

“being unaware that Muscovy does not permit missionaries in the empire to go outside its territory, as in fact happened: so that up till now that mission has not been provided” (with a priest). “Once more I recommend that it” (the mission at Rasht) “be given to the Capuchins in Georgia, who could easily get there from their residence in Ganjeh. . . . It is true that there are no Catholics settled there, but constantly Catholic traders are coming from Muscovy and other parts because of the trade in the famous silk of Gilan: and here I should warn you that this trade is no longer done in the town of Rasht itself, but on an island near the Caspian Sea, where for greater security ships put in, and there is a Muscovite consul and, I think, a hospice constructed by the Jesuits.

“This mission appears to me very necessary in the present circumstances in Persia, because with the loss of so many others it could be at least said that missionaries are to be found at the two opposite ends of the country, i.e. Bushire on the Persian Gulf and Rasht on the Caspian: from these two places, whenever God provides an opening, we could spread into the interior of the kingdom. . . .”

As late as the session of the Sac. Congregation, 30.7.1770,¹ on Cardinal Strappanij’s report (he had mentioned that there were only 35 Armenians in Rasht) the rescript was issued: “Some missionary of the Capuchin Order is to be sent. . . .” Apparently the advice given by Bishop Cornelius was adopted, for the latter in his letter of 30.6.1771² spoke of

“orders having been dispatched to the Fr. Superior and Prefect to send to Rasht at once one or two missionaries of his Order . . .”;

yet in his report of December 1772, written in Rome, the Bishop made it clear that “the Capuchin Father, who was expected, had not yet put in an appearance. . . .” As read by Cardinal Pamphilj in the session of 7.9.1778 a memorandum drawn up by the Administrator of the diocese, Fr. John son of Aratun, included the information:

“lately, however, the prince governor of Gilan, called — Khan, has . . . had . . . two Capuchins . . . with him as his doctors, to whom, the rumour is, he also assigned a good sum of money for their annual support. But he states that one of those two Religious, i.e. the priest, has died and there remains only the lay brother, who is sick. . . .”

In connection with Gilan after the departure of the Jesuits from Rasht, allusion may be made to one of those irresponsible, vagabond (*girovagi*) clerics, to be met in every age, in this case perhaps doubtfully a priest, and certainly a cause for scandal. He was

“called Emmanuel Caro, and he says that he is the son of a Spanish general, ‘superintendent’ at the Court . . . and brother of an archbishop, whose vicar general he was for some years too. For some years he wandered round Europe and finally . . . resolved to sacrifice himself to the service of the missions in Persia. In Rome he obtained—it is not known from whom—a faculty in writing for celebrating Mass in his own room, when passing through heretic or infidel lands. . . .”³

According to a letter of his own⁴ this Don Emmanuel Caro had arrived in Persia in 1766; but the first mention of him observed occurs in the letter of Fr. J. B. de Bernardis, the Vicar General of the diocese, dated Julfa, 20.12.1769,⁵ to the Cardinal Prefect:

¹ *Acta*, 1770, p. 291.

³ Mgr Charles of S. Conrad, 13.6.1774, *S.R. nei Congressi*, No. 34.

⁵ See also Bp. Cornelius, 30.5.1770, *S.N.R.*, VII, p. 580.

“by a letter of 12.1.1770 . . . I sent enclosed a very diffuse epistle from a certain Don Emmanuel Caro, an ‘American’ secular priest, containing the translation in Italian of a letter which the Khan of that province had written to His Holiness in favour of the Catholics there, and particularly of this ecclesiastic. . . .”

² *S.N.R.*, VII, p. 631.

⁴ *S.N.R.*, V, p. 135.