

1867: Lavigerie reveals that the clergy of Nancy have sent a petition to the Emperor to keep it.

1884: Foundation of the mission station of Ghardaïa. The White Sisters moved there on December 27, 1892. From 1901, Ghardaïa was the centre of the Saharan mission.

Report sent to the Propagation of the Faith of Lyon (15th January 1883)

Gentlemen,

After the very complete report I had the honour to send you a short time before the time of your last distributions, I think that this year, so as not to descend into needless repetition, I can stick to simply telling you about the changes which have taken place in the different mission activities entrusted to the Missionaries of Algiers whose superior I am. To facilitate matters, I shall follow the same order I followed last year, so as to allow you to find the details you wish to consult more easily.

1 - Kabylia – This mission continues its work. The number of missionaries has increased by two: today we have nineteen instead of seventeen. The number of Sisters remains four. Our operations have so far not been troubled, but the government, jealous of the influence they have and worried especially by the thought that we might ‘clericalise’ Kabylia and become its great electors, is preparing to compete with us. It has just placed at the disposal of the Algerian government the sum of 500,000 frs for the construction of French schools in different parts of the country and for paying teachers, whose mission, of course, will be to preach free thinking.

Poor France! Just look at how tax-payers’ contributions are being used. Everything clearly goes against her interests in a system like this, but what does it matter! France’s interests can perish so long as the hateful ways of ungodliness are satisfied! Faced with these hostile plans, we need your help more than ever, since we shall be placed in a position of inferiority regarding building materials and school fees.

2 - Sahara and Sudan – You know about the new and cruel ordeal which we have had to undergo in this

Mission. The disturbances brought about in Muslim countries by the Tunisia adventure led to the murder of three of our missionaries, Fathers Richard, Poupard and Morat. They were the victims of a plot hatched in Tripoli between a Turkish negotiator, an Italian Israeli protégé and the Kaïmakan of Ghadamès. Mr Féraud, the French Consul General and a fervent Christian, got hold of the details of this frightful plot which was directed more against France than against religion. He passed these on to the French government and gave them the names of the murderers who can walk about freely in Ghadamès under the eyes of the Turkish authorities and can even go as far as Tripoli. He asked the permission of the French government to have then arrested and condemned. The French government did not dare to do this!

All this, of course, is strictly confidential. But you can see, Gentlemen, what is becoming of France’s prestige in the world outside as we advance along the road we have taken. As for as our work in concerned, all I should like to point out to you is the fact that we must make good all our losses. With the approval of the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda, I have had to withdraw temporarily the other missionaries who might be exposed to a similar danger in the Sahara. Now that things are settling down after the victory of the British in Egypt, conducted very differently from ours, we shall have to re-establish our mission stations in which almost everything has been lost.

