Chapter 7

The Succession Crisis of 1842-1843

“This affair is grave.”¹

On 24 May 1842, François Guizot wrote to Ambassador Latour-Maubourg concerning the Lazarists’ problems.² He repeated the government’s position “that it would not tolerate any changes in the community’s administration.” The Foreign Minister also related he had “learned indirectly but with certitude” that the Holy See had summoned Nozo to Rome, apparently to persuade him to resign. Guizot told Latour-Maubourg that if this were true, the government supported the action, “given the Congregation’s extremely grave complaints against him.” Consequently, Guizot instructed the ambassador “to demand explanations from the pontifical government concerning its views on these subjects.”³

Regarding Nozo personally, Guizot said, “It would be manifestly contrary to all principles of reason and of beneficence to maintain Monsieur Nozo in his duties as the Lazarists’ superior general. The archbishop of Paris has said that he will not suffer the presence, in his diocese, of the head of a congregation whom he considered an instrument of scandal. The king’s government cannot tolerate as the head of this community a man against whom charges exist (and I tell you this confidentially) of such a nature that a court would likely convict him.”⁴ Guizot was no less clear concerning the possibility of the Congregation’s headquarters moving to Rome. “This is an innovation to which we cannot consent. I have already told you the motives for this, in that the interests of the Congregation of Saint Lazare in certain regards, and in very important ways, are connected too directly and too intimately with those of France. This is notably true regarding our policies in the Middle East. The royal government’s need for frequent communication with this congregation is too great to allow for its headquarters to move so far from Paris.”⁵

¹Joseph Wargnier to Antoine Poussou, 14 March 1843. There is a notation in an unknown hand on the letter which states, “M. Wargnier, superior at Chalons, blesses divine providence for the happy result of our business in Rome.” Poussou, Vicaire Gén., C 39, bas 3⁰, 41, ACMP.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Ibid.
Foreign Minister instructed Latour-Maubourg to point out to the Holy See that such a fundamental change in the Congregation's government would raise the question of its legal existence. He said that such a move would compromise the community and lead to its destruction. The government's position was that with Nozo's resignation, a general assembly should choose a new superior general. This would be "in conformity with the rules contained in the Constitutions, and...nothing could justify any change in the established order of things."6

At the general council meeting held on 4 June 1842, the vicar general presented the assistants with Nozo's request for a reimbursement of 10,000 francs. Poussou also told them that he had learned that Nozo wanted his Parisian confidant, Amand Baudrez, to accompany him to Rome. The council turned down the reimbursement request. Their reason was that the superior general had not provided any accounting for his expenditures. Also, the lawyers who were advising them had recommended that they give no appearance of being involved financially with Nozo or his interests. If the superior general asked for permission for Baudrez to accompany him, the vicar general was to say no. The council warned Baudrez that if he undertook the trip it would be considered as a "formal act of disobedience."7

At the council meeting of 6 June, Poussou reported that Nozo had written to complain of being deprived of Baudrez's companionship for his trip. He also requested 3,000 francs to cover his traveling expenses. The council replied by suggesting the names of three confreres for him to choose from as a traveling companion. As for his monetary request the council commented, "3,000 francs is a considerable sum for making a trip to Rome, if the journey were made in conformity with the simplicity required by our state." The council agreed to provide the sum, "leaving it to his [Nozo's] conscience that he employ the funds properly." However, the council stipulated that only half the money would be given to Nozo immediately. The community would provide the other half once he was in Rome and ready to return to France.8 Nozo chose to have his confessor, Alexandre Henin, accompany him.

On 18 June, Latour-Maubourg wrote to Guizot reporting his conversations with Propaganda Fide and Cardinal Ostini. He had been assured that the question in their minds was not the transferal of the superior general to Rome but rather the procurator general.9 The

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6 Ibid.
7 General Council Minutes, 1: 197, ACGR.
8 Ibid., 198-99.
9 Latour-Maubourg to Guizot, 18 June 1842, Correspondance Politique: Rome, 984: 107, AMAE.
cardinal also promised that the Holy See would consult the French government and the Lazarists’ council before making any decision. The ambassador promised that he would “combat this measure.” He added, “I hope to be able to stop any plan that is contrary to our views and to the Congregation’s true interests.” He said he expected no further developments on these fronts until the settlement of the Nozo question.\textsuperscript{10} On 28 June, Guizot wrote to Latour-Maubourg about the attempts to rehabilitate Étienne’s reputation in Rome.\textsuperscript{11} The Foreign Minister reported that De Jacobis had denied making the complaints attributed to him and to the contrary had expressed “his confidence and regard” for the procurator general. Guizot also reported that he had read a letter from John Timon. In this letter, Timon, “disavowed the charges against the procurator general attributed as having come from him.”\textsuperscript{12} The Foreign Minister instructed the ambassador to report this new information to Propaganda Fide.

In his \textit{Notice}, Étienne commented on these events, adding a few more details. When the news came suspending the general assembly’s convocation and summoning Nozo to Rome, the vicar general and the council feared that the Holy See was unaware of “Monsieur Nozo’s blind and deplorable leadership.” They assumed that it was the Italian missionaries who had “misled the Sacred Congregation,” since the Holy See had never requested any information from Paris. In Étienne’s view, this situation “was alarming...and something had to be done to avoid this danger.”\textsuperscript{13} According to Étienne, it was Garibaldi, the inter-nuncio in Paris, who suggested a plan of action.\textsuperscript{14} Garibaldi told the French to compose an account of the sexennial assembly for the pope. He recommended that the report include all the charges against Nozo and the reasons that had prompted the assembly to nominate a vicar general. Garibaldi stressed that this document needed to arrive in Rome before the superior general. He recommended finding a way of getting the document directly to the pope without it first being filtered through the Roman Curia. According to Étienne, Joseph Rosati took this report with him to Rome.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{11} Guizot to Latour-Maubourg, 28 June 1842, \textit{Correspondance Politique: Rome}; 984: 110, AMAE.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Etienne, \textit{Notice}, 42.
\textsuperscript{15} Étienne said that Garibaldi “loved the Company sincerely, deplored its misfortunes, and was indignant at M. Nozo’s conduct.” Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
However, there is no mention of this memorandum in the general council minutes.

Nozo arrived at the port of Civitavecchia on 24 June. Vito Guarini later recalled the profound sadness he felt as he saw a humiliated Nozo disembark. He said he could not help but contemplate the great changes in the general’s life since he visited Rome only five years earlier for the centenary celebrations. Nozo introduced his companion Alexandre Henin to Guarini by saying, “This is the man designated to spy and report on me.” The next day, accompanied by Rosati, Nozo had an audience with Cardinal Ostini. According to Guarini’s account, the cardinal entered the room “and without ceremony, and without any opening remarks, said to him [Nozo] in good French, ‘It is the Holy Father’s wish that you resign.’” Guarini recalled that this statement stunned Nozo, who could not believe that the pope would demand his resignation without giving him a hearing. The reason that he had come to Rome in the first place was for a chance to present his case. Nozo could not understand a summons just to request his resignation. He felt that if this were the Holy See’s decision, the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars could have issued the demand by mail. This first meeting did not have the result hoped for by Cardinal Ostini, as Nozo declined to make a decision. As Guarini correctly pointed out, however, Nozo delayed but could not avoid his fate.

Nozo had a papal audience the morning of 3 July. According to Guarini, Gregory XVI started the audience by asking Nozo, innocently enough, if it were true that he had suffered greatly from the heat during his voyage. Nozo replied that the heat he had suffered was only external, while “what afflicted him more was the moral suffering that he had endured, and continued to endure, at his enemies’ hands.” Guarini said that at this point, the pope interrupted Nozo to tell him “to deal with the cardinal prefect about these matters.” He then changed the subject and turned to Guarini to ask him a few innocuous questions. After only a few minutes, the audience quickly ended.

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21 Guaranì, Relazione, 54, ACMP.
22 See General Council Minutes, 1: 198, ACGR.
23 Guaranì, Relazione, 54, ACMP.
24 Ibid., 55.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 On 28 June, the French ambassador wrote to the Foreign Minister reporting that Nozo had arrived in Rome, and that he had already had his first interview. The ambassador also mentioned that according to the cardinal, in this meeting Nozo “had manifested the most pacific and conciliating attitudes.” Correspondance Politique: Rome, 984: 113, AMAE.
28 Guaranì, Relazione, 55, ACMP.
29 Ibid.
In his Notice, Étienne claimed, "Monsieur Nozo was not disposed to obey the Sovereign Pontiff’s order, and several weeks passed without the situation being resolved." Meanwhile, according to Étienne, Nozo asked permission to visit Naples. This request did not meet with papal approval. In Étienne’s version, a Neapolitan Lazarist, "Mgr. Laetitia," [sic] sought out Nozo in an attempt to resolve the impasse. Étienne said that Letizia, who was in Rome for his episcopal ordination, told Nozo the truth about his position. He said that the Holy See had received a full report on his conduct...and the pope had requested his resignation to spare him the humiliation of a scandalous deposition." According to Étienne, this news appalled Nozo. The general immediately wrote out his resignation and gave it to Mgr. Letizia to convey to the pope. Camillo Letizia, C.M., was the bishop of Tricarico from 1838 to 1859. He therefore could not have been "the bishop, newly named," referred to by Étienne in his Notice.

In his account Guarini, as an eyewitness, gave a differing version of these same events. He said that it was Ferdinando Girardi, a Neapolitan confrere, who invited Nozo and his companion to visit Naples. Girardi was in Rome for his ordination as bishop of Sant' Angelo dei Lombardi. Nozo accepted this invitation. When Joseph Rosati heard of these plans, he informed Cardinal Ostini. The cardinal made it known that "it was the will of His Holiness that Signor Nozo may not leave Rome until he has given his resignation from the generalate." This restriction increased Nozo’s despair.

Guarini received a letter at this time from Joseph Boury in France who wrote: "We ardently desire that the affairs that have occupied us for such a long time, and have so greatly afflicted us, will be settled happily in Rome. We hope that the superior general’s cause will be triumphant. Toward this end, we recommend that the Holy Father summon two confreres to Rome to confirm the details of the superior general’s defense. Two possible candidates would be Monsieur Wargnier and Monsieur Trouve." This plan for Nozo’s support was much too little, and it arrived much too late.

According to Guarini, on 26 July, when Girardi heard of the papal veto of Nozo’s trip, he sought the superior general out in his room.

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24 Étienne, Notice, 42.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Hierarchia Catholica, 7: 564.
28 Girardi (1788-1866) was consecrated on 24 July by Cardinal Ostini. Ibid., 7: 75.
29 Guarini, Relazione, 56, ACMP.
30 Boury was then the visitor of the province of Aquitaine.
31 Guarini, Relazione, 57, ACMP.
Girardi locked the door so that they would have no interruptions and after a half-hour of "animated exhortation" persuaded Nozo to write his resignation letter. The bishop-elect immediately sent the resignation to Cardinal Ostini. Three days later the French ambassador relayed the news to François Guizot in Paris.

The Cardinal Secretary of State told me this morning that Monsieur Nozo has finally given in and resigned in terms that are to the cardinal's complete satisfaction. His Eminence was pleased with this result and does not think it would have been obtained without calling this ecclesiastic to Rome....His Eminence greatly desired that I immediately transmit this good news to you....It does not seem that Rome will take any other actions for now with regard to changes in the constitutions of the Lazarists or the residence of the procurator general....So, for the moment we are without inquietude on these points. Nevertheless, I will be on the watch for such and will keep you informed. While awaiting further developments, we can say that we have achieved our immediate goal, and that the Lazarists, the cause of religion, and the royal government have avoided grave embarrassment, unfortunate publicity, and scandal.

On 2 August, Cardinal Ostini wrote to Guarini with the news that the pope had accepted the superior general's resignation with satisfaction.

In a letter written on the day he resigned, Nozo confided "to a secret correspondent" a partial account of the events leading to his resignation. He spoke of having dinner with Cardinal Ostini and telling him of his planned trip to Naples. According to Nozo, the cardinal had simply said, "one of these days we must speak about the Congregation's affairs." Nozo said he and the cardinal agreed on a future meeting date. While awaiting this meeting, Nozo recalled that he had kept silent and spoken to no one about the negotiations. He noted that Cardinal Ostini had not done similarly and that he had been busy consulting "with our dear confreres whom you know." According to Nozo, "someone has used this time to agitate, write, and intrigue with the cardinal prefect concerning my actions and my motives." Nozo now realized the impact of the French government's intervention "in the person of Monsieur Guizot." He acknowledged

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32 Ibid.
33 Latour-Maubourg to Guizot, 29 July 1842, Correspondance Politique: Rome, 984: 129-30, AMAE.
34 Guarini, Relazione, 57-58, ACMP.
35 Nozo to an unnamed correspondent, 28 July 1842, Nozo II, Documents, 1835-1842, C 39, bas 2°, ACMP. In another hand is written the following notation at the top of the letter, "M. Nozo writing to a secret correspondent that he had offered his resignation. Poor M. Nozo and his illusions."
that he was an embarrassment to people “in high places in Rome.” Nozo wrote, “No longer wishing to be the source of embarrassment and annoyance for the venerable pontiff...I have given my resignation pure and simple.”

On 2 August 1842, Cardinal Ostini wrote to Antoine Poussou informing him of Nozo’s resignation. He spoke of Rome’s desire to restore “peace and order” by confirming him as vicar general. This arrangement was to last “until the Holy See should decide upon the election of a future superior general.” At the general council meeting of 18 August, Poussou and the council members discussed the news. They approved drafts of circular letters to the Congregation and the Daughters. The vicar general issued these letters two days later on 20 August. On 17 August, Guizot wrote to the French chargé d’affaires to the Holy See, the Comte de Rayneval, expressing his pleasure at the news of Nozo’s resignation. The Foreign Minister commented that the only thing left to do was to “procure the election of his successor by a general assembly as called for by the constitutions....There is nothing more plausible than that things should now be conducted according to ordinary procedures.”

“Monsieur Nozo’s resignation did not end these affairs.”

Guizot’s assumption that normalcy would now return to the Lazarists was mistaken. According to Étienne, the “four Italian missionaries” whose appeal had stopped the general assembly now pursued the rest of their plans. Their ultimate goal was “to transfer the superior general’s seat to this capital of the world.” Étienne claimed that the only way for the Italians to accomplish this goal was for the pope to name the next superior general. The new general would then presumably agree to the transfer. Étienne said that the French government remained the only “obstacle” preventing the Italian plan’s success. The Holy See sought the French government’s agreement to the plan of having the pope choose the next superior general. Rome’s reasoning, in Étienne’s view, was that since Guizot was a Protestant “he would not attach any importance to an affair of this nature and

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36 Ibid.
37 General Council Minutes, I: 215, ACGR.
38 Guizot to Rayneval, 17 August 1842, Correspondance Politique: Rome, 984: 135, AMAE.
39 Étienne, Notice, 43.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
would easily consent to the pope's desire." Etienne's analysis here was ridiculous. The Holy See was already aware of the French government's, and Guizot's, deep interest in the solution of the Lazarists' problems.

After Nozo's resignation, Rome moved quickly to formulate its plan for the Congregation's future. The Holy See wanted to avoid any solution that would lead to further confusion and divisions within the Congregation. Under the circumstances, it therefore believed that a general assembly should not meet. The only alternative then was for the pope to name a superior general as in 1827. Rome realized that naming either an Italian or a Frenchman would only continue the internecine disputes within the Lazarists. Apparently, it was Joseph Rosati who suggested that naming a neutral outsider as superior general was a possible solution to this dilemma. Rosati put forward the name of his old friend, John Timon, the visitor of the American province, as just such a candidate. Timon was well known in Rome. He had already declined appointments to several sees in the United States. Once named, Rosati thought that Timon could then establish an equilibrium between the French and the non-French provinces in future general assemblies.

These plans made no mention of moving the superior general's seat to Rome. On 2 August, Ostini wrote to Garibaldi in Paris, instructing him to approach the French government with this proposal. According to Étienne, Rome forbade Garibaldi from making the details known to the French Lazarists. He was to ask Guizot to follow the same policy. Guarini reported that he too was forbidden to write to Paris about this matter. The Roman attempts to keep negotiations confidential between the Holy See and the French government failed. The French embassy had already informed the Foreign Minister about the plan's details. Cardinal Lambruschini had told Rayneval "We will use this occasion to give the Lazarists a superior general from the new world."

Guizot waited for further explanations from the Holy See that would justify the course of action they were proposing to take. This information was forthcoming from Rayneval in a dispatch dated 8 August. At the

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42 Ibid.
43 Guarini, Relazione, 64, ACMP.
44 Ibid.
45 For the correspondence between the Holy See and Garibaldi during this period see Arch. Nunt. Parigi, Garibaldi, 45, ASV.
46 Étienne, Notice, 43.
47 Guarini, Relazione, 65, ACMP.
48 Rayneval to Guizot, 8 August 1842, Correspondance Politique: Rome, 984: 82, AMAE.
49 Guarini, Relazione, 65, ACMP.
general council meeting on 30 August, Poussou told the assistants that Guizot had sent him a copy of this dispatch. This information revealed that the Holy See would soon propose a plan for settling "the Congregation's present position." Poussou informed the council that the Foreign Minister had asked it to advise him on the best means "to refute the motives advanced to justify such grave departures from our constitutions." The council agreed to have a memorandum prepared for consideration at their next meeting. At this crucial juncture of events, Étienne was absent on a trip to Algeria. Arriving back in Paris during the first days of September, he took up the familiar task of writing the memorandum mandated by the council. Étienne presented the draft of his work at the council meeting held on 6 September. The council approved the document with a few minor changes, and directed Étienne to send it to Guizot.

A concise statement of the Holy See's position can be found in a letter from Ostini to Garibaldi dated 21 September 1842. Cardinal Ostini said that the reason for not allowing the "inopportune" convocation of a general assembly were problems that were "inherent in the actual structure of this assembly." If not corrected, he felt that these could only lead to further problems among the Lazarists. In Rome's view, "the delegates in electing [a superior general] do not possess a full and necessary canonical liberty." Ostini held that no distinction could be made between droit et fait. The French had always recognized the constitutional principle that any qualified Lazarist, regardless of nationality, could be elected as superior general. They also acknowledged, however, that given the special relationship between the French government and the Congregation, the government would only accept a French candidate. This distinction had always troubled the Italians and the other nationalities.

The Congregation of Bishops and Regulars attacked the presupposition that the superior general of the Lazarists in any sense "had to be" French. Rome would not recognize such a restriction made either by the Lazarists or by the French government. If claimed by the

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50 General Council Minutes, 1: 216, ACGR.
51 Ibid. At the same time Guizot wrote to Rayneval in Paris instructing him to take no further action on this question until he had received "formal and detailed instructions that will enable you to judge and speak about this issue with a full knowledge of the facts." Guizot to Rayneval, 6 September 1842, Correspondance Politique: Rome, 964. 143, AMAE.
52 Ibid.
53 General Council Minutes, 1: 217, ACGR.
54 Guarini, Relazione, 66-67, ACMP.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
Lazarists, it would have been manifestly contrary to their constitutions and past papal decisions. If the government required this restriction and the Lazarists accepted it, for whatever reason, this action destroyed "the electors' absolute and perfect liberty" to vote for the candidate whom they judged "to be the most worthy" not just among the French, but among all the Congregation's members.7 Ostini denied that the papal appointment of Pierre de Wailly as superior general was a recognition of the government's claim that only a Frenchman could serve in this position. The Congregation of Bishops and Regulars also noted that Louis XIV's veto of Maurice Faure and the subsequent election of Nicolas Pierron had required a pontifical sanation (sanatoire).58 In this case, the Holy See had not recognized any claim by the French king of the right to veto the general assembly's choice. The Congregation also noted how the many years of Italian and French antagonisms had been detrimental to the Lazarists.

The document observed that the unbroken succession of French superior generals was attributable to the fact that the French held a guaranteed majority in general assemblies. This led to their second major objection that an assembly "would not represent a just and equitable equilibrium among the nationalities that composed the community."59 Ostini pointed out that the community had four French provinces with a total of eighty priests, while the three Italian provinces totaled more than 230 priests. The Cardinal Prefect said that until these problems were resolved his Congregation would not allow a general assembly to meet. He wanted to avoid the possibility of any further "intrigues and irregularities." To help determine a just equilibrium, the cardinal instructed Garibaldi to have the Lazarists send a report to Rome listing each province, its canonical houses, and its members.60

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57 Ibid., 67.
60 Ibid., 67.
61 Ibid., 68.
62 Ibid. At the general council meeting on 18 October 1842, Poussou told the council of Ostini's request for information on the Congregation. The council made the observations that "this was the first time that the Holy See has made a request of this nature, and it is not difficult to see that the true reason for the Roman request was to procure the information that would support the desire to change the Congregation's present organization." The council advised Poussou to respond to Ostini by saying that it would be impossible to respond immediately to this request since it would take many months to contact the foreign missions for the required information. It seems hard to imagine that the always precise Etienne did not have the information on the foreign missions at his fingertips. Despite their professed reverence for Roman authority, the French did not hesitate to stonewall when they felt it served their purposes, and they could get away with it. See General Council Minutes, 1: 228, ACGR.
In the preamble of his report to Guizot, Étienne spoke of the council’s reaction to the Roman dispatch:

The council members could not read this dispatch without being profoundly saddened. They discovered that the Holy See imputes intentions to the French Lazarists that they have never held and have always been far from their thoughts. They learned that it has judged their conduct with respect to the government of their Congregation with a severity that they believe to be unjustified. They can easily see that the accusations made against them did not originate with the Holy See but were the result of calumnious insinuations made by those who hope to attain their goals by this means. The council believes that by exposing the true state of matters they will reveal these prejudices to be entirely without foundation, and the Holy See will abandon this project.61

In his typical fashion, Étienne answered Rome’s objections, point-by-point. The first accusation he addressed was the alleged “French disregard for the Constitutions.” Étienne responded emotionally,

This accusation gravely wounds our hearts. We have, to the contrary, always considered them [the constitutions] as a precious deposit left to us by Saint Vincent de Paul. We view them as a deposit that we must pass on in its integrity, from age to age and by each generation to posterity. They must be for the community a source of consolation and the guarantee of heavenly favor. Contrary to this accusation, we believe that the community must obey the constitutions with the greatest and scrupulous exactitude. Our experience convinces us that the Congregation’s prosperity depends on our fidelity in this regard.62

Étienne then addressed the specific way in which Rome accused the French of “disregarding” the Constitutions. “Rome has accused us of arrogating to ourselves a supremacy that adversely affects all the other provinces of our Congregation. It has also accused us of purposely arranging things so that in all matters the French are always in the majority. This is said to be true in the election of the superior where, according to the constitutions, all the provinces should be equally represented, but because of the French majority the other provinces are only consulted for form’s sake.”63 Étienne told the Foreign Minister that these “assertions were entirely without founda-

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61 Nozo II: Documents, 1843-1866, C 39, bas 2°, 32, ACMP.
62 Ibid., 1-2.
63 Ibid.
tion.” He pointed out that it was Saint Vincent, who over two hundred years previously had given the Congregation its particular structure. He said that the claim that the organization of the provinces violated the community’s constitutions betrayed “an incomplete knowledge” of this document. He pointed out that the papally approved constitutions gave the superior general “full and entire authority” to erect and suppress provinces, “when in his wisdom he judges that the Congregation’s interests demand this action.”

Étienne commented on how in the past the number of French provinces, and thus the number of French votes at general assemblies, had been much greater than they were now. He did not mention, of course, the greater number of French Lazarists before the Revolution that justified a larger number of provinces. He noted that the number of Italian provinces had grown from one to three, as well as the addition of the provinces of Spain and Portugal. Nowhere, however, did Étienne directly address the great disparity in the number of French Lazarists and provinces in relation to the number of members and provinces in Italy. Étienne concluded that the French Lazarists could only unjustly be accused of having a disregard for the constitutions. Thus if, as the dispatch from Rome claimed, “an internal problem” existed within the Congregation the true source of this came from those who were using this argument as an excuse to produce “a great upheaval” for their own purposes.

Étienne next addressed the charge “that in the election of a superior the non-French provinces were only consulted pro forma.” In response, he noted that in examining the minutes of the Congregation’s previous eighteen assemblies he found no evidence to support this charge. He asked rhetorically, “Can one imagine that a transgression of this grave nature could take place regularly over the last two centuries without anyone attending these assemblies ever mentioning it?” Étienne retorted that only someone who had little knowledge of the “spirit that has always animated our various assemblies” could charge that a nationalistic spirit so presided there as to exclude other provinces from anything but a pro forma consultation.

The next accusation addressed by Étienne was the complaint made by “the Italian provinces” to the Holy See. The Italians claimed that they were deprived “of their legitimate influence in the general direction of the

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64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
66 This argument of Étienne’s still did not address the great disparity in numbers between the membership of the French and Italian provinces for example.
67 Ibid., 5.
Congregation's affairs." Étienne denied this charge. He countered by saying that the French believed that it was only "a few individuals from these provinces who were responsible for this complaint." He further claimed that the majority of Italians "do not support this claim." Étienne commented, "We know the true spirit of these provinces too well, and we believe that they support the maintenance of the Congregation's organization as established by Saint Vincent de Paul."*

Étienne next discussed the exclusion of the provinces outside Europe from the Congregation's assemblies. He pointed out that again this was in accord with a provision of the papally approved constitutions. Étienne explained the original reason for this exclusion. With the difficulties in communication and long travel times, delegates from overseas provinces did not have time to reach Paris within the maximum six-month period given from the convocation of a general assembly to its opening. Étienne admitted that "today we travel much more quickly and the motive for this exclusion no longer exists." He said that the general council had already decided to bring this issue before the upcoming general assembly. The assembly alone could, with the Holy See's approbation, make such a change in the constitutions.

Étienne went on to discuss the relations between Paris and the American province. He claimed that the French had always done everything that they could for the Americans. They had erected the province in 1835 and had promised as soon as possible to see that its delegates could attend assemblies. He also noted that the French had sent "a great number" of the missionaries who now comprised the membership of the province. Étienne recalled how in 1835, Jean-Marie Odin had come to Paris from America. He said that Odin had "insisted that the mission pass from its dependence on the Roman province to the jurisdiction of the mother house in Paris." Étienne overstated his case with respect to French relations with the American province. The mission in the United States was under the Roman vicar general's jurisdiction from its establishment in 1816. However, when unified government returned to the Congregation in 1827, it then came under the superior general's

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68 Ibid.
69 Ibid., 4. At this point there were only two provinces erected outside Europe; the United States and the Middle East.
70 General Council Minutes, meeting of 8 May 1842, 1: 190. ACGR.
71 Étienne, Projet, 5. ACMF.
72 For more information on Odin see American Vincentians. See also Vie de Mgr. Jean-Marie Odin, Missionnaire Lazariste, Archevêque de la Nouvelle-Orléans (Paris: Du Moulin, 1896).
73 Étienne, Projet, 5. ACMF.
74 See American Vincentians, 451-54.
jurisdiction. The minutes of the general council meeting attended by Odin in 1835 do not show any request by him for the mission to pass to Paris's jurisdiction. The minutes simply record that the superior general, taking advantage of the presence of Odin in Paris, had convoked the meeting of the council "in order to deliberate on the state of our American mission, and upon the measures which will ensure its future welfare." Etienne also claimed that it had only been through his efforts that the Lyons Society for the Propagation of the Faith had provided any funds for the American missions. He said that it was only after their association with Paris that the prosperity of the American establishments began. Etienne concluded that the Americans "had to have been entirely unaware" of the requests made on their behalf to the Holy See. These were so manifestly contradictory to the "true interests" of the American province as to be unthinkable. Thus, Etienne dismissed the threat reported to Rome of an American schism unless "a real reform took place in the Congregation." 

Etienne next discussed the Italian provinces. Here, the assertion to which he was responding was that if no changes took place in the Congregation's administration a schism by the Italian provinces was probable. Etienne felt that the Italians were using this threat as a scare tactic to get their way. He made the counter charge that the real danger for a schism was among the Italians themselves, since most Italian members did not support changes in the community's Constitutions. Etienne pointed out to the Foreign Minister that the French Lazarists, "had nothing to lose" by an Italian schism. This was because their existence and welfare did not depend on their union with their Italian confreres. As far as the French were concerned, a schism would pose no "inconvenience" for them. All it would mean would be that Paris would no longer have authority over the Italian provinces. According to Etienne, if Paris were to lose its authority over the Italians, "in our eyes this would have the very agreeable compensation of our no longer having to sustain the burden of the corresponding solicitude.

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75 General Council Minutes, meeting of 2 September 1835, 1: 71, ACGR.
76 Etienne, Projet, 5, ACMP. Given the troubled history of the early years of the American province and Etienne's own criticisms of the province it is hard to justify this claim. On 1 November 1852, for example, Etienne as superior general issued a circular letter to the confreres in the United States giving a gloomy assessment of their province. He noted that its progress "is far from presenting us with the consoling results that would have been expected." He went on to speak of "unfortunate ups and downs, aborted projects, sterile arrangements, failed undertakings, and deceived hopes that had caused so much work and sacrifice to be without fruit." See American Vincentians, 46.
77 Etienne, Projet, 5, ACMP.
78 Ibid.
that our present union with them imposes upon us." 79

Having said this, however, Étienne noted that the French "would greatly regret it if even one word they said contributed in any way to a schism." Paris’s position was that, "We do not want to separate what Saint Vincent himself has united. We greatly desire to see his work remain intact and enjoying its primitive unity." Étienne noted, "if this schism takes place and it is not our fault, we will consider it a development that will lead to the tranquillity and peace of the French Lazarists." 80 Étienne concluded that if the Italians wanted "to conserve the order and unity" of the Congregation they should "leave things as they are and as they have always been." If they thought that without a union that included them, the Congregation "could not function, or would disappear" they were operating under an "illusion." 81

Étienne continued his argument by saying that the Vatican plan "proposed to reform an abuse that does not exist and to remedy an interior weakness that has a source entirely different from what is presumed." These actions could only lead to "the inevitable dispersion and the fall of the Congregation of the Lazarists." Étienne felt that it was the proposal for a papal appointment of the superior general that revealed a true disregard for the constitutions. He then asked this series of rhetorical questions. "Can one reasonably expect that a superior appointed in this manner would be received without trouble, without controversy, and would not find his coming to power strewn with obstacles of every nature? Can one believe that he will obtain the submission and confidence of everyone, without which it will be impossible for him to govern? Is it not obvious, that to impose a superior will lead to a real fermentation within the community, as opposed to the one that is only imagined to exist now?"

Having said this, Étienne had to explain away the example of just such a papal action in Leo XII’s appointment of Pierre de Wailly as superior general. According to Étienne’s analysis, the situation in 1827 was completely different from what the community faced in 1842. In 1827, the Congregation had been without a superior general for almost thirty years. The community was also divided between the jurisdictions of two vicar generals. Under these circumstances, a general assembly could not have been regularly convoked.

79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
At the time, everyone recognized that the only way to get the Congregation reestablished “on its ancient foundation” was by the intervention of pontifical authority. Etienne said that in 1827, the Holy See had not “imposed” a superior general but had first consulted the vicars general in Paris and Rome. Étienne succumbed, however, to the temptation to overstate his case. He claimed that all the houses and provinces had been consulted about whether “to reinstate the Congregation’s seat at Paris, and whether the new superior general should be a Frenchman.” Supposedly, “the vast majority of the houses gave an affirmative answer.” His final comment was that the French government had proposed De Wailly as the candidate only after assuring the French Lazarists’ “consent.” None of these points was true.

As Étienne next pointed out, “Today the circumstances are different,” the Congregation possessed a regular constitutional administration. He said that he could see no reason that the community should not proceed to the convocation of a general assembly, and the election of a new superior general. He further asked, “Why rely on an extraordinary means when no serious motive justifies this?”

Étienne felt that it was his duty to point out the “grave consequences” of the Roman plan. He said that the proposal was “without precedent in the Congregation’s long history.” The plan sought “not only to impose a superior general but to impose a non-French superior general.” In Étienne’s mind, this would be an event “which could only lead to a catastrophe and a frightening upheaval that would lead inevitably to the collapse of everything.” What other outcome could be expected from transporting a superior, who cannot speak French, from another world to Paris and imposing him upon subjects who do not know him or have confidence in him? What other outcome could be expected from introducing such a superior into circumstances of which he is ignorant and into an administration whose ways he also would not know? What would happen to the Daughters of Charity with such an inexperienced superior general? How could the sisters have confidence in a superior whom their own confrères did not support? Has anyone foreseen the trouble and agitation which would soon arise as a result of this disastrous decision?

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Étienne, who had met Timon, knew that he spoke French.
Étienne commented that he believed Timon would not accept a burden "that could only overwhelm him." If he were to accept such an appointment, according to Étienne's apocalyptic vision, "He would cause the ruin of the two families of Saint Vincent in France. He also would end up moving the Congregation's seat to Rome." 88

Étienne reminded Guizot that in 1827, some Gallican opposition to the unprecedented papal nomination of a superior general had emerged within the Council of State. He predicted that in this case the "Council of State would refuse to allow the publication of the brief of nomination," since the papal nominee would be a foreigner. He requested the Foreign Minister's "powerful intervention." The purpose of this intervention was to persuade Rome "to abandon the proposed project since it has no legitimate justification, is contrary to all precedents, presents grave dangers for the Congregation's existence...and is manifestly impossible to execute." 89

Étienne also requested that the government lobby the Holy See to allow the immediate convocation of a general assembly. He pointed out that the temporary nature of government by a vicar general was problematic. Étienne explained that a vicar general had "very limited" powers since he usually held office for only six months while awaiting the election of a new general. One implication of Poussou's limited powers as vicar general was that he had no authority to sign legal documents on the Congregation's behalf. Étienne ended his long appeal by saying, "We are confident that given these motives, Your Excellency will take those immediate actions that you, in your wisdom, will judge to be efficacious to bring about a solution to the difficulties that presently impede the execution of our constitutions." 90

On 25 November 1842, the Foreign Minister wrote to Rayneval "to inform you of what I have learned to this point with respect to the Lazarist affair, the difficulties raised by the Holy See, and the royal government's intentions." 91 Guizot told the ambassador that in his judgment the Holy See's position was imprudent, unnecessary, and "did not take into account inevitable complications." He admitted that Rome's disposal of Nozo had been "useful and necessary." However, Guizot complained that the Holy See had taken this action and subsequent actions without informing or consulting the

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88 Ibid.
89 Ibid., 15.
90 Ibid., 17.
Congregation’s general council. He also thought that Rome was prejudiced against the community’s administration. Concerning the Holy See’s justification for its actions, Guizot recalled that “not knowing the accuracy of these accusations” he had relayed them directly to Étienne and asked him to respond. After having examined Étienne’s response, Guizot said that he now believed “the Holy See had succumbed to the machinations of intriguers.”

Guizot went on to state: “It is clear...that the royal government will not recognize a superior general installed in such an unusual and extralegal manner. This proposal is contrary to the letter and spirit of the Congregation’s constitutions...and violates the king’s rights.” The Holy See’s nomination of a foreigner would create an “inconvenient and impossible situation” regarding the relationship between the Congregation and the government. He concluded saying, “I can only interpret this nomination as having the ultimate goals of getting rid of a French general after two hundred years and moving the Congregation’s headquarters to Rome. We cannot tolerate this plan. The pontifical government knows that we have always opposed this move no matter what means it seeks to achieve this end.” Guizot agreed that the conditions that existed among the Lazarists were irregular but that the French Lazarists were not to blame. In his opinion it was “the non-French Lazarists, especially those of Italy,” who had misled the Holy See and convinced it to create these conditions.

The Foreign Minister agreed on the need to avoid a “deplorable schism.” He hoped to enlighten the Holy See by “defending, with clear evidence, the justice of the cause [of the French Lazarists]. Supplied with this information, Rome would then abandon its present plan that so prejudiced the Congregation’s essential interests and left it incapable of fulfilling its functions that are so useful to the cause of religion.” Guizot told the ambassador again that he should urge the Holy See to allow the immediate convocation of a general assembly.

The Foreign Minister also revealed his own Gallican ecclesial and political presuppositions. He told the ambassador that the Congregation’s constitutions (which Rome had approved) gave the Holy See no further right to “interfere” in the Congregation’s affairs. Guizot went on to say,
It is high time for the Holy See to stop this unfounded debate based on illegal arguments that disparages the evident rights of these esteemed men whose apostolic works everyone appreciates....I consider it a singular occurrence that the Holy See has raised these difficulties with respect to the only congregation of men legally recognized in France—a group of men who bear the name of Vincent de Paul—who are justly popular and well known because of the constancy of their moral conduct. These men are distinguished by the grandeur of the services that their indefatigable zeal has efficaciously rendered in the interests of Catholicism.95

Guizot instructed the ambassador to use Étienne's arguments. He ended by saying, "I repeat that it is urgent that things follow their regular course. I instruct you to spare no efforts in this affair, especially to see to it that the crisis does not continue. We want it to end as soon as possible." Rayneval replied a few weeks later, "I have received your memorandum, and I am following your instructions. However, I expect to have problems in the settlement of this affair, since here at the Vatican very old and powerful prejudices are at work."97

After the Cardinal Secretary of State received the French response, the pope suggested the possibility of a compromise. He would allow the general assembly to meet, but not in Paris. He felt that if it met instead in Rome, a "necessary harmony" could be assured.98 Étienne in his Notice commented that this new proposal had been suggested to the pope by the "intriguers," who were only seeking another means to achieve their ends. He observed that Guizot responded by saying that "since the Congregation had always held their general assemblies in Paris, he saw no reason to change this practice now."99 The Foreign Minister also pointed out that the members of the Congregation's general administration who had to attend the general assembly could not exercise their responsibilities so far away from the mother house. Guizot characterized this proposal as "being equally contrary to custom, without any utility, dangerous, and very impractical." The Foreign Minister concluded that the new Roman plan was a thinly veiled attempt to influence the upcoming election so that a Frenchman

95 Ibid.
96 Ibid. In his Notice, Étienne related that after "having attentively and seriously examined" the French response to the Roman allegations Guizot concluded "that the motives alleged" by Rome were "not well founded." Guizot's position, according to Étienne, was that "the successor to M. Nozo should be elected by a general assembly regularly convoked according to the constant practice of the Congregation," 44.
97 Guizot to Rayneval, 8 November 1842, Correspondance Politique: Rome, 984: 177, AMAE.
98 Guarini, Relazioni, 77, ACMP.
99 Étienne, Notice, 44.
was sure not to be elected. In his view, the election of a superior general at an assembly held in Rome would not be a free election.\textsuperscript{100}

In early January 1843, since it appeared that the Holy See had not yet completely abandoned its hopes of nominating a superior general, Guizot forwarded another memorandum to Cardinal Lambruschini via the embassy in Rome. He made some very telling points about the French government’s position and its relationship with the Lazarists. According to Guizot’s argument, the French Lazarists had established a secure national position despite the continuing French anticlerical prejudice against men’s religious communities. He said that the publicity caused by the proposed Roman intervention “will undo everything that the government has tried to do for the Lazarists.”\textsuperscript{101}

Guizot next reflected on the unique Gallican identity of the Lazarists.

The Lazarists were founded in France and in its earliest years were exclusively French. Other nationalities later sought to join, and they gladly were admitted to share in the successful work of Saint Vincent de Paul. Yet, it is no less true that the foundation is entirely French and has taken from France its principal resources and the principal elements of its success. I believe that I can affirm, without any purely nationalistic sentiment, that it has been its French spirit that primarily has accounted for the success of the work that Vincent de Paul gave to his disciples.\textsuperscript{102}

Guizot observed that in the case of communities established in other countries, their founders had taken advantage of “the particular religious character of the nation.” These founders instinctively used this character with great success to form their establishments. In his opinion, this had been Saint Vincent’s intention in establishing his “admirable” communities in France. He then asked the rhetorical question: “Today, what grave and compelling motive urges the Holy See to adopt a measure that will destroy all this?”\textsuperscript{103} The Foreign Minister repeated his contention that if the Holy See persisted in its intentions “the Congregation of the Lazarists would disappear from the kingdom and very soon by necessity from the rest of Christendom.” Guizot again asked rhetorically, “Would this deplorable result serve the Church’s interests, not only in France, but everywhere that the Lazarists work?” He also reminded Cardinal Lambruschini that the Daughters
of Charity inevitably would share the Lazarists’ fate, at the cost of their vast network of charitable institutions. The Foreign Minister repeated his view that there was no basis for Rome’s allegations against the French Lazarists. He echoed Étienne’s charge that “the ambitions of individual malevolent denouncers were the sole cause of the Congregation’s present unfortunate situation.” In his Notice, Étienne observed that after the unequivocal, and unyielding responses from Guizot, Rome finally understood “that it would gain nothing in negotiations with the French government.”

A Summons to Rome:
“A trap set by the authors of the intrigue”

At the general council meeting of 10 January 1843, Poussou informed the members that he had received a letter from the inter-nuncio. This letter announced that Cardinal Ostini had instructed him to invite the general council to send at least two French confreres to Rome. The French representatives were to meet with representatives of the Italian confreres, under the Cardinal prefect’s sponsorship, “to resolve the difficulties that have arisen with respect to the Congregation’s organization.” The goal of this action was “to end the present state of affairs in the Congregation.” In his Notice, Étienne commented that “one could easily see in this new proposal a trap set by the authors of the intrigue. They believed that once these [French] deputies were in the presence of the Church’s supreme authority they would be more likely to give in to its desires and not offer any further resistance.”

The debate in the general council revolved around the “danger” of consenting “to attend a meeting that in no way is foreseen by our constitutions.” This statement again reveals the underlying Gallican sensibilities of the French, who could not understand the ultramontane principles of a pontifical intervention. The French also balked at participating in a meeting “consisting of subjects under our authority who have no right to require any explanation from us. These subjects have caused all these difficulties because of their spirit of independence and have never consulted the general council about their difficulties.” The council felt that

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104 Rayneval to Guizot, 8 January 1843, Correspondance Politique: Rome, 984: 191-92, AMAE.  
105 Étienne, Notice, 45.  
106 Ibid.  
107 General Council Minutes, 1: 253, ACGR.  
108 Étienne, Notice, 45.  
109 General Council Minutes, 1: 253, ACGR.  
110 Ibid.
“out of respect for the Holy See” they should not refuse to honor the Roman request. Simultaneously, however, they had serious misgivings about cooperating. In this state of “indecision” the council did not feel it could act.111 It adjourned so that Poussou could consult the inter-nuncio.

Poussou reported to the council later the same day that Monsignor Garibaldi strongly supported the proposal of Cardinal Ostini and had told him that Rome would receive a French refusal to attend “very badly.” After this the council, “wishing to imitate Saint Vincent’s own profound submission to the Holy See, agreed to Cardinal Ostini’s request.”112 It appointed Étienne and Jean-Marie Aladel. According to the council minutes, both Étienne and Aladel at first declined to go but eventually accepted their assignments in a spirit of obedience.113

In his Notice, Étienne gave a different version of these events. He said that Garibaldi “had insisted that I be one of the two deputies chosen by the council.” He told Garibaldi that given the way Rome felt about him, he thought it would be “imprudent” for him to be a representative. Étienne expressed his fear that “the prejudices held against me would compromise the Congregation’s important interests in this matter.” He told Garibaldi it would take “a direct order” to make him agree to serve. Étienne said that Garibaldi had replied that “he knew both Rome and me very well, and for some time he had been looking for the right opportunity for me to go to Rome.” After hearing that Garibaldi thought the time was right for him to make such a trip, Étienne said he agreed to accept his appointment. The minutes of the general council meetings do not confirm any of these details.114

The general council met again on 16 January.115 The members gave the delegates two sets of instructions, one public and the other private. In its public instructions, the council said that it did not acknowledge the existence of any problems between the Italian and the French missionaries. In their view it was only “certain individuals in Rome” and not the Italian provinces that had caused the “present difficulties.” To avoid setting a “dangerous precedent,” the French delegates were to say that they were present at the Roman meeting only because of Cardinal Ostini’s “order.”116 The council did not recognize that the Italian confreres involved were competent to deal with constitutional questions or questions

111 Étienne, Notice, 45.
112 Ibid.
113 Ibid.
114 General Council Minutes, 1: 254, ACGR.
115 Ibid., 1: 255-56.
116 Ibid.
concerning the Congregation’s general administration.” The French representatives were only to provide information and any needed factual clarification. Étienne and Aladel “had no authority to decide any question or to make any concession touching our Constitutions.”117

It was the council’s position that, in any event, it could not agree to any constitutional changes since a general assembly alone possessed this power. They noted that all the proposed solutions to the Congregation’s alleged problems were outside the constitutions’ present provisions. The council also observed that the Holy See had never previously consulted it during these controversies. According to the council minutes, the second set of “secret” instructions addressed “the delegates’ rules of conduct and the manner in which they were to fulfill their mission.”118

Poussou also proposed to the council that it instruct the visitors of Turin and Naples, Marcantonio Durando and Pasquale Fiorillo, to go to Rome. They were to “reveal to the Holy See the true spirit of their provinces and to assist the French delegates in the prompt and successful completion of their mission.” The council accepted this recommendation, and it ordered the two Italian visitors to meet the French delegates in Rome by 5 February. The council had already written to Timon to ask if, as claimed by the Romans, the province of the United States supported changes in the Congregation’s constitutions. According to Étienne, Timon had written back to say that this was not true. The American province “not only had not expressed any such desire but on the contrary would not support the slightest change in the constitutions.”119

Étienne said that the Foreign Minister received notification of all these decisions. Guizot agreed that the delegates should “refuse to consider any change in the constitutions.”120 He also told Étienne that the government’s diplomatic efforts to reach an “advantageous solution” would continue.121 Guizot gave the delegates a letter for the French ambassador in Rome dated 23 January 1843. The Foreign Minister told Ambassador Latour-Maubourg not only to receive the French delegates with “the attention that they deserve” but also “to render them all the assistance in your power.”122 He went on to say, “You are aware of the intimate relationship that the procurator general [Étienne] has with my department, and the esteem and confidence

117 Ibid.
118 Ibid. For a copy of these formal instructions see Poussou, Vic. Gén., C 39, bas 3°, 33-38, ACMP.
119 Ibid.
120 Ibid.
121 Ibid.
that he enjoys with the king's government.... With regard to the completion of their mission, you are to support and sustain them in every manner. You should meet with them confidentially and give them complete access to all the materials that you have on this affair. You may intervene officially according to the policy set on this matter by the king's government. You are to cooperate in every way in their mission." The full force of the French government thus supported the position that Étienne and Aladel would be representing in Rome.

On 26 January, the two French delegates left Marseilles for Rome, where they arrived two days later. To avoid Michele Cremisini and Vito Guarini at Monte Citorio, Étienne and Aladel stayed at the house of San Silvestro on Monte Cavallo. Soon after their arrival, they had a preliminary interview with Cardinal Lambruschini. In this meeting, Lambruschini repeated the standard Roman reasoning for the proposed intervention in the superior general's election. He also commented "that the reason the Holy Father's supremacy existed was so that he could exercise it in a case like this, when the ordinary rules governing a situation were not able to resolve a dangerous conflict." The cardinal criticized Gallican constitutional dominance in the community. He repeated verbatim the central Italian charge that "the French majority decided all important decisions such as the superior general's election, and that the other provinces were only consulted pro forma." Lambruschini acknowledged the French government's position but said that the Holy See "understood the situation differently, and believed that its solution for the present state of affairs was preferable."

In this first interview with Lambruschini, Aladel did most of the talking for the French. This strategy was wise since everyone was aware that Étienne had a poor reputation with the Cardinal Secretary of State. Aladel repeated the standard French positions to Lambruschini. The cardinal replied that "he was not really tied to any particular way of resolving the situation as long as the means used attained the desired end." He thought that the proposed French solution "offered greater problems than the one the Holy See had proposed." This final statement was the first indication given by Lambruschini that...
Rome might consider other means to achieve their desired result.

On 8 February, Rayneval informed Guizot of Etienne and Aladel's arrival and their first meetings with Lambruschini and Ostini. He also reported that he had met with the Cardinal Secretary of State and told him of the government’s “repugnance” for the general assembly being held in Rome. Rayneval said, “I believe that I am safe in concluding that the task of Messieurs Étienne and Aladel will now be easier.”

On 14 February, Guizot wrote to Rayneval acknowledging with pleasure the sudden Roman decision not to name a superior general and its willingness to accept a French candidate. The Holy See, however, still had not abandoned its plan to have the general assembly held in Rome. The Foreign Minister repeated the government’s opposition to this extra-constitutional solution. Guizot refuted the argument that holding the assembly in Rome would help “to contain the dissidents who wish to spread and develop germs of discord.” He pointed out that everyone knew that the dissidents consisted of only two or three Italian missionaries. Dealing with these individuals’ complaints could be handled just as easily at a general assembly held in Paris.

Guizot noted ironically that at first the Holy See’s position had been that because a preponderant French influence created a lack of electoral freedom, the general assembly should not take place in Paris. Yet, it then turned around and wanted to create the same lack of freedom by guaranteeing the election of a French general if the assembly met in Rome. The Foreign Minister speculated that the Holy See had put forward this latest proposal to assure that a general assembly which met in Rome would change the constitutions and require that the procurator general reside there. The government had already said it would not allow this change. Guizot then issued explicit instructions to Rayneval:

To summarize, we will not consent, even for this one occasion, that the general assembly meeting to elect a superior general should be held in Rome. We do not admit that any valid reason

128 Rayneval to Guizot, 8 February 1843, Correspondance Politique: Rome, 984: 208, AMAE.
129 Ibid.
130 Ibid.
131 Guizot to Rayneval, 14 February 1843, Correspondance Politique: Rome, 984: 211-12, AMAE.
132 Ibid.
133 Ibid.
exists to modify the constitutions to require either the superior or procurator general to reside at Rome. We are formally opposed to any innovation of this type. Please inform the Holy See of our well-known intentions concerning these two points. You must insist in the most positive and pressing manner so that the Holy See will abandon all contrary and peremptory plans and stop raising obstacles to the general assembly’s convocation. The vicar general should be allowed to proceed to bring an end to all these difficulties that have gone on for far too long. Let the Lazarists go ahead and do the good that they are called to do.134

Showdown in Rome:
“The powers of hell attacked with ferocity.”135

The first face-to-face encounter between the French and the Italian Lazarists came in a meeting on 12 February arranged by Ostini and chaired by Joseph Rosati. Present at this meeting were Étienne, Aladel, and the three Italian visitors Cremisini, Fiorillo, and Durando.136 Étienne spoke first. He said that since the authors of the appeal had claimed that “the three Italian provinces and the American province shared their discontent and subscribed to their views,” the first order of business was to determine whether this claim was true.137 Étienne and Aladel then presented a letter from John Timon. The American visitor said that “neither he nor any of his confreres supported such an appeal to the Holy See.”138 According to Étienne’s notes from the meeting, Bishop Rosati then asked Durando and Fiorillo “if anyone had consulted them or their provinces to ask them to take part in the recourse to the Holy See.” They answered that the authors of the appeal had not consulted them or their provinces. The consequence of these revelations was the “recognition and admission that the recourse only represented the views of a few individuals.”139

134 Ibid.
135 Étienne to Sœur Marie, [a later hand has identified her as superior of the Daughters of Charity at the church of Saint Louis, Paris], 20 February 1843, Étienne: Lettres 1839-1845, C. 40, F. 3, L. (39-73), p1°, ACMP.
136 The Italian author of the life of Marcantonio Durando noted that before coming to Rome for the fateful meeting, Durando had consulted all the superiors of his province. They advised him “to oppose any division whatsoever.” “Difficultés intérieures dans l’administration de la Congrégation de la Mission, 1843,” (Trad. de la Vie de M. Durando, écrite par M. Martinengo. Dans la traduction publiée par les Annales de la Mission en 1892, on a omis les fragments ci-inclus.)” Envoi: Étienne, Casier 40, Haut 1, Adm. gl., ACMP.
137 Rosset, Vie Étienne, 150.
138 Étienne’s minutes from the 12 February 1843 meeting. Nos II: Documents 1842-1866, C. 39, bas 2°, 40, ACMP.
139 Ibid.
In his Notice, Étienne erroneously said that having established that the recourse represented the views of only "four Roman missionaries," the delegates "had nothing more to discuss."\footnote{Étienne, Notice, 47.} However, Étienne’s notes from the meeting reveal that the delegates discussed several other important matters at length. Étienne’s lapse on this point is again mythic in its intentionality and proportionality.

The second question put on the table by Étienne was whether "the general assembly had a complete liberty of suffrage in a superior general’s election."\footnote{Étienne, Roman Minutes, ACMP.} Étienne and Aladel clarified the French position on this question.

1. The French Lazarists support the principle enunciated in the declaration inserted in the acts of the 1703 general assembly saying that according to the Constitutions, any member of the Congregation whatever his nationality can be elected as superior general if he possesses the constitutional qualifications.
2. The French Lazarists state that they have had no part in the French government’s professed opposition to the election of a superior general who is not French. They also believe that if a non-French general is elected they can expect to see the suppression of the Congregation in France. However, they are more attached to the constitutions than to their existence. They believe that they can only enjoy heaven’s blessings when they observe these same constitutions in their integrity. They thus leave the consequences of this possibility to providence, and the general assembly’s consideration.
3. If the assembly elects a non-French superior general, and the government suppresses the Congregation in France because of this election, they would not hesitate to recognize the superior general’s authority to fix his seat wherever he thought it to be appropriate.
4. Finally, they would recognize anyone as the true and legitimate superior general if the election was regular and conformed to the relevant constitutional provisions.\footnote{Ibid.}

Rosati then asked the Italian visitors if “this satisfied them and if they judged” that these explanations guaranteed that “the liberty of suffrage is entire and is that required by the Constitutions?” Étienne’s notes record that “they unanimously responded positively.”\footnote{Ibid.}

The delegates discussed a third question concerning “the assertion that there was a disproportion in the various provinces’ representation in the general assembly.” “After discussion,” the minutes record
that the delegates “unanimously affirmed” the following points:

1. That a numerical and mathematical proportionality between the various provinces of the Congregation is impossible and has never existed in the Congregation’s history.
2. That there is nothing in the Constitutions to infer or support the above.
3. That all the French provinces have a sufficient number of houses and of missionaries and that no reason exists to justify their reduction.
4. That if, up to the present, the foreign provinces have not taken part in general assemblies this has been a legitimate exclusion. The present constitutions do not allow provinces outside Europe to participate in the general assembly. Nevertheless, we agree to propose that the next general assembly examine this article and see if the present circumstances are sufficient justification to permit that provinces outside Europe possess the same rights as the European provinces, with respect to attendance at assemblies.¹⁴⁴

A fourth question examined at the meeting dealt with a proposal, first put forward by Creminini with strong support from the Holy See.¹⁴⁵ This concerned ‘the possibility of having each nationality in the Congregation represented on the superior general’s council, thus increasing the number of the assistants.” The French focused on the fact that the constitutions limited the number of assistants to three or four. They did not support increasing the number. In their view, to specify the assistants’ nationalities would deprive the assembly of its liberty.¹⁴⁶ The French delegates also reminded the others that their instructions expressly forbade them to support, or even discuss, any positive resolution for constitutional changes.

The final point concerned reaching agreement upon “the most expedient means for responding to the Sovereign Pontiff’s wish that the superior general have a representative in Rome.” The delegates again “unanimously” agreed on a way of addressing this issue:

1. The establishment in Rome of a representative of the superior general is a measure that is not only useful but indispensable for the Congregation’s efficient administration.
2. In deciding the title and powers of this representative the opinion of the Italian visitors is important. Consequently, this question should be examined carefully. The Italian provincial assemblies should consider this proposal and present their recommendations to the general assembly.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.
¹⁴⁵ Guarini, Relazione, 85, ACMP.
¹⁴⁶ Étienne, Roman Minutes, ACMP.
¹⁴⁷ Ibid.
Étienne’s minutes record this final statement: “We unanimously agree to these resolutions, and we the undersigned have requested Mgr. Rosati to inform His Eminence, Cardinal Ostini, that there no longer exist any difficulties between the French Lazarists and the Italian Missionaries. We ask him to obtain an immediate audience with the cardinal, so that he may hear the assurance from us that we are in perfect accord with the resolutions that are here presented.” The “unanimity” so often claimed by Étienne in his minutes did not exist, since the Roman visitor refused to sign the agreement along with the others.

Cremisini was unconvinced by the French arguments. He also was undeterred by the lack of support from Durando and Fiorillo. He fired off a letter of protest to Cardinal Ostini. He charged that despite what the French had said and the others agreed to, a lack of liberty at the general assembly and a disproportion between provinces did exist. The Roman visitor said that the French arguments were “illusions not verified by the facts and contrary to the spirit of the Constitutions.” Cremisini told Ostini “that in conscience I cannot subscribe to the proposed illusory modifications, and I persist in imploring a true and efficacious solution from the supreme tribunal.”

Cremisini proposed just such a solution to Cardinal Ostini, “The Holy See should stop the abuse of authority by legislating that all the Congregation’s provinces, even those outside Europe, have the right to send three delegates to the assembly unless the province contains less than forty priests.” He also proposed that the Holy See direct that the four assistants each represent different nationalities. If the French refused to agree to these “indispensable modifications,” then the Holy See should divide the Congregation. The French could then go in their own direction. The rest of the Congregation would fall under “a head established in Rome.”

On 16 February, the delegates met with Cardinal Ostini to report the results of their negotiations. The Cardinal Prefect made one last attempt to avoid a complete defeat for the Holy See by picking up on Pasquale Fiorillo’s reservation that the delegates should ask the pope to authorize the representation of the American province at the next

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148 Ibid.
149 Ibid. Pasquale Fiorillo added a condition to his agreement, “that the Supreme Pontiff give the American Province the right to attend the next general assembly.”
150 Guarini, Relazisme, 84, ACMP.
151 Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, Consultazione, 21, ACMP.
152 Ibid.
assembly. Ostini also felt that the measures proposed by the delegates did not sufficiently address the issue of equilibrium within the Congregation. On this basis, the cardinal proposed that the general council have five assistants general, one each for France, Spain, Italy, Poland, and the United States. The three Italian visitors supported this idea. One went as far as to suggest that the Holy See appoint the assistants before the next general assembly so that their votes could help improve the equilibrium in the superior general's election.

In his Notice, Étienne said that the "debate" at this meeting with Ostini involved the proposal for national assistants. Étienne said that this represented nothing more than a new subterfuge to set the stage for an eventual removal of the general to Rome: "Once the majority of the assistants were foreigners it would become easy for the council, acting under pressure, to approve the transfer of the superior general's residence. Thus, in time and by a regular means, this end would be achieved."

In what Étienne described as a "stormy" encounter, Ostini pointed out that the practice of having national assistants worked well for the Jesuits. Étienne testily replied that, "We are not Jesuits nor do we want to be; we want to be what Saint Vincent formed us to be in his constitutions confirmed by the Bull of Clement X." Ostini just as testily replied, "One pope has confirmed your constitutions, but another can change them." Étienne commented, "We were careful not to agree to these proposals and declared that we would never consent to the least modification in our constitutions." He noted, "We clung to the principle that the work of Saint Vincent should remain intact after two hundred years." Étienne replied to Ostini, "A pope could take this action, and he could also suppress the Congregation. I would prefer to see the Congregation suppressed rather than to see Saint Vincent's work so deformed."

In his Notice, Étienne commented in the same vein,

We were told that the Sovereign Pontiff had the power to make these changes in the Constitutions. We responded that he also had the power to suppress the Congregation. If he wanted to change

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153 Ibid., 14.
154 Ibid. Normally, the Constitutions provided that the assistants be elected after the election of the superior general. See Constitutiones, 93.
155 Ibid.
156 "Note de M. Stella (Salvatore) sur M. Étienne, épisode du voyage de M. Étienne à Rome en 1843, d'après ce que ma dit lui même le soir du 23 juillet 1873 à Gentilly. Ecrit à Gentilly le 23 Juillet 1873 tout de suite après avoir entendu ce récit de la bouche même de M. Étienne," Étienne Lettres, C 40, H 3, 1 (39-73), pli. 1G, ACMP.
157 Ibid., 3.
158 Stilla, Episode, 3, ACMP.
Saint Vincent’s work, we felt that we could speak for all our confreres in demanding that he instead suppress the Little Company so that we would perish gloriously defending the deposit that had been confided to us. If we were to accept such a decision, we believed that we would later perish miserably because we had allowed the introduction within us of the source of our destruction and death.  

Étienne and Aladel agreed, however, that in theory the next general assembly, if it so chose, could address the question of mandating the national composition of the assistants. Their view that if such a change was done by papal fiat it could only lead to the community’s destruction is strange. Étienne continually spoke about the importance of never making even the slightest changes in the constitutions. He acknowledged the right of a general assembly to make these changes, but seemingly not the Holy See. Étienne’s Gallicanism shines brightly here. Under these circumstances, it appears as if the French had agreed that such a change could theoretically be discussed at the upcoming general assembly only because they were confident that the general assembly would never consent.

Since Étienne and Aladel would not agree to these two proposals, Ostini declared that he would submit the questions to a special congregation of cardinals for a decision, and the meeting ended. Étienne immediately reported to Rayneval, who in turn reported to Guizot. Regarding the Vatican proposal for national assistants, Rayneval commented, “This plan to require that assistants be chosen according to nationalities is entirely contrary to the liberty of suffrage guaranteed by the constitutions. Under this system the assistants are chosen from among all the members of the Congregation. In certain circumstances, it could also impede the government’s relations with the administration of the Congregation by introducing heterogeneous elements who could easily become difficult and even hostile.”

The chargé d’affaires told the Foreign Minister that the Holy See had implied that if the French did not accept one or the other of these points, it was “the pope’s intention to divide the Congregation of Saint Lazare into two groups, one with headquarters in Paris to care for the missions and one in Rome with jurisdiction everywhere else.” Rayneval observed that the prospect of such a separation “did not seem to bother
the French Lazarists [Étienne and Aladel] who are present in Rome. On the contrary, they seem more disposed to welcome such a move.” Rayneval also informed Guizot of the proposal to allow the American province’s participation in the upcoming general assembly. He noted that the French representatives “were not greatly preoccupied” with this issue. They expected that Rome would so word the papal act so as to “authorize” rather than to “prescribe” the change in the constitutions. In any event, Rayneval told Guizot that he “would not remain as a passive spectator in the controversy’s new developments.”

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Rayneval reported that he had sent a memorandum to Ostini and had met with Lambruschini about these points. He noted that Lambruschini “as usual was inclined to agree completely with my ideas.” The chargé d’affaires also stated his belief that if the cardinal would have had his way, “he would have terminated this affair to our satisfaction a long time ago.” Rayneval believed that it was the pope’s “passionate” dislike for the French Lazarists that had led him to “give the dissidents an authority and a force that they would not have otherwise possessed.” Rayneval ended by saying that Lambruschini had told him “that it is probable that the results of the congregation of cardinals’ deliberations would finally put an end to these debates.”

Rayneval’s memorandum to Cardinal Ostini of 21 February 1843 had ended any possibility of a successful Roman intervention in the Lazarists’ internal affairs. Rayneval had reminded the Holy See that the letters patent of Louis XIV authorizing the Congregation’s establishment in France had contained the text of the community’s constitutions word for word and that from that time on their legal status was linked indissolubly to this document. The 1804 restoration of the Lazarists had recognized, according to the chargé d’affaires, that Louis XIV’s decree had not lost its force. He therefore concluded that the “Constitutions as given by Saint Vincent” are “the condition for the Congregation’s existence.”

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164 Ibid.
165 Ibid.
166 Ibid.
167 The intervention of the French embassy was not the only diplomatic effort of the struggle. Durando’s biographer notes that the Sardinian ambassador had attempted to win Durando over to the Roman side. See Durando, 110.
168 Rayneval was mistaken. The 1804 Napoleonic restoration decree made no mention of the community’s previous legal status. See Actes du Gouvernement, 76.
169 Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, Consultazione, 14-15, ACMP.
Rayneval explained that a change in such an essential constitutional point as the general council’s composition would require the Council of State to reexamine the Lazarists’ legal status. Under the circumstances, it might even prove necessary to submit a proposal to the Chamber of Deputies to authorize such an “important change concerning the government’s future relations with the administration of the Lazarists.” Rayneval told Ostini that he himself “could well imagine all the problems that would result from this course of action.” His point was that the proposal to change the method of selecting assistants was unacceptable to the government of the king. “I hope that you will desist in this project which not only does not please the government but if put into action would compromise the Congregation of Saint Lazare. The government’s position is that no changes in the constitutions should take place. I therefore do not hesitate to affirm in its name, that all modification of these rules is unacceptable.”

Regarding the attendance of the Americans at the general assembly Rayneval noted that while this was against the “letter of the constitutions it is according to their spirit.” The chargé d’affaires assured Ostini that on this point Paris would have no objection, “if this is the pope’s desire.” However, this agreement had a proviso. Rayneval noted that Rome would avoid all possible problems if it worded the pontifical brief to “authorize” the Congregation to take such a move rather than being phrased to make it appear that this was a pontifical order.

Vito Guarini commented that Cardinal Fransoni had told him that the Lazarist controversy was a political one and Rome would have to settle it on that basis. He also quoted Lambruschini as saying, “We are defeated.” Cremisini, however, was determined to go out fighting. On 25 February, the Roman visitor wrote again to Lambruschini and Ostini. In this letter Cremisini denied having ever claimed to be speaking for any other province but only on his own behalf. He characterized the position of the “two French commissaries” as not only an “illusion” but as “a tacit insult to the Holy See.” The Roman visitor denied that there was any constitutional reason to prevent having the procurator general reside in Rome. He continued to predict dire results if the “supreme authority” did not intervene in the future.

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170 Rayneval to Cardinal Ostini, copy of a memorandum dated 21 February 1843, Correspondance Politique: Rome, 984: 216-17, AMAE.
171 Ibid., 217.
172 Ibid.
173 Guarini, Relazione, 89, ACMP.
174 Ibid., 91.
general assembly. Cremisini quoted Joseph Rosati, whom he alleged to have said that "he knew of no French confrere capable of serving as superior general." He then repeated his earlier proposal for splitting the Congregation unless the conditions he had suggested were met. To these earlier proposals he added another: that the procurator general, no matter what his nationality, reside in Rome and have a vote in the election of a superior general. 176

Even if the Holy See had supported any of Cremisini's proposals, Lambruschini's comment that "we are defeated" was true. With respect to the French embassy's intervention at this critical juncture Étienne commented, "The French ambassador's intervention produced the desired effect. The congregation of cardinals decided to abandon these last proposals and not to change our constitutions." 177 In his Notice, Étienne was proud that the French emerged from the Roman negotiations "without ceding on any point whatever." 178 According to him, one final Roman proposal still threatened a complete French victory, the establishment of an additional procurator general in Rome. In Étienne's view, the French had no objection to the creation of such a post "since it could only be considered an honor to have the Congregation represented in Rome, as were other religious bodies." He claimed that what the French objected to was the proposal that this official "could not be French." He said that if the community accepted this stipulation, "then our procurator general would not be a true representative of the superior general. If the general does not have the liberty to name the man of his choice to this position, he could not be sure that the procurator would act only in his name and according to his instructions." The French feared that someone like Vito Guarini might someday again fill the post and that such a person "would become the instrument of a new intrigue and would use his official position to try to speak in the Congregation's name." 179

Contrary to what Étienne claimed, however, the Holy See did not propose to prohibit the superior general from naming a Frenchman to

173 Ibid.
174 Ibid., 95.
175 Étienne, Notice, 48. It is interesting to note that in Salvatore Stella's account of his conversation with Étienne about these events, he related that Étienne had told him that after his meeting with Ostini he had appealed to the French ambassador for assistance. Étienne told Stella that the ambassador had said "that he did not want to get involved in these kinds of ecclesiastical questions." According to Étienne, it was only at his urging that the ambassador agreed to write to the Secretary of State. These oral details obviously do not agree with what Étienne himself wrote and said elsewhere. See Stella, Episode, 3, ACMP.
176 Ibid.
177 Ibid., 49.
this post. The Consultazione prepared for the special congregation of cardinals simply suggests that “a procurator general, or commissary general, be reestablished in Rome with whatever powers seem appropriate as decided by the general assembly.” No mention of this proposed restriction appears in the diplomatic correspondence of the period. Given the French government’s nationalistic sensitivity on these issues, it is unlikely that if this were a serious possibility that there would be no mention of it in the detailed reports of Rayneval to Guizot.

Étienne claimed that it was “God himself who resolved this last difficulty by a manifestation that was proof for us that he efficaciously had helped and sustained us throughout this affair and was the Congregation’s salvation.” According to Étienne, “When the decree containing this proposition was presented for the Sovereign Pontiff’s signature, without making any comment he took his pen and with his own hand scratched out the condition that we had been combating.” No other independent confirmation of these details provided by Étienne exists. However, Cardinal Lambruschini said he had a difficult time in getting the pontiff to agree to meet with Étienne and Aladel before their departure, because of his displeasure at their victory.

On 2 March 1843, the special congregation of cardinals met and issued its recommendations. On 5 March, Cardinal Ostini wrote to Poussou with the decisions of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. The French were victorious on every point. Étienne commented, “Thus the Company emerged from this terrible struggle, not only victorious, but also without receiving the least wound.” He recalled that Ostini had spoken to the French delegates expressing his “edification at the zeal with which we defended the work of Saint Vincent. He also praised the profound wisdom underlying our constitutions, and he exhorted us always to preserve the affection that we had manifested for them.” An audience with Gregory XVI followed the meeting with Ostini. According to Étienne, the pope “greeted us graciously and talked to us familiarly for a half-hour. He permitted us to kiss his feet and gave us his blessing.”

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180 Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, Consultazione, 19, ACMP.
181 Étienne, Notice, 49.
182 Ibid.
183 Ibid.
184 Ibid.
Lessons Learned:
"The spirit of Saint Vincent hovered over the waters."185

Étienne reflected back on the events of 1842-1843 in order to draw specific lessons “for the benefit of future generations.”186 First, he said, the community learned that divine providence had saved it by “turning to its favor the attack made against it.” Rome [and the authors of the recourse] had incorrectly assumed that the French government would agree to its proposals for appointing a foreign superior general. This assumption supposedly rested on the fact that since the Foreign Minister, François Guizot, was a Protestant “he would be indifferent to a question concerning a religious community.” According to Étienne, the Holy See’s strategy of involving the French government “in a matter that should only have been between itself and the Congregation” backfired. Instead, the government supported the cause of the French Lazarists, assuring their victory.187 Étienne summarized this first lesson in an apt quotation from scripture, “The trap seizes those who rejoice in pitfalls.”188

As previously pointed out, however, this interpretation concerning Rome’s alleged assumption about Guizot is insupportable. Also, the statement that the crisis should have been treated as a matter solely between the Holy See and the Congregation’s general administration is insupportable. Étienne knew that a dispute such as this could not have but required the involvement of the French government. This was an involvement the French Lazarists did not hesitate to request or accept, on this or any other occasion.

According to Étienne, the second lesson was “the respect due to our constitutions.”189 This respect required “the necessity of never departing from them for any reason.” Étienne judged that the Italian intriguers were lacking in this respect, as evidenced by their request for the Holy See’s intervention. These agents, according to Étienne, “did not hesitate to demand the mutilation of Saint Vincent’s constitutions although this would have inevitably compromised the community’s future.” They had hoped that by obtaining a superior general who was not French, they would be able “to arrive at their

185 Ibid., 54.
186 Ibid., 49.
187 Ibid., 40-50.
188 Sirach 27: 29.
189 Étienne, Notice, 50.
goal of transferring his seat to Rome.”190 Étienne again used scripture to deliver his harsh judgment of these men: “Sons have I raised and reared, but they have disowned me!”191

Étienne noted that during the succession crisis, in contrast to their opponents, “the Company’s administration remained unshakable on the rock established by its founder.” He repeated his contention that the members of the general administration would have gladly chosen to have the Congregation perish rather than agree to the smallest departure from the constitutions. He used another scriptural quote to characterize their attitude, “Let us all die without reproach.”192 According to Étienne, “Saint Vincent observed this stance with pleasure,” and “from the heights of heaven arranged for the defeat and the humiliation of those unworthy children, who had declared themselves to be the enemies of his work.”193

Étienne repeated his earlier contention that these years of crisis had resulted when the 1835 general assembly departed from the constitutions and accepted the resignation of Dominique Salhorgne and irregularly elected the unfortunate Jean-Baptiste Nozo. Again, he came up with a scripture quote to bring home his always sharpened point: “For whoever keeps the whole law but falls short in one particular, has become guilty in respect to all of it.”194

Étienne’s third lesson concerned the truth of Saint Vincent’s teaching that “a calumny can never hurt the one against whom it is directed.”195 The saint had noted that “if anyone accepts an attack with submission and patience, it will turn out to be to his advantage.”196 Étienne recalled his own experience in this regard: “When we arrived in Rome we encountered a storm of accusations and calumnies against the French Missionaries and me personally!”197 In the face of this, he and Jean-Marie Aladel had clung to the saint’s teaching even when everything seemed lost. Given the negotiations’ success, he said he could only conclude that God had heard the prayers “of all the members of the Double Family.” In answer to these prayers, the Lord had

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190Ibid., 50-51.
191Isaiah 1: 2.
1921 Maccabees 2: 37.
193Étienne, Notice, 51.
194James 2: 10.
195Étienne, Notice, 51.
196See for example, Saint Vincent’s conference of 6 June 1659 entitled, “Du bon usage des calomnies,” Coste, CED, 12: 276-86.
197Étienne, Notice, 52.
"performed a miracle for Saint Vincent’s children."\(^1\)98

According to Étienne’s creationist myth, the spirit of Saint Vincent “hovered over the chaos of the troubled waters engulfing our Company.”\(^1\)99 During “the long and sorrowful trial that had been the source of such great agony and painful worry,”\(^2\)00 the saint “secretly was preparing the elements of its complete restoration.”\(^2\)01 He did this by “disposing all things so that it would emerge in the world…with the same brightness with which it had shone when it first came forth from his hands.” Through the founder’s intercession “this double storm raised against Saint Vincent’s ship in both Rome and Paris was calmed “by a word from the Lord.” The ship of the Company was able finally “to dock safely at its destination.” Now, the community awaited “the unfolding of its magnificent destinies.”\(^2\)02

The members of the Congregation saw “the dawn of a beautiful day that made us forget all our troubles.”\(^2\)03 They knew that what they had experienced represented the “new creation…the second infancy” of the community. Their faith made them understand that God had permitted the community “to fall into chaos.” He had done this in order to get rid of “all its heterogeneous elements.” Had these “elements” not been purged they would have been “obstacles to the reestablishment of the community’s primitive spirit and purity.”\(^2\)04

\(^{198}\) Ibid.
\(^{199}\) Ibid.
\(^{200}\) Ibid., 54.
\(^{201}\) Ibid.
\(^{202}\) Ibid. This is an obvious reference to the account in the synoptic gospels of Jesus calming the storm at sea. See Matthew 9: 23-27, Mark 4: 35-40, Luke 8: 22-25.
\(^{203}\) Ibid., 53.
\(^{204}\) Ibid., 53. One of the “heterogeneous elements” referred to here by Étienne was “the fourteen missionaries who abandoned their vocation during this great crisis.” Their loss “was not regretted,” according to Étienne, “since they had entered into the family but had never become part of it. They never had its spirit nor loved its rule. They always would have been an obstacle to the reestablishment of regularity.” From the dismissal records during this period it is difficult to pinpoint exactly to whom Étienne is referring. The records indicate the dismissal of twenty-three Lazarists at the beginning of 1841. These names reflected those dismissed during the entire period of Nozo’s generalate. The dismissals for the years 1842-1845 do not record enough departures to equal the figure quoted by Étienne. Those to whom he was referring must have been spread out over the course of all of the troubles which dated from the election of Nozo in 1835. See Congrégation de la Mission. Démissions des Vœux. (1838-juin 1923) 3 bis-5, ACGR.