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A National Mission in the Times of *Maximum Illud*: The Holy See and Portugal's Missionary Policies in Africa

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Abstract

The First World War had devastating consequences for Christian missionary activities, with thousands of missionaries deployed to the front or arrested due to their nationalities. The war's nationalistic frictions did not spare the religious field. As before, Christian missionaries were seen as representatives of their own countries rather than messengers of their religious denominations. In a way, Benedict XV's apostolic letter *Maximum Illud* responded to those national (and imperialistic) dissensions in the Catholic missionary world by fostering a more supranational consciousness in missionaries' minds.

This supranational and Papal-directly-supervised mission was far from complying with Portugal's old and persisting understandings of a mission submitted to and working on behalf of the imperial state. The Catholic missions remained a nationalising tool despite Portuguese laic policies towards the Catholic Church (namely the Separation regime). This concept disputed the Holy See's insights on the goals of missionary work. Although pontifical officials held assertive judgements regarding Portuguese missionary policies, Rome sought a less confrontational relationship with Lisbon even after the publication of *Maximum Illud*. The Holy See understood how the Catholic missions were indispensable to Portugal and in which way a passive collaboration would ultimately benefit Catholic evangelisation in Portuguese Africa.

Keywords: Catholic Mission; Holy See; *Maximum Illud*; Portuguese Empire

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> For the religious question, for the [Catholic] Church, it does not matter if French or Portuguese missions go [to Africa]. The purely religious purpose is fulfilled in the same way; what is not fulfilled in the same way is the patriotic purpose because if the missions were French, in addition to the religious purpose for which they are destined, they would do French politics. Only the missions that are Portuguese can make Portuguese nationalising politics.[1]

In 1923, the *Centro Católico Português*' (Portuguese Catholic Centre party) deputy Joaquim Dinis da Fonseca addressing the Parliament, defended the importance of the Catholic missions to Portugal's imperial needs. They were necessary to carry on the nationalisation of the colonial populations. When he delivered his long discourse on the importance of the Catholic missions, namely those run by religious congregations, which were expelled and illegalised at the dawn of the Portuguese Republic in 1910, the Holy See had an increasingly critical position concerning the nationalising intents of Catholic missionaries. Those criticisms were undeniably explained in the apostolic letter *Maximum Illud*, issued by Benedict XV in November 1919.

Published a few months after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, this *magna carta* of missionary Catholicism was somehow a response to the concerns regarding the nationalistic clashes between missionaries of different nationalities inside the Catholic missionary world (also diffused in the Protestant context) during the decades before the First World War. Those dissensions were also fuelled by the widespread perceptions of missionary activities and their association with European imperialism. Firmly attached to and involved in Europe's political and cultural expansion, missionaries were understood as representatives of its countries and religious denominations and were frequently under suspicion by local powers or colonial authorities. For Portugal, foreign missionaries, namely Protestants, embodied all sorts of threats against its colonial rule. In his speech, Dinis da Fonseca recalled that "the intrigues of the Scottish priests" led to the British Ultimatum of 1890, which forced Portugal to abandon the "Rose-Coloured Map" project to value the importance of a mission under Portuguese authority.[2]

Deeply rooted in everyone's minds, these entanglements between mission, nation, and empire became widely exposed at the outbreak of the Great War. Across the world, political authorities detained and arrested nationals of the adversary powers.[3] Religious missionaries were no exception, particularly in the

[1] Speech by Joaquim Dinis da Fonseca at the Chamber of Deputies, Lisbon, 6 June 1923; *Diário da Câmara dos Deputados*, June 6, 1923.

[2] Speech by Dinis da Fonseca, 14. On the links between the Scottish missionaries and the Ultimatum crisis, see Hugo Gonçalves Dores, *Politics and Religion in the Portuguese Colonial Empire in Africa (1890-1930)* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2021), 39−52.

[3] Hartmut Lehmann, "Missionaries without Empire: German Protestant Missionary Efforts in the Interwar Period (1919-1939)," in *Missions, Nationalism, and the End of Empire*, ed. Brian Stanley and Robert E.

colonial field. When Portugal joined the war on the Allied side in 1916, one of the first decisions made by the Government-General of Mozambique was to despatch a military force to imprison the German and Austrian Verbite missionaries working in the province.[4] Laying aside its primary features of religious workers, the governments imprinted on the missionaries the general perceptions of being agents at the service of its national powers. As in many other aspects, the Great War exacerbated nationalistic dissensions within Christian denominations and threatened to throw down previous inter-denominational initiatives such as those laid down by the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference in 1910.[5] On the Catholic side, despite the authority of the Pope and the central role of *Propaganda Fide* on missionary affairs, there were internal conflicts among congregations and the nationalistic positions of the missionaries, patently criticised by Benedict XV in the *Maximum Illud*.

In the aftermath of the war, due to the impact of the enormous material and human losses, religious personalities reasserted the spiritual importance of missionary work, mitigating the national insights that left their mark on the missionaries' endeavours. By valuing the idea of a supranational mission, Catholic and Protestant leaderships sought new paths in the post-war times. As Dinis da Fonseca stated, the purely religious purpose would be fulfilled with French or Portuguese (Catholic) missionaries. According to him, they were both embraced by the Catholic Church, that is, by the Holy See.

Even though he was a prominent member of the Portuguese Catholic Centre party and lobbied for the Church's interests, Dinis da Fonseca assumed a vigorous defence of the country's interests like many other Portuguese politicians and clerics before and after. If he was simply concerned about the expansion of Catholicism—in a strictly religious perception—the missionary's nationality would not matter, provided it was Catholic; however, his concerns were obviously more 'earthly'. If Benedict XV proclaimed that the missionary's "duty [was] not the extension of a human realm but of Christ's," that is, "the acquisition of citizens for a heavenly-fatherland and not for an earthly one," Dinis da Fonseca was noticeably demanding the government in Lisbon to employ all the efforts to increase the numbers of Portuguese subjects across the colonial world, although Catholics.

Dinis da Fonseca's assertion expressed a general and long-lasting attitude towards the role of missions and religion in colonial matters. His demands regarding the legalisation of religious congregations as the best-suited entities to

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Frykenberg (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 34−50. Richard Pierard, "Allied Treatment of Protestant Missionaries in German East Africa in World War I," *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 12, no. 1 (1993): 4−17. William R. Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations. A History of the International Missionary Council and its Nineteenth-Century Background* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1981), 166−67.

[4] Paul Schebesta, *Portugal: a Missão da Conquista no Sudeste de África. História das Missões da Zambézia e do Reino do Monomotapa (1560-1920)* (Lisbon: Missionários do Verbo Divino, 2011), 431−33 ; Hugo G. Dores, *A Missão da República. Política, Religião e o Império Colonial Português (1910-1926)* (Lisbon: Edições 70, 2015), 127−28.

[5] Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

carry on a fruitful evangelising work went back to the Constitutional Monarchy, in which the 1834's legislation had initially imposed the congregations' expulsion and illegal status in the country. Nevertheless, the monarchical governments had more or less willingly allowed the presence of congregations, namely for colonial purposes. In 1910, the new republican power, fiercely opposing the congregations, with the Society of Jesus occupying a central place, enforced the existing laws. All Jesuits were forced to leave the country, like the other foreign congregants, while the Portuguese were compulsorily secularised.[6]

Republican politics impacted the Portuguese colonial world differently, with the ideology often bent on political and diplomatic demands and necessities. The mission remained a valuable tool for the imperial state. It could not be simply neglected or abandoned, provided that it would promote the nationalising goals that the governments in Lisbon desired. Consequently, if the anticlerical stances of the Republic did not legally extinguish the Catholic missions (the Jesuit missions were handed to German and Austrian Verbites, with the government's approval) and established a Separation regime, it did not pave the way for a free intervention of the Holy See on missionary matters in the empire.[7]

In Asia, the Holy See was tied to the Patronage system, lately reasserted by the Concordat of 1886, and the Republicans refused to relinquish its prerogatives over religious issues that seemingly contradicted the concept of separation between State and Church set in 1911.[8] In Africa, despite Portugal's failure to obtain such an agreement from Rome in the last decades of the nineteenth century, missionary life continued outside the supervision of *Propaganda Fide*.[9] In Portuguese political officials' imagery (whether monarchical or republican), the sacred congregation remained a threatening opponent to the nation's imperial aims, such as the Protestant missionaries or Britain's and Germany's expansionist attitudes.

Concerned about the future of Catholic missions and evangelisation, the Holy See had thus to cope with the intricacies of Portugal's missionary policies, considering how far it could go. If the new international setting, envisaged after Versailles and the League of Nations, seemed to guarantee missionary freedom that went back to Berlin's General Act of 1885, and the *Maximum Illud's* tenets that proclaimed a supranational mission, Portugal's political situation might require different remedies. Between 1919 and 1926, on several occasions, the Holy See had to consider its position towards the Portuguese missionary policies and the Catholic evangelisation in the Portuguese empire. This text follows that story.

[6] Dores, *A Missão da República*, 55−57.
[7] Ibid., 58−65, and 69−75.
[8] Célia Reis, *O Padroado Português no Extremo Oriente na Primeira República* (Lisbon: Livros Horizonte, 2007).
[9] Dores, *Politics and Religion,* 52−77.

In the Aftermath of the Great War: Missonary Freedom

A moment of nationalist confrontation, the Great War was fed by the antagonistic conflict that marked the passage from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. The competition between nations, exacerbated by nationalist entreaties, arms races, and inter-imperial rivalries, also reached the religious world.[10]Paralleled with the historical competition between congregations and religious orders in the colonial world, the differences between nations crossed the field of religion. Even in the Catholic world, more unitary than the diverse Protestant sphere, nationalistic antagonism and competition conditioned daily life, especially in the colonial and non-European realms. With a greater or lesser degree of colonial intervention, Christian missionaries were framed within the same mental and cultural frameworks as their fellow citizens, be they imperial officials, diplomats, traders, or settlers.[11]

The association between missionaries and their nations of origin was perceptible to contemporaries. To a great extent, this explains why the belligerent governments ordered the imprisonment of citizens of enemy nations, among them the missionaries spread across their overseas territories. France and Great Britain ordered the detention of missionaries of German origin and vice versa. In Asia, the Chinese government, supporting the Allies, gave the same order. The German Christian missionaries present in China were arrested, in an attitude contrasting with the juridical condition of extra-territoriality that Christian missionaries had enjoyed in China since the middle of the nineteenth century, after the so-called “unequal treaties” (such as the 1860 Convention of Peking) and the Boxer Uprising of 1900. In addition to the arrest, governments also seized missionary assets. Even before the decision to arrest missionaries and take over their assets, many missions suffered a significant setback when many of their members returned to Europe to assist in the war effort, working in the medical and assistance fields, swelling the corps of military chaplains. By November 1918, the Christian missionary world was far from the flourishing dynamism of the first decades of the twentieth century.

The international legal status of the missions was brought up for discussion at the Paris Peace Conference, at which the Holy See was prevented from actively participating. However, Benedict XV, criticised for his neutral stance during the conflict, sent the secretary of the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, Bonaventura Cerretti, to Paris to follow the works and intervene on behalf

[10] Adrian Hastings, “The Clash of Nationalism and Universalism within Twentieth-Century Missionary Christianity,” in *Missions, Nationalism and the End of Empire*, ed. Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 15−33.
[11] Claude Prudhomme, *Missions Chrétiennes et colonisation. XVIe–XXe siècle* (Paris: Cerf, 2004), 95−130.

of Catholic missions.[12] Like the Protestant Joseph H. Oldham[13], Cerretti sought to safeguard the missionary assets confiscated by the Allies and guarantee the return of the missionaries of the defeated nations to their former missions. Under the Treaty of Versailles, confiscated belongings would be handed over to the entities responsible for the missions of each of the respective religious confessions, namely the *Propaganda Fide*. The Covenant of the League of Nations had granted missionary freedom to all nationalities and religious denominations. However, despite the international legal system and official statements, allied governments were often reluctant to allow German missionaries to resume their work, especially in former German colonies. The association between mission and empire vividly lingered in colonial minds.

When the Peace Conference of Paris started, missionary issues regained a prominent place in the international arena, probably in the most significant way since the negotiations of the Berlin Conference, in 1884−85. The Treaty of Versailles, the Covenant of the League of Nations, and above all, the Convention of Saint-Germain-en-Laye reasserted the principles of missionary freedom and religious tolerance, which had underpinned the international law of missions in the colonial world since the late-nineteenth century. However, the post-war context would bring a novelty to these premises, in line with the Portuguese expectations concerning its overseas missionary policy. After a world conflict profoundly impacted by nationalistic discourse, Portugal was far from diverting its imperial conceptions away from its traditional aims of nationalising colonial populations—substantially based on ideological discourses but often with few actual policies implemented in the field.

The 'mission', broadly understood as an instrument of colonial power, remained an essential asset in the imperial repertoire—even if less related to establishing borders or areas of influence and more to the consolidation and expansion of colonial political and administrative rule. Portuguese political circles remained concerned about the missions' role in the colonial context. If the war had interrupted the definition and enforcement of an ideological-based missionary policy, it was time to resume quickly and adequately.

Through Article 11, the Convention of Saint-Germain-en-Laye guaranteed that the signatory powers would "protect and favour, without distinction of nationality or religion, the religious, scientific or charitable institutions and undertakings […] which aim at leading the natives in the path of progress and civilisation."[14] Christian

[12] Marc Boegner, "Gouvernement et Missions: De l'Act de Berlin au traité de Versailles," *Le Monde Non-Chrétien* 1 (n.d.), 59−79; Vittorio De Marco, "L'Intervento della Santa Sede a Versailles in favore delle Missioni Tedesche," in *Benedetto XV e la Pace – 1918*, ed. Giorgio Rumi (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1990), 65−82; Antonio Scottà, *Papa Benedetto XV. La Chiesa, la Grande Guerra e la Pace (1914−1922)* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2009), 301−25.

[13] Keith Clements, *Faith on the Frontier: A Life of J. H. Oldham* (Edinburgh: T& T Clark Ltd., 1999), 163−66.

[14] Convention of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Article 11; accessed October 16, 2021, http://www.loc.gov/law/help/us-treaties/bevans/m-ust000002-0261.pdf.

Missionaries were allowed to freely circulate, settle, and live in any part of Africa to pursue their work. Freedom of conscience and worship was guaranteed. The same principles closely transcribed Article 6 of Berlin's General Act of 1885. However, Article 11 brought a novelty unparalleled in any of the previous Acts, supposedly suggested by the Portuguese delegation.[15] Despite the abovementioned guarantees, the text also allowed the political authorities to set restrictions on missionary freedom if "the maintenance of security and public order" or the "application of Constitutional law" were at stake.

Through this amendment, colonial powers could easily obstruct the installation and work of any undesirable missionary. For example, in the Portuguese context, where the governments always tried to control missionary activities, the missionaries, especially the Protestants, often used the liberties given by international conventions (such as the Berlin General Act) to reply to any governmental restriction on their work. With this new setting, Lisbon could counter-respond. If the Protestant missionaries could be implicated in some sort of menace to "the maintenance of security and public order" (on several occasions, the authorities accused them of inciting local populations against Portuguese colonial rule), the Catholic missionaries belonging to religious congregations could be prevented from entering the countries and its empire due to the legislation that prohibited and illegalised them.[16]

Unsurprisingly, Afonso Costa, one of the leading figures of the Republic's anticlerical policy, former Prime Minister and, at the time, head of Portugal's representation at the Paris Peace Conference, confessed that this provision was a "safeguard of Portuguese interests." However, the government did not use this new piece of international law to harass the members of religious congregations working in the empire, such as the Spiritans and the Franciscans. Their permanence in Africa after 1910's expulsion order was entirely due to the republican governments' complaisance. The post-war times could bring new opportunities and possibilities to the Catholic missionary field.[17]

[15] Cristina Pacheco, "Portugal na Sociedade das Nações: 1919-1930" (MA thesis, Lisbon: Faculty of Letters, University of Lisbon, 1999), 34.
[16] Valentine Ugochukwu Iheanacho, *Maximum Illud and Benedict XV's Missionary Thinking: Prospects of a Local Church in Mission Territories* (Saarbrucken: Verlag, 2015). Alberto Monticone, "Il Pontificato di Benedetto XV. Rinnovamento della Chiesa e azione missionaria (1918-1922)," in *Storia della Chiesa. La Chiesa e la Società Industriale (1878-1922)*, ed. Elio Guerrero e Annibale Zambarbieri, 1st part, vol. 22, 3rd ed. (Milan: Edizioni San Paolo, 1995), 192−94.
[17] Hastings, "The clash of Nationalism," 15−17.

Towards a "Supranational Mission"': the Spirit of *Maximum Illud*

While the powers in Paris set the lines of a new international scenario during the summer of 1919, the Holy See was devising the necessary means to deal with this post-war world. Oldham and Cerretti's efforts allowed the return of German missionaries to their former colonies—at least, theoretically, since most colonial powers were unwilling to accept them back—and the convention of Saint-Germain-en-Laye reassured them of Berlin's missionary freedom, wherefore the future of missions might be promising.

In Rome, the Curia had been preparing a document concerning the missions and missionary work. Finally, on 30 November 1919, Benedict XV issued the apostolic letter *Maximum Illud* on the propagation of the faith.[18] According to Hastings, while drafting this letter for modern missions, Benedict XV and *Propaganda Fide's* Prefect, Cardinal Van Rossum, had considered the attitudes of Belgian, Portuguese, but "above all," French missionaries.[19] Iheanacho also stated that the "thorny question" of the French Protectorate of the missions and the daunting relationships between missionaries in China, along with the implications of the world conflict, pressed the Holy See forward.[20] It seems that the motto proclaimed by French Spiritan Prosper Augouard, apostolic vicar of French Congo, at the entering of the Spiritans in the Congo—"*pour Dieu et pour la France*"—would not prevail over Psalm 44:11, "forget your people and your father's house," written on *Maximum Illud*. Similarly, the prerogatives of the exclusivist and national-controlled Portuguese Patronage were hardly compatible with it.[21]

By appealing to this forgetfulness, *Maximum Illud* broke with one of the elements that marked missionary life throughout the nineteenth century: imperialist nationalism. Instead, the document claimed that Catholicism was a "stranger to no nation" and that the missionaries should not "propagate the kingdom of men, but that of Christ." It would be "regrettable" for the religious, neglecting their dignity, to think more "of their earthly homeland than of their heavenly one." Missionaries should not be preoccupied with spreading their nation's "power and glory" above all. If the people to be converted realised that the missionary was committed to "the interests of his own country," all his work would become suspicious in their eyes. They might believe the Catholic religion was the "exclusive property of some foreign nation." The letter unequivocally criticised those missionary magazines anxious "to increase the power of the missionary's country" instead of extending the Christian kingdom. The missionary was to appear not as an "envoy from his

[18] Valentine Ugochukwu Iheanacho, *Maximum Illud and Benedict XV's Missionary Thinking: Prospects of a Local Church in Mission Territories* (Saarbrucken: Verlag, 2015); Alberto Monticone, "Il Pontificato di Benedetto XV. Rinnovamento della Chiesa e azione missionaria (1918−1922)," in *Storia della Chiesa. La Chiesa e la Società Industriale (1878−1922)*, ed. Elio Guerrero e Annibale Zambarbieri, 1st part, vol. 22, 3rd ed. (Milan: Edizioni San Paolo, 1995), 192−94.
[19] Hastings, "The clash of Nationalism," 15−17.
[20] Iheanacho, *Maximum Illud and Benedict XV's Missionary Thinking*, 136−40.
[21] Armand Brice Ibombo, *L'oeuvre missionnaire de Mgr. Prosper Augouard au Congo-Brazzaville (1881−1921*) (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012), 13.

homeland, but from Christ." The papal disapproval of the plans and intentions of the imperial powers to nationalise the missions and their activities was evident. The Church, intended to be universal, should not interfere in political matters and European colonialism, emphasising its spiritual function.[22]

The apostolic letter intended to imbue the mission with a supranational spirit to overcome nationalist divisions within the missionary Church. Before being German, French, Belgian, Portuguese, or Italian, the missionary was Catholic. His fundamental concern should be the evangelisation of the heathens and not politics. This principle contrasted with the nationalising functions that states sought to imprint on overseas religious missions and disputed most governments' understanding of the mission's role within an imperial framework. In an attempt to protect the interests of Catholic missions, just as Protestants sought to overcome national divisions exacerbated by the world war, Rome too would insist on the spiritual character of missionary work to the detriment of the nationalising elements employed by both colonial authorities and missionaries in the missions.[23]

Missions should promote the "raising and training of a clergy amidst the nations among which they dwell," on whom Pope placed "the best hopes of the new Christianity" since the indigenous clergy shared the "origin, character, feelings and inclinations" with the rest of the population. Indigenous clerics are best suited to "introduce the faith in their minds." Consequently, the Catholic mission should recover this essential aspect expressed in the *Instructions* of 1659, issued by Pope Alexander VII as a guide to the missionaries of the Society of Foreign Missions in Paris sent to the missions of Asia, one of the first moments of the evangelising action of *Propaganda Fide* in the region, after its foundation in 1622 by Gregory XV: the indigenisation of the clergy.[24] It was, therefore, "absolutely necessary" that this group of ecclesiastics be trained conveniently and that a "raw and unfinished preparation" should not be sufficient. It should be a "full, adequate" training like that given to any priest of the evangelising nations.[25]

If some missionaries, like the Belgian Lazarist Vincent Lebbe, were strong supporters of the indigenisation policy that the Holy See sought to encourage in the guidelines expressed in *Maximum Illud*, many European missionaries were vehemently opposed to its application.[26] Many cited the lack of people capable of occupying the leading positions of the local Church, with arguments that were often close to the discourses of cultural and racial superiority that permeated the mentality of Europe at the time. For these missionaries, supported by the colonial administrations or the diplomatic representatives of their countries of origin,

[22] Claude Prudhomme, "Le Cardinal Van Rossum et la politique missionaire du Saint-Siège sous Benoît XV et Pie XI (1918-1932)," in *Life with a Mission. Cardinal Willem Van Rossum C.Ss.R. (1854−1932)*, ed. Vefie Poels, Theo Salemink and Hans de Valk (Gent: Redactie Trajesta, 2011), 131−32.
[23] Hastings, "The clash of Nationalism," 15−18.
[24] Claude Prudhomme, *Stratégie Missionnaire du Saint-Siège sous Léon XIII (1878−1903)* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1994), 195−201.
[25] Prudhomme, "Le Cardinal Van Rossum," 130−31.
[26] John Pollard, *The Papacy in the Age of Totalitarianism, 1914-1958* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 115. Iheanacho, *Maximum Illud,* 199−204.

promoting the ecclesiastical rise of the indigenous populations could call into question the dominance and preponderance of Europeans.

The Eventual Return of the Missionaries

For the missionaries, both the Treaty of Versailles and the Covenant of the League of Nations seemed to open new doors so they could resume their long-awaited activities. On 10 July 1919, a few days after the treaty's signature, the General of the Society of the Divine Word, Nikolaus Blum, wrote to the Secretary of State, Cardinal Gasparri, to ask the nuncio in Lisbon to release his still imprisoned missionaries. Portugal had to fulfil the terms of the treaty it had signed. The nuncio, Achille Locatelli, immediately took the necessary steps so that the Verbites could return to their missions in Mozambique. On 11 October 1919, Locatelli informed the Verbite missionaries that the Minister of Foreign Affairs, João Melo Barreto, had "formally" assured him that they could "return immediately" to their Zambezi missions. The Minister of the Colonies, Alfredo Rodrigues Gaspar, also agreed to their return. It was now only necessary to send a government official to release them.[27]

However, the apparent willingness quickly became a stalling process. In January 1920, two former Verbite missionaries in Mozambique, Paul Schebesta (former superior of the Chupanga mission) and Paul Freyman (superior of the Angónia mission) sent a letter to the Minister of War, Hélder Ribeiro, declaring their submission to all Portuguese political and judicial authorities as demanded to the Catholic missionaries under the recently approved legislation on missions (Decree No. 6322, of 24 December 1919). They were ready to make the necessary efforts to recover their former missions, endorsing the legal measures so they could adequately contribute to the "national civilising work" expected by the government. They ensured that most of the former missionaries who had worked in Mozambique knew "enough" Portuguese language to comply with the legal and nationalising requirements. Plus, they were also willing to become naturalised Portuguese.[28]

The Verbites' goodwill and guarantees stumbled upon Portuguese traditional suspicions and opposition towards foreign missionaries and the constant flow of governments and ministers within metropolitan politics. In February 1920, the Ministry of the Colonies clarified that only after the country ratified the Treaty of Versailles could the German missionaries enjoy "the same freedoms as the

[27] Blum to Gasparri, 10 July 1919; Gasparri to Locatelli, 29 July 1919; Archivio Segreto Vaticano/Archivio della Nunziatura di Lisbona [hereafter ASV/ANL], no. 424, fasc. 3, tit. VIII, pos. 6ª: Missionari del Verbo Divino (1919-1920), fols. 192v−93. Locatelli to Schebesta, 11 October 1919, transcribed in Schebesta, *Portugal: A Missão da Conquista*, 437.

[28] Schebesta and Freyman to Ribeiro, 15 January 1920; ASV/ANL, no. 426, fasc. 1, tit. IX, pos. 9ª: Missioni Cattoliche (1919), fls. 200−201.

missionaries of all nations." Without ratification, the missionaries could not appeal to it. Besides, the new government no longer had Gaspar or Melo Barreto, and the previous promises seemed to have faded. In April, *Osservatore Romano* noticed that the nuncio obtained the return of the German missionaries to Mozambique from the government. It was unfounded news, as it turned out.[29]

After Portugal ratified the treaty (2 April 1920), the Verbites made a new request. By June, Locatelli assured the governor of the prelature of Mozambique, Sebastião José Alves, that the new government seemed "willing to let them in."[30] At the end of August, Schebesta, following the suggestion made by the Minister of the Colonies, asked Locatelli to intervene within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to hasten the imperative naturalisation of his missionaries for their return to Mozambique. Despite the government's declared acceptance, it would not translate into a proactive attitude or political decision.[31]

In September 1920, the situation suddenly changed when the General Chapter of the Society of the Divine Word, assembled to choose the successor of the late General Blum, discussed the situation in Mozambique. The newly elected Superior General, Wilhelm Gier, listed the conditions under which the congregation would be willing to permit the return of the missionaries to their former missions. Firstly, the congregation should be allowed to create an autonomous mission under the direct dependence of *Propaganda Fide*. Secondly, the mission should not be obliged to employ only Portuguese personnel. Finally, the congregation and the Portuguese government should sign a "contract" concerning this matter.[32]

Gier's proposal was far from reality, and any of these points would be enough for a peremptory refusal on the Portuguese part. Neither the government in Lisbon nor in Lourenço Marques would allow an exception that would not establish the obligation of Portuguese missionary personnel, even if the authorities would inevitably acquiesce with foreign missionaries, as it had often done in the past. Although not officially acknowledged by the Republic, the idea of a mission outside the Patronage (although not formally recognised by the Republic) was entering a hornets' nest into which even Rome would be reluctant to follow.

Still, Schebesta went to Steyl to explain the question of the Patronage and the quarrels with *Propaganda Fide*, but there was nothing to be done by then. On 17 October 1920, Freyman told Locatelli that after the Portuguese government declined them and Gier's terms, the Society decided to refrain from "further attempts" for the Verbites' return to Mozambique, admitting that any outcome could

[29] Schebesta, *Portugal: A Missão da Conquista*, 439-440. "Per la libertà dell'Apostolado Cattolico. III. Le Missioni dei Tedeschi dopo la guerra," *Osservatore Romano* 98, April 23, 1920.
[30] Locatelli a Alves, 14 de Junho de 1920; ASV/ANL, no. 426, fasc. 2, tit. IX, pos. 9ª continuazione: Missioni Cattoliche (1919−1920), fol. 99.
[31] Locatelli to Alves, 14 June 1920; ASV/ANL, no. 426, fasc. 2, tit. IX, pos. 9ª continuazione: Missioni Cattoliche (1919-1920), fol. 99. Schebesta to Locatelli, 28 August 1920; ASV/ANL, no. 424, fasc. 3, tit. VIII, pos. 6ª: Missionarii del Verbo Divino (1919-1920), fol. 231.
[32] Schebesta to Locatelli, 28 August 1920; ASV/ANL, no. 424, fasc. 3, tit. VIII, pos. 6ª: Missionarii del Verbo Divino (1919-1920), fol. 231. Schebesta, *Portugal: A Missão da Conquista*, 443−44.

"only be negative." For the Verbites, the matter reached its conclusion. As for Portugal, this decision ended a controversial question. Not only were the conditions demanded by the Verbites unacceptable, but they also served as a sustained justification for Portuguese unwillingness regarding a group of missionaries from a religious congregation imposed upon the country from the start. Despite Locatelli's commitment in the matter, the Holy See would not be able to ensure Gier's demands next to the Portuguese government, not only because of the recent re-establishment of their diplomatic relations but also because Rome knew too well how Lisbon would defend the prospect of a national and subordinated mission.[33]

Seeking for Autonomy: the Spiritan Plan for Angola's Missions

In Angola, this new international reality had given the Spiritans new expectations in their relationship with the political authorities. It was, perhaps, time to rethink the province's missionary structure. In January 1920, the Spiritan Superior General Alexandre Le Roy sent *Propaganda Fide* the memoir *Angola and Congo. Les dioceses et les prefectures* for appreciation, handling the complicated conflict between the diocese of Angola and Congo (established in 1596 under the Patronage system, and therefore Portugal's control) and the Apostolic Prefectures submitted to *Propaganda Fide*. Since the mid-nineteenth century, the existence of the former was at the centre of a noteworthy quarrel between Portugal and the Holy See.[34]

Le Roy pointed out three crucial conclusions. Firstly, the jurisdiction of the diocese overlapped that of the apostolic prefectures; secondly, the Law of Separation of 1911 had effectively led to the end of the Patronage; finally, the Treaty of Versailles and the Convention of Saint-Germain-en-Laye reasserted religious freedom to missionaries of all nations and confessions. Thus, Le Roy concluded, the Portuguese government could not prevent Catholic missionaries from establishing within its colonial territories and, consequently, *Propaganda Fide*, as the coordinating body of the Catholic mission, would have "freedom of action" not only in the apostolic prefectures but also in the entire diocese of Angola and Congo. Instead of the intent that dominated Portugal's imperial affairs of widening

[33] Freyman to Locatelli, 17 October 1920; ASV/ANL, no. 424, fasc. 3, tit. VIII, pos. 6ª: Missionarii del Verbo Divino (1919−1920), fol. 236. The entering of the Verbites in Mozambique was the result of German and Austrian pressures after the expel of the Jesuit missionaries (most of them German and Austrian) from Mozambique due to the republican decision of 1910. On the matter see: Dores, *Politics and Religion*, 143−44.

[34] The Apostolic Prefectures dependent on Propaganda Fide in Angola were the Apostolic Prefecture of Lower Congo, established in 1865, and the Apostolic Prefecture of Upper Cimbebasia, established in 1879 as Apostolic Prefecture of Cimbebasia and renamed Apostolic Prefecture of Cubango, in 1921. Dores, *Politics and Religion*, 52−77; Dores, "The Road to an Agreement on Missions. The Quarrel between Portugal and the Holy See regarding the Missionary Policy for the Portuguese Empire in Africa (c. 1880−1910)," *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 51 (2021): 86−100.

the diocesan jurisdiction to the prefectures, Le Roy proposed the opposite: all of Angola should be under the authority of *Propaganda Fide*.[35]

Le Roy suggested an ecclesiastical reorganisation similar to that implemented in some French colonies in the aftermath of the 1905 Law of Separation, such as Guadaloupe and Martinique, placing Angola's jurisdictions under the supervision of his congregation.[36] If this system was applied in Angola, and although the bishop remained a Portuguese national, "the spread of the Gospel would soon make significant progress there." He believed that the government, which did not "officially" recognise "neither diocese, nor prefecture, nor Royal Patronage," would not object to this reorganisation because it maintained some precepts frequently demanded by Lisbon, such as the bishop's nationality. Above all, Le Roy trusted that republican laicity and international agreements would supersede any objection on the Portuguese side. As it turned out, Le Roy misread the context, which seems odd since he, as superior of the Spiritans since 1896, had to deal with Portugal's stances regarding the importance of a national missionary policy on several occasions, especially during the missionary crisis in Angola, in 1901. Le Roy would soon understand that those stances were not bound to the regime's differences. A nationalising mission was not a monarchical prerogative.[37]

Propaganda Fide passed the project to the Secretary of State, which forwarded it to the nuncio in Lisbon. It was a "great" plan, Locatelli admitted, but in practice, it would be "unfeasible" and could only "create difficulties" that must be "avoided." There was a contrary and long-standing feeling against *Propaganda Fide* in Portuguese public opinion, instigated by the liberal monarchical governments throughout the nineteenth century. The suggestion of removing the jurisdiction of the whole province from the bishop of Angola achieved officiously in 1906 and handing it over to *Propaganda Fide* would end up "upsetting the authorities against the Fathers of the Holy Spirit and even compromising their missions." Locatelli warned that the international conventions quoted by Le Roy would allow the government to hinder religious congregations' presence in the colonies, finding or "inventing" pretexts against them. Moreover, he recalled that the government had managed to block the return of the Verbites to Mozambique, delaying any final decision, despite the possibility provided by the Treaty of Versailles. Also, discussing Angola's jurisdictional problem was not convenient since the province constituted a "real maze of jurisdictions."[38]

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[35] *Memoire Angola et Congo*; Archivio Storico della Congregazione per l'Evangelizzazione dei Popoli [Propaganda Fide] [ASCEP], Nuova Serie, 668 (1920), fol. 228.

[36] On French policies regarding religious congregations, see, among others: Patrick Cabanel and Jean-Dominique Durand, eds., *Le Grand Exil des Congrégations Religieuses Françaises. 1901−1914* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2005); Jacqueline Lalouette and Jean-Pierre Machelon, eds., *Les congrégations hors la loi? Autour de la loi du 1er juillet 1901* (Paris: Letouzey & Ané, 2002).

[37] *Memoire Angola et Congo*; ASCEP, NS, 668 (1920), fols. 228−29.

[38] Van Rossum to Gasparri, 12 May 1921; Gasparri to Locatelli, 29 June 1921; Antunes to Locatelli, 1 September 1921; Locatelli to Gasparri, 4 September 192; ASCEP, NS, 668 (1920), fol. 231, fols 234−41, and fols. 232−33v respectively. The diocese of Angola and Congo had been vacant since 1915 when the former Bishop Lima Vidal returned to Portugal. The vicar general, Manuel Alves da Cunha, a secular priest, would administer it until 1932, when a Spiritan, Moisés Alves Pinho, was nominated as bishop.

Locatelli's assessments crippled Le Roy's idea. For the Prefect of Propaganda Fide, Willem Van Rossum, the man behind the Maximum Illud, his report showed that it was "opportune" to abandon Le Roy's plan, maintaining the status quo ante, to not "worsen religious interests" in the Portuguese colony. In contrast with several of his predecessors, Van Rossum acknowledged Angola's complex religious scenario. For him, such a reorganising plan would have more serious, negative consequences for the congregants and, consequently, local missionary life. An open confrontation with Portugal, establishing a judicial system that would be undoubtedly repudiated, would weigh heavily on the missionaries and could trigger a possible expulsion, as sustained by the legal terms of Article 11 of the Convention of Saint-Germain-en-Laye. The Spiritans, likewise, should not forget that the Decree of 8 October 1910, the Law of Separation, and the 1911 Constitution prohibited the presence of regulars in Portuguese domains.[39]

Given this situation, Van Rossum concluded, it would be preferable to continue to accept the regime of exception that the republican policies had granted to the Spiritan congregation (as to the Franciscans) when other religious institutions were not that fortunate. Furthermore, after a decade of wavering political measures and in a context where several political sectors ideologically contested religion and the Catholic Church, missions were facing a concerning lack of personnel. So, for the time being, the status quo ante should be preserved. Besides, the missionary legislation recently approved seemed to anticipate a much-expected improvement in missionary conditions.[40]

Legislating The Missionary Life: from Decree No. 6322 (1919) to *João Belo's Statute* (1926)

Since the beginning of the republican regime, several governments have tried to implement legislation on missions to control them better and guarantee better results. After a failed attempt to extend some principles of the Law of Separation to the empire, through Decree No. 233 (1913), three different governments came up with new legal documents, all issued in 1919, each with its particular perspective on the missions' role in the imperial structure, but all underlining its nationalising character.[41] Later that year, Decree No. 6233 (24 December 1919), resulting from a collaborative effort among different actors, seemed to open a calmer, hopeful prospect for missionary life.[42] Several clergymen, such as the Spiritan provincial José Maria Antunes, were summoned to give their insights on the matter. The lay

[39] Van Rossum to Gasparri, 19 January 1922; ASCEP, NS, 668 (1920), fols. 258−58v.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Dores, A *Missão da República,* 158−63.
[42] On the Decree no. 6322, see, Dores, *A Missão da República*, 163−68.

Quirino Avelino de Jesus, a prominent figure in Portuguese Catholicism, served as a liaison between the Ministry of the Colonies, and the Apostolic Nunciature, facilitating conversations between the different parties and interests, including those of the so-called laic missions, that is, non-religious missions entrusted to nationalise the colonial populations under the auspices of the republican ideology devoid of any religious feature.[43]

The negotiations were "long and complicated," admitted Quirino, "due to the extreme, and at times the almost insurmountable difficulty of reconciling […] the ideas of the Holy See, the missionary congregations and the secular priest's missions, with those of the Republic, the Law of Separation and the laic missions." For Nuncio Locatelli, Quirino and Antunes' project, as he called it, seemed "fair and promised good results."[44]

Above all, the Decree of 24 December managed to calm some Catholic concerns, although it still put both Catholic and laic missions under the common designation of "civilising missions." The republican regime was not yet keen to favour the religious missions as the only one capable of carrying out that "civilising" endeavour. Cardinal Gasparri admitted to Locatelli that the decree was not what it "should be" but had secured "notable advantages for the Catholic missions." Pope Benedict XV welcomed the decree in a joint letter to the Portuguese clergy on 4 February 1920. However, it did not "completely reflect the just desires and aspirations of the Catholics." He only hoped those "appreciable advantages" would have "full and faithful execution." Naturally, the Catholic Church was eager to achieve a calmer and more profitable relationship with the Portuguese republican authorities in Portugal and overseas. Hence, the Catholic missionaries may keep their evangelising work while competing with the Protestants and preventing further ideological conflict with the more radical, anti-religious republican sectors.[45]

When the First Republic ended, following the military coup of 28 May 1926, the new political situation leaned over the missionary matter and decided, once again, to reorder its legal postulates. As before, several clerics helped the new minister of the Colonies, João Belo, to elaborate the *Estatuto Orgânico das Missões Católicas Portuguesas de África e Timor (Organic Statute of the Portuguese Catholic Missions in Africa and Timor*)—which would become known as the *Statute of João Belo*, including the prelate of Mozambique, Rafael Maria da Assunção, the vicar

[43] Ernesto Castro Leal, "Quirino Avelino de Jesus, um católico 'pragmático'," *Lusitania Sacra*, 2nd series 6 (1994): 373.

[44] Quirino de Jesus to Barbosa Leão, 25 September 1919; Locatelli to Barbosa Leão, 26 September 1919; ASV/ANL, no. 426, fasc. 1, tit. IX, pos. 9a: Missione Cattoliche (1919), fol. 153 and fols. 152−52v, respectively. Quirino Avelino de Jesus, "O Centro Católico e A Época. Um trecho da história político-religiosa contemporânea," *Seara Nova* 59, November 7, 1925, 210. Eduardo dos Santos, *O Estado Português e o Problema Missionário* (Lisbon: Agência Geral do Ultramar, 1964), 68. Nuno da Silva Gonçalves, "A dimensão missionária do catolicismo português," in *História Religiosa de Portugal*, vol. 3, *Religião e Secularização*, ed. Carlos Moreira de Azevedo (Rio de Mouro: Círculo de Leitores, 2002), 371.

[45] Gasparri to Locatelli, 2 February 1920; ASV/ANL, no. 426, fasc. 2, tit. IX, pos. 9ª continuazione: Missioni Cattoliche (1919-1920), fol. 35. Lourenço, *Situação Jurídica da Igreja em Portugal*, 212.

general of Angola and Congo, Alves da Cunha, the bishop of Cape Verde, José Alves Martins, and the superior of the Colleges of the Missions and Procurator General of the Secular Missions, Teotónio Vieira de Castro.[46]

The *Statute's* lengthy preamble claimed that amongst the "greatest political, moral and economic needs of a colonial power" that of nationalising and civilising colonial populations was highly significant because it was "absolutely necessary to call them from barbarism and savagery"—the repeated civilising obligations of the colonising nations. The religious mission remained one of the essential elements of assimilation, an assertion widely addressed in the main international treaties concerning colonial matters, such as the recent Covenant of the League of Nations, where the freedom and protection of missions had been "greatly consecrated," as the decree stated. Repeating the old and recurrent Portuguese repertoire against missionary freedom proclaimed since the times of the Berlin General Act, the decree argued that this freedom had resulted in the expansion of foreign missionaries who lacked "the Portuguese soul, having instead in many cases another, opposed to it and the love of Portugal and its prestige." The preamble, in this sense, was not very innovative. Nor was the recipe for reversing this state of affairs: the nationalisation of religious missions, whose objectives would be "to exercise rights, fulfil obligations, dominate treacherous foreignisms and continue in Africa and the East, […], the work of Portugal's overseas sovereignty and civilisation.[47]

According to the *Statute's* provisions, religious missions had to be subject to the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Portuguese prelates, which aimed to block any attempt to reconstitute jurisdictions outside a framework largely identified with the Royal Patronage system. In this sense, suggestions like those made by Le Roy in 1920 of transferring the responsibility of ecclesiastical life in Angola to the Congregation of the Holy Spirit and consequently to *Propaganda Fid*e were categorically rejected. Furthermore, the missions could only be composed of Portuguese personnel, and their training houses could only function in the national territory. However, if the number of national missionaries was insufficient (as expected), the government would accept the collaboration of missionaries of other nationalities as long as they agreed to submit themselves to Portuguese ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Once again, the new decree reproduced old demands. In sum, the general programme of the missions was "to sustain the interests of the Portuguese colonial empire and develop its moral, intellectual, and material progress to the fullest extent possible."[48]

The Catholic mission was no longer equated with the laic mission: it became the civilising mission par excellence. The insistence of the advocates of the religious mission during the previous years seemed to have produced a result. Catholic

[46] Decree no. 12485, *Diário do Governo*, October 13, 1926. Santos, *O Estado Português e o Problema Missionário*, 86.
[47] Decree no. 12485, *Diário do Governo*, October 13, 1926.
[48] Ibid.

missionaries were legally considered the most suitable civilising and nationalising agents.

In Rome, the *Statute* caused some impact and "the liveliest interest," as the Minister at the Holy See, Augusto de Castro, noticed. An official of the British Legation asked Castro for further clarification regarding the decree and the secretary for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, Borgongini-Duca, confessed to the diplomat that the Secretary of State had received several requests for "indications and copies" of the law. For *Osservatore Romano*, the new law "establishes broad protection of the Portuguese Catholic missions," presenting a programme "worthy of special study, as a model of colonial organisation and legislation." By widely publicising the *Statute*, at the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Castro succeeded in these compliments, which the Portuguese government saw as a victory of its colonial and missionary achievements after years of mistrust.[49]

Conversely to this positive reception, the Curia was more reserved. Gasparri avoided discussing the content of the Statute; otherwise, the Hole See had to point out "some concepts" that were clearly inspired by the principle of the "State separated from the Church." Furthermore, the emphasis given to a Portuguese-centred mission contradicted the missionary policy of the Holy See propagated by *Maximum Illud* (1919) and Rerum Ecclesiae, published in February 1926, just months before the approval of João Belo's decree. The contradiction between the latter and those pontifical documents was undeniable. The nationalising rationale underpinning Portuguese missionary policy was hardly compatible with the Pontifical promotion of a supranational strategy that should describe the evangelising action of the Catholic missions worldwide.[50]

Gasparri might seem critical of the new legislation, as other clergy members had previously been regarding other legal documents, but his attitude was not of public condemnation or disavowal. The Secretary of State and the Roman Curia knew that the *Statute* could be a beneficial opportunity for the Catholic missions in Portuguese Africa. Given the new missionary statute and hoping for "the best disposition of the Portuguese government regarding the Catholic missions," Pius XI understood that the time had come to proceed with the reorganisation of the missionary structure in the Portuguese empire, still living under the provisional status set in 1906. For that purpose, a special commission should be set up within the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs since the matter concerned several pontifical bodies, including *Propaganda Fide*. This commission would, in a way, function as one of the joint congregations of cardinals assembled in the last decades of the nineteenth century to tackle Patronage matters.[51] However, instead of the sporadic character of previous and unsuccessful joint

[49] Castro to Bettencourt Rodrigues (Minister of Foreign Affairs), 18 and 29 November 1926; AHD/MNE, Caixa 264 – Legação junto da Santa Sé (1924−1932), maço 3 (1926).
[50] Gasparri to Sebastiano Nicotra (nuncio in Lisbon), 11 November 1926; ASV/ANL, no. 435, fasc. 1, tit. VIII, pos. 1ª: Legislazioni (1924−1928), fols. 65−65v.
[51] Dores, *Politics and Religion*, 52−77.

congregations, this commission would be in office until it resolved the jurisdictional reorganisation overseas, as Gasparri explained to Nuncio Sebastiano Nicotra in Lisbon. An agreement on missions would only be settled with the Missionary Agreement, signed in 1940 and annexed to Salazar's emblematic Concordat.[52]

In 1926, while Pius XI consecrated the first six Chinese bishops, due to the assumptions enacted by the *Maximum Illud* of a supranational mission and an indigenous clergy, he was also gathering a group of senior pontifical officials to debate the ecclesiastical framework of the Portuguese empire.

Conclusion

Throughout the nineteenth century and in the first decades of the twentieth century, the Holy See held strong critical views concerning Portugal's missionary policies, doubting that the country had the means—both material and human—and the will to carry on an evangelising work capable of responding to the demands of the time. The once prolific Royal Patronage system had been in decay since the late-eighteenth century, especially in Asia and Africa. In the following century, the Holy See, facing the emerging competition of missionary Protestantism and the outcomes of the liberalising momentum in Catholic Europe, step in, first in Asia, then in Africa. Papal intervention in territories previously attributed to the Patronage sparked a long quarrel between Rome and Lisbon over the Patron's rights, prerogatives, and duties. With the dawn of the imperial scramble, the religious mission became a meaningful way to further territorial claims and to submit colonial populations. And Portugal needed it, unquestionably, as did other imperial powers.

For decades, Portugal sought to enhance its imperial strategies by consolidating its religious prerogatives and a spiritual empire to assist its political counterpart. The Patronage became central. However, Portuguese assertions over its prerogatives faced Roman opposition, concerned about its anti-congregation laws, its perceived limited financial resources, and the lack of commitment to fulfilling its Patron's duties. The Holy See expected more from a nation that used the creation of Goa, the life of Saint Francis Xavier, and the missions to Japan and China in the sixteenth century to defend the Patronage's existence.

The establishment of the Republic in 1910 hardly changed Roman minds in this regard. Nevertheless, the need to protect the continuation of Catholic missionary work across the empire and even the condescendence of republican powers concerning missionaries from religious congregations led the Holy See to seek less

[52] On the 1940 Concordat, see: Rita Almeida de Carvalho, *A Concordata de Salazar* (Lisbon: Temas e Debates, 2013); Bruno Cardoso Reis, *Salazar e o Vaticano* (Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2006), 148−73; Duncan Simpson, *A Igreja Católica e o Estado Novo Salazarista* (Lisbon: Edições 70, 2014), 100−102; Manuel Braga da Cruz, "As Negociações da Concordata e do Acordo Missionário de 1940," *Análise Social* 32, 143−144 (1997): 815−45.

confrontational attitudes. While Pius X and his Secretary of State, Cardinal Rafael Merry del Val, kept harsh criticism against the Republic's anticlerical policies and the Separation regime, they appealed for a calmer and submitted posture to the Catholic missionaries in the empire.[53]

Throughout the First Republic, governments, politicians, clerics, and diplomats sought a missionary policy to respond to their expectations. After 1918, the idea of a nationalising mission was meaningful as before. The international assumptions and the apparently guaranteed missionary freedom of the post-war period might have given different hopes to the Holy See, by then, entangled with the thriving concepts of a supranational missionary enterprise, crowned by the *Maximum Illud*, the centralisation of significant missionary fundraiser institutions in Rome (such as the *Propagation de la Foi*) or even the Vatican Missionary Exhibition of 1925.[54]

Although promising, these aspects were quickly challenged when the Holy See had to deal with the *realpolitik* of Portugal's imperial strategies. It seems that for the new papal positioning regarding the missionary work and reinforced role of *Propaganda Fide*, the proposal made by Le Roy would be cheerfully welcomed and, most of all, adopted. It was not. Despite all praises, papal officials acknowledged that its implementation could only jeopardise the mission's work. The promotor of *Maximum Illud's* reasonings, Van Rossum, concluded that they should drop the plan altogether. It was not the time, perhaps. Rome would not start a jurisdictional fight with the Republic.

In the same way, the Holy See did not make any real effort to help the Verbites to return to Mozambique. They knew the Portuguese authorities never wanted those missionaries imposed by foreign powers after the Jesuits' expulsion. Most German missionaries were having trouble returning to their former missions due to the Allied powers' objection, despite the guarantees given by the Treaty of Versailles. Portugal was no exception.

On the other hand, the Holy See was expecting the outcomes that the legislation on missions might bring. Benedict XV welcomed Decree No. 6322, which unequivocally featured the Catholic missions as national entities, submitted to Portuguese political and religious authorities and working on behalf of the empire. A concept far away from the Pope's claim of forgetting one's home.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to notice that this legislation somehow appeased the Catholic missionaries, allowing them to continue their work under governmental supervision. Eventually, the Holy See would achieve its ultimate goal of seeing the improvement of Catholic evangelisation. The João Belo Statute was a step even further, giving the Catholic missions the privilege of being the only ones considered by the state to carry on with the empire's nationalising aims, whatever that meant at that time. Portugal was also softening its more aggressive stances against the Catholic Church. The official relations with the Holy See were resumed in 1918, the

[53] Dores, *A Missão da República*.
[54] Prudhomme, "Le Cardinal Van Rossum."

government accepted the nomination of the Franciscan missionary Rafael Maria da Assunção as prelate of Mozambique in 1920, and new missionary colleges started opening after 1921. Lisbon also knew how to bend its ideology to fit its broader purposes. In sum, the need for a calmer and more beneficial context explains the Holy See's compliant attitude regarding Portugal's insisting assertions and decisions towards a national(ising) mission in the times of *Maximum Illud* and missionary supranationality.