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LOUIS DE BUGGENOMS C.SS.R.,
APOSTOLIC LEGATE TO SANTO DOMINGO (1866)

SUMMARY

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Shortly after the middle of last century a Belgian Redemptorist, Father Louis de Buggenoms, found himself involved in the Church's diplomatic dealings with the newly independent Dominican Republic¹. It was not a happy experience. The representative of the Holy See diligently investigated the deplorable (the word frequently recurs in his reports and those of others) condition of the Church in Santo Domingo and faithfully reported it to Rome. It was a state of affairs that called for firm action. And Father de Buggenoms in time

¹ Information for the present article as for those we hope will continue the study has been found in the following archives:

ASV: Archivio segreto Vaticano
SS: Segreteria di Stato

ACAP: Archivio del Consiglio per gli affari pubblici della Chiesa, formerly Sacra Congregazione degli affari straordinari della Chiesa

AGR: General Archives of the Redemptorists, Rome. The pertinent material is found for the most part in VI, Provincia Belgica, Vice-provincia Antilles, I, B.

There is a brief and well-informed account in A. Boni, *In den Westindischen Archipel*, Bruges, 1944, 197-238. Particularly important is the work of Carlos Nouel, *Historia Ecclesiastica de Santo Domingo*, III, Santo Domingo, 1979. Unfortunately, the thorough exposition, drawing on government and ecclesiastical sources, has not been completed, the account of Father de Buggenoms, in particular, remaining incomplete. The checkered career of Father de Buggenoms himself is summarily described in *Digesta Chronica Collegiorum C.SS.R. Provinciae Belgicae*, VI, Bruges, s. d., 66-70.

found himself appointed to take the measures so urgently needed. He was sent back with the title of Vicar Apostolic to assume the government of the archdiocese.

The commission given to the Father plunged him into the decidedly muddy waters of local politics and those of ecclesiastical diplomacy, which could by no means be called limpidly clear. Towards the end of his four years of service the Vicar Apostolic was in a state of bewilderment, as he begged to be relieved of his burdens.

These events that we propose to investigate did not cover a great span of time, but they were so far from being simple that it is impossible to treat them merely as a simple chain of happenings. In the present article we shall treat Father de Buggenoms' first visit to Santo Domingo as legate to the president and for a fact-finding mission. Later we hope to deal with the vicissitudes of his unhappy term as Vicar Apostolic. No doubt, there is much in the story that must strike a twentieth century mind as bizarre, if not ridiculous, in the earnestness of the politicians and churchmen over the affairs of this tiny republic. Even Father de Buggenoms, in fact, on his first visit heard President Baëz described as « a caricature of Napoleon III »². Nevertheless, the episode has considerable significance for the Church and the infant republic, as Carlos Nouel, the historian of the Church in Santo Domingo, was quick to discern³. There is also something to be learned about Vatican diplomacy during the sixties of last century. The story of the Vicar Apostolic has something to say, too, about Louis de Buggenoms, a man who had already assured himself of a place in Redemptorist history.

1. *Santo Domingo*⁴

The large island, named by Columbus Hispaniola in 1492, was Spain's first stepping stone in the New World. Fine public buildings still witness to its early importance; but in the course of years it was eclipsed by the development of Mexico and Peru with their exciting new cultures and more so with their promise of wealth. After a couple of centuries the island was divided by the Treaty of Ryswick in 1697,

² De Buggenoms to Cardinal Antonelli, 21st May 1866. Copy in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-prov. Antilles, I, B, 10.

³ C. Nouel, 308-335.

⁴ Unless otherwise indicated information about the Dominican Republic has been taken from *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 19, London, 1958, 980-981 and *New Catholic Encyclopedia (NCE)*, IV, New York, 1966, 970-971.

the smaller and more fertile part, the present republic of Haiti, going to France, while Spain retained the eastern part, about two thirds, a mountainous and less productive region. Towards the end of the following century the revolution sweeping through Europe raised ripples even in the far-off Caribbean. The Spaniards withdrew in 1795. At that time the eastern part of the island counted about 125,000 inhabitants, while in the smaller French part there were no fewer than 450,000 slaves alone.

The early part of the nineteenth century was a period of changing fortunes for the one-time Spanish colony. The Haitian revolutionaries more than once united the island, and the Spaniards returned for a short time. At length in 1844 the Dominican Republic was proclaimed by Pedro Santana and his associate, Buenaventura Baëz. The two revolutionary leaders alternated as presidents of a poor and thinly populated nation. It was largely the wretched state of the economy that induced Santana in 1861 to invite the Spaniards to come back. Their brief stay on this occasion made them so thoroughly disliked that the people rallied to the new revolutionary movement, supported by Baëz and his formidable family, to expel their old masters, this time not to return. This was in 1865, just at the time that is our present concern.

The new republic was tiny, counting no more than 160,000 inhabitants according to Father Boni, the historian of the Redemptorists in the Caribbean⁵. It covered an area of about 48,000 square kilometers divided lengthwise by the massive Cordillera Central. To the north the country was well watered and fertile, while the south of the range had so sparse a rainfall that it could be developed only when irrigation should become available. The scattered population was desperately poor, the sad legacy of the troubled half century that had followed the first withdrawal of Spain. The struggle to find its feet had left the young republic with the scantiest resources and suspicious of all strangers, especially of the Spaniards who had earned their intense distrust. This wariness towards outsiders was to be a source of trouble to Father de Buggenoms in his difficult mission and to Church authorities as they tried to bring order into the venerable and distressed archdiocese of Santo Domingo.

The archdiocese of Santo Domingo had been established in 1511, the first in the Americas. In early years it had known some

⁵ A. Boni, 204-205. A representative of the Holy See in 1870 gave a rather more generous estimate, 250,000. Leopoldo d'Acquasanta to Pius IX, 26th June 1870 in ACAP, A III, fasc. 504 (1867-1871), f. 52-81.

magnificence as the first capital of the rapidly expanding empire of the New World. There had been bright lights in the Church, not the least being the ardent Dominican champion of the poor Caribs, Bartholomé de las Casas. By the 1860's, however, the once proud archdiocese was in sad decline.

Between 1853 and 1866 no fewer than ten ecclesiastics of varying dignity had exercised the government of the archdiocese⁶. The Spanish Archbishop, Bienvenido Monzón y Martín, had been expelled by the revolutionaries in 1864, leaving the Church in a condition that was causing anxiety. The Franciscan sent in 1870 to investigate the state of religion in the republic put his finger on the underlying evil. « Ecclesiastical jurisdiction », he wrote to Cardinal Antonelli, « is in every respect at the service of politics and of the parties »⁷. Matters of Church and State were entangled to an extent scarcely paralleled elsewhere. This condition, one of hopeless confusion, was to prevail for many years to come. Two Archbishops of Santo Domingo were to become presidents of the republic. In 1880 Ferdinando Arturo Meriño, a man whose political involvements particularly scandalised Father de Buggenoms, became president two years before being appointed archbishop; and in 1912 the popular Archbishop Adolfo A. Nouel was elected president in an attempt to pacify an unsettled republic. Needless to say, political intrigues at the head of the archdiocese did not make for good pastoral care.

The clergy were, naturally enough perhaps, the most affected by the defects in Church authority. In the archdiocese, which amounts to saying in the republic itself, there were some twenty-eight priests responsible for thirty-three parishes⁸. Of the clergy the majority, sixteen in number, were native born, or Creoles according to local terminology⁹. In the course of his dealings with the republic Father de Buggenoms had occasion to learn that the Creole clergy were officially regarded as privileged. He reported to Cardinal Antonelli a government statement published in the newspaper, *El Monitor*, in 1866 declaring that Creoles alone should be promoted to positions of honour

⁶ A. Boni, 207.

⁷ Leopoldo d'Acquasanta to Antonelli, 28th January 1870 in ASV, SS, 1870, 251, fasc. 2, f. 165-168.

⁸ Leopoldo d'Acquasanta to Pius IX, 26th June 1870 in ACAP, A III, fasc. 504 (1867-1871) f. 52-81. The lengthy report gives a thorough description of Church affairs and provides the source from which most of our comments are taken. It must be noted that numbers of clergy fluctuated with revolutions and subsequent exiles. These events were constantly recurring in Father de Buggenoms' story.

⁹ A. Boni, 205 draws attention to the fact that the name applied not only to persons of mixed race, but to those of European blood born in the republic.

or responsibility of any kind, « since in that consists the safety of the republic »¹⁰. Unhappily, lack of numbers in the archdiocese as well as the long and troubled years during which the republic was emerging from Spanish domination had disastrously affected the seminary. More than once visitors remarked on the prevailing ignorance and frequent immorality of the local clergy. Father de Buggenoms for his part declared to Cardinal Antonelli: « It is simply impossible to give you any idea of how ignorant most of these priests are »¹¹. The consequence was, naturally, that it was most unlikely that any locally born priest be seriously considered as archbishop. That was the view that very quickly forced itself on the various observers whose advice counted with the Holy See.

On his first visit to the island Father de Buggenoms was informed that there were only six priests at the most who could be considered above reproach. But that did not deter him in the least, as he quickly learned to appreciate the goodness of the people. That they were ignorant was apparent; but what he called « their remarkable shrewdness » showed that they were by no means unintelligent¹². Though the bulk of the population was similar to that of Haiti, descendants of the Africans brought as slaves in the early colonial days, there were no traces of the gross superstition of Voodoo religion and observances so widespread among their neighbours. It was their faith, he assured the Secretary of State, unaffected by either scandalous clergy or years of anarchy, that gave the Church hope for the future. All they needed was good leadership; and for that it was urgent that there be a good seminary to train good priests¹³.

Among the better educated, however, those involved in politics, there were problems to occasion grave concern. Practically all were freemasons. In fact, the craft was developed to an extraordinary extent among the wealthier citizens, with lodges for women and even for children¹⁴. Among those who played at politics in the new-born Dominican Republic their freemasonry pervaded everything and all parties, attitudes to religion in particular differing hardly at all from

¹⁰ De Buggenoms to Antonelli, 6th September 1866. Copy in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-prov. Antilles, I, B, 10.

¹¹ De Buggenoms to Antonelli, 9th October 1868. Copy in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-prov. Antilles, I, B, 14. Cf. also Charbonneau's statement, 24th September 1869 in ACAP, A III, fasc. 504 (1867-1871), f. 30-32.

¹² De Buggenoms to Antonelli, 21st May 1866. Copy in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-prov. Antilles, I, B, 10.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Leopoldo d'Acquasanta to Pius IX, 26th June 1870 in ACAP, A III, fasc. 504 (1867-1871), f. 52-81.

one to another. All would have readily subscribed to the profession of faith made by President Baëz to the representative of the Holy See: even though they no longer went to church, attended Mass or confessed their sins, they would always remain firm in their Catholic allegiance¹⁵. There were, of course, exceptions. Father de Buggenoms after his first encounter with the republic was able to name citizens of standing and influence whom he considered worthy of trust by Church authorities for their piety, culture and public spirit¹⁶.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century Spain's crumbling American empire had given rise to new nations. Of these the Dominican Republic was one of the last to emerge. Once the gateway to the New World, its fine churches and public buildings appeared sadly out of place in the new nation's poverty. Lacking population and material resources, the country was a prey to petty factions, which achieved little more than dissipate the nation's meagre wealth. The one treasure that remained unaltered from earliest times was the people's Catholic faith, which their rulers themselves, in spite of their freemasonry, did not dream of renouncing. It was a people deserving of sympathetic consideration as the Church authorities in Rome sought ways to bring some order into the once proud archdiocese of Santo Domingo.

2. *The government*

The early years of the Dominican Republic were dominated by the formidable figure of Buenaventura Baëz. He was constantly in the public eye, either as president or as leading opposition from 1844, when the republic was successfully established by Santana, until he was definitively replaced in 1873. During a significant period in the fifties he was president, and it was to some extent in reaction against his regime that Santana in 1861 had invited the Spaniards to return¹⁷.

Baëz came into his own after the rebellion that put an end to Spanish rule in 1865. The leader of the revolutionary armies had been General José Cabral, who was not interested in the presidency, and that gave Baëz his opportunity. Supported by his three brothers and a relative, the ex-priest, Gabriel Benito Merino, he secured elec-

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ De Buggenoms to Antonelli, 21st May 1866. Copy in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-prov. Antilles, I, B, 10.

¹⁷ Cf. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, loc. cit.; *NCE*, loc. cit.; A. Boni, 205-206.

tion to a four-year term¹⁸. To de Buggenoms, who summarised these events for the guidance of Roman authorities, his tenure of office seemed very shaky indeed. For one thing, the people did not trust him because of his subservience to the queen during the brief period of Spanish rule. More ominous was fact that Cabral, the people's hero, who had not opposed the election, was now disgusted at the devious policies of the president and was mustering a further revolution, which was bound to have popular support.

For the time being he was in command, even though there was little hope of his seeing out his term. Church authorities had already learned that he could be expected to prove troublesome. During his term as president before the Spanish interlude he had revealed his character. In 1853 Mgr. Alessandro Franchi, Vatican Chargé d'Affaires in Madrid, reported to the Sacred Congregation for Extraordinary Affairs a story that had reached him from Santo Domingo¹⁹. It seems that the president had suddenly appeared in the senate and proceeded to deliver what the monsignor described as a wild harangue on the relations between Church and State. The incident, no doubt, must be seen in the light of inexperience on the part of Baëz and the fact that democratic government was still a novelty in the Dominican Republic; but none the less, his future behaviour, though much more polished, was to show an extreme sensitiveness in Church matters. The appointment of an Archbishop of Santo Domingo, he was to assure the Franciscan, Father Leopoldo, was for him a matter of life and death²⁰.

The years taught him restraint, it appears, so that at first acquaintance he gave the impression of courtesy and a readiness to listen to reason²¹. Even Father de Buggenoms faced his dealings with the president with confidence. He told his Superior General, Father Mauron, that they were old acquaintances, having travelled together from Europe in 1859. He had found Baëz pleasant company on the long voyage and had been most favourably impressed by his attention to a group of Sisters on their way to Trinidad²². Father Leopoldo, how-

¹⁸ De Buggenoms to Antonelli, 21st May 1866. Copy in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-prov. Antilles, I, B, 10.

¹⁹ Franchi to Mgr. Vincenzo Santucci, Secretary, 9th June 1853 in ACAP, A III, fasc. 503 (1853-1859) f. 4.

²⁰ Leopoldo d'Acquasanta to Antonelli, 28th January 1870 in ASV, SS, 1870, 251, fasc. 2, f. 165-168.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² De Buggenoms to Mauron, 22nd April 1866 in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-prov. Antilles, I, B, 10.

ever, who had found the president most charming at their first meeting, soon had occasion to warn about his bullying ways, never far below the surface²³.

The president's hand fell heavily especially on the Church, so that the Franciscan emissary spoke of « a real persecution » in the summary exile of clergy suspected of opposition²⁴. Father de Buggenoms for his part had reason to draw attention to the same thing²⁵. That outburst in the senate had obviously not been an isolated incident. Baëz for all his pleasant manners, had a history of a cavalier fashion in dealing with Church affairs. In 1857 he had used his position as president in order to have his uncle, Elias Rodriguez, named coadjutor with right of succession to the elderly archbishop²⁶. The nomination was a scandal which was long remembered. Rodriguez was a priest who had gone to Haiti and there married civilly and set up a flourishing medical practice. When his nephew became president he reappeared in Santo Domingo protesting repentance. « Fortunately », reflects Father de Buggenoms, « God brought it about that he died in 1858 before exercising the episcopal office »²⁷. One could be sure Baëz had not changed his character when once more he was president.

3. *Father de Buggenoms, superior of St. Thomas*

In April Father Louis de Buggenoms, superior of the little community on the island of St. Thomas in the Danish West Indies, received from his Superior General a packet of letters²⁸. In his covering note Father Mauron explained that « it was our Holy Father the Pope himself who charged me to see that they reached you. As our holy Father Alphonsus used to say, the will of the Pope is the Will of God »²⁹. The burden of the documents so formidably introduced

²³ Leopoldo d'Acquasanta to Pius IX, 26th June 1870 in ACAP, A III, fasc. 504 (1867-1871), f. 52-81.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ De Buggenoms to Mauron, 22nd August 1868 in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Viceprov. Antilles, I, B, 14.

²⁶ The request of Baëz to Antonelli dated 21st January 1857 is in ACAP, A III, fasc. 503 (1853-1859), f. 47. A note added to the petition records that it was favourably received.

²⁷ De Buggenoms to Mauron, 12th May 1868 in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Viceprov. Antilles, I, B, 14.

²⁸ A. Boni, 198.

²⁹ Mauron to de Buggenoms, 24th March 1866 in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Viceprov. Antilles, I, B, 12.

was explained at once. « The Holy Father entrusts you with an official mission to the President of the Republic of Santo Domingo ». The package contained a letter of Cardinal Antonelli, Secretary of State, explaining in detail the nature of the appointment as Apostolic Legate to the republic, together with a courteous letter to be delivered to President Baëz³⁰.

After his solemn announcement of the appointment Father Mauron may well have been more than a little crestfallen when Father de Buggenoms replied that he had been warned beforehand by the Bishop of Puerto Rico³¹. He went on to inform the Superior General that he would set out as soon as possible for Santo Domingo, « trusting myself to my Guardian Angel and taking no account of my own feelings ».

At the time of his appointment Father de Buggenoms was just fifty years of age³². He had been born into a comfortable merchant family of Liège, and in his youth he had spent some time in England to prepare himself to take his part in the family business. His ability, well above the average, and his ease in learning languages prepared him for an extraordinarily varied career that he was to know as a Redemptorist. After taking his vows in 1837 and while preparing for ordination he translated into French the Life of St. Alphonsus by Tannoia. Immediately after he was ordained in 1843 he was sent as a member of the pioneer band to introduce the Redemptorists into England. Owing to the extreme eccentricity of the superior he had to shoulder the major burden of the pastoral work and care for the community during the foundation years in the Cornish port of Falmouth³³. Ten years later saw him in Ireland, superior of the house in Limerick, the first in that country. In December 1859 he arrived in St. Thomas, which was to be his home for the next fifteen years. The Redemptorists had come to the West Indies in the previous year in an attempt by the Holy See to bring some sort of order into what

³⁰ Copies of the letters, together with one to Benito Paez, Vicar Capitular of the vacant archdiocese, are in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-prov. Antilles, I, B, 12.

³¹ De Buggenoms to Mauron, 22nd April 1866 in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-prov. Antilles, I, B, 10.

³² Biographical details have been taken from *Digesta Chronica* and from S. J. Boland, *A Dictionary of the Redemptorists*, Rome, 1987, 57-58. The name is often (perhaps more frequently) spelt De Buggenoms. The spelling we have adopted, with the small 'd' is that used in *Digesta Chronica* and Father Boni, both sources Belgian.

³³ An account of the problems encountered in Falmouth has been given by de Buggenoms himself in his *Manuscrit confidentiel* in AGR, XI, Prov. Anglica, Labores Apostolici. Cf. also J. Sharp, « The Redemptorists in the United Kingdom: the Early Years » in *The Clergy Review*, London, 67 (1982) 383-392.

was being called with very good reason a state of schism among the Catholics of St. Thomas³⁴. After his earlier experiences it was not surprising that in the following year he was named superior of the tiny group of Redemptorists in their isolated mission. He did much good in his pastoral work, introducing schools staffed by Sisters brought from Europe and even a small Catholic hospital. He won the warm favour of the Bishop of Roseau, Mgr. Poirier. Within a short time he had become well known to many ecclesiastical personages of Central and South America, whose travels so often brought them to St. Thomas, a sort of crossroads on the sea lanes to Europe. In 1865 Father de Buggenoms was summoned to Rome by his Superior General to give a thorough report on the West Indian mission.

The man chosen by the Holy See for the diplomatic mission seemed to have much to recommend him. But those who knew him best from close quarters had their misgivings. Father Adrian Bossers, who was left in charge in St. Thomas during his superior's absence in Santo Domingo thought it well to voice in confidence to Father Mauron a note of warning³⁵. Father Bossers was a gentle and scholarly man, and the moderation with which he wrote makes his assessment of Father de Buggenoms' character deserving of serious attention.

« Before I left Europe in January 1861 », he wrote, « I was told that Father de Buggenoms did not know how to govern a religious community, but thought he did, or in other words he had too high an opinion of himself. Five and a half years' experience have made me agree with this criticism. Without detracting from his due, his literary gifts, his skill in business matters, his strong faith, his zeal, piety and religious spirit, it still seems to me that he is not a good superior ».

Explaining himself in detail, he went on to say that Father de Buggenoms never consulted those about him, but treated them like novices or inexperienced young men, a judgment that was shared by Father Philippe Noël, who had been Belgian provincial and with whom

³⁴ There is a study of the beginning of the Redemptorist foundations in the West Indies in J. G. Daly, *Conflict in Paradise*, St. Louis, 1972. Cf. also A. Boni, 155-187.

³⁵ Bossers to Mauron, 23rd August 1866 in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-Prov. Antilles, I, B, 10. Father Bossers really belonged to the Dutch province, being born in Holland in 1825. Ordained in 1848, he had come almost at once to the Redemptorists, taking his vows in 1849. From 1867 until his death in 1898 he worked in the Dutch mission in Surinam. He is the author of a thorough study of the foundations there, *History of the Catholic Church in Surinam*. Before coming to St. Thomas he had also published a *Life of St. Alphonsus*. We give our own translation of the French in which the letter was written.

he had spoken before writing³⁶. Reflections like this made him fear trouble in Santo Domingo. « To sum up, Father de Buggenoms has too much of the warrior spirit, and in speech and conduct too much self love. I foresee trouble should be met with spirits more sensitive than ourselves and less pliable ». One may be sure that President Baëz would have been seen by Father Bossers as a thorny character and far from pliable, from whom trouble was to be expected for Father de Buggenoms.

4. *The mission to the republic*

The scope of the mission to Santo Domingo was expalined by the Secretary of State in his letter to Father de Buggenoms³⁷. The most immediate need was clarification as to what was the state of affairs in the archdiocese, where there had developed some confusion after the departure of the Spanish archbishop a couple of years earlier. When he was compelled to leave Mgr. Monzón y Martín had delegated Don Benito Paez, whom Antonelli described as « a parish priest of the archdiocese » with « suitable faculties ». Then when the Holy See had decided to transfer the archbishop to a diocese in Spain³⁸, it decided also to name his delegate Apostolic Administrator. Before the decision could be communicated Paez reported further complications in Santo Domingo. He had seriously fallen foul of the government through his refusal to take an oath to observe the Constitution, alleging conscientious reasons for objecting to some of its provisions. The Secretary of State had commended the archbishop's delegate for his firmness and announced his appointment as Apostolic Administrator. A copy of his letter Antonelli included for his information in the package sent to Father de Buggenoms³⁹.

Between this letter to Paez, dated 16th February, and the commission to Father de Buggenoms a month later there had emerged a further complication. The Holy See had instructed Paez that in case

³⁶ Father Philippe Noël had been provincial in Belgium and then superior of the ill-fated mission to Chile before coming to St. Thomas to end his days. Cf. *Spic. hist.*, 30 (1982) 369-399.

³⁷ The letter, dated 22nd March 1866 is in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-prov. Antilles, I, B, 12. It is addressed to M.R.P. Lodovico Buggenoms, which is the usual form of address used in communications from the Holy See.

³⁸ Mgr. Monzón y Martín was transferred to the see of Granada, in fact, on 5th January 1866. He was later transferred to the archdiocese of Seville on 27th March 1885, a few months before his death in October of the same year. Cf. R. Ritzler & P. Sefrin, *Hierarchia Catholica medi et recentioris aevi*, Padua, VIII, 1978, 290, 308.

³⁹ The copy is in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-prov. Antilles, I, B, 12.

of further difficulties with the government he might subdelegate his faculties to a suitable ecclesiastic. Antonelli was evidently surprised that even before the appointment as Apostolic Administrator had reached him, he had entrusted the administration of the archdiocese to the priest, Calixto Maria Pina. This was the position that immediately called for investigation.

To smooth the way for his mission Father de Buggenoms was given a letter of introduction to President Baëz, « to forewarn him so that everything may go ahead in complete agreement »⁴⁰. The letter spoke of the good achieved on St. Thomas as indicating the legate's competence for his task. The holy Father, Baëz was assured, was confident that he would readily cooperate, because « your Excellency recognises that the diocese requires special provision ».

The purpose of his mission, the Secretary of State told de Buggenoms, was the good order the Pope so earnestly desired for the archdiocese. And for that reason, he went on, the Holy Father was giving serious thought to appointing as Apostolic Administrator with episcopal character « some suitable subject of the Congregation of the Redemptorist Fathers and to have them open a mission there ». This further project was not mentioned in the brief and formal letter to the president, but the legate was to raise the matter and, should objections be made, prudently try to find out what would be acceptable.

So much was for the future wellbeing of the archdiocese. In the meantime there was the actual situation that demanded much clarification. And that was obviously the principal task entrusted to Father de Buggenoms. He was required to report on the way the archdiocese was being administered; and that meant that he investigate the subdelegation made by Paez. How did it come about? Was it « regular and legitimate? » And what sort of a man was Pina? Naturally, too, the Holy See wished to know more about the Constitution, which had occasioned the objections raised by Paez. Were there, in fact, laws opposed to the Church, and what could be done to change them or to counter them?

In view of the civil upheaval that had occasioned the exile of the archbishop information was sought as to the more general pastoral care, especially the number of priests remaining in the archdiocese and who among them could be considered reliable. Father de

⁴⁰ A copy of the letter to Baëz with the same date as the letter to de Buggenoms, 22nd March 1866, is in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-prov. Antilles, I, B, 12.

Buggenoms was advised to discuss these matters with Paez who had been represented, no doubt by Archbishop Monzón y Martín, « as the person most apt to inspire confidence because of his gifts and sound principles ». That was the charge entrusted to the superior of St. Thomas, a task which carried with it the distinct probability that he should himself be the man to be given a more permanent responsibility, even with the episcopal character.

In his letter accompanying the despatches from the Secretary of State Father Mauron, unnecessarily one must surely think, spelled out the contents of the official documents⁴¹. Of more significance, perhaps, was a word of warning in the postscript, that in his reports Father de Buggenoms should be on his guard not to exaggerate either the good or the bad. No doubt that was on account of the Superior General's knowledge of his man. On one recent occasion he had been told by his consultor, Father Edward Douglas, that de Buggenoms « seems to take too black a view of things »⁴².

The matter of the Redemptorist foundation in Santo Domingo was, not unforeseeably, described as being « for us the most important point ». Father Mauron was cautious, however, in view of the fact that the appointment of a Redemptorist as administrator with the support of a house of his Congregation was made largely dependent on the president's proving agreeable. In the course of the succeeding months the foundation assumed increasing prominence in his thinking⁴³, very likely through his speaking about it with curial officials. In the end nothing eventuated. It is significant, however, that in 1870 when a new Visitor was sent to the republic, his immediate task was to see about a foundation of his own institute, the Reformed Franciscans⁴⁴. Apparently, the Holy See hoped to see a fervent and apostolic religious community bring some sort of vitality into the archdiocese, so long troubled by uncertainties and civil strife.

⁴¹ Mauron to de Buggenoms, 24th March 1866 in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Viceprov. Antilles, I, B, 12.

⁴² Cf. *Spic. hist.*, 33 (1985) 286. The comment was made by Father Edward Douglas, Consultor General, on the remarks on the English foundations made by de Buggenoms in his *Manuscrit confidentiel*.

⁴³ Towards the middle of the year, for example, it was known in Spain that three Fathers had been chosen for a foundation contemplated in Santo Domingo. Cf. *Annales Provinciae Hispanicae*, I, Madrid, 1925, 38.

⁴⁴ Cf. Leopoldo d'Acquasanta to Antonelli, 28th January 1870 in ASV, SS, 1870, 251, fasc. 2, f. 165-168.

5. *Father de Buggenoms in Santo Domingo*

Father de Buggenoms lost little time before setting out for Santo Domingo at the first opportunity, as he informed Antonelli⁴⁵. Before leaving, he told the Cardinal, he had been fortunate in having been visited by the Bishop of Puerto Rico, who gave him the official document appointing Paez Apostolic Administrator and at the same time provided him with useful information. Among other things he had been able to assure the legate that the subdelegation to Pina made in the previous December was quite valid. The father was well prepared when he arrived in Santo Domingo early in May.

His first impressions did not incline him to approve the administration of the exiled archbishop. Mgr. Monzón y Martín, he informed his Superior General, had acted with the foolishness which had been unhappily characteristic of the short-lived Spanish regime and which had contributed to their final downfall⁴⁶. The archbishop had expended very great and quite useless effort in establishing a cathedral chapter with seven canons, and this at a time when there was an acute shortage of priests to care for the parishes. Of the resulting cases of neglected parishes the most distressing was that of Puerto Plata in the north of the island, where there was only one priest, a man of seventy-eight, « notorious for the past twenty years for his scandalous life ». The archbishop had been warned of the needs of the neglected people in the busy seaport, but he had not made a canonical visitation. Mgr. Monzón y Martín, whom Father de Buggenoms knew personally, he admired for his personal goodness of life but considered much more suited to a diocese in Europe. As for himself, he foresaw his having to report a task calculated to daunt the man appointed to look after Church affairs in the republic. It was with some foreboding that he asked for an interview with President Baëz.

At their first meeting Father de Buggenoms explained in detail what the Holy See had in mind for improving ecclesiastical affairs in the archdiocese, asking if the president would like to offer some alternative proposals. Baëz replied in the most fulsome terms. As far as he was concerned, he declared, the wishes of the Holy Father were

⁴⁵ De Buggenoms to Antonelli, 21st May 1866. Copy in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-prov. Antilles, I, B, 12. Unless otherwise stated, this report is the source of the information offered here on this first visit of de Buggenoms to the republic.

⁴⁶ De Buggenoms to Mauron, 22nd May 1866 in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-prov. Antilles, I, B, 10.

sacred laws; and in fact what Rome now suggested was precisely what had been in his own mind for a long time: even the Redemptorist foundation was « the only remedy for the deplorable condition of the clergy in the republic ». During the six or seven interviews that followed he invariably repeated the same sentiments and even readily agreed to put them in writing⁴⁷. The atmosphere could scarcely have been more amicable.

In his cordial letter to the legate Baëz voiced a warning which had about it an ominous sound. There was only one obstacle, he said, to the Holy See's plan, namely a provision in the Constitution concerning the appointment of bishops. According to the law of the republic it belonged to the senate to choose the nominee from among three names proposed by the executive authority, which was then to transmit them to the Holy See. But whatever trouble the senate might make, he assured de Buggenoms, he was confident he could smooth over and see that reason prevailed. For the immediate future he thought that the best thing to do would be to appoint one of the Redemptorists Apostolic Legae with episcopal or even archiepiscopal character.

As regards Calixto Pina, Baëz explained frankly why he was anxious to have him as administrator of the archdiocese. In fact, he said, he was thinking of putting his reasons to the Holy See itself. Pina was one of his most devoted supporters and was the candidate desired by the revolutionary movement which had brought himself to the presidency. Pina, he assured de Buggenoms, was a man of good repute, and he would be most appreciative if he could be left undisturbed in his present charge.

Of Benito Paez he presented a picture very different from the favourable impression made on Cardinal Antonelli. The incident of refusing the oath to the Constitution had been, he declared, grossly overdramatised. The offending article on freedom of worship had, in fact, been subsequently withdrawn, as had been promised when Paez made his objections. In spite of that Paez had publicly accused the president of tyranny, adding that for himself, his soul belonged to God alone and nothing would bring him to act against his conscience, but that he would first deliver up his body for the president to do his worst. He was a man, concluded Baëz, who forces doors already

⁴⁷ The copy of the letter of Baëz to de Buggenoms, dated 8th May 1866, is in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-prov. Antilles, I, B, 12. The letter was written by de Buggenoms at the suggestion of Baëz, and is in French.

open. Father de Buggenoms could only say that he would soon be speaking with the man himself.

Paez arrived in Santo Domingo on the evening of 7th May after an eight hours' journey on horseback from San Cristobal, where he was assisting the elderly parish priest. As soon as they met Father de Buggenoms handed him the letter naming him Apostolic Administrator. The effect was remarkable, confirming what the president had already warned. As he read Paez became visibly moved and he burst out:

« Here I am, ready to pass through fire and water, to shed the very last drop of my blood to justify the confidence the Holy Father has shown me by himself naming me administrator of the archdiocese. I know what it will cost me, but I am ready to suffer anything, prison and even death ».

In the hope of restoring a more reasonable atmosphere de Buggenoms introduced the question of Pina. Had he been validly subdelegated and was he free of irregularity? Paez brushed the questions aside, saying he did not know of any irregularity; but it did not matter in any case since the appointment of himself by the Holy Father annulled the earlier subdelegation. The poor legate patiently pointed out that it was only a question of waiting a short time until the Holy See made some better and more permanent provision. At the cost of some argument he got Paez to agree that he would probably confirm Pina in his subdelegation, with the proviso that it was to be only until the Holy See decided. That seemed adequate, so Father de Buggenoms suggested that they both go to the president with the good news.

They were received at once, and Baëz once more explained his reasons for wanting Pina as administrator. It was as he had already put his case to the legate, but he now added that he was asking no more than that it should hold only until further provision was made by Rome. Paez replied with an outburst denouncing both the president and Pina, whereupon Baëz turned to the legate.

« You can see for yourself. He is a man who forces doors already open. He is posing as a martyr in the presence of a tyrant. His hatred for me does not suit his priestly character ».

Poor Father de Buggenoms had to try to restore calm. He told the president that he was sure Paez did not hate him but was tired and on edge after a long day which had begun with eight hours in the saddle. He then repeated to the angry priest all the arguments he had already worked so hard to have accepted, while Baëz for his

part made it clear that he would not be satisfied except with the subdelegation of Pina until Rome decided otherwise. At length Paez grudgingly agreed that he would perhaps fall in with the president's wishes, but that he needed time to think about it.

Paez asked de Buggenoms to go with him to speak with Pina. It was another strange interview with its share of histrionics. As soon as the two arrived Paez read out the document appointing him Apostolic Administrator and then demanded: « Do you submit to the wishes of the Pope »? Startled, Pina replied at once: « Most certainly. Do you think I want to go into schism »? He did venture to offer a warning not to cross the president, at least as regards the temporalities of the administration. Paez made a gesture that seemed to indicate that money was the furthest thing from his thoughts and then said that he would probably renew the delegation, but that for the present he needed time for reflection. Before they separated for the night de Buggenoms had Paez promise to return to him next morning and in the meantime not to discuss with anyone at all the matter of the subdelegation. Paez assured him that after his extremely long and trying day all he wanted was a good night's sleep.

Early next morning Father de Buggenoms was summoned by the president, whom he found in a very angry mood. He greeted the legate with news of Paez's latest escapade. Instead of going to his home to rest as he had said he had been extraordinarily busy. He had visited some of the strongest opponents of the regime and had then sent word for all the clergy of the city to assemble at his house that afternoon. The Father could do no more than promise to do his best to repair the damage when he spoke with Paez in the interview arranged for that morning. When midday had passed with no sign of the expected visit, de Buggenomes set out for the Paez residence. He arrived at two in the afternoon, to find the meeting of the clergy in progress. Paez quickly recovered from his evident consternation at the sudden appearance of the Papal legate; explained that he had thought it his duty to communicate his appointment as Apostolic Administrator; and summarily dismissed the gathering. De Buggenoms made an appointment for six o'clock and warned Paez not to fail a second time to present himself.

As soon as they had parted the legate sent for two young priests whom he already knew and whom he had noticed at the meeting. From them he learned that it had been exactly as he had been warned by the president. Paez had spoken with known enemies of the government and on their advice informed the clergy that he would

subdelegate his faculties to nobody, but would on the contrary give himself up to martyrdom.

It was a sorry and crestfallen Paez who presented himself that evening. He confessed what he had done (he had been caught red handed after all), and humbly listened to an edifying discourse on discretion, called by St. Anthony « coachman of all the virtues ». Thoroughly alarmed at the possibility of his misdemeanours being reported to Rome, he showed himself more agreeable to confirming the subdelegation to Pina. After all, as de Buggenoms assured him, it was only until the Holy See should make its own provisions. And after all, it was pointed out most reasonably, it was scarcely possible that Pina or anybody else make much change in diocesan administration, given the shortage of priests. Paez went away in a chastened frame of mind, having promised to return next morning with the subdelegation to Pina duly prepared in writing.

The next morning with the document in his hands Father de Buggenoms was sure all his troubles were over. Since he was due to embark for St. Thomas on the next day, he went to take leave of the president with a light heart. There would be no further problems with Paez, he declared. Baëz sourly replied that he was of the same opinion as all his friends, namely that his troubles would cease only when the man was out of the country. With the legate himself, however, relations could not have been more cordial. As a parting gift the president gave Father de Buggenoms a map of the island « on a vast scale ». But the amiable farewells did not by any means guarantee an end to the legate's worries. Paez was as elusive as an eel, as Father de Buggenoms was to complain to his superior⁴⁸.

That night as he was preparing for his departure, at about nine o'clock Father de Buggenoms was visited by one of the president's brothers⁴⁹. He had been sent to inform the legate that Paez was once more meeting the president's opponents, and that if he failed to confirm the subdelegation to Pina, the president would « see himself obliged to have recourse to coercive measures ».

Next morning Paez arrived to escort de Buggenoms to the ship. When asked if he would make further problems about the subdele-

⁴⁸ De Buggenoms to Mauron, 22nd May 1866 in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Viceprov. Antilles, I, B, 10.

⁴⁹ A. Boni, p. 210 identifies the nocturnal visitor as General Damiano Baëz. It is highly probable that the president's brother did hold the rank, as Father de Buggenoms reported to Antonelli that it was customary for the revolutionaries to confer military rank on themselves, with the interesting result that in the tiny Dominican Republic there were no fewer than 130 generals.

gation, he now declared that he could not in conscience appoint Pina, since he had learned the previous evening that he had taken part in the inauguration of a masonic lodge. When pressed to reveal the source of his information, he gave the name of a priest of the city whom de Buggenoms knew to be one of the most outspoken opponents of the regime as well as a person of notoriously bad reputation. Nothing remained then but to hand on the message of the president's brother with its promise of « coercive measures ». Paez replied, predictably enough, that they were going to put him in prison, but he was ready for martyrdom. Father de Buggenoms declared that he himself was satisfied to see him remain simply a devout confessor of the faith and persuaded the would-be martyr to come with him to St. Thomas. He hurried Paez on board and hid him in his cabin until the ship weighed anchor.

Before leaving de Buggenoms wrote hastily to the president expressing his regret that Paez would not agree to the appointment of Pina, but he would explain the circumstances faithfully in his report to the Holy See. It was very cold comfort indeed for the president. As soon as he reached St. Thomas Paez sent off to Santo Domingo a letter by which he subdelegated the parish priest of San Cristobal, Juan de Jesus Ayala, an old man of eighty.

When he described Paez as being as slippery as an eel, Father de Buggenoms was speaking of his own unhappy experience. His mission to Santo Domingo had come in the end to be little more than repeated and futile attempts to get the man to do what he promised. In his report to the Secretary of State he limited himself for the most part to a simple narrative of what had happened, letting the facts speak for themselves, and they were eloquent enough to be sure. He ended his long account with a thumbnail sketch, in which he revealed a little of his own feelings. Paez was a mestizo of Portuguese and Indian blood, fifty-one years of age. He seems to have suffered from some liver complaint, « which, I believe, is why he is always spitting ». He had practised law for sixteen years in Havana and had been married for eight years before the death of his wife. He had been ordained in Santo Domingo, where he had lived for the past ten years. To his Superior General Father de Buggenoms wrote with less restraint⁵⁰. Paez had three daughters, whose love affairs had become quite notorious during the brief Spanish period and

⁵⁰ De Buggenoms to Mauron, 22nd May 1866 in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Viceprov. Antilles, I, B, 10.

who followed their lovers to Cuba, one of them abandoning her husband on the occasion. It was also matter of gossip that one of them had been the occasion of a duel, which had led to the death of one of her admirers⁵¹. So much was public knowledge; but the girls' father was himself untouched by any scandal and so much respected for his learning that the former archbishop had left the archdiocese in his care. This « flower of the clergy of Santo Domingo » enjoyed considerable influence among his fellow priests, as Father de Buggenoms saw for himself when he appeared so unexpectedly during the meeting Paez had called. He was really of no more than mediocre talent, as de Buggenoms saw it, and totally unfit for any exercise of authority. He smoked day and night, and even should it happen that he was not he would still be chewing on a cigar. Father de Buggenoms had given him a present of a breviary and a copy of *Homo Apostolicus* of St. Alphonsus, which had to be in a Spanish translation, since « he is not used to Latin ».

During the short time he spent in St. Thomas Paez went to great trouble to have himself photographed and send copies to numerous friends, being careful not to omit one for the Pope. He was very happy with all this bustle, says de Buggenoms, apparently showing no regrets at having been frustrated in his desire for martyrdom; but he did not give much edification to the locals, Catholics and non-catholics. He went on to Cuba in the highest spirits, confident that he would be comfortable there, since he had a number of debtors who would provide him with funds. He was obviously an extraordinarily simple character. He was so open to flattery that de Buggenoms shrewdly suggested to Cardinal Antonelli that he could well prove useful if in the future the Holy See should wish to have its decisions accepted in Santo Domingo.

As it happened, Rome had no occasion to rely on the good offices of Paez; and it comes as no surprise to learn that it was himself who in the end made it clear that he was hopelessly unreliable. When, shortly after his own hurried departure, the Baëz government was overthrown, Paez returned in triumph to Santo Domingo, having the church bells rung in greeting. Some friends wrote of the reception to Father de Buggenoms, adding that the Apostolic Administrator, glorying in his undisputed authority, had acted with so high a hand

⁵¹ De Buggenoms to Mauron, 6th July 1866 in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Viceprov. Antilles, I, B, 10.

and such clumsiness that he had alienated everyone, including those who had been his supporters⁵².

Of one matter Father de Buggenoms was reassured by his experience in Santo Domingo, and that was the project of a Redemptorist foundation in the archdiocese. « I do not believe », he wrote to Father Mauron, « that ever since our Congregation was founded we have had a finer opportunity to develop on a grand scale the resources of our Redemptorist vocation »⁵³. He frequently returned to the topic in future letters, especially during that year. In July he told the Superior General that if just a few Fathers went to the archdiocese and preached and heard confessions, after no more than six months the people simply would not allow them to leave⁵⁴. Father Mauron caught the enthusiasm, especially when he was urged by the Holy See, as he reported to Father de Buggenoms in September. He had been asked, he said, to send at least two or three Fathers and to start the foundation⁵⁵. Later in the same month he informed Father Bossers in St. Thomas to expect three Fathers and a Brother, who were preparing to depart for Santo Domingo⁵⁶. Just a couple of weeks later reports of a revolution in the republic caused the Superior General to post-he said, to send at least two or three Fathers and to start the foundation. Even though it still remained under consideration and was to occasion much wishful thinking, it was with decreasing hopes until it was no longer mentioned.

6. *The outcome of the mission*

Once back in St. Thomas, Father de Buggenoms set about his report to the Secretary of State. It was long, rather more than half of it taken up with a description of his frustrating attempts to come to grips with Paez. The rest was clear and orderly, well representative of the author's mind, and very informative.

⁵² De Buggenoms to Mauron, 20th July 1866 in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-prov. Antilles, I, B, 10.

⁵³ De Buggenoms to Mauron, 22nd May 1866 in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-prov. Antilles, I, B, 10.

⁵⁴ De Buggenoms to Mauron, 23rd July 1866 in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-prov. Antilles, I, B, 10.

⁵⁵ Mauron to de Buggenoms, 6th September 1866 in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-prov. Antilles, I, B, 10.

⁵⁶ Mauron to Bossers, 23rd September 1866 in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-prov. Antilles, I, B, 10.

⁵⁷ Mauron to de Buggenoms, 7th October 1866 in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-prov. Antilles, I, B, 10.

The clergy he described succinctly. Of the thirty or so in the archdiocese he could find only six whom he could call completely above reproach; and of them only two were still young, but badly handicapped on account of their very defective studies. Of the rest four were certainly scandalous; eight of doubtful character; while the remaining dozen were reported as good, though their earlier lives would not bear investigation. It could be, he suggested at the end of his report, providential that the clergy should be so clearly of such poor quality, since that made it all the easier for the Holy See to take what steps it thought best without fear of being challenged.

Before offering his own personal views on the situation he explained on what grounds he had based them: seven years' experience in the region, discussion with suitable advisers before coming to Santo Domingo and most of all four men of the country itself, whose competence and uprightness he respected. On this basis he gave his opinion on the instability of the government, a view which was dramatically vindicated by a successful revolution before the very month was out. Particularly significant was a comment offered by one of his trusted informants, Dr. Del Monte, « the most famous dramatic poet in Spanish America and a good Catholic ». He had come to Santo Domingo as personal adviser to the president; and he told de Buggenoms that Baëz was making a political blunder by involving the clergy in his government. No doubt this remark was occasioned by the president's preoccupation with the advancement of Pina. The same informant assured him in his own rather poetic phrasing that for Santo Domingo the seed of resurrection was the simple faith of the people, which was not shaken either by scandals among the clergy or by the turmoil of revolutions they had suffered for so long a time. The good, patient people of Santo Domingo, Father de Buggenoms was sure, would be quick to appreciate good priests.

The third of his recommendations Father de Buggenoms described to his Superior General as « the essential part » of his report⁵⁸. The matter of the Constitution, which Cardinal Antonelli had particularly asked him to study, he was able to dismiss briefly on the advice of Don Domingo de la Rocha, the most trusted of his advisers. Before his retirement this wealthy old man had filled more than one cabinet post, while keeping himself aloof from the intrigues and freemasonry that more generally characterised the government. The clause

⁵⁸ De Buggenoms to Mauron, 22nd May 1866 in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-prov. Antilles, I, B, 10.

quoted by Baëz about the rights of the president and senate in the appointment of bishops was so much nonsense, he declared. The reason was that the Constitution was one that had been framed as early as 1854 and simply adopted by the present government. Ecclesiastical affairs had never been finally regulated, so that the claim made by Baëz really amounted to nothing less than usurpation. For the present it was unimportant; but later on when there should be talk of a concordat it would surface once more, and then it would be time enough to give it serious consideration.

Much more important, Father de Buggenoms considered, were thoughts offered by de la Rocha concerning the northern part of the republic. He was sufficiently impressed as to propose a reorganisation of the Church more radical than had yet been considered. Too little attention, he thought, had been paid to the region north of the Cordillera. In fact, the only school in the whole of the area was one established some ten years earlier by Protestants from the United States. It was in the north that revolutions began, and that for reasons, not the least being its isolation, which were just as significant for the Church as for the government. For one thing the north was more populous, Santiago de los Caballeros, for example, counting 2000 more inhabitants than the capital, Santo Domingo. The isolation was especially serious. The only contact with the south and the seat of government, ecclesiastical as well as civil, was by a sea journey which could take as much as thirteen days according to the vagaries of the weather. Archbishop Monzón y Martín had been repeatedly urged by de la Rocha to make a pastoral visitation in the north, but he had not done so by the time he was forced into exile. Because of the long neglect one found situations like that in Puerto Plata, where the only priest was the seventy-eight year old pastor, a man who was « scandalous in the extreme ». This sort of thing, said de Buggenoms, called for a remedy. And he had one to propose.

He frankly wrote that in his opinion any reorganisation of the archdiocese would prove unavailing unless a Vicar Apostolic or even bishop were installed in Santiago de los Caballeros. He also suggested that a community of missionaries, such as the Belgian Recollects, be established in the north. With the Redemptorists in the south in Santo Domingo there would be hope of peace and the spiritual and temporal good of the whole republic. It is clear from Father de Buggenoms' remarks to his Superior General that he attached the greatest importance to this suggestion about provision for the northern part of the archdiocese. As far as can be judged, his recommendation

carried little weight with the Roman authorities. At any rate, it was not until 1953 that a separate diocese was erected in Santiago de los Caballeros.

Before he concluded Father de Buggenoms recommended prompt action, warning that owing to the sensitiveness of the people towards outsiders it would prove impossible to pass over any suitable candidate who might emerge among the local clergy. In this connection he thought it well to sound a warning about one such possible whose name he expected to hear in the near future. This was Ferdinando Arturo Meriño, then in his early thirties and destined in fact to become Archbishop of Santo Domingo, but after a lapse of nearly twenty years. He was undoubtedly the most competent among the local clergy. After the expulsion of the Spaniards he had been appointed president of the constituent assembly. After the election of Baëz, which he had opposed, he found refuge in Havana. With the expected fall of the regime he was bound to return and would most probably be proposed for the vacant archbishopric. Meriño, wrote de Buggenoms, had a bad reputation and was besides something of a spell-binder who could easily sway people to his will. The most immediate danger was that this man would soon be back in the country with all the magic of his oratory. For that reason he recommended haste, because once the Holy See had made provision the good people of Santo Domingo would not let themselves be led astray. Father de Buggenoms was proved right in his forebodings. Meriño came to the fore within a matter of weeks and the Father had more than one occasion to oppose his candidacy, arguing that his political involvements especially made him unsuitable for the spiritual office. There is reason to think that his objections were not always well received in Rome⁵⁹.

The report Father de Buggenoms so painstakingly compiled was mostly rendered irrelevant long before it reached Rome. The regime collapsed much sooner than had been anticipated. By the end of the month, only a couple of weeks since the mission to Santo Domingo, Baëz had been removed and was in flight to find refuge in Cuba. Writing some time later Father de Buggenoms was able to give his Superior General a description of the confusion which prevailed for a time and which he suggested was the normal state of politics in the country. It is clearly exaggerated and oversimplified, but to what extent it is quite impossible to judge. « There are two factions in

⁵⁹ Cf. Mauron to de Buggenoms, 7th December 1866 in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-prov. Antilles, I, B, 10.

Santo Domingo: the so-called generals, hundreds of them, and the priests »⁶⁰. The revolution that unseated Baëz had been led by Cabral, the people's favourite. He must still have been reluctant to assume the presidency, since the government was in the hands of a triumvirate, Pimental, García and de Luperon⁶¹. It was quite probable, he warned, that the three had already been replaced in the poor country, ruined by factions and discontent. In fact, it was not long before Cabral was installed as president. He was a strong man with sufficient popular support to provide an acceptable government, provided he was left in peace. But that was too much to expect from the formidable Baëz family with their taste of power and their capacity for rallying support.

Father de Buggenoms' mission to the republic had value, in the long run, only as a fact-finding mission. And that task he discharged with considerable credit. He had no occasion to exercise authority, so that the misgivings voiced by Father Bossers proved to be on this first occasion groundless. He showed himself, in fact, much more commendably patient than many another would be with Paez, as slippery as an eel and forever spitting and chewing his cigars. He was justified in finding some satisfaction in what he called his *coup d'état* in spiring the man out of the country⁶². The information he assembled for the Holy See's guidance was clear and succinct, more so, one could well say than the similar report offered a few years later by Father Leopold, and more helpful⁶³.

As regards the archdiocese, all that was achieved was the installation of the poor, eighty-year-old Ayala as subdelegate. Even that unsatisfactory provision did not last, as Paez found himself back in charge after only a matter of weeks, and he did not fail to have all the bells rung to celebrate his triumph. For the more permanent provision for the vacant and sorely troubled see Rome would adhere more or less to the original plan communicated to the deposed president. And that would prove a further burden for the perhaps not unwilling shoulders of Father de Buggenoms. That, we hope, will provide matter for further reflection, his dealings with President Cabral.

⁶⁰ De Buggenoms to Mauron, 13th November 1866 in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-prov. Antilles, I, B, 10.

⁶¹ De Buggenoms to Mauron, 20th July 1866 in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-prov. Antilles, I, B, 10.

⁶² De Buggenoms to Mauron, 22nd May 1866 in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-prov. Antilles, I, B, 10.

⁶³ Cf. Leopoldo d'Acquasanta to Pius IX, 26th June 1870 in ACAP, A III, fasc. 504 (1867-1871) f. 52-81.

DOCUMENTS

1. - Cardinal Antonelli, Secretary of State, to de Buggenoms, 22nd March 1866 in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-prov. Antilles, I, B, 12.

Molto Reverendo Padre,

La S. V. Molto Reverenda che trovasi vicino alla Repubblica di Santo Domingo, non può ignorare lo stato della Repubblica stessa in seguito dei cambiamenti politici che vi hanno avuto luogo. Monsignor Monzon, non potendo più rimanere in quell'isola, né esercitarvi la sua giurisdizione arcivescovile ne incaricò colle opportune facoltà D. Benedetto Paez, Parroco di quella arcidiocesi; il quale, dopoché il prelodato Prelato fu dalla Santità Sua traslato nell'ultimo Concistorio ad una sede di Spagna, fu nominato dalla S. Sede Amministratore Aplico de S. Domingo. Se non che si è tanto venuto a sapere, che il riferito Sacerdote Paez, sia per la sua età, già avanzata, ed incomodi di salute, sia molto più perchè non ha creduto di poter prestare il giuramento alla nuova Costituzione politica, che da lui si esigea per potere essere riconosciuto nella sua qualifica, sia si dimesso dal suo officio ed abbia affidato anche prima che gli giungesse la nomina di Amministratore Aplico da Roma il regime dell'arcidiocesi al Sacerdote Calisto M. Pina, designatogli dal Governo, subdelegando al medesimo le facoltà ricevute dall'Arcivescovo.

Sua Santità cui sono noti i bisogni spirituali della ripetuta Diocesi e che conosce quanto poco conto possa farsi del Clero che vi esiste, mosso dall'interesse che non può a meno di prendere per quei fedeli, ha risoluto dopo di aver fatto precedere le opportune intelligenze con questo Rmo Rettore Maggiore d'incaricare la P. V. di una missione Officiosa presso il Presidente della Repubblica di S. Domingo. A questo effetto io Le acchiudo una mia Commendatizia pel Sig. Presidente medesimo, cui Ella dovrà esporre a voce che il S. Padre nel desiderio vivissimo di veder regolati gli affari dell'Arcidiocesi e di affidarne l'amministrazione ad una persona pia, zelante ed istruita, vorrebbe nominarvi come Amministratore Aplico col carattere Vescovile od anche Arcivescovile un qualche idoneo soggetto della Congregazione dei PP Redentoristi bene accetto al Governo e farvi dai medesimi aprire una missione. La P. V. dovrà aggiungere che il S. Padre prima di venire a cosidetta misura, ha voluto farne prevenire per di Lei mezzo Sua Eccellenza perché ogni cosa proceda di pieno accordo, e coadiuvi le paterne cure di Sua Santità, le quali non tendono ad altro scopo che al maggior bene dei fedeli di Santo Domingo, e che non possono non contribuire alla maggior quiete e tranquillità degli abitanti dell'isola medesima. Che se questa idea non soddisfacesse pienamente il Governo stesso, Ella è autorizzato a trattare con esso lui un qualche altro progetto tendente a provvedere la regolare amministrazione diocesana e gli affari ecclesiastici della medesima, per quindi inviarlo a Roma ed attenderne le analoghe istruzioni.

In questa circostanza poi Ella dovrà informarsi dello Stato dell'Arcidiocesi e del modo come venga amministrata, e quindi darsi premura renderne esatto conto alla S. Sede. Importa anche moltissimo conoscere se la suddelegazione dell'amministrazione ecclesiastica e delle facoltà fatta dal parroco Paez sia stata regolare e legittima, e quali sono le qualità personali di chi le esercita. Se inoltre siansi dalla Costituzione emanate nuove leggi ostili alla Chiesa, e se sia speranza che vengono ritirate o modificate. Occorrerebbe pure avere notizia del numero dei Sacerdoti dell'Isola, e di quali potersi avere fiducia. Ove non lascerò di prevenirla ch'Ella ad oggetto di essere più accuratamente istruita potrebbe forse, con riservatezza e prudenza tener proposito delle anzidette cose col summenzionato parroco Paez; il quale veniva rappresentato alla S. Sede come la persona più adatta ad ispirare confidenza per le sue doti e per i suoi principii, di cui ha dato anche una prova col negarsi a dare il giuramento richiestogli alla Costituzione perchè contenente alcuni articoli contrarii alle dottrine della Chiesa. A tale effetto credo opportuno di acchiuderle pure copia della lettera spedita al Parroco suddetto.

Non dubito che la V. P. sarà per corrispondere a questo tratto di fiducia che Sua Santità ha voluto in Lei rimettere, e che perciò vorrà adoperarsi con ogni studio affinché coll'aiuto del Signore possa felicemente riuscire nell'onorevole incarico a Lei affidato. In attesa pertanto dei di Lei rapporti mi è grato di assicurarla dei sentimenti di piena stima coi quali rimango

Di V. P. Rma
Roma, 22 Marzo 1866

Affmo per servirla,
G. Card. Antonelli.

2. - President Baëz to de Buggenoms, 8th May 1866. Copy in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-prov. Antilles, I, B ,12.

Très Révérend Père,

Le Président de la République de Sto. Domingo déclare être parfaitement convaincu que l'unique moyen d'apporter un remède efficace aux besoins de l'Archidiocèse est présement celui que le Révd. Père Buggenoms lui a proposé de la part du Saint-Siège, c'est-à-dire d'envoyer à Sto. Domingo des missionnaires de la Congrégation du SS. Rédempteur, parmi lesquels le Saint-Père choisira celui qu'il jugera le plus propre à exercer les fonctions d'Administrateur apostolique de l'Archidiocèse, avec le caractère épiscopal ou archiépiscopal. La seule difficulté qui empêche que le Président puisse souscrire dès à présent à la proposition du Saint-Père et prier Sa Sainteté de l'exécuter le plus promptement possible, c'est que selon la Constitution maintenant en vigueur (art. 26, n. 12) *il est du*

ressort de l'assemblée de Sénat de choisir les archevêques et évêques de la République entre les trois qui lui sont proposés par le Pouvoir Exécutif qui les présente ensuite à Sa Sainteté. Le Président ne doute pas que vu le trop petit nombre de prêtres éligibles parmi le clergé de la République, et l'urgence de pouvoir à une réorganisation saine et vigoureuse des affaires de l'Archidiocèse, le Sénat ne consente à se départir pour cette fois du privilège que lui donne la Constitution; mais outre qu'une décision du Sénat ne pourrait avoir lieu sans entraîner des délais qu'il importe d'éviter, le Président croit devoir se borner pour le présent à faire connaître à Sa Sainteté les sentiments dont il est animé envers le Saint-Siège, en l'assurant qu'il fera son possible pour obtenir la sanction du Sénat en faveur des mesures que le Saint-Siège adoptera pour la meilleure organisation des affaires de l'Archidiocèse. Le Président croit que le moyen le plus sur de concilier les esprits tant du clergé que du Sénat, au sujet de l'article précité de la Constitution, serait que l'administrateur de l'Archidiocèse choisi par Sa Sainteté parmi les missionnaires Rédemptoristes portât le titre de *Légit Apostolique*, revêtu du caractère épiscopal ou archiepiscopal, ayant la mission d'administrer les affaires de l'Archidiocèse aussi longtemps que l'état du clergé ne permettra pas qu'il soit pourvu à l'élection d'archevêques ou évêques selon la lettre de la Constitution.

Sto. Domingo, 8 de Mayo de 1866

Buenaventura Baëz.

3. - Report of de Buggenoms to Secretary of State, 21st May 1866. Copy in AGR, VI, Prov. Belgica, Vice-prov. Antilles, I, B, 10.

Eminence,

Conformément aux intentions exprimées dans les lettres dont V. Em. m'a honoré de la part du S. Père par l'entremis du Rme P. Général, j'ai saisi la première occasion pour me rendre à S. Domingo. Dans l'entretemps le Vén. Evêque de Porto-Rico, Mgr. Carrion de Malaga étant venu à St. Thimas, en route pour Madrid, il m'a fourni des renseignements précieux pour l'objet de ma mission à S. Dominique, et m'a remis le document officiel par lequel V. Em. mande au Rév. P. Benito Paez que Sa Sainteté le confirme dans sa charge d'Administrateur apostolique de l'Archidiocèse. Il m'apprit en même temps que la subdélégation faite en Décembre 1865 en faveur du Prêtre Pina avait été validement faite.

Dès mon arrivée à S. Dominique, sachant que le P. Paez s'était retiré depuis son acte de subdélégation dans la paroisse de S. Cristobal à quelques lieues de la Capitale pour y desservir une petite cure, je tâchai de me procurer aussitôt une entrevue avec le Président Baëz, et après lui avoir remis et traduit la lettre à lui adressée par V. Em. je lui fit

part des intentions du Saint-Siège; et comme je lui priais de me dire s'il les agréait ou s'il avait quelque autre plan à proposer pour apporter remède à l'état actuel de l'Archidiocèse, il me répondit que les intentions du S. Père avaient toujours été pour lui des lois sacrées, et que d'ailleurs ce que je venais de lui communiquer de la part du S. Père était précisément ce qu'il avait lui-même imaginé comme l'unique remède à l'état déplorable du clergé de la République. Pendant les six ou sept entrevues assez longues que j'eus avec le Président durant mon séjour à S. Domingo il maintient en substance ce qu'il m'avait dit au prime abord; et sur mon demande de vouloir bien confirmer par un document officiel le résultat de nos entrevues, il me pria d'en faire moi-même le résumé, ce qu'ayant fait, il le trouva bon, et l'ayant fait copier mot à mot, il me remit cette copie revêtue de sa signature, la veille de mon départ qui fut le jour de l'ascension. V. Em trouvera cette pièce ci-jointe.

Après m'avoir exprimé combien il révérait les intentions du S. Père et m'avoir montré deux lettres qu'il reçut de Sa Sainteté en 1857 le Président me dit qu'il avait préparé sinon envoyé une lettre au S. Père touchant le Prêtre Pina afin d'obtenir qu'il fût confirmé Administrateur de l'Archidiocèse, ajoutant que ce Prêtre était l'élu du mouvement révolutionnaire qui avait ajugé à lui, Baëz, la présidence de la République, et qu'il lui importait de se l'attacher de plus en plus, qu'il était d'ailleurs bon Prêtre et que je l'obligerais beaucoup en le secondant dans ce sens. Je lui répondis que le Saint Père ayant confirmé le P. Benito Paez dans la charge d'Administrateur apostolique qui lui avait déjà été conférée par Mgr. Monzon, je devais avant tout m'entendre sur cette affaire avec le P. Paez. Le Président répliqua aussitôt que ce Prêtre Paez était un de ses plus grands ennemis et un exalté, qu'il avait refusé de prêter serment à la Constitution sous prétexte qu'une clause y avait été insérée concernant la liberté des cultes, quoiqu'il lui avait fait entendre que cette clause serait bientôt annulée (comme elle l'est en effet) qu'il l'avait apostrophé publiquement comme un tyran, en disant que son âme n'appartenait qu'à Dieu, que rien ne lui ferait faire un acte que sa conscience désapprouvait, *mais qu'il lui livrait son corps pour en faire ce qu'il plaisait!* N'est-ce pas là agir comme un enforceur de portes ouvertes? Je lui répondis que j'avais déjà envoyé un message au P. Paez pour qu'il vînt me visiter dans la Capitale, et que je ferais mon possible pour pacifier toutes choses, sachant que telle était l'intention du S. Père. Le Président parut satisfait, et me pria de lui procurer l'occasion de parler au P. Paez en ma présence; ce que je lui promis.

Le R. P. Benito Paez étant arrivé le 7 mai, je lui donnai tout le loisir de lire la lettre de sa confirmation en qualité d'Administrateur apost. de l'Archid. par le S. Père avant de m'entretenir avec lui; ayant remis cette lettre à son frère qui habite S. Domingo pour lui être remise à son arrivée. Quelques heures après il vint me trouver. Il me parut être dans un état de grande excitation. Le fait d'avoir reçu des éloges du S. Père pour la conduite qu'il avait tenue le mettait littéralement hors de lui-même. Me voilà, dit-il, prêt à passer par le feu et par l'eau, et à verser jusqu'à la dernière goutte de mon sang pour justifier la confiance que le S. Père m'a témoignée en me nommant lui-même Administrateur de

l'Archidiocèse. Je sais ce qu'il me coutera; mais je suis prêt à tout souffrir, le prison et la mort! Je lui demandai si le P. Pina auquel il avait déjà validement subdélégué ses facultés depuis environ six mois était empêché de quelque irrégularité qui empêchait qu'il confirmât cette subdélégation, du moins jusqu'à ce que le S. Père ait reçu mon rapport pour le tirer d'embarras, ajoutant que je croyais ce parti le plus sage, vu que j'amènerais facilement le Président à se soumettre d'avance à la décision du Pape. Il me répondit qu'il ne savait pas que Pina fut empêché d'irrégularité, mais qu'il avait brigué cette charge et que d'ailleurs le S. Père l'ayant maintenant nommé de nouveau Administrateur apostolique de l'Archidiocèse, la subdélégation antérieurement faite était anéantie, et qu'il n'avait plus le pouvoir de subdéléguer.

Comme j'avais attentivement lu la copie que V. Em. m'a envoyée de l'acte de la confirmation du P. Paez dans la charge d'Administrateur apost. de l'Archid. avec le pouvoir de subdéléguer ses facultés en cas de nécessité, je tâchai de faire entendre au P. Paez qu'il se trompait, et je lui offris de lire de nouveau la lettre de V. Em. dont je lui avouai que j'avais copie et lui lus le paragraphe dont il s'agissait. Je lui dis que s'il jugeait Pina indigne, il pouvait du moins faire la subdélégation en faveur du Prêtre qu'il jugeait le plus propre. Il me dit alors qu'il y penserait et qu'il confirmerait peut-être Pina dans ses facultés avec réserve, c-à-d jusqu'à ce que, le S. Père ayant été informé par moi, Sa Sainteté décidât la question. Là dessus je lui proposai de m'accompagner auprès du Président, en lui recommandant de se contenir en sa présence, vu qu'il n'était déjà que trop irrité contre lui: ce qu'il promit.

Dès que nous fûmes vis-à-vis du Président, celui-ci exposa avec calme les raisons qui l'avaient obligé à contraindre le P. Paez de subdéléguer ses facultés au P. Pina, et les mêmes raisons existant, il le pria de renouveler cette subdélégation, jusqu'à ce que le Pape pût adopter des mesures fixes pour l'organisation de l'Archidiocèse. Le P. Paez perdit alors son calme, et comme il trahissait par son attitude et ses paroles son ressentiment contre le Président et le P. Pina, le Président m'adressant la parole, me dit: Vous voyez bien que c'est enforcer de portes ouvertes et qu'il se pose devant moi comme un martyr en présence d'un tyran. La haine qu'il me porte jure avec le caractère sacerdotal dont il est revêtu. Je priai alors le Président de ne pas attribuer à des motifs de haine l'agitation du P. Paez, mais à son tempérament nerveux, surtout qu'il avait fait ce matin une course de huit heures à cheval; que je étais sûr que le P. Paez ne désirait que la Paix et par conséquent le maintien du gouvernement du Président afin que le S. Père eût le loisir de remédier efficacement à l'état de confusion qui affectait maintenant les affaires de l'Archidiocèse. Le P. Paez confirma ce que je disais et dit au Président qu'il avait regret de lui avoir donné occasion de se scandaliser de sa manière de parler avec une véhémence qui n'était que l'effet de son tempérament et de l'embarras de conscience dans lequel il se trouvait. Le Président insista alors de nouveau pour amener le P. Paez à confirmer Pina dans la charge d'administrateur de l'Archidiocèse. Le P. Paez répondit qu'il le fera probablement, quoique malgré lui, mais qu'il avait besoin d'y réfléchir. Là-dessus nous quittâmes le Président et le P. Paez me pria de l'accompa-

gner auprès du P. Pina, afin de lui communiquer la lettre de V. Em.

Arrivés chez le P. Pina, le P. Paez lui dit qu'il devait lui donner lecture d'une lettre qu'il venait de recevoir du S. Père par mon entremise. La lecture étant faite, le P. Paez demanda au P. Pina s'il l'avait bien comprise; et sur sa réponse affirmative, « Vouz avez donc entendu », continua Paez, « que le S. Père me nomme Administrateur apost. de l'Archid., et que par conséquent la subdélégation que j'ai faite en votre faveur est annulée. Vous soumettez-vous à la décision du Pape »? « Bien certainement », reprit Pina sans hésiter, « croyez vous que je voudrais devenir Prêtre schismatique? J'espère cependant que pour ce qui regarde purement le temporel de l'administration vous aurez égard aux circonstances et ne me le retirerez pas, car vous savez les dispositions dans lesquelles se trouve le Président ». Le P. Paez fit signe qu'il n'interviendrait pas dans le temporel de l'administration et qu'il renouvellerait peut-être la subdélégation mais qu'il avait besoin d'y réfléchir.

Sortis de chez le P. Pina, le P. Paez et moi nous nous séparâmes après être convenus que nous nous reverrions le lendemain de bonne heure, le P. Paez me disant qu'il était fatigué du voyage et avait besoin de se reposer chez son frère. Avant de le quitter je lui fis promettre de ne rien faire sans s'entendre avec moi, et il me promit d'être avec moi le lendemain matin et de ne consulter personne autre que moi.

Le lendemain matin lorsque je m'attendais à recevoir la visite du R. P. Paez je reçus un message du Président qui me mandait chez lui sans tarder. J'y fus; et dès qu'il me vit il me demanda si je savais ce qu'avait fait Paez la veille au soir quelques instants après l'entrevue que nous avions eue en sa présence. Je lui dis que nous avions été visiter le P. Pina et qu'ensuite le P. Paez était allé se reposer de ses fatigues après avoir promis de venir me voir le lendemain de bonne heure. « Il n'en est rien », reprit le Président, « je suis informé de tout, et je dirai qu'hier soir après avoir vous quitté il est allé visiter mes plus grands ennemis, et qu'il a fait savoir à tous les Prêtres de la ville qu'ils devaient s'assembler aujourd'hui chez lui pour délibérer sur la conduite qu'il avait à tenir ou plutôt pour ne pas subdéléguer ses facultés au P. Pina, car la chose est déjà arrêté ». Je lui répondis qu'il était peut-être mal renseigné et que j'attendais Paez ce matin même selon la promesse qu'il m'en avait faite. Je me débarrassai du mieux que je pus du Président en lui promettant de faire tout ce que je pourrais pour lui être agréable, mais que l'objet de ma mission ne s'étendait pas au delà de ce que j'avais déjà fait avec son Excellence et ensuite de prendre des informations sur l'état du clergé afin d'en faire au S. Père un rapport consciencieux.

De retour à mon logis j'attendis, mais en vain, la visite du P. Paez. Vers les deux heures de l'après-midi je me fis conduire chez le P. Paez; et il arriva que c'était précisément l'heure à laquelle il avait convoqué chez lui tous les Prêtres et clercs de la Capitale, que je trouvai rangés en cercle autour de lui. Je dissimulai ma surprise et lui dis que ne le voyant pas arriver selon sa promesse, j'avais supposé qu'il était indisposé des fatigues de la veille, et que j'étais venu pour m'en assurer. Il me parut d'abord un peu déconcerté, mais s'étant remis de la surprise que ma visite lui causait, il me dit que le S. Père l'ayant nommé Administrateur

etc., il s'était cru obligé de faire part de son élection à tout son clergé. Je pris alors place à côté de lui, résolu de ne pas le quitter; et comme il avait déjà suffisamment communiqué ses sentiments au clergé, il congédia l'assemblée. Tout étant sorti, je lui demandai si tous ces prêtres avaient juridiction dans la ville, ce que je fis parceque ayant compté le nombre des personnes assemblées j'en trouvai quatre de plus que le nombre qu'on m'avait indiqué. Il me dit que ces quatre étaient deux Prêtres étrangers et deux étudiants tonsurés. Je tâchai de ne pas lui témoigner pour le moment ce que j'éprouvais, mais le priai de ne pas manquer de venir me trouver vers six heures du soir, parceque j'avais dans l'entretemps une besogne à dépêcher. Il me promit d'être exact.

Je me hâtai de regagner ma demeure et d'envoyer un message à deux des Prêtres de la ville qui s'étaient trouvés à la réunion, Ces deux Prêtres, que j'avais auparavant l'occasion de connaître et d'apprécier, sont les plus jeunes et véritablement pieux. Un d'eux a séjourné tout un mois à S. Thomas et nous a constamment édifiés par son recueillement et les longues heures qu'il prenait chaque jour pour se préparer à la Messe et faire son action de grâces. Mon but était d'apprendre de ces deux Prêtres en qui je pouvais avoir toute confiance ce que avait fait et dit le P. Paez. Ils ne tardaient pas à venir, et j'appris d'eux que le Président avait été bien informé: que le P. Paez ayant consulté des personnes hostiles au Président, on lui avait dit que je m'étais laissé séduire par lui, étranger comme j'étais, et ne connaissant pas quel homme était ce Baëz: qu'en consequence le P. Paez avait de nouveau résolu de ne subdéléguer à personne et de se dévouer au martyr. Je congédiai ces bons Prêtres en les remerciant après les avoir priés d'être discrets et de m'aider à concilier, s'il était possible, ce qui menaçait d'éclater entre le P. Paez et le Président. Ils me promirent de beaucoup prier et d'offrir le S. Sacrifice de la Messe à ces intentions.

A l'heure marquée je reçus la visite du P. Paez. Je le laissai d'abord parler, et il me confirma lui-même ce que je savais déjà. Je lui remontrai alors avec franchise que sa conduite n'était pas selon les règles de la discrétion, que est, comme dit S. Antoine, la cochère de toutes les vertus; et en résumé je lui dis qu'il agissait certainement contre les intentions du S. Père, à qui j'en ferais mon rapport, s'il ne m'aidait pas à ménager, autant que la conscience le permettait, les bonnes grâces du Président, dont nous avons besoin pour éviter le malheur d'un schisme et donner au Pape le loisir de remédier efficacement aux maux de l'Eglise dans l'Archidiocèse. Le P. Paez parut attiré de la menace que je lui avais faite de blâmer sa conduite dans le rapport que j'en ferais au S. Père, et il me dit que cela l'affligeait beaucoup. « Eh bien », dis-je alors, « montrez-vous donc conciliateur et subdéléguez vos facultés en faveur de Pina, puisqu'il peut les exercer vaildement, et faites-le en exprimant que cela ne durera que jusqu'à ce que le Pape, étant dûment informé, il soit pourvu par Sa Sainteté à une organisation stable des affaires de l'Archidiocèse. Supposé d'ailleurs que vous puissiez conserver seul avec le bon plaisir du Président votre charge d'Administrateur, quel changement ou quel arrangement ferez-vous parmi le clergé? Ne le laisserez-vous pas absolument dans le même état dans lequel Pina le laissera aussi, vu qu'il n'y a pas moyen

de rien régler de nouveau maintenant, faute de Prêtres meilleurs que ceux qui sont en place »? Je finis en lui disant que je me rendais responsable vis-à-vis du S. Père du conseil que je lui donnais s'il l'adoptait. Il me promit alors de tout faire et qu'il me apporterait le lendemain matin la copie de l'acte de subdélégation qu'il allait rédiger en faveur du P. Pina. Ainsi nous nous séparâmes bons amis.

Le lendemain matin le P. Paez vint en effet me remettre la copie de l'acte de subdélégation, et je remerciai Dieu de m'avoir aidé à tout concilier. Ce jour étant la veille de mon départ, je me rendis chez le Président pour prendre congé de lui et lui dire que j'avais tout sujet d'espérer que le P. Paez ferait ce qu'il avait promis. Il me dit qu'il en doutait fort et qu'un de ses amis venait de lui conseiller de faire sortir Paez des états de la République comme perturbateur, car il ne cessait de s'aboucher avec ses ennemis. Je tâchai de convaincre le Président que bientôt il serait satisfait de Paez, vu que j'avais de fortes raisons pour croire qu'il ne tarderait pas à subdéléguer ses facultés à Pina, jusqu'à ce que le S. Père pût adopter des mesures pour la réorganisation des affaires de l'Archi-diocèse. Le Président me fit présent d'une carte géographique de l'île de S. Domingo sur une échelle vaste, et je pris congé de lui de la manière la plus satisfaisante. Je passai le reste de cette journée à visiter toutes les églises et endroits remarquables de la ville.

Dans la soirée le frère du P. Paez vint me prier de lui rendre la copie que je tenais de l'acte de subdélégation sous prétexte qu'il devait faire un changement. Plus tard encore, vers les neuf heures du soir je reçus la visite d'un des frères du Président, qui avait charge de me faire savoir que son Excellence ayant été informé que le P. Paez continuait à s'aboucher avec ses ennemis et qu'il venait tout à l'heure de prendre la détermination de ne pas subdéléguer ses facultés à personne, il me prévenait que s'il ne changeait aussitôt de conduite il venait obligé d'avoir recours à des mesures coercitives. Je répondis que la mission dont j'étais chargé ne me donnait aucun pouvoir pour obliger le P. Paez à faire ce que demandait le Président, que j'avais usé de toute mon influence pour être agréable à son Excellence, que j'espérais encore que Paez le satisferrait, mais qu'en tout cas ma mission était terminée, et qu'il ne me restait plus qu'à en rendre compte au S. Père.

Le lendemain matin j'allais de très bonne heure célébrer la S. Messe, vu que le vapeur qui devait me ramener à S. Thomas devait partir dans quelques heures. De retour à mon logis je reçus la visite du P. Paez une heure avant mon embarquement, selon la promesse qu'il m'avait faite de m'accompagner jusqu'au bateau. Je lui dis que j'espérais qu'il avait maintenant réglé l'affaire de la subdélégation. Alors il m'apprit qu'après avoir entendu la veille au soir les rapports qu'on lui avait faits sur le compte de P. Pina, il se voyait obligé en conscience de ne pas lui subdéléguer ses facultés, parcequ'il était coupable de fautes qui le rendaient irrégulier, parcequ'il avait entr'autres assisté à l'inauguration d'un loge maçonnique. Je lui demandai qui lui avait fourni cette nouvelle information. C'était un Prêtre N. précisément celui que le Président m'avait nommé comme étant l'ennemi le plus acharné de lui et de Pina, et la conduite de ce Prêtre m'avait d'ailleurs été dénoncée comme mauvaise. Je répondis au P. Paez

que je regrettais beaucoup qu'il n'eût pas fait cette découverte plus tôt, vu que je lui aurais alors consulté de faire la subdélégation en faveur de quelque autre. Je le prévins du message que le Président m'avait envoyé la veille par son frère. Il me dit alors qu'il savait bien que le Président allait le faire incarcérer et qu'il était prêt à accepter le martyre. Je lui répondis qu'il n'y avait plus de temps à perdre, que je voulais qu'il restât confesseur quelque temps encore, et lui conseillais de s'embarquer avec moi *incognito* pour S. Thomas, que je lui payerais son passage et pourvoirais à ses autres besoins. Il accepta avec une reconnaissance des plus démonstratives. Je me hâtai alors d'écrire deux mots au Président pour lui dire que, contrairement à mon attente, le P. Paez venait de me déclarer qu'il ne pouvait en conscience subdéléguer ses facultés d'administrateur au P. Pina, que je regrettais infiniment ce contretemps, auquel je le priai de croire que je n'avais aucune part et auquel je ne pouvais remédier, qu'en rendant un compte fidèle de tout ce qu'il s'était passé au S. Père qui ferait tout ce que la Religion lui permettrait pour lui être agréable. Enfin que j'espérais dans l'entretemps le Président n'adopterait aucune mesure contraire aux intentions du S. Pontife, selon la promesse qu'il m'en avait faite.

Je ne vis pas de meilleur expédient que de soustraire le P. Paez comme je l'ai fait aux mesures coercitives que le Président aurait autrement employées contre lui. Je crois même qu'en agissant ainsi j'ai fait ce que le Président désirait, en lui épargnant l'odieux qu'aurait rejailli sur lui, soit en bannissant soit en incarcérant le P. Paez, qui jouit l'estime du clergé et du peuple. L'évasion s'est fait sans qu'on puisse soupçonner que j'y aie coopéré, surtout qu'il n'y a pas eu de ma part ni de la part du P. Paez l'ombre de préméditation. Etant entré avec beaucoup d'autres personnes dans une grande chaloupe qui nous conduisit au vaisseau qui était en rade à embouchure de l'Ozama, il m'accompagna jusqu'à la cabine qui m'était destinée, et il s'y tapit pendant que je montais sur le pont jusqu'à ce qu'on eût levé l'ancre. Nous arrivâmes sains et saufs à S. Thomas, d'où il a déjà expédié l'acte de subdélégation de ses pouvoirs en faveur d'un Prêtre qu'il a jugé être le plus propre, le Rd. Juan de Jesus Ayala, curé de S. Cristobal, âgé de 80 ans.

Le P. Paez est de race mixte, indienne et portugaise; il est âgé de 51 ans et souffre d'une affection au foie, qui est, je crois, cause qu'il crache sans cesse. Il a exercé pendant 16 ans la profession d'avocat à la Havane a vécu 8 ans dans le mariage, et a embrassé l'état ecclésiastique depuis 10 ans qu'il réside à S. Domingo. Arrivé à S. Thomas, il s'est empressé de se faire photographier pour envoyer son portrait à tous ses amis. Il m'a prié d'en faire parvenir un à V. Em. Sa soutane et son manteau sont de soie. Ce Prêtre a un coeur d'enfant, malgré son caractère exalté. J'ai tout fait pour gagner sa confiance et crois d'avoir réussi. Il importe qu'il se croie bien vu du S. Père; car, tel quel, ce P. Paez est le Prêtre le plus estimé de la partie la plus saine du clergé et il ne manquera pas de faire usage de son influence pour faire accepter ce qui sera ordonné par le S. Père en donnant lui-même l'exemple de l'obéissance.

Tout le clergé de la République de S. Domingo consiste en 30 Prêtres, ayant chacun la charge d'une paroisse. Il n'y a que la Capitale qui

compte deux paroisses. Plusieurs églises sont sans prêtre. Le territoire de S. Domingo est plus du double de celui de la Belgique, c-à-d de 114,400 mètres carés. Beaucoup d'habitants doivent parcourir une distance de sept lieues pour se rendre à l'église. Parmi le clergé on m'a désigné six Prêtres dont la réputation est intacte, tous vieux et infirmes, à l'exception de deux, dont j'ai déjà loué la piété, mais qui n'ont fait que de faibles études. Il y a quatre Prêtres dont la conduite est scandaleuse, huit de moeurs équivoques et douze sont réputés bons, quelle qu'ait été leur vie antérieure. La République est divisée en chefs lieux, et les chefs lieux en communes. Il y a cinq chefs lieux ou villes principales d'une population de 4, 5, 8, 10 et 12,000 âmes. Il y a 26 communes ou endroits secondaires dont Puerto Plata est le plus important. Le nombre total des habitants s'élève à 250,000, parmi lesquels on compte à peine 1,800 Protestants.

Je me suis identifié autant que possible avec la situation politique et morale de la Répub. de S. Domingo afin de pouvoir en rendre un compte juste. Outre que j'ai eu depuis sept ans l'occasion d'apprécier l'état de ce pays, la Providence m'a singulièrement aidé pendant et depuis le voyage que j'y ai entrepris par l'ordre du S. Siège. Avant de soumettre à V. Em les réflexions que j'ai faites pour sa gouverne je mentionnerai les noms et le caractère de quelques personnes qui m'on le mieux secondé dans mes recherches.

1^o Je mettrai en toute première ligne Dr. Domingo de la Rocha, âgé 67 ans, qui a constamment rempli les charges les plus importantes de la République sans autre ambition ou intérêt que de servir son pays et surtout l'Eglise. Il est par héritage un des plus riches propriétaires de l'Ile. En 1854, époque à laquelle la Constitution, maintenant encore en vigueur, fut décrété il occupait le poste de Ministre de l'intérieur, de la police et de l'agriculture. Cet homme est très instruit, et a fait des études théologiques, bien qu'il ait, étant encore jeune, embrassé l'état de mariage, et sa femme aussi pieuse que lui, vit encore. Depuis quelques années il s'est retiré des affaires politiques pour se donner à la prière et aux bonnes oeuvres. Il récite chaque jour les heures canoniales. Il n'a cessé de correspondre avec Mgr. Monzon, ainsi qu'avec l'administrateur du diocèse de Pto. Rico, qui savent l'apprécier. Dès qu'il a su mon arrivée il s'est mis à ma disposition pour seconder le but de ma mission.

2^o Dr. José de la Cruz Castellanos, de la Havane mais résident à Madrid. Il m'a dit être connu de V. Em. par les entrevues fréquentes qu'il eut avec le S. Père et V. Em. pendant les deux mois de son séjour à Rome en 1856. Il a été enchanté d'apprendre ce que le S. Père a projeté en faveur de S. Domingo et il m'a offert sa coopération de toutes les manières en son pouvoir. L'Espagne a un grand intérêt à ce que l'organisation du clergé de D. Domingo soit capable d'exercer une influence salutaire sur les habitants et empêcher que la contagion de l'esprit révolutionnaire passe de cette Ile aux possessions espagnoles qui l'avoisinent, c-à-d l'île de Cuba et celle de Porto Rico.

3^o Un littérateur, Dr. Del Monte, le plus célèbre poète dramatique de l'Amérique espagnole et bon Catholique. Quoique résidant à Pto Rico il s'était rendu à S. Domingo, son pays natal, afin d'aider le Président Baëz à maintenir la paix avec son gouvernement. Il a acquis la conviction

que Baëz a suivi une fausse politique en impliquant le clergé dans son gouvernement et en favorisant la franc-maçonnerie, qu'il redoute plus que Dieu. Selon lui, et c'est l'opinion des hommes le plus sensés, Baëz est la caricature de Napoléon III, et son cabinet une grotesque parodie de celui de l'autre.

4° Un commerçant, né à S. Domingo et qui après avoir vécu plusieurs années à S. Thomas, où j'ai eu l'occasion de lui rendre service et de légitimer l'union qu'il avait avec une jeune dame française s'est de nouveau fixé à S. Domingo. Par reconnaissance il m'a offert l'hospitalité que j'ai acceptée avec d'autant plus de plaisir que cet homme se tient étranger à tout parti politique, ne fréquente personne et connaît fort bien le pays sur lequel il m'a renseigné.

Voici maintenant les conclusions que je soumets à V. Em. pour sa gouverne.

1° Le gouvernement de Baëz qui a été élu pour quatre ans ne durera probablement plus guère. En six mois de temps six révolutions ont failli chaque fois de le renverser. Baëz est odieux aux Dominicains, parce que il faisait cour à la Reine d'Espagne pendant que ses compatriotes combattaient pour secouer le joug de l'Espagne. S'il a réussi à être élu Président c'est grâce au désintéressement de Cabral, qui a présidé le mouvement révolutionnaire qui a été si fatal aux Espagnols. Le Général Cabral n'a pas voulu être Président, et d'un autre côté trois frères de Baëz et un mauvais Prêtre de ses parents, l'ex - Mgr. Gabriel Benito Moreno, ont agité le pays afin de procurer à Bonaventura Baëz la dignité de Président. Or, Cabral croyant que Baëz pourrait gouverner aussi bien qu'un autre a lui-même favorisé son élection. Maintenant que la politique tortueuse de Baëz mécontente tout le pays, Cabral s'est de nouveau mis à la tête du mouvement qui le renversera. Il est probable que le successeur de Baëz se maintiendra du moins pour les quatre années, terme de l'élection. Le peuple est plus que fatigué de l'état d'anarchie dont il a déjà tant souffert. Le pays est sans argent et les bons en papier qui circulent sont tellement dépréciés qu'il faut donner 40 piastres en papier-monnaie pour la valeur de 16 piastres en espèce. Cela seul forcera Baëz de quitter la République où il ne se maintient que grâce aux fortifications de S. Domingo, qui rendent cette ville imprenable, du moins par les soldats qui pourraient en faire le siège.

2° L'élément de salut, ou comme disait le poète Del Monte, la semence de résurrection pour S. Dominique c'est *la Foi*, que ni les scandales des Prêtres ni les désordres de l'anarchie et de la guerre n'ont pu altérer à l'égard de la très grande majorité des habitants. Il n'existe pas dans cette Ile où la langue espagnole est exclusivement parlée les superstitions grossières et l'idolâtrie qu'on trouve dans la partie française de l'Ile, nommée Haïty, où la langue française est l'unique qu'on connaisse. C'est un immense bienfait pour les habitants de S. Dominique d'ignorer la langue française, car cela les sauve de la contagion des mauvais livres et des écrivassiers de journaux. qui, ne trouvant plus leur compte en France, s'abbattent sur Haïty, au grand dommage des moeurs et de la religion, Bien que le Dominicains soient généralement ignorantes, ils sont doués d'une sagacité remarquable qui, jointe à la simplicité de leur foi, fera

que le jour même qu'ils verront de dignes Prêtres ils les apprécieront et c'en sera fait des mauvais. S'ils ont péché c'est bien par ignorance et par mauvais exemple des Prêtres, qui se sont souvent eux-mêmes faits chefs de révolte et ont secondé certains aventuriers qui se sont eux-mêmes décorés du titre de Général. On en compte maintenant 130. La Religion seule peut les anéantir en paralysant leurs efforts pour soulever les paysans.

3° Il n'y a pas sujet de craindre qu'on impose une Constitution politique contenant des clauses contraires à l'esprit de l'Eglise. Toute tentative dans ce sens échouerait, dès que le clergé s'y montrerait contraire, parce que le peuple se fera l'écho du clergé, surtout si le clergé est ce qu'il doit être. La Constitution politique décrétée en 1854, maintenant encore en vigueur, dit à l'article 10: « La Religion Catholique, Apostolique Romaine est la Religion de l'Etat. Ses ministres, en tant qu'il s'agit de l'exercice de leurs fonctions ecclésiastiques dépendent seulement des Prélats canoniquement institués ». La clause no. 12 de l'article 26 citée par le Président Baëz dans la lettre ci-jointe n'est d'aucune valeur, comme me l'a fait observer Dr. Domingo de la Rocha, parce que il n'y a jamais eu du Concordat entre le S. Siège et la République, et celle-ci ne jouit pas du privilège de présentation, lorsqu'il s'agit de pouvoir à l'élection d'Archevêques ou d'Evêques. Tout ce qui viendra directement du S. Père sera accueilli avec respect et amour par le peuple. Tout dépend de la réforme du clergé et d'un Président qui ait l'intelligence et la fermeté nécessaires pour maintenir simplement et exclusivement les principes immutables de la vraie Religion.

Il est vrai que dans la partie la plus au nord de l'île les Protestants des Etats Unis d'Amérique ont établi une école depuis une dizaine d'années, mais on le leur a permis parcequ'il n'existe pas d'autre école dans cet endroit où se trouve d'ailleurs le plus grand nombre de Protestants. Aucun enfant catholique n'a perdu la Foi en fréquentant cette école, où l'on n'enseigne rien contre l'Eglise. J'ai néanmoins à faire une remarque à propos de cette partie du Nord qui avoisine le plus les Etats Unis, dont l'importance me paraît capitale. C'est dans cette partie au Nord de S. Domingo, c-à-d Monte Cristo, Puerto Plata et Santiago de los Caballeros, qu'a commencé le mouvement révolutionnaire qu'a fini par expulser les Espagnoles. C'est parceque cette partie au Nord est plus à la portée des Américains du Nord, qui convoitent les possessions espagnoles et cherchent à y propager l'esprit républicain qui les domine. Puerto Plata compte 4000 habitants et Santiago de los Caballeros 12,000, tandis que la Capitale n'en compte que 10,000. Malheureusement c'est dans cette partie située au Nord qu'a vécu depuis longues années un Prêtre scandaleux à un suprême degré, et nonobstant cela très populaire parce qu'il a des talents et s'en est servi pour des buts exclusivement politiques. Il est encore le seul Prêtre à Puerto Plata, mais agé de 78 ans et infirme. Dr. Domingo de la Rocha (qui est ma principale autorité pour tout ce qui suivre) avait fortement engagé Mgr. Monzon à ne pas tardir de faire sa visite pastorale dans cet endroit car il pressentait qu'aucun autre expédient ne serait capable d'étouffer les étincelles de révolte que les Américains faisaient couvrir. Mgr Monzon ne se dissimula pas l'importance du conseil qu'on lui

donnait, mais il crut pouvoir un peu différer, en visitant d'abord la partie de l'Est (Hato Mayor) et c'est lorsqu'il était en visite pastorale à Hato Mayor qu'eurent lieu en 1863 les événements de Monte Cristo suivis de l'incendie de Puerto Plata etc, et enfin la catastrophe que l'Espagne déplore. Le fait est que de S. Domingo à Puerto Plata il n'y a pas de route par terre à moins de traverser à gré une foule de rivières ou ruisseaux et d'aller à cheval par un temps souvent pluvieux l'espace de sept jours ou moins. Le voyage par mer exigerait treize jours d'une navigation pénible, à cause du genre des bateaux dont on devait user.

C'est pourquoi je pense que les mesures que le S. Siège désire adopter pour la bonne réorganisation de L'Archevêché ne seront que très inefficaces, à moins qu'on ne puisse en même temps à l'établissement d'un Vicaire Apostolique avec le caractère épiscopal à Santiago de los Caballeros, d'où il pourra exercer son influence sur le clergé et le peuple de cette partie de l'Île, qui est la porte et le foyer des révolutions. Cette partie de l'Île pourrait être confiée à d'autres Missionnaires, parmi lesquels on choisirait le Vicaire apost. ou Evêque, car le caractère épiscopale est nécessaire à cause du prestige qu'il opère sur ces populations, bien autrement qu'en Europe. Les Revd. Pères Récollets de la Belgique, dont la maison principale est à Gand, sont de fervents Religieux et missionnaires qui accepteraient peut-être cette mission, qui joint à celle des Rédemptoristes dans la partie opposée de l'Île coopérerait admirablement au maintien de la paix et par suite à la prospérité temporelle aussi bien que spirituelle de toute l'Île de S. Domingo.

4^e Quoi qu'il en soit de l'époque à laquelle les projets du S. Siège en faveur de l'Archidiocèse de S. Domingo poussent être réalisés je crois qu'il est désirable qu'on tienne tout préparé pour l'exécution sans différer plus qu'il ne sera nécessaire afin de ne pas laisser passer la première occasion favorable. C'est sans doute par un dessein particulier de la Providence que le clergé actuel de S. Domingo est tel que personne ne peut même penser à faire quelque objection aux mesures proposées par le S. Siège pour réorganiser l'administration de l'Archidiocèse à l'aide de missionnaires d'un autre pays. S'il y avait quelques Prêtres indigènes réunissant plus ou moins les qualités requises pour exercer la charge d'Administrateur, on ne les écarterait pas sans difficulté, vu la disposition des Dominicains de se suffire à eux-mêmes et de ne pas se laisser dominer par un étranger. Il est peut-être utile de savoir qu'il y a entr'autres un Prêtre nommé Meriño qui après l'expulsion des Espagnoles a été nommé président de l'assemblée constituante et n'a quitté l'Île pour se retirer à la Havane que depuis l'élection de Baëz, dont il est le plus redoutable ennemi. Ce Prêtre, d'ailleurs mal famé, est doué d'une éloquence entraînante qui lui permet d'exercer une grande influence sur le peuple. Or il n'y a guère de doute que dès que le gouvernement très précaire de Baëz sera renversé le P. Meriño rentrera à S. Domingo, pour exercer son talent oratoire comme homme politique et probablement dans l'espoir d'être présenté pour occuper la charge qui flatterait le plus son ambition. Une fois que les esprits seront prévenus en faveur des dispositions du S. Père, les malveillants arriveront trop tard pour fourvoyer le peuple et contrecarrer les vues du S. Siège. J'ai la confiance que le P. Paez pourra en temps

opportun être très utile, ne fût-ce que pour promulguer d'avance et faire apprécier les mesures projetées pour remédier aux maux que l'Eglise déplore maintenant dans ce pays.

Si V. Em. approuve la manière dont je me suis acquitté de la mission qu'Elle a daigné me confier de la part du S. Père, j'en attribuerai le mérite uniquement à la vertu de l'obéissance; et ma grande récompense sera d'avoir pu donner à Sa Sainteté une preuve de ma soumission et de mon dévouement.

C'est dans ces sentiments que j'ai l'honneur de me dire avec le plus profonde respect

St. Thomas (Antilles Danoise)
21 mai 1866

le très humble serviteur
de Votre Eminence
L. de Buggenoms C.S.S.R.