

“Hurmuz, as it hitherto has offered hospitable shelter to those sailing in the mouth of that same Persian Gulf, if it be taken away from the Portuguese, will deprive Europe of very great conveniences: yet, on the other hand, it will not bring Your kingdom particular much advantage. For You would be able to use this citadel as though it were Your own, provided that You cultivate the friendship of the Spanish king: and the Spanish soldiers themselves stationed there will guard Your marches and defend Your prestige. On the other hand, if that bulwark, taken by force, be retained by You wrongfully, you will turn a most powerful king from a friend into a foe for Yourself, and it will be at the high price of the pay, with which You will be compelled to maintain a military garrison there, that You will purchase the hostility of a very powerful nation and the dislike of all who go voyages. Finally, You will not find You have added for Yourself as much gain as You have lost in the way of public goodwill, which even when barren of results is considered a fine thing and is called the real treasure-ward of princes. For that their chief wealth lies not so much in gold and silver talents as in the liking of the world and devotion of its people Your own Cyrus bears witness in Greek histories.

“Hearken, most puissant king, to the prayers of the whole of the Christian commonwealth, which by those same voices as it extols Your Highness’s triumphs and valour begs earnestly and beseeches of You that, mindful of Persian greatheartedness and justice, You restore that fortress to the Spanish king and do not at this time close the most celebrated roadstead in the memory of man to navigation. Deprive Your foes of this solace, hopeful as they are (now) of being able to marshal against Your soldiers for the recovery of Hurmuz the armies of those peoples, who opened up to the human races the secrets of the unknown Ocean and have been able to span both hemispheres in their triumphant career.

“As for Us, it can hardly be said how urgently We wish the Portuguese, with their liking for the Persian race, never to be forced to the unhappiness of trying whether by force of arms and the shedding of blood they are strong enough to recover this port which their forebears fortified for the public convenience of countries and the sea. The magnanimity of Your Highness has the power here and now of binding very tightly the ties of all Europe and the Roman Pontiff to Your realm. Assuredly We shall all attend to it to make all Eastern nations understand that the foundations of those realms (of Yours) stand secure so long as You shall lay the whole Christian world under so great an obligation. And that We may bear witness more clearly on this matter, We have dispatched to You Our beloved son Francis Costa, a man dear to Us, experienced in Persian affairs and on that account, as We hope, acceptable to Your Highness. In him, therefore, when expounding in more detail Our views on this question You may have the same confidence as You would in Ourselves.

“Meanwhile We shall ask God, who wonderfully works peace in His high heaven, that as soon as possible these quarrels be decided by a renewal of harmony and not by the slaughtering of soldiers. For Your Highness, however, of whom the Christian nations expect this comfort, We can depute in Our stead as the debtor for so great a benefit the Lord of lords Himself, who being rich in tenderheartedness will with some brilliant price of happiness reward a decision of this kind. With such sighing as cannot be told the Roman Church will unceasingly beg of Him to guide the feet of Your Highness into the path of salvation, which will lead so great a king after the long-continued glory of this present life unto the kingdom of everlasting bliss.

“Given at S. Peter’s, Rome, under the Fisherman’s ring, the tenth day of June 1623, in the third year of Our Pontificate. . . .”

It is, however, true that in 1623¹ Sultan Murad IV of Turkey, having recommenced Turco-Persian hostilities dormant since the peace of 1618, lost Baghdad to the forces of Shah Abbas, and the latter may have been away from Isfahan for a considerable period in this and

¹ It was to remain in Persian control till 1638.