

"3½ years since he (Fr. da Costa) left<sup>1</sup> to come to Rome with an ambassador whom the Shah was sending to His Holiness. . . . They went by way of Muscovy."

The account goes on to describe how even on the return journey Fr. da Costa had a fight with an Armenian in his company over another Armenian lad, and the man was killed

"So that the Shah might not get to hear of it, the governor of Gilan had him (da Costa) at once put on board ship, and then he was forced to surrender the youth. . . . He stayed 3 years at Astrakhan as<sup>2</sup> the disturbances in Muscovy did not allow him to travel, and he was still there when I left Persia. . . . When we were going to Astrakhan, we met him on the river Volga, as he was coming with a prince (who—so they said in Astrakhan—was a brother of Dmitri, the Duke of Muscovy, and was accepted as such by the townsmen) by whom he was much liked: he had two large boats full of merchandize which in part he had brought away from Persia, in part bought in Astrakhan. . . . All that happened to him in Persia I learnt from Fr. da Costa himself."<sup>3</sup>

Far from following the instructions of the Holy See and devoting themselves to its double objective as regard to the Turkish war and the extension of liberties for Christians, Fr. da Costa and Miranda had disastrously damaged the reputation of Christendom in general, and cast a slur on the seriousness on the Pope's intentions in the eyes of the Shah and the Persian notables.

While Diego de Miranda was still in Persia there had arrived from Goa in Isfahan the first Catholic mission to take root in the country, as distinct from isolated Religious or secular priests who had travelled through or made some stay in it—three Religious, Fathers of the Order of Hermits of S. Augustine, sent by the viceroy of the Portuguese Indies,<sup>4</sup> and named Jeronimo da Cruz, Cristoforo do Spiritu Santo, Antonio de Gouvea. On the evidence of those archives in Rome examined for the present compilation it is difficult to assign, or calculate the date, and even year of their arrival at Isfahan.<sup>5</sup> It would seem from the words of a report by Fr. John Thaddeus the Carmelite—"the Augustinian Fathers who have been here for 5 years past"<sup>6</sup>—that their arrival in Isfahan would have been between May 1603 and January 1604:<sup>6</sup> this would fit in with the facts that Shah 'Abbas' letter, quoted below, mentions that he had already sent back Fr. Antonio de Gouvea to the viceroy of Goa, that he had by this

<sup>1</sup> and <sup>2</sup> i.e. da Costa had left Persia early in 1604.

<sup>3</sup> Quoting Fr. Paul Simon, the author of *En Persia*, vol. II, p. 79, explains how the Carmelites and Fr. da Costa met:

" . . . Prince John was proceeding with 7,000 men . . . to join Dmitri" (the Russian pretender). "When the boats of the two flotillas crossed, both stopped and everyone disembarked on the banks of the river. They put up the tents there, and over all the others rose that of the Prince, in which he received our missionaries. According to what Fr. Paul Simon afterwards wrote, the Prince was taking in his company Fr. Francisco de Acosta, who had gone to Persia in the time of Clement VIII, and an Armenian, who had gone as ambassador from the king of Poland to the King of Persia, and two Persian ambassadors, one who was going with Fr. Acosta as ambassador to His Holiness, and the other to the king of Poland, together with the Armenian we have mentioned. 'The Prince,' he adds, 'stopped and put up his tents to give us audience. Fr. Francisco de Acosta sent to pay us a visit at once when we arrived. At the end of a short time the Prince sent to summon us to an audience. Fr. Acosta and the other ambassadors were present. He promised to give orders to Astrakhan to let us pass on at once into Persia. Fr. Acosta overwhelmed us with attentions and respect, speaking with many laudatory expressions to the Prince of us, and saying that he (the Prince) should not look at our poor garb, but at what we represented, and in presence of everyone he kissed the feet of the superior of the mission, saying that the Christian princes thus esteemed us. He took us to dine with him, and we remained thus together two days, in which he informed us of many things concerning Persia.'"

<sup>4</sup> *Early Spanish and Portuguese Travellers in Persia* quoted hereafter states "by the Viceroy Saldanha". The Carmelite author of *En Persia*, Fr. Florencio del Niño Jesus, states that the prior of the Augustinians brought letters from the archbishop of Goa . . . "at that time governing the Indies", and he was Alexis de Menezes. In either case doubtless instructions from the King of Spain or Council of Portugal had moved the authorities in Goa to take the action.

<sup>5</sup> The present compiler has not had the opportunity of consulting: "Relacam en que se tratam as guerras e grandes victorias que alcancon o grande Rey da Persia Xa Abbas do grao Turco Mahometto e seu filho Ametho: as quais resultarao das Embaixadas q por mandado da Catholica e real Magestade de rey D. Felipe segundo de Portugal fizerao alguns religiosos da ordem dos Eremitas de S. Augustinho a Persia. Composto dello Padre F. Antonio de Gouvea Lisboa, 1611", mentioned by Sir A. T. Wilson, K.C.I.E., M.P., etc., in his monograph, *Early Spanish and Portuguese Travellers in Persia* (1925), in which work (*Traduction française Rouen 1646*) the clue to the dates of arrival of the Augustinians at Isfahan, and Fr. Antonio's departure is no doubt to be found.

<sup>6</sup> Vide O.C.D. 236 a.—a report itself undated, but which from its contents must have been begun between May 1603 and January 1609.