

SOS! Suspicious Vessel off the Coast of Almería.

This February we are going to talk about Andalusia and its coasts, a bastion of cultures, confrontations and resistance. These coasts have been coveted since ancient times as a privileged route between East and West and as a paradise to settle and establish oneself. From Huelva to Almeria, the Andalusian coast has witnessed numerous events that have marked the evolution of Spanish history. And this document narrates one, the background to which is none other than the trade war between Spain and other nations. Or not.

But let's put this event into context. In the 19th century, Spain was focused on itself, trying to manage the loss of its last overseas territories, while other countries, in the midst of industrial effervescence, tried to broaden their commercial horizons in Europe by taking advantage of Spanish ports. Hence, they tried to smuggle their products into Spain through nearby ports, such as those of Portugal or Gibraltar.

Let us now place ourselves on the coast of Almeria at the beginning of the 19th century, where the territory is beginning to emerge thanks to mining and the grape trade, and whose coast is the starting point for the distribution of these products.

One morning in April 1827, the naval commander of the port of Almería sighted a sloop-of-war named Warren, flying the Anglo-American flag and coming from Boston, which reached the coast without warning. After contacting their captain, a certain Kearney, he told him that they had left Gibraltar for Mahon (Balearic Islands) six days before and had anchored in the port of Adra (Almeria) to fill their barrels with water because they

had left Gibraltar in a hurry. However, to the commander's suspicion, they made another stopover in Almería for the same purpose, in a port barely 32 nautical miles (approximately 60 km) from the previous one.

This fact, and others that the commander recounts in the document, set off alarm bells in the Naval Command, which quickly brought it to the attention of Luis María de Salazar, Secretary of State and Office of the Navy, who, in turn, informed the Secretary of State's Office.

This brief but expressive account by the commander, who declares his suspicions and misgivings, transports us back to the everyday life of our ancestors, including their fears and worries.

