



### Letter to the Work of the Propagation of the Faith (24 February 1885)

Dear Sirs,

Mgr Livinhac and Mgr Charbonnier have taken the responsibility of sending to you, before they leave for their missions, a report on the Apostolic Vicariates of Nyanza and Tanganyka. These reports will reach you with this same post.

I myself wish to speak to you about our two missions [in the region] of the Upper Congo, both South and North, and about the resolutions which we are forced to take by the events that are occurring with regard to Equatorial Africa. I shall start by summarizing in a few words the events that you will already have learned about from the public broadsheets and the specialized journals that are concerned with these regions, principally in Germany and in Belgium.

After this strictly geographical and political preamble, I come to the question of our missions. As you surely remember, Gentlemen, it is at the very sources of this river, close to Tanganyka, that we have started our mission in the Upper Congo. Referend Father Guillet, as I mentioned to you in my letter of December last, had received the order to ascend this river and to establish himself in the Manyema in the vicinity of Nyangoué. From there our missionaries were supposed to descend little by little downstream, following exactly the opposite route from that of Stanley who went upstream to found his posts, whereas we wished to descend the river to found ours. But what has just happened in Berlin and the great activity that is already becoming visible and which will increase yet more in the regions allotted to Belgium and France impose on us a sudden change of plans. In fact, Protestant missionaries, always on the look-out and moreover favoured by Stanley, himself a Protestant, are beginning to establish themselves in this region. It is therefore indispensable that our missionaries show up at the same time as these and, if possible, get themselves established before them.

This is what we tried to do already, three years ago, through the work of Father Guyot and of Father Baudounet. These two priests were given the task of undertaking a journey of exploration in order to determine the points where it would be preferable to found our first missions, from the point of view of the possibility of creating relations as also from that of population density which are necessary conditions for a fruitful mission. You know how this initiative

met with a sad end. Fr Guyot died, drowning in the waters of the Congo, and everything would lead us to believe that his death was the result of an atrocious ploy. Fr Baudounet, who was prone to suffer from serious fever, returned to Algiers.

With Fr Guyot disappeared all his belongings: money, trinkets (pacotille), provisions, papers, without our finding any trace of them. This is what made us decide, after such a terrible trial, to begin the mission from the opposite direction. So this is how we established the mission of Manyema. Today, however, necessity commands and necessity knows no law. The Council of the Society of Missionaries of Algiers has therefore just decided that two new caravans will leave, going by way of the Atlantic Ocean. One of these caravans is destined for the mission of southern Upper Congo, in other words the territory allotted to the Belgians by the Berlin Congress, while the second is destined for northern Upper Congo, in the territory which the same Congress has placed under the protectorate of France. These two caravans are to ascend the river to a point midway between Stanley-Pool and Falls Station, that is, about 1400 kilometres from the ocean coast.

It is in April that these two caravans should set out. The personnel have already been designated. This however will depend on the decision that you are going to make, and which I am at this moment soliciting from you. We would really need to be able to send twelve missionaries. In order to finance the journey and a first post at least a hundred thousand francs would be necessary. Can you grant this sum to cover the expenses of the journey? If you cannot do this, we shall be obliged to reduce our effort in proportion to the reduction of the figures of the subsidy requested.

