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## Pius XI and Portugal as a Small State and Great Colonial Power

*Convergences and Tensions (1922–1939)*<sup>1</sup>

*I would speak with the devil himself if that would spare a single soul!*  
Pius XI, Osservatore Romano (16. 5. 1929)

The quasi-official motto ‘Portugal is not a small country’ was especially used by the propaganda apparatus of the authoritarian *Estado Novo* regime (1933–1974), but it reflects a much wider and deeper trend in Portuguese political culture and raises an interesting point if we are to place Portugal in the context of smaller European powers in their relationship with the papacy during the pontificate of Pius XI (1922–1939).

Portugal was in fact a small power in Europe. But it did have a large overseas empire, especially in Africa, one it was making great efforts to occupy effectively and to keep in a volatile international context. This imperial dimension, regardless of the challenges it posed, did give Portuguese decision-makers and diplomats a perception of themselves as representing a Great Catholic Power. An example of this is provided when, in 1935, the then Portuguese diplomatic envoy to the Holy See decided to press Lisbon about the urgency of reclaiming the status of a full embassy for Portugal’s diplomatic representation. This had been the case until the new Portuguese Republican government decided to cut diplomatic relations with the Papacy from 1910–1918, and when they were renewed in 1919 it was decided to do so only at the level of legation not full embassy. The Portuguese diplomat argued, in 1935, that it was inconceivable

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank the ICS University of Lisbon and the CEHR of the Portuguese Catholics University, and in particular all those at the CEHR involved in the project *Os Católicos e a Política*, in particular António Matos Ferreira, João Almeida, Sérgio Pinto and Paulo Alves, not only for their insights in frequent discussions of these matters, but also, and more specifically, because otherwise my access to Vatican sources of this period would have been impossible. This project was sponsored by FCT Portuguese Ministry of Science.

that an old empire like Portugal should have to give precedence to recent South American republics that did have a full embassy at the Vatican. He does then go on to compare Portugal with smaller European states, but in order to underline that the *only European Catholic countries with a similar status for their diplomatic mission are Austria and Hungary ... countries that lost status and were mutilated because of the [First World] War*<sup>2</sup>. Oliveira Salazar, the *de facto* authoritarian leader of Portugal, and, since 1933, head of government, was not, however, one to be pressed on matters of such importance. Despite his past as a Catholic militant he was committed not only to defending State interests but also to be seen as not yielding to the Papacy for the sake of his political image. Embassy status would, therefore, only be restored after the signing of the 1940 Concordat. The 1940 Concordat made some concessions to Catholics, especially in helping Catholic missions in the Portuguese overseas empire, but it also enshrined the acceptance by Catholics of the separation of Church and State that was a central concern for republicans in Portugal, of which there were many among military officers, not least President Óscar Carmona himself, the general who became head of state and appointed Salazar.

The negotiations for the 1940 Concordat were only concluded under Pius XII, besides which they are too complex to be addressed in a short text like the present one. How then is this text to be structured? It will have three sections. The first one will focus on the challenges faced both by Portugal and the Papacy in the initial decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The second section will look at the negotiations of the 1928 Concordat in the context of regime change in Portugal and the central problem of how to reconcile Catholic missionary priorities and Portuguese interests overseas. The last section will offer some brief concluding remarks by linking our previous analysis to how Pius XI and Portugal dealt with the deep Europe-wide crisis from 1929 onwards, more specifically the challenges of Nazism and communism in the Spanish Civil War – using Portuguese–Vatican relations as a mutually revealing mirror.

#### 1. PORTUGAL IS NOT A SMALL COUNTRY BUT WAS IN A BIG POLITICAL MESS

Despite grand statements in the official discourse of successive regimes – constitutional monarchy until 1910; radical First Republic (1910–1917) and a more moderate First Republic (1918–1926), authoritarian regime (1926–1974) – about Portugal as a great civilizing and Christianizing empire, the fact was that the Portuguese State had serious problems of loss of international

<sup>2</sup> AHD-MNE (Arquivo Histórico-Diplomático-Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros) 3P/A.11/M.329 Of.51 from Portuguese Legation in the Holy See (LSS) to Ministry of Foreign Relations (MNE) (28. 6. 1935).

status and credibility. This was mainly due to the unstable political situation to the point of regime change in 1910 and again in 1926. In this, Portugal was similar to smaller states in Central and Eastern Europe. The October Revolution of 1910 led to the overthrow of the monarchy and the creation of the First Republic in a Europe where monarchies still predominated. The new Portuguese regime survived with difficulty, facing numerous coups and other forms of political violence until 1926. Then a military dictatorship took over and had to deal with internal struggles as well as attempts to overthrow it, before and after it became a formalised regime known as the *Estado Novo* i.e. *New State*, with Salazar's Constitution of 1933. The First Republic (1910–1926) was also the first Portuguese regime that was not officially Catholic. Initially, from 1910 to 1917, it was even dominated by a radical anti-clerical faction that broke diplomatic relations with the Vatican, did not recognize the legal status of the Catholic Church, and severely limited its activity – for example, by confiscating Church property, closing seminars and monasteries, and, by 1914, sending all Portuguese bishops into internal exile.

The Portuguese Republic was therefore perceived in Europe as a radical new state, with little credibility, and this was signalled by the long delay, of almost a year, by the Great Powers of Europe in recognizing the new regime. From 1919 onwards, however, Portugal came to be perceived as a more moderate republic. Given the massive changes in Central and Eastern Europe, with the emergence of a number of new republics, not least Soviet Russia, the Portuguese Republic came to be perceived in relative terms as more mainstream, more acceptable. Also, the Portuguese government had moderated its attitudes, not least by renewing diplomatic relations with the Vatican from 1918 onwards, and making some changes in the Law for the Separation of Church-State. All this set the tone in relations between the Papacy and the Portuguese government for the period of interest to us here, the pontificate of Pius XI (1922–1939).

The change from the Vatican side is characterized by the views expressed by Cardinal Secretary of State Gasparri, back in 1919 in his first big meeting with the new Portuguese diplomatic representative. Gasparri *manifested unequivocally his feeling that the winds were now favourable to democracies and hostile to thrones*. The Portuguese diplomat adds that *according to the information I have been gathering, this is indeed the dominant feeling in the Vatican*. The Papacy had therefore explicitly abandoned the idea that confessional monarchies were ideal for a good relationship between Catholics and the State. The policy of *ralliement* was taken to its logical conclusion of accepting the new republican regimes that had spread across the successor states of the great confessional empires of Central and Eastern Europe, rather than risk a confrontation the new political order emerging after the end of the First World War.

But the Portuguese diplomat wanted something more tangible, and Gasparri was willing to provide it, assuring him that the Papacy:

*Reproved the hostile attitude of the Catholic press and militants towards the new Republic, as not being in accordance with [the papal] doctrine ... of respecting the existing government, and asked if a good way of correcting this would not be a [papal] Encyclical, that he himself would write and show me prior to publication.*

This was part of a wider papal strategy of rebuilding bridges with non-confessional states, but was also used as an element in a very specific diplomatic bargaining. Gasparri wanted to make sure the Portuguese State would drop all accusations linking the Primate Archbishop of Braga to a recently defeated Monarchist uprising. The Portuguese diplomat signalled openness. And he reported back to Lisbon: *I believe this will be of enormous importance for the consolidation and tranquillity of the Republic; even if he predicted correctly that some [Portuguese] Catholics will not wish to conform to it*<sup>3</sup>.

Why is this relevant? First, because Gasparri was reappointed as secretary of state by Pius XI and remained in that key position from 1922 until 1930; second, because his statement is important in showing that papal policy towards Portugal was part of a general policy of *ralliement* towards the rest of Europe as a response to the change brought into European political dynamics by the impact of a wave of new republican states emerging in Central and Eastern Europe after the collapse of large confessional empires in 1918. Lastly, this is also of significance because it is linked with the political ascent of Oliveira Salazar.

Until 1919 Salazar was a professor in the prestigious university of Coimbra and an active Catholic militant. He then became a leading figure in the Centro Católico. This political movement inspired by the German Zentrum, even if with much more modest results, was the focus of great interest by papal diplomacy. Of particular concern was, initially, purging its traditional monarchist leadership that resisted the new papal guidance of *ralliement* to the Republican regime.

Implementing *ralliement* and solving colonial/missionary issues were the major problems facing Pius XI in relation to Portugal when he came to the papal throne in 1922. He dealt with both decisively. The second aspect will be focused on in the second section, now let us focus on the first.

To put an end to on-going divisions on how to deal with the new Republican regime between Portuguese bishops, Pius XI ordered the Portuguese episcopate to publish a collective letter requiring *ralliement* to the Republican regime by all Catholics. Pius XI would reply in another public letter underlin-

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<sup>3</sup> AHD-MNE 3P/A11/M329 Of.2 LSS to MNE (24. 9. 1919).

ing the need for Catholic unity and discipline, following the new policy being promoted by the renewed leadership of the Centro Católico.

It is in this context that the nuncio writes, in June 1922, a dispatch exclusively on the *magisterial speech in the latest Congress of the Catholic Centre by the distinguished Professor*. Salazar, as a member of the new leadership, was described as having *set the principles and orientations that must be followed* by the *Centro Católico*. This point – underlined in this report by someone at the Papal Secretariat of State – was met with *enthusiastic applause*<sup>4</sup>.

During the early 1920s Salazar, indeed, made the point that there was *no fundamental clash* between Catholicism and democracy but rather a *serious misunderstanding*. The two could and should be reconciled *by us, Christian Democrats*. Not least because *democracy was an irresistible trend* and therefore had to be accommodated. Salazar was taking note of the post-1918 European trend towards parliamentary democracy. Even more importantly to our analysis, Salazar concludes that *those who feel a deep revulsion against the triumph of democracy in our time* – as was his own case as well as that of other deeply conservative Portuguese Catholics – should find consolation in the idea that in seeking *ralliement* with republican democracy *we are with the Pope. Believe me, we cannot be wrong*<sup>5</sup>! Salazar was soon to change his views about the need for reconciliation of conservative Catholics with democracy with the growing crisis of parliamentary regimes in Europe. In Portugal, a military dictatorship emerged after May 1926. This made Pius XI's policy of accommodation with existing regimes no longer equivalent to an acceptance of parliamentary democracy by Catholic politicians.

The Centro was never a major political force in a Portuguese political system dominated, from 1910 to 1926, by the founding party of the regime, the Portuguese Republican Party (PRP-PD); and then, from 1926 onwards, by a military dictatorship. Papal appeals for political unity among all Catholics were clearly not powerful enough to achieve it; even if another major factor of weakness of the Centro was the fact that the rural masses of devout Catholics were mostly illiterate and therefore deprived of franchise.

It is also important to note that the task of the Centro was made all the more difficult because of the fluid and complex Portuguese political dynamics during this period – not least because first the PRP and then the military were often divided.

A good example of this is found in 1924, when the three MPs of the Centro Católico provided the decisive votes that led to the fall of the Rodrigues Gaspar

<sup>4</sup> ASV 284, 3, 56rv, NA Lisboa to SS N° 2923 (5. 6. 1922), *Invio di un Opuscolo del Prof. Oliveira Salazar, Mss Centro Cattolico*.

<sup>5</sup> António de Oliveira SALAZAR, 'A Democracia e a Igreja' [conferências no Porto e em Viseu em ...], *Inéditos e Dispersos I* (Lisbon 1997) 199, 214, 210.

government. Yet, this had no impact in improving the status of the Catholic Church, the ultimate aim of the Centro. Gaspar, as minister of colonies, had, in fact, approved a renewal of State recognition and support for Catholic missions in the Portuguese overseas territories in 1920<sup>6</sup>. This created among Catholics positive expectations of an improvement in Church–State relations, which he was unable to fulfil, not least because the more ‘radical’ wing of the Republican Party managed to sabotage attempts by the Centro to get majority support in Parliament for a revision of the Law of Separation with some support from the moderate president and prime minister. The prime minister was unable to stop his own anti-clerical minister of justice, despite the alleged *opposition of the rest of the government*, from organizing a surprise vote – to profit from the absence of some MPs – to insert in the parliamentary agenda a discussion of the annulment of the 1918 revision of the law that had moderated the terms of the separation of Church and State. This forced pro-Catholic MPs to focus on avoiding this move backwards rather than on moving forward. When the Centro voted for the fall of this government, however, what followed was a new government led by this more radical wing of the Republican Party<sup>7</sup>.

The task of managing papal relations with Portugal was therefore also very complex. Even the international context could be unhelpful. At least, this was the view of the nuncio, who saw in the case of the fall of the Gaspar government an example of the *negative impact* of the victory of Radicals and Socialists in the elections in France, a country *which always has a strong influence on Portugal*<sup>8</sup>.

The main problem came from the fact that *ralliement* was supposed to be based on a trade-off ‘recognition of new regimes’ in exchange for greater freedom for the Catholic Church. The status quo in Portugal after 1917, however, brought an end to active repression of Catholicism but not full legal recognition, and some restrictions on key activities for the Church, like private education, remained.

If Pius XI first became impatient with Catholic monarchists who did not conform to his policy of *ralliement*, then, very quickly, the Pope became increasingly impatient with the lack of will or ability of Portuguese governments dominated by the PRP to engage in this trade-off and grant greater freedom

<sup>6</sup> Ernesto CASTRO LEAL, Quirino Avelino de Jesus, um católico ‘pragmático’. Notas para o estudo crítico da relação entre publicismo e política (1894–1926), in: *Lusitania Sacra* (1994) 374.

<sup>7</sup> ASV 318/22 NA Portogallo to SS N°796 (25. 11. 1924), *Cadduta del Ministerio Rodriguez Gaspar e il nuovo ministero*; ASV 318/22 NA Portogallo to SS N°624 (24. 6. 1924), *Proposta del Ministro di Giustizia contra la Chiesa*.

<sup>8</sup> ASV 318/22 NA Portogallo to SS N°624 (24. 6. 1924), *Proposta del Ministro di Giustizia contra la Chiesa*.

to the Catholic Church and greater control of the Papacy over it, particularly regarding missionary work overseas.

Portuguese decision-makers at the time were aware of this trend, even if they tried to resist it. As a Portuguese foreign minister put it, referring to his *tough negotiations* with the Vatican of Pius XI: *undoubtedly, these difficulties came, in part, from the idea that, for reasons of ecclesiastical discipline and order, the Church now claims a degree of freedom that does not easily fit into traditional agreements between Church and State.*

To be fair to Portuguese decision-makers, alongside the challenges of building a coherent policy in the middle of great political instability, there was the specific problem represented by the anti-clerical movement. This urban-based minority was especially important in the capital Lisbon and surrounding areas, giving it great political impact. This was especially true before 1926, but had some effect even after that. More conservative decision-makers did not feel secure they could make concessions to Catholics without causing a dangerous conflict with anti-clericalism. How dangerous this was is shown by the assassination of President Sidónio Pais, in December 1918, The assassin was an anti-clerical militant who stated that he wished to see the *Vatican smashed* and had *sworn to kill* President Sidónio *when I saw the Separation Law in shreds*. And yet Sidónio had only, in early 1918, engaged in a very limited and unilateral revision of the terms of the separation between Church and State, and re-established relations with the Papacy without making any other major concessions<sup>9</sup>.

This difficult internal political context made symbolic gestures useful to try to mitigate the lack of more substantive progress. An example of this with some impact was a papal concession to the moderate president of the Republic António José de Almeida. He was granted the honour of placing the cardinal's biretta on the departing nuncio's head in 1923, as had traditionally been done by Portuguese kings before 1910. But the anniversary of the coronation of Pius XI was to become the centre of this diplomacy of symbolic gestures.

Catholics, naturally, saw the anniversary of the papal coronation as an opportunity to display publicly their devotion to the papacy and their allegiance to Pius XI. But the parliamentary leader of the Centro also used it to get a vote of congratulations to Pius XI approved in the Portuguese Parliament in 1924. In that same year the nuncio first organized a banquet in honour of Pius XI with the participation of both the Portuguese president and the head of government. This was *unprecedented* as Mons. Nicotra did not fail to underline. Significantly, President António José de Almeida *asked for some time* before accepting. The foreign minister made clear the president *feared* those *radicals* that in their *anti-clerical phobia* branded as *not good republicans* all those *well-disposed towards*

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<sup>9</sup> Cit. in: João MEDINA, *Morte e transfiguração de Sidónio Pais* (Lisbon 1994) 71s.

*the Church*. But in the end the president decided to accept, because he *realized that the republic could not last in Portugal if it did not co-opt Catholics as elements of order in a society*. When the Portuguese president accepted the invitation he publicly explained that *the Pope, because of his great moral authority deserved all respect and honours*; and during the banquet he expressed hope in *the continuation and even improvement of the good relations between Portugal and the Holy See*<sup>10</sup>. The realization of this wish, however, proved to be beyond the ability of the First Portuguese Republic.

## 2. THE ULTIMATUM OF PIUS XI AND THE CONCORDAT OF 1928

The negotiations for a concordat between 1926 and 1928 provide interesting parallels with Central and Eastern Europe. The 1928 Concordat dealt with the Portuguese *jus patronatus* over Christian missions in Asia. This was the result of a crisis that erupted in early 1926, before the military coup of May 1926 that led to a fall of the First Republic, and then continued amidst the tumultuous attempt at consolidation of a new regime. What is important to note is that although the Papacy and its diplomats, not to mention Portuguese Catholics did not have any real sympathy for a First Republic they associated with anti-clericalism, they did not move against a republican regime and in support of the restoration of the monarchy. The aim of Catholics was not overthrowing the republican form of the regime or even promoting an authoritarian regime per se, though the latter raised hopes of achieving the real aim, i.e. a decisive change in terms of improving the legal status of the Catholic Church.

What, then, were the commonalities between Portugal and Central and Eastern small Powers? First, perhaps most obviously but no less importantly, there was the need for the Papacy to deal with regime change. Second, Portugal had new borders in its overseas territories. It had expanded significantly into the hinterland as a result of the scramble for Africa and was consolidating control over what became Angola and Mozambique; at the same time it had old patronage rights in large parts of Asia where it had not ruled for centuries. These major political changes had to be made to fit better with ecclesiastical borders and organization; this was also a major concern in the case of Central and Eastern Europe during this period. The negotiations for the Portuguese Concordat of 1928, moreover, are particularly revealing of the role of the pope and the impact of the personality of Pius XI on diplomatic relations.

Patronage rights over large areas of Asia had been retained by the Portuguese crown despite strategic retrenchment from Asia during the seventeenth

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<sup>10</sup> ASV 318/22, NA Portogallo to SS N°368 (17. 2. 1924), *Anniversario dell'Incoronazione del S.P.*

century in favour of Brazil and Angola. Even diminished by past concordats – the one now being questioned dated from 1886 – these patronage rights were still being claimed by the new secular First Republic after 1910. Separation or not, the *Padroado do Oriente* was seen as part of an untouchable national overseas heritage of the republican golden age of discovery, a core element of Portuguese national identity. They had been a major argument for re-establishing diplomatic relations with the Vatican in 1918/19. This is clear in the initial instructions given by the Portuguese republican government to the first diplomat it send to the Papacy<sup>11</sup>. Defending Portuguese patronage rights in the East was also an important argument used by political groups favourable to maintaining them, when, during a discussion of budgetary cuts, the leader of the more anti-clerical wing of republicanism, Domingos dos Santos *strongly argued for suppressing the diplomatic representation at the Vatican* as a cost-saving measure. This was opposed *very effectively* by Centro MPs and pro-government MPs, arguing that defending the Portuguese *Padroado* made a diplomatic presence in papal Rome indispensable. This was in itself a recognition of how aware Portuguese politicians were of how fragile this historical legacy had become. It should also be noted that papal diplomacy employed a studious ambiguity in this respect, neither explicitly recognizing this privilege, nor denying it – even if this diplomatic ambiguity was not always observed by the rest of the Papal Curia<sup>12</sup>.

Pius XI quickly ran out of patience with this diplomatic game. The most important of these dioceses were in India, namely Bombay, and there were increasing signs of a rise in nationalism that the Church felt it needed to take into account to ensure the future of its missionary work. But the last straw for Pius XI's patience with this situation was the appointment by the Portuguese Colonial Office of Mons. Manuel Anaquim, vicar-general of the Lisbon patriarch, as bishop of Damão, at the end of 1925. The pope had already made clear his refusal to appoint this influential cleric as bishop because there were against him *objections related to ecclesiastic discipline* according to Portuguese diplomatic sources citing Mons. Borgongini Duca. Portuguese diplomats were significantly critical of the way their own government had dealt with this whole affair. This was done without prior consultation of the Papacy. In fact, not even the Portuguese Foreign Ministry was informed. Pius XI saw this as a double abuse, as an attempt to *coerce him* by appointing as bishop someone unworthy of the position and, to add insult to injury, using for that a privilege that no

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<sup>11</sup> AHD-MNE 3P/A11/M329 Desp.2 MNE to LSS (31. 7. 1919).

<sup>12</sup> AHD-MNE 3P/A11/M329 Tel. 22 MNE to LSS (5. 3. 1926).

longer made any sense<sup>13</sup>. From the point of view of papal diplomats it was also probably the ideal pretext to deal with this matter.

More to the point in terms of the main subject of this text, the leading Portuguese diplomat at the Vatican, Augusto de Castro, concluded from all of this that *in this crisis of the Padroado, one must really take into account the personal, indirect but ever-present role, of the pontiff [Pius XI], who is far from the political malleability of Benedict XV*. Castro points out that in this negotiation *all proposals, even small details, are dependent on papal approval so that frequently something that was informally agreed ... ends up being changed. – It was His Holiness, they say*<sup>14</sup>.

Pius XI decided not simply to denounce the breach of form by the Portuguese Ministry of Colonies and veto this specific appointment, as he could have done under the 1886 Concordat. The pope wanted to go deeper and denounced the latter agreement as null and void because of regime change in 1910.

Also significant was the fact that the vague and belated promises of improvement of the conditions of the Catholic Church in Portugal by the moderate Republican head of government, António Maria da Silva, were of no avail in trying to convince Pius XI not to go as far as he did<sup>15</sup>. The same strong character, the same determination to see the interests of the Catholic Church prevail despite some political risks that were first used in favour of *ralliement* and therefore favoured the republican regime, were now working against it. Pius XI was not willing to delay the changes necessary to increase his direct control and the possibility of executing without interference the papal strategy for Asia of promoting native prelates, not least in important dioceses in India. He was certainly not willing to do it for the sake of a small European power like Portugal, and/or of some vague promise of improvement of the situation of Portuguese Catholics. Furthermore, this was a small European state with a big empire, but most of the dioceses in question were in fact not in Portuguese territories overseas – of which only a few enclaves survived in Asia – but rather mostly under British imperial control.

In fact, papal diplomacy was also careful to put the question to Portugal in terms of the Vatican having to act under pressure from Britain to appoint more British bishops to its empire. This did correspond to a generic British request made previously. But this specific British ‘pressure’ for change, namely in the case of the vacant diocese of Bombay was, in fact, requested by the Curia. This deception was not very successful because Portuguese spies obtained a copy of

<sup>13</sup> AHD-MNE 3P/A11/M329 Of. 6 LSS to MNE (18. 1. 1926).

<sup>14</sup> AHD-MNE 3P/A11/M329 Of. 106 de LSS to MNE (17. 11. 1926).

<sup>15</sup> E. g. AHD-MNE 3P/A11/M329 Of. 6 LSS to MNE (18. 1. 1926).

the dispatch by the British diplomatic representative stating that *the Cardinal Secretary of State told me ... it was ... difficult for the Holy See to take the initiative in bringing about the practical abolition of the Padroado without formal prompting from His Majesty's Government*<sup>16</sup>. But of course, given the nature of this information, Portugal could not make much use of this knowledge, except to try to use its traditionally close alliance with Britain in its favour.

Portuguese diplomacy used in response a typical diplomatic tactic of smaller states: it made the most of its weakness! Before May 1926 the fragile First Republic played on fears of an even more radical alternative. After the military *pronunciamento* of 28 May 1926, the military governments used the fact that the situation was far from stabilized, and a radical revolution could follow.

Portuguese governments also used internal instability as a justification for dilatory tactics in their reaction to Pius XI's pressure for change regarding the *Padroado*. They also appealed to history, both to centuries-old promises by both London and the Papacy to respect the Portuguese ecclesiastical legacy in the East, and to more recent memories of strong anti-clerical and anti-British feelings, with a crisis potentially giving a boost to these now more dormant prejudices.

This ultimately resulted, in April 1928, in a compromise partially mediated by Britain. The area under Portuguese patronage was reduced. But it would still include a few large historical dioceses in India, Malaya and the Far East. The jewel in the crown of this dispute, the diocese of Bombay, would see alternate appointments of a Portuguese and a British subject to the position of archbishop. Still, it was Pius XI who got the main prize – the pope alone would now choose the new bishops while the Portuguese government only had the formal honour of nominating those previously chosen by the pontiff.

Yet given the resistance of the Portuguese Colonial Office to any change in the status quo, a final display of Pius XI's iron fist under the velvet glove of papal diplomacy would be required to seal the deal already achieved between papal, Portuguese and British diplomats<sup>17</sup>. From the beginning of the crisis, the main papal negotiator, Mons. Borgongini-Duca, had emphasized that the final word rested with Pius XI himself; and Borgongini-Duca had *little or no confidence* that the pope could be moved in his determination to change the status quo<sup>18</sup>. In February 1928, fearing this, the Portuguese foreign minister drafted a telegram authorizing the Portuguese envoy to the Papacy to sign a deal in extremis. Instead the latter chose to alert his colleague at the Colonial Office

<sup>16</sup> AHD-MNE 2P/A48/M187 copy Dispatch 43, British Envoy to Holy See to Foreign Office (26. 2. 1926).

<sup>17</sup> AHD-MNE 2P/A48/M187 cf. Of. MNE to MCOL (8. 2. 1928).

<sup>18</sup> AHD-MNE 2P/A48/M187 Of. 21 MNE to LSS (7. 5. 1927) plus *Memorandum* to HS in annex (7. 5. 1927).

of the risk of a unilateral and public abolition of the *Padroado* by Pius XI if he persisted in his intransigence, also emphasizing that there was little Portugal could do to respond. After all, to retaliate against the Catholic Church in Portugal would alienate a crucial group of supporters of the new military regime<sup>19</sup>.

It was in this context that, in February 1928, the Portuguese foreign minister received a letter from Cardinal Gasparri. It notified his colleague privately that if no agreement was reached by the end of March 1928, he would no longer be able to exercise a moderating influence over Pius XI. Furthermore, it informed the Portuguese foreign minister that the pope had stated unequivocally that he would then appoint unilaterally an archbishop of Bombay ignoring the *Padroado*. Gasparri did try to sweeten this bitter pill by stating that the new prelate to be unilaterally appointed by Pius XI would probably be Portuguese, and he was willing to continue to negotiate even after that. As a Portuguese diplomat put it in an internal memo this was *de facto an ultimatum, there is no other name for the confidential letter of Cardinal Gasparri* on 26 February 1928. But the point is that formally this was a confidential private letter written in the tone of a friendly warning, even if the result was the making of a credible threat and a clear deadline. It made absolutely clear that the status quo would be untenable, as would further delaying tactics by the Portuguese. Pius XI's strong will ensured the desired result, while tactful papal diplomacy made this easier to accept without a public loss of face by the Portuguese government<sup>20</sup>.

It is interesting to note that had Pius XI really been forced to do away with the *Padroado* and create an open confrontation with Portugal, this crisis of the *Padroado* in April 1928 could have compromised Salazar's ascent to power that was about to begin with his appointment, at the end of the same month, with dictatorial powers, to the key position of finance minister. This would have been much more difficult in the middle of an open conflict between the Portuguese military government and the Catholic Church.

This is not to say that Salazar's ascent to power was not welcomed by Portuguese Catholics or the papal nuncio. The latter's feelings are made clear in his evaluation of the new constitution of 1933. Why is made clearer by the appointment of Nuncio Ciriaci in that same year. This also provides another interesting linkage between Portugal and the problems of smaller states in Central Europe. Mons. Ottaviani presented the decision to appoint Ciriaci as nuncio to Portugal by underlining that this was to be done after the conclusion of the negotiations by the latter of a *modus vivendi* with Czechoslovakia, where he was stationed, and *alluding to the possibility of a concordat* with Portugal to solve all pending issues in Church-State relations. The Portuguese representative at

<sup>19</sup> AHD-MNE 2P/A48/M187 Of. MNE to MCOL (8. 2. 1928).

<sup>20</sup> AHD-MNE 2P/A48/M192 Of.43 LSS to MNE (14. 6. 1935).

the Vatican replied that this *was not in the mind of the Portuguese Government, for the moment* and Mons. Ottaviani *replied he did not ignore this, but was simply alluding to the future, one of mutual interest*<sup>21</sup>.

### 3. A STRONG POPE AND A SMALL EUROPEAN POWER IN A EUROPE IN TURMOIL

The year 1929 would bring in a period of intense crisis and increasing turmoil across Europe. It also brought to the Vatican the first diplomatic representative appointed by the Portuguese authoritarian regime increasingly under the control of Salazar. Trindade Coelho had just been forced to resign as foreign minister. In his voluntary exile in papal Rome he tried to regain favour by promoting the regime Salazar was founding as the ideal mix of 'moderate' authoritarianism and corporatism for solving the problems of political instability and socio-economic crisis that dominated Europe. Coelho reports that he had argued with Secretary of State Pacelli that *Portuguese nationalism ... was free from the errors of the cult of the State and anti-Catholicism* in an obvious reference to fascism and Nazism. That he found receptive ears at the Vatican of Pius XI is clear in Trindade Coelho's ability to place several positive reports about the 'new Portugal' in the *Osservatore Romano*, affecting as well as reflecting Catholic perceptions of Salazar's regime<sup>22</sup>.

In the middle of this turmoil, Portuguese diplomats at the Vatican also tried to make themselves more useful by keeping an eye on the wider European picture. And being aware that Salazar meant to negotiate a concordat at some point in the future to consolidate his hold on Catholic allegiances and normalize relations between the State and the Church they also followed European developments on this front. Pius XI presided over a golden age of concordats. This included, for instance, the Austrian Concordat of June 1933. A clipping from the *Osservatore Romano* announcing its signing by Dollfuß at the Vatican was sent to the Portuguese Foreign Ministry as well as a preliminary report. The impression of the Portuguese envoy at the Vatican was that, despite some *Josephist exaggerations* denounced by Benedict XV in 1921, it would surely contain *some concessions from and to the Church* given the closeness between Austrian Catholicism and the Dollfuß regime – implicitly greater than in the case of Portugal. The Portuguese representative at the Vatican promised to send a full copy of the document as soon as possible, having requested one from his Austrian colleague<sup>23</sup>. The texts of concordats and modus vivendi – mostly with small Eu-

<sup>21</sup> AHD-MNE 3P/A11/M329 Of. 200 LSS to MNE (31. 12. 1933).

<sup>22</sup> AHD-MNE 3P/A11/M329 Of. 24 LSS to MNE (25. 3. 1933) and newspaper clippings in the same dossier.

<sup>23</sup> AHD-MNE, Gab. Sec.-Geral AF/M9 Of. LSS to MNE (7. 6. 1933).

ropean states – signed during the 1920s and 1930s were all put to practical use in the very careful preparation for talks with the papacy by Salazar. In July 1937 his top diplomatic and legal advisers prepared a systematic comparative table with, for instance, twelve references to the Austrian Concordat, on how various important issues were dealt with: from the absence of the traditional State *placet* to papal communications with local Catholics to the scope and wording of the State veto of papal episcopal appointments<sup>24</sup>.

The references made by Salazar and his diplomats in the following years to the wider European picture and the more specific issue of State–Church relations darken significantly. Here there is convergence with Pius XI, who is also increasingly concerned with Nazism and communism, namely in Spain, a country of great interest to both Portugal and the papacy.

The German absorption of Austria increased Salazar's concern with the Nazi threat for smaller European states. At the Portuguese Legation, the man most trusted by Salazar was the ecclesiastical counsellor Mons. Castro. An example of the kind of report he was sending him in secret private letters is one summarizing *again a long talk*, in 1938, with the former leader of the German Zentrum, Mons. Kaas, who took refuge in the Vatican; he refers to the *enormous damages of [Nazi] persecution*. Castro goes on to ask: *Is there no way to resist? – Impossible due to the physical threats*. Castro insists: *I asked about the strong Austrian Catholicism. – Alas Austria! ... I do not feel I can criticize Cardinal Innitzer in this early period [of Anschluss]. But the Viennese is so courteous he is capable of bowing even to the guillotine*<sup>25</sup>.

As for Spain, after the Republican take-over of power in 1931 and the wave of radical anticlericalism that swept it, Pius XI had some exchanges of views with Portuguese diplomats on the situation. He expressed to them his anxiety about: *the dangers our country faces with such a long border with Spain ... Here, not long ago, We had confirmation that Bolshevik propaganda in Spain is paid and produced directly by Moscow*. The pope ended the audience, asking the diplomat to forward *the conclusions he had drawn from information received from sources above suspicion, about the danger to us from an anarchic Spain, as well as his best wishes for the prosperity of our Fatherland and the Government God had chosen for our salvation*<sup>26</sup>.

In the wider European context, Salazar clearly appeared to Pius XI as a providential man, who, while he might not be able to move as quickly as desired in Catholic circles on Church-State relations, nevertheless represented a solid barrier to any radical threats to Catholicism, from the extreme Left as

<sup>24</sup> ANTT-AOS (Arquivos Nacionais–Torre do Tombo–Arquivo Oliveira Salazar ) CO/NE-29; P.1, Notes on the first draft project Concordat with Holy See (19. 7. 1937).

<sup>25</sup> ANTT-AOS/CP-60, Letter from Mons. Castro to Salazar (25. 2. 1938).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. AHD-MNE 3P, A11, M329, Conversation with Pius XI (31. 12. 1932).

well as from the extreme Right. Pius XI's growing concern over Nazism became increasingly clear once the Civil War started in Spain, in July 1936, and is particularly clear in his last meeting with Portuguese diplomats in January 1939: *Portugal suffers less than others. But as a universal Father I am still concerned and I say: Portugal, resist, defend yourself from perfidious insinuating thoughts that tend to pervert the world, misguide the souls!* And when the Portuguese diplomat replied predictably that in Portugal *we know well the poison of Bolshevism*, Pius XI interrupted with some irritation: – *But it is not Communism I am talking about, it is racism, criminal Nazism that perverts the souls*<sup>27</sup>!

Portuguese Catholics were traditionally devoted to the figure of the pope. Pius XI therefore had ex officio an important role to play. Still we find echoes of the improvement in the standing of the Papacy as a moral power after the State-sponsored carnage of the First World War and as a result of the policy of *ralliement* that made it much more difficult to criticize, even by former adversaries like many Portuguese Republicans. Did Pius XI bring something new to the equation? In terms of personality if not of policy Pope Ratti was closer to Pope Pius X. In terms of relations with the Portuguese State and Portuguese Catholics, Pius XI pursued the policy of *ralliement* initiated by his immediate predecessor, Benedict XV, but in a much more decisive manner. The Papacy did not achieve all its aims regarding Portugal, but the situation improved during the pontificate of Pius XI. This was especially true in relative terms, because, of course, things got worse in terms of Church–State relations in other parts of Europe in the 1930s in places like Spain or Germany. But in some important aspects the strong personality of Pius XI played an important, even decisive role; the most important ones being ensuring the conformity of mainstream Catholic militancy and press with the *ralliement* to the Republican regime and the Concordat of 1928, with Portugal giving up patronage in large areas of India and keeping only a formal shadow of it. This centrality of Pius XI was certainly the view of Portuguese diplomats, who tried, with mixed results, to counter papal pressure for change by employing as bargaining chips the fact that Portugal was still a great Christianizing empire as well as a small state struggling with political crises.

<sup>27</sup> This papal audience of 15. 1. 1939 is the last one with Pius XI less than a month after this date: ANTT-AOS/CO/NE-4E, Of. 7 de LSS to MNE (15. 1. 1939). This indicates that the text was most likely read by Salazar.