

Meanwhile, between June and September of 1621 the tension at Hurmuz became more acute, for the Captain of the fortress had erected a fort near the springs of fresh water on Qishm Island, and the Shah had caused one of the Augustinian Fathers, Fr. Nicolas Parete, to proceed from Isfahan to Hurmuz to convey his protest and ask whether the Portuguese wanted war. Persian forces must have been collected and moved towards the coast, if not actual hostilities have begun, by mid-September, for there is on record the following declaration:¹

“We, the undersigned Fathers, certify that our reverend Fr. Vincent of S. Francis, “Visitor General, having consulted us whether he should continue his journey to Hurmuz and India, or return to Rome, we were of opinion that, since *the passes are now closed by the war between the Portuguese and the Khan*” (i.e. of Shiraz) “together with the English and, as he has been unable to obtain a permit from the king to pass through, and for many other reasons which we have and the Father himself will state verbally, it was not expedient that the said reverend Father should proceed to India, but that it would be to the greater service of God that he should return to Rome and report to the reverend Father Prae-positus and the Definitory General. In faith and testimony of that opinion and that it is the truth we subscribe our names. Given at the Convent of Jesus and Mary of the “Discalced Carmelites at Isfahan, 23.9.1621.

“(sd) fr. Prosper of the Holy Spirit

“fr. Dimas of the Cross

“fr. Jhoan Thaddeus of S. Elisaeus.”

A change had already come over the attitude of Shah 'Abbas towards the Carmelite representatives of the Pope: on 8.9.1621 the new Prior was denouncing him in a letter² to Rome:

“We are in the country of the greatest tyrant the Church has had since it began until our own times: for the methods he adopts are taken from hell. Since our arrival he has had enslaved 39 villages, and had the wives of Christians given to Muslims, and those of Muslims to Christians: and he leaves them neither churches nor priests—things that may not be done according to the Quran, say his Persian and Muslim legal luminaries. . . .”

Again, 27.9.1621,³ to Fr. Paul Simon, then second Definitory General in Rome:

“The king . . . does not appear to be as he used to be till recently in giving us audience, having thought for us and taking account of us. Now it seems he is all for the English, with whose aid, it is much to be feared, he wants to have a total breach with the Portuguese and make war on Hurmuz. There is little at which to be happy, seeing that the Portuguese, from what can be gathered, are few in number in their sea and land” (forces), “and there is little unity among them . . .”

and on 20.10.1621:

“. . . The king is behaving in such a way that he has not been willing to reply to the Pope, nor to speak to us, although he has seen us several times. . . .”

By December of that year (2.12.1621) Fr. Prosper informed the Praepositus General that:

‘no news was likely to come from Hurmuz and Goa or Tatta in Sind for another 3 years, as the roads were all blocked by troops.’

Shortly afterwards, indeed, the English Agents of the East India Company and 'Abbas I