

Thomas Jefferson to Albert Gallatin, December 29, 1807, from The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.

TO THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY J. MSS. (ALBERT GALLATIN.)

Washington, Dec. 29, 1807.

It is impossible to detest more than I do the fraudulent & injurious practice of covering foreign vessels & cargoes under the American flag; and I sincerely wish a systematic & severe course of punishment could be established. It is only as a punishment of this fraud, that we could deny to the Portuguese vessel the liberty of departing. But I do not know that a solitary & accidental instance of punishment would have any effect. The vessel is *bonâ fide* Portuguese, the crew Portuguese, loaded with provisions for Portugal, an unoffending & friendly country, to whom we wish no ill. I have not sufficiently considered the embargo act, to say how far the Executive is at liberty to decide on these cases. But if we are free to do it, I should be much disposed to take back her American papers, & let her go, especially on giving bond & security to land the cargo in Portugal, dangers of the sea & superior force excepted. Perhaps it would be proper to require the captain to give up also his certificate of citizenship, which is also merely fraudulent, has been the ground of fraudulent conversion, and may be used on the voyage as a fraudulent cover to the cargo. Affect. salutations.

END OF VOLUME X