

'but at a distance, and, when admonished, claiming to be, as of another rite, exempt from the jurisdiction of Fr. de Bernardis';<sup>1</sup> they used to celebrate marriages (of Catholics) with heretics,<sup>2</sup> they offered prayers for the (schismatic) dead, and used to go to the heretical churches. On their part the young Roman-trained Uniat priests asserted to the Sac. Congregation that their own arrival and reopening of the "national", i.e. Shariman, church, abandoned for years previously, had been displeasing to the Dominican Fathers, who had even taken some of the disputes to the tribunal of the schismatic Vartapet.

"Not without difficulty" (after Fr. Secker's departure for Rasht) "did I succeed in making peace between Fr. de Bernardis and the priest from Propaganda Fide, Fr. John son of Aratun . . ."

wrote Bishop Cornelius. Fr. Norbert Secker, O.P., had indeed gone off, 22.7.1770, to Rasht in Gilan, where he had persuaded the peripatetic cleric Emmanuel Caro to abandon and sell that mission-house,<sup>3</sup> and together they had returned to Julfa.<sup>4</sup> At Eastertide 1771, with the addition of Fr. de Bernardis they set off to Shiraz, whence Fr. Secker had made his way back to Mausil by August 1771.<sup>5</sup> The Vicar General Fr. de Bernardis, however, had, 18.11.1770,<sup>6</sup> pointed out to the Cardinal Prefect that:

"if two Armenian priests, alike in character and sentiments, were to remain alone in the mission" (at Julfa) "they will bring it down to what it was some time ago, to its being indistinguishable from the heretical church, except in name. . . ."

Making the position still more confused, on 22.1.1771 Fr. Dominic Lanza far away in Mesopotamia recommended<sup>7</sup> to the Congregation that, in view of the imprisonment at and expulsion of the Dominicans from Mausil, Frs. de Bernardis and Secker should not be withdrawn from Persia. Finally, from Baghdad, 30.6.1771, the Bishop of Isfahan also<sup>8</sup> demurred in a letter to the Cardinal Prefect to the withdrawal of the Dominicans, his opinion and that of the Vicar General being remarkably akin to those held in similar, but more recent situations:

"Fr. J. B. de Bernardis writes to me from Julfa that he has received instructions from your Eminence to quit that mission and go to that at Mausil: and he asks my advice. I have replied that I did not wish to interfere, since I had received no notice at all about this from the Sac. Congregation. . . . Your Eminence will say that the two priests from Propaganda Fide sent are more than enough for the guidance of so scanty a flock. Quite so. But I should be afraid that they would *not be able to remain without a European Religious to watch over their conduct* and, above all, protect them against persecution by the heretical Armenian monks, priests and laymen. With the knowledge I have of the character of this race and of Julfa people in particular, I know the interest they have in sending and receiving through the intermediary of European Fathers residing there letters for and from their relatives in Europe, and in making use of them" (the European Fathers) "to receive with greater security the remittances of money they expect from those relatives, added to which is the fear lest, should they molest the Fathers, the latter should cause umbrage to be taken against the" (Armenian) "race by the consuls at Basra and Directors of the India Company, by whom the Fathers are considered to be protected. This inclines them not only to put up with European missionaries in Julfa, but even to pretend willingness to see them there, and out of consideration for them they allow the Catholic church, in which the Armenian Catholic priests officiate, to remain open.

<sup>1</sup> "These orientals love an oriental enemy more than a European friend," was Fr. de Bernardi's aphorism.

<sup>2</sup> In *Lettere dalla Sac. Cong.*, vol. 236, p. 163, are instructions to the Armenian administrator of the diocese about this.

<sup>3</sup> Bp. Cornelius, *S.N.R.*, VII, p. 631.

<sup>4</sup> Vide Fr. Secker, Julfa, 14.3.1771, *S.N.R.*, VII, p. 607.

<sup>5</sup> Bp. Emmanuel of Baghdad had been "edified" by Fr. Secker (*S.N.R.*, VII, p. 361).

<sup>6</sup> *S.N.R.*, VII, p. 606.

<sup>7</sup> *Idem*, p. 589.

<sup>8</sup> *Idem*, p. 631.