

“Directors of the East India Companies, attracted by” (prospects of) “gain, would have “to reopen their Factories—the more so as it was not properly the troubles in Persia that “led to the two Companies named withdrawing from trade with Persia; for the Dutch, “even a few years ago, continued to be in Kharg, an island of the Persian Gulf, and the “English at the port of Bushire.”

Then Bishop Cornelius puts forward a remarkable reason in the case of the English East India Company, which does not seem to have been touched in any printed, historical work on this period of history:

“The real cause was that the former” (the Dutch) “had been driven out by a certain “Mir Muhanna, a notorious pirate in rebellion against Karim Khan: while the latter” (the English) “had withdrawn out of a mere point of pique, because the Persian government had “not allowed them to construct, as they claimed for their security, a fort at Bushire;¹ and, “repenting of having done so, *now* according to what people write to me, they seek to come “to an accommodation and settlement. So that it is permissible to hope for their return to “Persia very soon, and for their former commerce to recommence” (at least that of the English): “the English Company cannot forgo the large profit it makes in Persia in the exchange “of cloth from England against silk stuffs from Persia. . . .”²

With the departure of Bishop Cornelius of S. Joseph from the region the fount of information about the internal condition of Persia and its relative political tranquillity dries up almost entirely. Karim Khan Zand, the ‘Wakil’ or Regent, died in 1779, whereafter a fresh wave of strife and struggle for power and insecurity was to set in until in 1791 the Qajar chief was left victorious and able to inaugurate the dynasty of that name; but the present search has not extended so far; and it only remains to note from the Carmelite *Cont. Basra Chron.* and other letters that in the last years of his rule Karim Khan followed the example of most Safawi Shahs and of Nadir in going to war with Turkey. Designating himself ‘French Resident at Basra’ in a letter to the Cardinal Prefect Castelli, 22.1.1774,³ a certain Monsieur Jean Rousseau wrote:

“. . . scarcely had plague ceased⁴ in these parts, Monseigneur, than in the month of July “last” (i.e. July 1773) “war broke out, for by orders of Karim Khan, Regent of Persia, who “knew the weak position of the Pasha of Baghdad, the Shaikh of the K’ab came to attack “Basra with galleys and troops. After having burnt all the naval force the Turks had here, “and sacked part of the town he levied a fine on the Turkish administration, and the town “ransomed itself with money. . . .”

It must have been in that connection, and the alarm caused through the unpreparedness of the Turks to defend them, that Fr. Charles of S. Conrad, Vicar Apostolic in the Mogul’s dominions, wrote from Basra, 13.6.1774:⁵

“. . . There is still no news of the ships arriving from various ports of India, which some “months ago were lying in the port of Masqat; but there is nothing to fear, neither from “Karim Khan nor from the K’ab, as those ships are not to leave that port except under the

¹ There had been forts of all the foreign Companies at Gāmburūn, until destroyed by the French attack. At Shiraz, in the same letter Bishop Cornelius wrote of the “Factory which the English have made for themselves near the Prince “Alexander of Georgia’s, who calls himself a Catholic and in fact tries to show all Catholic travellers special help in their “needs. . . .”

² He was correct—if that was the only reason—for the Armenian Uniat Administrator of the diocese in reports of 20.4.1777 (18.9.1777), which were read in the session of the Sac. Cong., 7.9.1778, mentioned: “In Bandar Bushire . . . “a short while ago the English made a convention with Karim Khan, hoisted their flag and established a consul. . . .”

³ S.N.R., VII, pp. 596-9.

⁴ i.e. the great plague of 1773 when all the Carmelites in Mesopotamia, including Bishop Emmanuel Ballyet of Baghdad, died.

⁵ *Scrittura Riferite nei Congressi*, No. 34, East Indies, 1774-5.