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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### THE PORTUGUESE STATE AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH: DURING THE PERIOD OF ANTÓNIO OLIVEIRA SALAZAR

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#### ABSTRACT

The relations between the Portuguese State in the person of Antonio de Oliveira Salazar and the Vatican during the New State. The four phases of relationship, all different and always influenced by the international context.

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#### INTRODUCTION

António de Oliveira Salazar, being deeply Catholic, maintained close relations with the Holy See, but he was a defender of the old Roman adage "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's". The international political framework always had a strong influence on the Portuguese foreign policy, and in this case also had in relations with Vatican. In Portugal, since 1933, enormous perks were granted to all levels, the Catholic Church in Portugal maintained close relations with PIDE (the secret police), the Church was considered a pillar of the State. We cannot say that the New State was confessional, Salazar's personality did not allow it, but it was surely "for confessional". In order to regulate relations between Portugal and the Holy See, Salazar signed with the Holy See a diplomatic agreement, the Concordat, where the principles of common coexistence are established, Salazar offers to the Catholic Church immense privileges at all levels.

#### Context

In terms of relations between the Portuguese State and the Catholic Church, we can say that from the nineteenth century until 1991 these relations have passed through, at least, four distinct phases. The first was related to the "fusion of Church and State", characterized by a complete "regalism", in which religion was totally controlled by political power. The second phase, which followed the establishment of the Republic in 1910, an open and violent conflict began, initiating a total separation between the State and the Church, enshrined in law.

In a third phase, which began with the advent of the New State and went from separation to full collaboration, which in some cases is seen as one of the fundamental pillars for Salazar to remain in power, the Church is granted privileges never before taken so officially. At this stage the Portuguese State was not confessional but was certainly "paraconfessional". With the 25<sup>th</sup> of April, a new phase arose in which, theoretically, the State adopted a neutral position in relation to the Church, but it kept a set of unique privileges that came directly from the New State. [1] To briefly summarize, we can speak of at least 19 agreements at different times, from the Portuguese State to Vatican, prior to the 1940 Concordat. We will here analyze those which fall chronologically into this paper's object of study.

#### III. First Republic

At the end of Monarchy, and with the beginning of the Republic, the Law of Separation arose on April 20, 1911, in which Afonso Costa played a decisive and courageous role, for the first time, to proceed to an effective separation of the State from Churches. Nonetheless, as the Catholic Church had for centuries a unique set of benefits, taking the state to give it a unique role in relation to other religions, it was the Catholic-Christian who most resented with this Law of Separation. However, the State continued to subsidize Portuguese missionaries throughout the world, a fact that few authors mention. Measures such as the abolition of religious vows, abolition of the teaching of the Catholic religion in public schools, civil registration as the only valid one, legalization of divorce, are measures that characterize modern democratic states and which, with great courage and state vision, Republicans. However, it was not these that led to the failure of

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the ideals of separation of the First Republic. In general, the Law of Separation (April 20, 1911) of the State from the Catholic Church provided for the immediate application of the following measures:

Establishment of "cultural", which were similar to committees, appointed by state authorities, which would be responsible for the regulation and financing of religious worship, and could not integrate priests; for priests to receive money they had to strictly obey the measures regulated by the "cult" and accept the Law of Separation; nationalization of religious property, although much of what was thus considered had been acquired over the centuries from the ownership of the Portuguese Crown; imposition of restrictions on the use of taller habits by priests and the prohibition of worship acts at night and at bells tolls; Institution of censorship to ecclesiastical declarations; reduction in the number of seminaries to five, and these were under state supervision. Portugal and the Vatican cut off diplomatic relations in 1913. The failure on the application of this law and the republican and democratic ideas of Afonso Costa led to a slowing of the confrontations between State and Church, even verifying, by future moderate governments, the application of a set of amnesties regarding the Law of Separation. As soon as this occurred, Catholics tried to take advantage of this small setback to establish a strategy to regain their lost privileges and influence. The instrument the Church used to implement this strategy was the creation of the Catholic Union, a federation of Catholic organizations, whose leadership belonged to the episcopate [2].

### Salazarist Period

As we have already mentioned, after May 28, State's relations with the Church greatly improved, however, it was no longer feasible to implement the Concordat of 1886. Thus, it was decided to establish contacts for a new Concordat, limited in a first phase, to the issue of the Eastern Patronage, an agreement signed before Salazar arrival to Government (April 13, 1928). This document was officially designated by protocol, but in practice it was a true concordat. In this document the Eastern Patronage was kept, and it was composed of four dioceses; Goa, Kochi, Meliapor, and Macao, although that of Daman was extinguished and incorporated into that of Goa, India, under the auspices of Bombay, whose archbishop would be of Portuguese and British nationality alternately. In this way, the preparatory work for a new Concordat began, already under the auspices of Oliveira Salazar and practically negotiated between him and his youth friend, Cardinal Cerejeira. Oliveira Salazar gained some prestige as a professor at the University of Coimbra, however, his connection with the Catholic Church was always present, placing him in a position that led the Church to see in him the "bridge" for a direct connection to the State. Salazar, himself, always described himself as a Catholic militant, and Cunha Leal made him the following picture: "... few friendships, [2] no love, unconscious exaggeration of his own value, insensibility due to isolation, absolute contempt for a humanity that did not understand him and which he could not even throw into his arms, in a spontaneous gesture to a companion whom, despite everything, he must have dreamed with..." [3]. Obviously, this type of personality attracted Catholic elites and especially the hierarchy of the clergy in Portugal. He had everything to represent them in power, therefore, the Catholic Church took advantage of this unique circumstance to introduce into the political system an "agent" of it, who could in future be at his "orders", which would not be exactly like

this, but the concessions the Church had as a consequence of these presuppositions were undoubtedly unique [2]. Salazar, allying himself with the Church, considered himself an "ally of God." Assumed himself and so did the Catholic elites, these and the clergy made him believe that it was so. It was, therefore, a closed triangle in itself, feeding itself ideologically, forgetting the external context in sociopolitical terms. [2] On the other hand, we must not forget that the Church was involved on May 28, and even the priest Sousa Peres was seconded "next" to Gomes da Costa. Franco Nogueira, once said, very objectively, that Salazar's appointment to the finance ministry "... should not have been indifferent to the Portuguese episcopate, certainly advised by Holy See..." [4] hence Salazar had a "doctrine and a will" favorable to the Church. The Catholic Center itself did not hesitate to support it from the beginning.

It could not be otherwise, the Catholic Church had to support Salazar and, unreservedly, since he had been militating early in Coimbra at all levels in the Catholic ranks, and with connections there to an active nucleus that fought permanently against the ideals of "modernism". The Academic Center for Christian Democracy, to which Salazar belonged, had become a pole of reaction against modernist ideas and also against the ideas conveyed by Freemasonry, by "free thought" and republicanism [5]. Two personalities played key roles and direction in this center, Oliveira Salazar and Gonçalves Cerejeira, who would have a decisive influence in the relations between the Church and the State. Already in August 1917, the Portuguese Catholic Center was founded at a congress in Braga, with the aim of promoting the Christianization of laws, customs and political life. In fact, they intended to restore all that the Church had lost at the beginning of the First Republic. In this congress Oliveira Salazar spoke several times presenting the theses underlying the creation of the center [5]. The Catholic social movement, which began to be more concerned with social issues, quickly became interested in strictly political problems and issues, privileging even doctrinal issues to the detriment of those related to the mobilization of Catholic "masses".

At the reopening of the Academic Center for Christian Democracy in Coimbra in 1912, Salazar stated that, "... although we are called Christian Democrats, we do not know of any other true democracy than that founded on Christianity, we do not understand what liberty, equality and human fraternity are or may be..." [6]. Therefore, the rise of Oliveira Salazar to power had to rejoice Catholics and, especially, the high hierarchy of the Catholic Church. Cerejeira "smiled" with his rise and has perceived the possibility of putting into practice his plans to Christianize Portuguese institutions in a structural way.

After Oliveira Salazar was invited to Government, Gonçalves Cerejeira wrote to him at the end of 1928, saying to him, "...the best souls of Portugal are with you. I know people praying for you in their knees, when they read that you were minister and that you asked for believers' prayers. There are many people who praying and accompanying you, you don't realize and you don't know them, with their prayers and their penances. As you see, you are there as an emissary of God's friends. Do not be discouraged, no matter how hard the difficulties, be content with giving God, who directs events, your possible part of collaboration - and He will take charge of your effort and will reward your dedication..." [7].

This speech leaves no doubt about Cerejeira's intentions as well as of his *modus operandis*. He intended to influence Salazar and, as the main instrument of psychological pressure, he used Salazar's "deification" to turn him in to a charismatic and providential leader. The Church, therefore, came to internalize in Salazar that he had a destiny drawn by God from which he could not escape, permanently "waving" him with a "priesthood," but very different one from that he had refused years before to live in Viseu. Cerejeira writes to him, "Don't be afraid, look for God and pretend you have a priestly mission in the Ministry. May everything be for God, and now you will have in the disasters and injustices of men a part of spiritual martyrdom; then you will have, besides God, men's blessings..." [6]. Cardinal Cerejeira always used this type of language when he wanted something from the Portuguese State for the Church, which happened in many cases, such as the Catholic University, religious holidays, the management of mercies, the teaching of religion in schools and specifically, in the documents that gave rise to the Concordat. Cerejeira assumed in full that it was a "business" of the Church with the State, not an agreement, but a business, "...Antonio, here is the leaflet I forgot to send you. There are also some notes. Forgive me for sending them now; but yesterday I had no time and I'll have no rest if I do not send them. You will do a work that is not like others, just for the moment that passes. It is a work done to God and his Church, which also hopes for justice. God chose you to give Him Portugal and give Him to Portugal. We have to do the most perfect work we can. Portugal is going to live a long time from what one will do. The Christian soul of Portugal will depend of this work, God knows how much. I pray that you can do all that God expects of you. And may the Church always bless you, glorious son to whom He gave in Portugal the place that belongs to Him for the salvation of souls. You owe it to your Catholic conscience to finalize this business." [5]

For Salazar, his governance should be guided by the principles of the Church's social doctrine in harmony with his earlier Catholic militancy, but he introduced very specific "nuances" which allowed him to gain greater control over the Church. But this only came to apply to Overseas. In Portugal, the Church would have great benefits at all levels on the part of the State, thanks to this vision of Salazar. Thus, Christian democracy was the main inspiration of the New State. Salazar, in his preface to António Ferro's book, presents the New State as "... a doctrine in action." On the other hand, the Portuguese Episcopate regards Salazar as a divine blessing, the Christian autocrat for excellence. Its members no longer had the memory of the times of the Monarchy, they only remembered the First Republic, and therefore Salazar received their unconditional support. It was not only in Portugal that Salazar gained the Church support. In Rome, the Pope took similar actions. In the ceremony for the presentation of credentials by Carneiro Pacheco, Pius XII referred to the country stating: "And in a world shaken by the feverish convulsions of war, Portugal was able to prove with facts that it was heading to new ascents, towards a noble grandeur" [1]. Despite the enormous Catholic influence in the establishment and consolidation of the New State, one cannot conclude that Salazarism had been a confessional regime. The Constitution of 1933 limited itself to sanctioning what was already in force, a regime of separation between the State and the Church, purged from the most damaging aspects of religious freedom. From the constitutional revision of 1945, the principles of Christian doctrine and moral, traditional to the country have prevailed.

Catholic elites were forced to confront and countering various secular tendencies, in which some tended towards totalitarianism. In ideological-political terms, it was here that the struggle against national-syndicalism and against the introduction of Italian fascism took place. Press agencies affiliate to Catholic elites and the Church's own hierarchy, such as the "News", where Mussolini's insolence and incoherence, as well as his public secularism and paganism, were always criticized, they even have compared Mussolini's politics to communist. For the Catholic elites, the Italian model jeopardized Church's social activity, as well as its economic and social independence, which it intended to restore in relation to what it had lost during the First Republic. However, the attack of the Catholic elites was stauncher against Nazi policies and the danger of being introduced in Portugal. The Catholic press has consistently contrasted Christian morality and Nazi "immorality" as a totally pagan culture, not inhibiting itself from denouncing the sacrifices of human people as well as Hitlerian racism. Portuguese Catholic Church bishops came to public to condemn both Nazism and Communism. These denunciations had external and internal purposes, trying, on the one hand, showing outside that these ideas were not welcomed, and by another, indicating to the national syndicalists and internal anarchists that they would not be welcomed, and having Salazar's unconditional support on their side. At the First Congress of the National Union, Salazar objectively made public, this coincidental line with the Catholic elites, unequivocally rejecting a totalitarian and secular state. According to Salazar, one should choose an associative, mixed and partial corporatism, always according to the social doctrine of the Catholic Church, directly opening a very important door for the overseas mission, as a factor of collaboration between both, specifically in the questions of education in Overseas. He wanted to make corporatism Christian in Portugal so that it would be as fair as possible.

### The Concordat

The Concordat has juridically solidified this tacit agreement between the Church and the New State (Salazar), first by recognizing the legal status of the Catholic Church. The free exercise of the authority of the Church and the power to exercise its powers were guaranteed (art. 1); safeguarding the material assets and patrimony of the Church (Article 4); the collection by the Church to the faithful was granted (Article 5); the Church was recognized as having the right to teach in private schools (article 20); the teaching of the Catholic religion in public education was guaranteed, and its texts and teachers were appointed by the Church (art. 21); the granting of subsidies to the dioceses and missionary corporations of the Overseas Territory, as well as to their houses of formation and rest were established (article 27). The Concordat was signed between the Portuguese State and the Holy See on May 7, 1940, with the outcome of the reverse curve that started at the beginning of the First Republic. The background of the signing of this document comes from 1929, however, the worsening of divisions among some Catholic elites, in which the "Bells' Ordinance" stands out, led to the idea of a Concordat to be interrupted. In 1933, Salazar again addressed this theme with the nuncio, Mons. Ciriacci. In April 1934, the newspaper "Diário da Manhã" reported that a Concordat would soon be signed with the Vatican, obviously stating, that Salazar was already determined to move forward with the negotiations. That same year, in Rome, Salazar gave a short interview to the Petit Parisian newspaper, stating that in Portugal the religious

question and the future signing of an agreement with the Holy See would be much less difficult than in other European countries. Cerejeira took advantage of the fact that in 1937 Salazar was Minister of Foreign Affairs to personally deliver him a draft of a Concordat with twelve articles, accompanied by numerous personal notes, in a higher number than the text of the project itself. He tried to justify the advantages of the document and the moment, making a particular reference to the fact that the State only came to subsidize the Church directly in the Overseas as well as in missions. [5] Then, Salazar formed a working group, which was known to be headed by Mário de Figueiredo, and to which also Teixeira de Sampaio and Fezas Vital, whose main mission was to elaborate a document in counterproposal to the one that Cerejeira had given to Salazar. This new text was denominated "First Formula" and was composed by 15 articles. After analyzing this document, Salazar filled it with personal notes, and asked Mário de Figueiredo to prepare a new document considering his notes. This third document, which was called "Second Formula", had thirty-five articles. There would also be two further documents known as 'Third' and 'Fourth Formula', the latter being sent to Cerejeira for consideration [5]. In the document that Cerejeira had to analyze, some of the initial proposals were suppressed, such as the recognition by the State of the "Academic" degrees and the obligatory establishment of public holidays. Salazar insisted in withdrawing the possible "intrusions" of the "Propaganda Fide" in the Overseas, leaving the Church fully subordinate to the governor-general as well as to the Overseas minister. For all this, there was a greater division within the Portuguese Catholic Church, on religious matters and, especially, concerning the relation of the State with the Church in the colonies.

Thus, the Concordat and the Missionary Agreement were an official commitment of partnership between the State and the Church, in inseparable terms, through the use of the religious phenomenon as a mechanism for stabilizing society.

### Conclusion

The relations between the Portuguese State and Vatican were different according to two factors, the internal political factor and the external political factor. During the first Republic the Church was diminished of the enormous power that it had during the monarchy, and we shall highlight here the prominent paper of Afonso Costa. With Salazarism we can state that the policy was of total collaborationism. With the "April 25 Revolution" of 1974, the Portuguese State became neutral, and the Constitution of the Republic expressed that the State itself was Secular.

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