



1881: Massacre of the second caravan for Timbuktu: Richard, Morat, and Pouplard.

1888: Lavigerie gives an anti-slavery conference to Roman ladies.

Letter to Bishop Livinhac in Uganda (12 December 1886)

You probably know already, through the correspondence of the superior of your little Society, that these Fathers used ways contrary to Christian simplicity and loyalty, to drive us out of the Congo and to usurp our missions. They claimed that I had granted them the right to take those of our territories that were suitable for them in southern and northern Upper Congo, as delineated for us by the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide. They defended this claim audaciously, even though I had simply authorized them to establish, under my jurisdiction, mission stations on the Congo, on condition that they would always be at least eighty kilometres distant from the stations of our Society.

Unfortunately, Cardinal Simeoni took them at their word, without consulting me, and by decree created the two new missions of the Vicariate and the Prefecture of Congo, one of which took away from us the French Congo and the other a large part of the Belgian Congo. I had to make a special journey to Rome in July in order to have the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide revert from such an unfair measure, and I managed to obtain a decision that, in law, overturned the first and took away from the Holy Ghost Fathers that which they had received. After having achieved this moral satisfaction, however, I considered that it was not advisable to press for its material execution, all the more so since the King of the Belgians intervened with regard to the Belgian Congo demanding the execution of the promise that had been made to him by the Holy See to entrust the missions of his State of the Congo to Belgian missionaries. (Moreover, in truth the difficulty of finding staff on the one hand, and that of providing for such expenses on the other, and finally the troubles that the three Fathers who are there have given, made us really yearn to offload a burden that was becoming too heavy).

I therefore raised this matter, as Father Deguerry writes to you in the letter enclosed with this one, in the last General Chapter of the Society and, after having carefully considered the pros and cons, this Chapter agreed to leave the entire French Congo to the Holy Ghost Fathers, and to the Belgian missionaries of Scheut-lez-Bruxelles the part of the Belgian Congo that extends from the Atlantic Ocean to beyond Stanley-Falls, the only condition being that, in order to facilitate our [missionary] endeavours through maintaining the same number of vicariates so as not to see our resources reduced, we would retain four vicariates as before, namely: two vicariates headed by bishops in partibus, and two others headed by ordinary priests with the title of pro-vicar.

Father Deguerry gives you the precise territorial limits assigned to each of these four missions. The Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide accepted these requests and confirmed them through a pontifical decree. It has also instructed me to care for the greater good of the two new pro-vicariates, those of the Upper Congo and Unyanyembe, as regards their governance and the choice of their pro-vicars. This is what I canonically determine in the ordinance attached to this letter and of which you will kindly inform Father Coulbois, while transmitting to him my blessings for his new responsibility. As you will see, the Council of your Society, in this approved by me, has chosen to confer the title of pro-vicar on Father Coulbois and Father Ludovic Girault. One of them had already held this position in Tanganyika; preference has been given to the other because of his seniority and also because of the trust he deserves.

