

“The government of it had been claimed by the Afghans who were obliged to surrender it to the armed might of Heraklios, son of the prince of Tiflis and Kakhetia. The ill-treatment in words and deeds, encountered by them (the Afghans) from the inhabitants of each and every place through which they passed in their retreat, exasperated them and caused them to gather at Romi [*sic*], a fortress over against Tabriz, where their Khan was: and to him they made known the affront they had received from the population and from him they demanded satisfaction for it. Seeing his troops angered and disaffected the Khan wanted to satisfy them; but, in order to make his position sure, he sent envoys to Haji, . . . the head of the Lesghians, a race on the borders of Georgia who profess a brand of Muhammadanism mixed with idolatry. He made a league with the latter, whereby the latter” (the Lesghian chief) “pledged himself at a certain time to attack the Georgians in the region of Ganjeh, in order to divert their (the Georgians’) attention from Armenia, and so make it easy to fall on Nakhchiwan. Deeds followed the pact: so that the Georgians, in order to defend their own country, were obliged to take away their force from Nakhchiwan, where the Afghans at once entered and made an indescribable slaughter of the people there, without regard either to sex or to age. Of the two Religious of my Order, who were there, one withdrew with the Georgians to Tiflis and by way of Akhalsik (?) reached Erzerum in safety, the other took the road to Bayazid, where he soon afterwards died. Ten families of our Catholics are sheltering on this side of the Araxes in Akmal and Tang-i-’Ali, tiny villages in the jurisdiction of Bayazid. The ruination has been general, both for the Muslims and for the Armenians and Catholics. A fine church, which we have in Chahuk, remains in its former condition, the others—as they were supported on wooden structures—have been reduced to ashes, and the convents demolished. I pray Divine clemency to deign to grant some tranquillity, so that that unfortunate, small remnant of our Catholicism can live, to its consolation, under the shadow of their ancestral roofs, or among a community of a different rite, and be able to die in the Lord God with the assistance of some Catholic priest. . . .”

By a memorandum dated 25.9.1753 the Sac. Congregation had instructed Archbishop Salvini, O.P., to forward a report on his diocese, and this he proceeded to do with details valuable for purposes of historical statistics and record of the past, and therefore reproduced here: the student may check it with similar reports already quoted in this work in the chapter on the reign of Nadir Shah. There are in fact two reports, one dated Smyrna, 30.1.1754,¹ the other Smyrna, 6.2.1758:² and they have been collated and combined here below. His covering letter included these brave words of a refugee from his see, with a flock so decimated and scattered:

“. . . They (their Eminences) will comprehend from this (report) to what misfortunes Armenia has been subjected for thirty years past. But, God be thanked, the tree of our Catholicism has not been so withered that there are not some living roots still left. The extirpation and destruction wrought by Timur the Lame, and later by Shah ’Abbas were more ruthless: that notwithstanding, the few Catholics, who then saved themselves and who were fewer in numbers than now, increased so much that they populated those villages of ours and the whole of Armenia also” (once more), “as I myself witnessed more than 30 years ago: and I trust it will be the same in the future, if it please the Divine clemency to grant a stable government. About the two Religious who went to take spiritual care of those poor Catholics, as I note in this report under No. 10, I shall not fail to inform you when clearer news comes. . . .”

(Enclosure)

“Report on the diocese of Nakhchiwan

“(1) The province of Nakhchiwan is included in Armenia Major, and has as its boundaries Sissian on the east, and Kapan on the south: the river Araxes, which divides it

¹ S.R., vol. 757, p. 284.

² S.N.R., vol. VI, p. 376.