

“Highness yet more fully. We render profound thanks to Your Highness for the signal goodwill which You profess towards Us and this holy Apostolic see, of which You have given such admirable tokens about those ‘Three Churches’ (i.e. Echmiadzin) to be restored, which the Turk, that most savage enemy of piety and religion, had destroyed at Erivan, and in regard to Your reception and care for Our sons, the greatly beloved Discalced Carmelite Religious: just as even We are unspeakably grateful to You for the most generous offer of the holy city of Jerusalem, should Almighty and merciful God grant to You to seize it out of the hands of the enemy, as We pray of the Divine benevolence. On the other hand We also shall make it Our business to respond, as much as We shall be able with God’s help, to Your lovingkindness with all the services of goodwill and friendship. For the rest We most earnestly commend to You this Our beloved son, Vincent of S. Francis (and his brethren), in whom You will please repose entire confidence in those matters which he will relate of Our love for You, just as You will be able with like reliance to entrust to these same Religious whatever You may wish to notify to Us: and so once more with all the affectionateness of Our heart We implore for Your Highness the light of the Divine grace. Given at S. Mark’s, Rome, the 10th of the Kalends of July, 1610, in the sixth year of Our Pontificate” (= 22.6.1610).

The military preparations made by ‘Abbas I in 1609, to which these narratives of the Carmelites bear testimony in casual fashion, and his messages to Pope Paul V were no empty demonstrations or words: in 1610 a large Turkish force under Murad Pasha was sent against Tabriz. Forewarned, the Shah had the region between the frontier and Tabriz evacuated, so that before reaching Tabriz the Turks had consumed their provender and found themselves threatened by famine: on their sending a large part of their force to forage ahead well inside Persian territory ‘Abbas I fell on it with a more numerous army and defeated the Turks so severely that reports of the time (doubtless wildly inaccurate and exaggerated as all Persian estimates in figures, except those of distances, are wont to be) placed at 10,000 the number of Turks put to the sword.

On that the Shah, scheming to crush the Turkish empire once and for all, and at the same time relieve himself of this constant preoccupation on his N.W. frontier, bethought himself to make fresh entreaties to the sovereigns of Europe for joint action on their flanks of the Turkish dominions—strangely enough, it would seem, in the face of repeated disappointments of his hopes in this respect and his irritation and outbursts, of which these preceding narratives have furnished concrete examples, he continued to cling to his plan for simultaneous and allied action: and, as his envoy this time, he fixed on Fr. John Thaddeus. The arguments which his envoy was to urge differed, however, considerably from the military and naval operations demanded in ‘Abbas I’s recent letters and embassies and were what in modern parlance would have been termed an appeal for economic sanctions to deprive the Turks of the sinews of war, harking back indeed to clause 6 of the proposals put forward by Sir R. Sherley to Pope Paul V.

‘Abbas I,¹ then, at the very beginning of 1611 explained to Fr. John Thaddeus that, instead of sending an Armenian, as first intended, he wished the Father to proceed to the Czar of Muscovy, the king of Poland and the Pope, and propose to them the diversion, via Russia and Poland, of the valuable trade to Europe in Persian carpets and silk and other goods from the route across the Turkish dominions, and thus to deprive the Turkish government and trading population of the funds and capital derived from Persian sources. (It will be subsequently noticed that the Shah personally had a stake in the export of raw silk.) The Carmelite’s protests that he had no acquaintance with such commercial business and was unfitted for work so far removed from his profession as a friar, that without permission from his superiors and the Pope himself he ought not to leave Persia, were brushed aside by the Persian

¹ The following is mainly a précis of the account given in *En Persia*, pp. 71–80, by Fr. Florencio del Niño Jesus, quoting Fr. John Thaddeus’ statement, and that of Fr. Redempt, but also makes use of MSS. *Hist. Miss.*, by Fr. Eusebius ab Omnibus Sanctis.