

implying that there was no missionary to care for the Christians. By this time the new Bishop of Isfahan, Mgr Cornelius of S. Joseph, had arrived in the region and from Basra, 5.7.1763,<sup>1</sup> had more explicit information to give:

“Persia—or rather Isfahan and the provinces subject to Karim Khan are now quite quiet, and living is cheap; but the country is empty of men and money. None of the Catholics who went away have been signalled as returned, for they foresee fresh disturbances and revolts on the death of Karim Khan, who for the same reason up till now has not cared to assume the title of ‘Shah’, but simply that of ‘governor’ . . .”

Then he turned to the Persian Gulf:

“. . . Some months ago with a squadron of three vessels the English destroyed Bandar ‘Abbas,<sup>2</sup> otherwise called Gāmburun, a Persian town at the mouth of the Gulf, as they had just transported their Factory, which they had there to another place<sup>3</sup> on the Persian Gulf, called Bandar Bushire (‘Bandar’ in Persian signifies ‘port’), a place only a few hours distant from Kharg island. . . .”

To the Secretary of the Sac. Congregation Bishop Cornelius resumed his exposition of political events a year later, 2.8.1764,<sup>4</sup> as he was about to proceed from Basra to Bushire:<sup>5</sup>

“. . . That Karim Khan, who at present rules part of Persia under the title of ‘Deputy’ (or ‘Representative’ = ‘Wakil’) of whoever may be the” (rightful) “Shah, has taken the city of Tabriz, and caused to submit to him his principal rival, ‘Ali Fath [? sic for Fath ‘Ali] Qajar, led<sup>6</sup> to hopes of seeing the tranquillity so much desired revive in this region: and indeed the roads were open for some months, and the two Dominican Fathers mentioned profited by it to proceed to Julfa. But this tranquillity was only for a breathing-space: and it has been soon disturbed by the treason of Zaki Khan, governor of Isfahan, who rebelled against his own brother, Karim Khan. The latter, being obliged to fight with him, succeeded in taking from him the capital which the former” (Zaki Khan) “had sacked and in gaining some advantage over him, without however having been able till now to bring him to submission. What must make that good warrior” (Karim Khan) “more apprehensive are the secret plots which are constantly being made by the chief officials of the Court against his” (Karim Khan’s) “life; although, contrary to his peaceable nature, he has been compelled to punish a large number of them with death, either on proof or on suspicion” (of complicity). “Things being in so critical a state not even a single one of our Catholics, who had gone abroad, has so far returned to Persia, nor a single Armenian merchant, notwithstanding the repeated invitations and tempting promises made by Karim Khan, since all foresee that fresh disturbances will surely follow

<sup>1</sup> *S.N.R.*, VII, p. 219.

<sup>2</sup> *Vide English Factory Records*: ‘December 1754. Factory established at Bandar Rig, but demolished three years later. October 1759, English Factory at Gāmburun taken by the French fleet and destroyed. British re-established in 1760. 1763, removal of the Factory to Bushire.’ The proximate cause of this punitive act and of the removal from Gāmburun was the hostility of the Khan of Lar, an independent potentate, as explained below.

<sup>3</sup> The removal of the East India Company’s Factory from Gāmburun (Bandar ‘Abbas) had one curious sequel, as told by *Cont. Basra Chron.* under the year 1763:

“From this time, since they had suppressed their trading house in Bandar ‘Abbas, the Resident at Basra was at the same time a Member of Council of Bombay, on account of which office on festival occasions and on the arrival of a new Mutasallim he was given precedence over the Frenchman notwithstanding agreements to the contrary with the Sublime Porte, and regularly the Englishman was received by the Mutasallim before the Frenchman, not because the Turks had acquiesced in prerogatives of the offices of a Councillor but because each year the trade of the English was ‘blooming’ with a number of ships . . . and very fine gifts were presented to the Turks, which the French were not at all in a position to do, not because the will was lacking, but the means, so long as their trade is inactive, as it is up to today. . . .”

<sup>4</sup> *S.N.R.*, VII, p. 266.

<sup>5</sup> While it is interesting to note that he spelt the word “*Abouscir*” with the initial ‘Alif’ in the same false Arabicized form as some native Bushire merchants and others have done to this day, the origin of the name is held by at least one great modern orientalist to be ‘Bukht-i-Ardashir’, i.e. from a purely Persian and non-Arabic derivation.

<sup>6</sup> This must have taken place, therefore, before April 1763 and after the beginning of 1760.