

“that fellow, and if such huge armies attack that monster from all sides. For, if very recently, while you stayed quiet, he has been all the same defeated at the Echinades by the prowess of the Christians, only some few torn and half-shattered ships escaping to tell of so great a disaster and his mighty fleet sunk, fired, beaten, annihilated, what is now to happen to him, ringed round both by Christian princes and by Your own might and arms? What place in which to halt, or to which to flee, and what hope is left him?”

“We desired to open out to You this plan of Ours, and to exhort You to be willing to use such a great chance as this. May the blessed God both in this matter and in all Your thoughts and emprises indicate what is supremely true and what advances Your interests and Your kingdom’s safety and dignity.

“We have willed that this letter should be done in duplicate, and with that second copy shall send You a trusty man who on arrival will both give You that second copy and explain some points at Our bidding. We desire his words to be believed by You. Given at Tusculum on the last day of September 1592, in the first year (of Our Pontificate).”

In 1597 operations were reopened against the Uzbaks on the east, with the recovery of Harat and the province of Khurasan resulting: in the south the semi-independent Khan of Lar was subjugated, though not by 'Abbas in person. Hostilities with Turkey recommenced in earnest in 1601, when the qualities of 'Abbas I as a military leader and organizer of conquest and extension of territory, his most merited title to renown, began to manifest themselves: for, one after another, he recovered the provinces on its western borders lost by Persia in preceding reigns, Shirwan, that touchstone of Turco-Persian enmity, being one of the first. In the preliminary audience which he gave the Carmelites, 3.1.1608, he claimed that he had persevered at war with the Turks for 10 years continuously, i.e. from 1598.

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From this chronological point contact between Persia and Europe was joined far more consistently than ever in the past: and it was precisely the venom of 'Abbas I against the Turks, his tenacious purpose to have them beaten to the ground, which made him turn his attention to Europe as a means of attaining his end: just as the Popes in past crises had bethought themselves of the utility of co-operation from and by Persia in order to pierce and throttle Turkish might, so 'Abbas needed someone to create a serious diversion in European or in Anatolian Turkey, in order that he might sweep over into Mikrasia, as Timur the Lame had done before him. Further, his soldiers, trained enough in their own style of tactics, lacked the artillery in which the Turks always hitherto had been superior and owing to which frequently the victors: he wanted field-pieces and gunners to be supplied by the allies he hoped to obtain.

First, and fortuitously, enter the Sherley<sup>1</sup> brothers on the scene as possible “liaison officers” to achieve the co-operation desired: and, with so much already written on the subject, an apology to the reader is almost needed for relating the circumstances of their coming, and their proceedings as recorded by various direct and indirect correspondents of the Papal chancery in Rome. However far right or wrong it may be, the account produced by the Portuguese traveller in Persia da Costa (himself a delegate from Rome, as will subsequently be explained) reads:<sup>2</sup>

“Anthony Sherley was the second son of Thomas Sherley, a knight of the county of Sussex and treasurer of the Queen, and of a mother attached to the Catholic religion. He was a favourite with the Earl of Essex, under whom he served in the wars in France,

<sup>1</sup> So Robert spelt his name in his letters to the Pope.

<sup>2</sup> Fondo Borghese, Ser. II, n. 20.