nations.

To the Commander of the War Cruiser *Charleston*.

He called me and gave me the paper so that in the company of the Port Captain, we could give it to the officer, as it was hard for Don Juan to be the one to give it himself. I gave the small paper to the officer expecting that he would go back to the cruiser to hand it to the Commander, but vain illusion! He opened it himself and slowly learned of what it said, and when he finished, he said:

“I need that you stay here with me.”

He called the Governor (who was about to ride the carriage and leave for Agaña) and the Doctor, telling them the same thing what he told us. The first one replied that he needed to go to the city and that he was protesting against the detention that was taking place in an act of parliament, to which the American retorted:

“A war is a war. You all have to come with me to the ship as prisoners. Captain Glass will explain”.²⁹

We had to follow him in a boat, but before that, he forced Don Juan to send four letters wherein he was giving orders to the [Spanish] Commander of the Marine Infantry detachment, so that he and his 54 men would go down to Piti to surrender their weapons and ammunition.

When we were already in the boat, water started to pour on us as if in a flood, and some 400 or 500 meters from the pier, we saw two lines of boats tugged by steamships,

²⁹ In broken Spanish in the original.

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hidden right at the tip of Cabras Island, that were there during the sham parley. As we crossed the two enemy lines, I could count in the first [line] a total of 800 men in 25 boats and launches, and the doctor told me that, after counting some more in the second line, he also saw machine guns on the boats and the two revolving cannons on the steamer's launches, clearly visible. At two o'clock, we arrived on board the cruiser, soaked to the bone, and were led to the Commander's cabin.

The officer spoke in English very fast to make difficult for us to understand him. He spoke with the Commander who then told us, seeing our condition, that he would allow us to go back to the land as long as we keep parole (word of honor) to return, yet we did not accept. Then they allowed us to write our families asking them to send us some clothes. At this point, courtesies began. As we came out of the Captain's cabin, we were each approached by a cruise officer who, very courteously, led us to their chamber, gave us paper, envelope and everything else we needed for writing and everything at our disposition. A little later, they gave me (how thankful I was) a cup or a mug of tortoise broth and a big glass of good white wine from California. I wrote there to Maria a letter that I'm sure she passed to you. By the way, it was written in great haste and almost while I could barely stand from weakness, soaked to the bone. The second-in-command collected our letters and immediately sent them ashore in a steam launch. The officers invited us to join them on deck, where they left us completely free in the stern area.

At about 5 of that afternoon, the officers had all left the cruiser leaving us alone, while they fired gun salutes and launched hurrahs of ordinance for the capture. This took place in Punta Piti, with a Company of the cruise going down with the flags of Oregon Regiment while the whole Port was occupied by 2,000 men well distributed. The Company of honor took charge of the armaments and ammunitions of the garrison or detachment that we had, and afterwards, they boarded back bringing with them our 54 soldiers and their two Ensigns, with the arms and the national flags.

So that in the Marianas they did not leave a single man, nor their flag, nor any appointed authority. We remained silent because we could not do anything else. I only thought of how to make all these [news] reach Spain so that, at in due time we could invoke the Treaty of Berlin to our favor, which I, the naïve of me! thought that it could serve for something else other than for spending some budget in troops and in Guardia Civil garrisons in exchange for being able to say that the Caroline Islands were Spanish.³⁰

At 6pm, they made us go down to eat at the Wardroom, having the attention of placing us alternately with them, and to the right and to the left of the presidency, the Governor and the Port Captain, Navy Lieutenant Don Francisco García Gutiérrez. They did not spare the means to be kind and even put a small gramophone at the center of the table and chose the cylinders containing Spanish tunes and melodies that they sang and chanted. The food was splendid and with all types of wine, of which they had a bit too much. You can imagine that we were not actually in the right mood and humor to correspond to joys and parties.

At night, we were told that we would be transferred to the liner *City of Sidney*, since there were no unoccupied chambers in the *Charleston*. At 9 we were transferred and handed over to the military chief of the *Sidney*, Commander Mr. Phelps. In pairs, they put us in the First Class cabins with a sentry at the door to prohibit us from going out. I was assigned as companion the military doctor Señor Romero. We did not have a bad night, as during the first hour we were accompanied by two very pleasant young men, lieutenants from the regular Army and graduates of West Point academy, who occupied the cabin next to ours. This is how the 21st of June of 1898 ended, which as you can

³⁰ The Treaty of Berlin, signed in 1885 by Western colonial powers including the United States of America and Spain, established “legal” procedures for the conquest and subjugation of other peoples. Initially, it applied only to the coastal territories of the African continent; however, later that same year, Germany invoked it against Spain in a dispute over the “possession” of the Caroline Islands. It sparked an international conflict that ended with the recognition of Spanish sovereignty and the establishment of a colonial administration in the said Micronesian archipelagos.

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imagine I will never forget.

The following day, they brought me the clothes and money that my poor Maria sent, with a letter that you may well imagine the sorrow that it caused me. Apparently, under similar distress, or better said under the sorrow that overwhelmed her, she must have written Juan and you. Imagine, the poor thing was still waiting for me for lunch!

We stayed in the cabin all the morning until 6 in the afternoon, when we sat sail. Upon setting the steamer in motion, Mr. Phelps called us on the deck and asked our word or promise not to try to communicate with our soldiers. We gave it to him, and he left us free to walk all around the ship except in the prow where our troops were. He informed us that upon the orders of Captain Glass and General Anderson, and in compliance to the instructions of President McKinley, we should be treated with all consideration and in accordance to our ranks.

After eight days of navigation, passing through the N. [North] of Luzon, we reached the [Manila] Bay, anchoring off Las Piñas. You can form no idea of the effect on us of seeing the disaster at close range. Although from the American press we had on board we were already acquainted with the news up to the 2nd of June, we thought it all exaggerated and most of it false. The very night we arrived (30th of June) we could not sleep all night, because of the noise of the rifle and cannon discharges that could be heard around Manila; During the whole of the following day we heard and saw heavy fire all along the coast of the bay as far as Cavite. Later we learned that they were the insurgents taking over all our military detachments in that province, detachments that had to surrender due to hunger or lack of ammunition for the most part. In short, our hearts crumbled when we saw so much disaster and witnessed the sad situation of Manila. And as if all this were not enough, they announced to us that since the American expedition had arrived and counting already on land forces, the following day Admiral Dewey would send the *ultimatum* to the city, that if they would not surrender, they would be bombarded.

The Commander of the *Charleston* came to tell us that if we gave him our word of honor not to bear arms against the U.S., he would set us free to reach Manila. We replied though that we could not promise something that we knew from the outset that we could not comply, since on reaching Manila our place was in the trench against whoever would attack the capital. He understood it perfectly well, because he told us that his intention had not been to offend us, since the parole is admitted in the armies of the principal nations and the same in that of the U.S. He offered us that he himself would see to it that we remained on land as well as possible, and indeed he himself saw to it that we were not surrendered to Aguinaldo and that we remained under the custodian of American forces, taking us down at the Naval dockyard of Cavite on July 5 and locking us up in the pavilions of the Governor of Fort San Felipe.

There we have been well treated, with sufficient, or rather with surplus of rations, and continuously visited by the officers of the American army who came with us. From that darned Fort we saw the attack and surrender of Manila, as well as the sufferings and humiliations of the [Spanish] officers and soldiers that the rebels had as prisoners in Cavite. These humiliations caused anger to the Americans, who later, out of compassion, helped and facilitated the escape of most of those prisoners. There was a day in which about six officers and thirty Spanish soldiers took refuge in the Fort, who the next day were embarked for Manila at the Dockyard by the Americans themselves.

Well after the capture of Manila, we were allowed to transfer to the city as prisoners of war, remaining under the custody of American authorities. There you have in detail the vicissitudes of my abduction and imprisonment.

When I arrived here, I went to see Juan, finding him skin and bones, while Titay was suffering with severe dysentery. All were caused by worries, privations, bad nourishment, etc. during the siege. Now, Juan is quite recovered, and she is recovering little by little, although because she gets scared of almost everything, she relapses again, so you can imagine the dismay that it causes our good brother Juan. Add to all of this that

the personal safety of the Peninsulares is wanting, and that now no servant wants to work. Since everybody is considered to be independent, they find demeaning to be servants, so our good Juan is burning out and cursing everything to hell. I try to calm him, but you know his character, he cannot be indifferent to slander and despicable behavior. Since now these are the most abundant fruits in Manila, try to picture how our good Juan lives now. All his belongings are packed in chests ready to leave anytime, but... where can they go which is not worse than Manila?

Our brother tells me that in the beginning of the year, he sent you the candy you wanted, but he found it strange that you did not write him anything about the matter. I told him that if you had received it, you would have written to let him know, so I believe it may have been lost, especially considering that he sent it through a customs agency.

I have received several letters from my good Maria. The poor thing never missed an opportunity to write me some lines. The last ones I received were dated July 28th, (received through the monitor “Monterey”), August 4th (through the monitor “Monadnok”) and August 7th (through the German cruiser “Arcona”).

In all of them she complains about the lack of news from us and the situation they are going through there [in Guam], seeing American ships with troops passing at every step and fearing any attempt by the political deportees that were sent from here to the Marianas at the beginning of the insurrection, who are now doing as they wish.

The Chamorro people, according to all the letters from there, are behaving very well, having presented themselves, after our removal from there, to the Administrator of Public Treasury, who is the most characterized among the civil employees (all of whom had remained there, without any interference from the Americans), asking him to take charge of the Government, which he did. Everyone continued paying their taxes as if nothing had happened, and a section of Chamorros was armed with machetes and clubs, to patrol the town and keep the exiles in check

By this time, you should already have a letter from me because I wrote extensively to you [and passed it] with Dr. Romero, who returned there on the American transport "Pensylvania" after the surrender of Manila. God willing, nothing out of the ordinary has happened over there! I would have tried to return to the Marianas since my presence there is always necessary due to the interests I have there, but I think it would isolate me from the news, and I consider it more convenient to stay here to see what will ultimately be decided regarding all this. I lose something by staying here (as they say, "the master's eye fattens the horse"), but it is likely that I would expose myself to a greater loss if, by being there, I missed a good opportunity or, above all, if the settlement of my previous [professional] status is delayed. So, I will tell you and consult with you about what I intend to do.

My military situation: on August 9, I have been in service for twenty-one counted years, having two years of credits from my previous stay here, and two more completed last August 13 of this second stay. Will they credit me these years for retirement, or should I wait day by day to complete 25 years? I have been in this office [Secretary of the Governor of the Mariana Islands] since April 1, 1897, which I hold until present. This has not affected my current situation because I wanted to wait to complete 24 evaluation periods, so I did not ask for a leave of absence since Primo de Rivera declared these islands pacified. Otherwise, I would have done so, as what it would have been more rewarding to attend my own businesses, which I could not attend to due to my assignment. Had I done it that way, the Americans would have left me there in peace, just like they did with all the military men who were not in active service.

Hopes for promotion... you would understand so well what hope I can have after this disaster. And worse, having younger people ahead of me. Besides, it is not worth for me to continue being posted here and there, considering the [economic] loss I would have on the other aspect.

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Financial situation: Now, I have more than two thousand pesos in cash, not counting what the State owes me as salary, and expired bonuses, and the half-salaries first, with the two compensations, which according to my calculation would amount to 1,035.50 pesos. God knows when I would see that! In Marianas, I have an extensive coconut and coffee plantation of 400 hectares, registered in the Land [Registry] and with a good house. From this property, I earn a bit more than the Captain's salary, where I already have planted (and I continue planting) more than 10,000 coconut trees, and some 26,000 coffee plants planted by me. So this is my hope, as you well know how much coconut costs, and how challenging it is in Marianas. Ever since the Japanese came to establish themselves there, the agricultural properties have increased in value, but now much more: as an example, it suffices to tell you that my good Maria says that she was able to sell ten *picos* of coffee, from the 52 we have stored up, at 45 pesos per *pico*, a fabulous price in Marianas.³¹ There, the price of copra has gone up until three cents of peso per pound. This hurts me, because it is a pity to lose an income that grows progressively, and that there is no other business there where it can be earned. Besides, it's improved by a good investment of a small capital in storing products that are profitable, as of now, no less than 70% (every 4 months) of the invested capital.

Some Americans have met me here [in Manila] to inform them of the business there [in Guam], proposing me to embark on one with them. A German from one of the firms here in Manila also made me a proposal to be the representative of their company, offering me a good commission (18%) for the purchase and sale. But I told them that until the *Sphinx of Paris* speaks,³² I would not decide on contracting commitments, and then, I will get in relation with the one that will give me more advantages.

³¹ Pico was a unit of weight used in the Spanish Philippines, equivalent to 63.25 kg. or 139.4 Pounds.

³² The sphynx, in ancient Greek mythology, was a mostly silent creature. The *Sphynx of Paris* here is in reference to the negotiations of peace between Spain and the United States that were still taking place in Paris at the time Pedro Duarte was writing this letter.

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Family situation: You already know how big it is, and in Marianas they live more economically than in any other place. I only have to worry about the education of the younger ones, and this I have resolved it: I began since I arrived in Marianas the last time, I made sure that Henry [Millchamps] and Emilia, who know English, spoke in this language to the younger ones. And the arrival in Marianas of an American family with nine small ones, very intelligent by the way, helped me in my purpose. Since that family stayed at first at my in-laws' house, and the little ones spoke only English, they were always playing with mine, they speak that language almost like if it was Spanish, and today Pedro and Mariquita speak it just as well. So that is something that I have in advance. In California, or better, in San Francisco, or in Los Angeles, San Diego, and other cities that were formerly Mexican, both Spanish and English are spoken. And according to the official teaching programs and public school catalogues [there], the children can take whatever course (even Commerce, which is a real degree there) without paying a cent since all official education is absolutely free, the State being the one who finances the schools. In consequence, one would only have to worry about sustenance and clothes for the children. In addition, for those students who excel, once they finish the plan of education with distinction, they are given job placements upon graduation. The sustenance of the children there, according to some people who have informed me, is more or less the same in the Peninsula. Besides, I have the advantage that Henry has relatives there and a cousin of his, who does not have children, lives in Alameda (near San Francisco). The last time he was in Marianas (October '97), he wanted to bring Pedro with him, but I did not let him because at that time I had the intention of sending him to the Peninsula this year or the next one. Since my idea is that the children get to do the career or get the profession that can make them earn decently as soon as possible, and they do not show any kind of opposition to this, I will try to convince them that they do an Industrial or a Commerce degree, which are practical and with good perspectives. Pedro turned eight [years old] last June and it is not worth for him to stay in Marianas since he already knows what they can teach them there, like to read, write and the catechism. Juan

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(whom you have not seen yet) is younger, he is five [years old], he has the same face as Pedro, but his hair is blonder; he can still wait, and it is better that he stays with me longer. He is too independent and very stubborn, making it more difficult for his mother to discipline him. Their trip would not mean a great effort on my part, because the head of the family I referred to previously, has already suggested several times that he would take Pablo with him when he goes there together with his two younger ones (the two older ones are already in San Francisco). Besides, to support him there would not cost me more than the average of 30 dollars (American) monthly, and for which Señor Don Pedro already had ready a pack of white linens that his dear mother herself prepared.

I am giving you the previous information so that you may know, in the best possible way, my present situation. In lieu of this, it is not convenient for me at all to be transferred somewhere else, as it would cost me, afterwards, around a thousand pesos to come back.

There are three solutions: retirement, transfer to the reserve or supernumerary. The first solution, if I get a bonus, it is convenient for me, because although there would be nothing more after 25 years of service, it is always a salary that will produce income. But... will they pay me for the time (or rather half of it) of service in the Philippines? Will they pay my retirement after the current catastrophe? If I get the credits, I am about eight months short of 25 [years].

To be transferred to the reserve would be the best, but I doubt they will open such a pass now since there is an excess of people waiting for it.

The third solution is the one that, in the absence of the other two, remains feasible and seems most suitable for my purpose. However, I don't want to be caught off guard by events and lose once again what I am currently at risk of losing. It would work against my interests if, by failing to act in time, I were forced to return to the Peninsula, having to cover my passage and expenses just to come back later—a cost I could avoid. I could also

miss the opportunity to get ahead of those who, if I don't act, will take the lead and rob me of gains that I could otherwise secure.

Since you likely have earlier access to information than I do here, especially concerning any peace resolutions, I ask that you let me know which solution you think I could pursue.³³ The most pressing issue for me is to be free as soon as possible to focus on my own matters, which will continue to suffer losses as time passes. Since you are there more informed about what I might be able to request, please write to me, in detail if needed, but to save as much time as possible, please write me by cablegram with your advice. I will cover the cost as I will explain to you later.

I attempted to submit a request here, asking that once the Treaty of Peace was signed, I be granted transfer to a supernumerary status. However, they responded first that, as I am a prisoner and under American authority, they could not accept my request. Second, they said the Captain General is General Ríos, and the command is located in Iloilo. In short, the situation is such chaos that it's hard to know who to go to.³⁴

As I mentioned before, and as you understand from the lengthy explanation I've given, it is advantageous for me to get ahead. A cablegram can gain me a month over a letter.

Therefore, I would appreciate it if, once the right moment arrives, you could send me the following cablegram: "Leave of Absence," "Reserve Status" or "Retirement", whichever you see as best and, above all, fastest. If it's appropriate for me to address the request directly under your authorization, add the word "Request" to whichever of the other three options you send. In the first case, I will submit a request here according to

³³ The Treaty of Paris signed between the United States of America and Spain was signed on December 13, 1898.

³⁴ Spanish General Diego de los Ríos was in charge of the remaining islands under Spanish sovereignty in the Philippines. Until the conversations of Paris resolved, the capital was transferred to Ilo-Ilo. The capital of the Marianas province was transferred to Saipan Island.

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the option you recommend. In the second, I'll know that I need to send you the request by the next mail. My address is: Pduarte = Manila.

Please in your letter let me know the cost of the cablegram in your currency.

I hope this letter reaches you in time, that is, before the final decision is made in Paris. I mention this because General Whittier, who was in charge of customs here, just left for Paris from Hong Kong on the 5th, to inform the delegates handling the carving of the bird that the eagle seized, as they say. He won't arrive in Paris until the middle of next month.

Everyone here speculates about what will happen. For my part, I doubt that anyone will step up to cover the debt of Cuba – which is what hurts the most. And I don't see where the resources for pacifying this place could come from. I am quite afraid that the Philippines will end up no longer being ours. The Americans are starting to take a liking to the situation, and the insurgents rather follow what they say, and nothing from us. The situation in the Visayas is as God wills, despite everything General Ríos says. Anyway, you will know the decisions in Paris before we do here.

Tell Pepín to keep studying; one never knows when one might need it. My time in captivity would have been much harder otherwise. As they say, necessity forces one's hand. While in the Marianas, I took up English, and I could translate and write it fairly well, but speaking it was difficult due to the pronunciation. When I was captured and had no choice but to speak it if I wanted to communicate, I would constantly ask people to write down what they wanted to tell me, and seeing it written helped me understand perfectly. Over time, from both stammering through it and hearing it daily, especially in Cavite once Dr. Romero, who spoke it well and was released under the Geneva Convention, joined us, I started to get better at it. I shared with him being the interpreter, particularly with the twenty-five [Spanish] officers of the [ship] *Leyte* who also needed to communicate with the guards, that was a good exercise. Those three months of captivity

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helped me a lot, as now I can understand and make myself understood, and I write it even better. Who would have thought English would become necessary? I have a gift prepared for Pepín, and if I see Elustondo, who was heading there, I'll give it to him to bring.

What's up with Enrique? Has he entered the academy? I hope we soon see him become a man. Tell them that in four or five years, when I have everything settled in the Marianas and my presence there is no longer so necessary, I'll come around to give them a big hug.

I repeat my request: please don't fail to send the notice as discussed, as any delay in freeing me to tend to my own affairs would be a serious setback.

I won't take up any more of your time. Give Pepín and Enrique many kisses and a big hug, and warm regards to Sofía and her family.

To you, a big hug from your loving brother,

Perico

If you write to Don Antonio, tell him I haven't forgotten them and will write at the first opportunity. Address: Calle de Victoria, 15 (House of Doña Ana Anderson), Manila.

Until Spanish mail service regularizes, it would be better to send mail through the Marseille route.³⁵ Juan is still at Palma, 7.

However, given Titay's fears and the current instability, they might leave Manila. For this reason, you may include her letter inside mine if you wish. November 5, 1898.

³⁵ Vía Marsella, meaning sending the letters through the French line of mail ships.

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Elustondo left for Hong Kong without taking the gift I had prepared for Pepín. There will be another opportunity. The *Buenos Aires* has delayed its departure until tomorrow.

[End of the Letter]

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