BRILL

JOURNAL OF JESUIT STUDIES 10 (2023) 83–101

JJS

brill.com/jjs

Conspiracy Theory as a Vehicle for a Jesuit-Free Portugal under the Pombaline Government (1750–77)

José Eduardo Franco
Centro de Estudos Globais, Universidade Aberta, Lisbon, Portugal
eduardo.franco@uab.pt

Paula Carreira
Centro de Estudos Globais, Universidade Aberta, Lisbon, Portugal
paula.carreira@uab.pt

Abstract

During the reign of José I (1714–77), his prime minister, the marquis of Pombal paired an expansive program of Enlightenment reform with a dramatic anti-Jesuit policy whose impact extended far beyond Portugal. The Pombaline anti-Jesuit measures, accompanied by intensive international propaganda, were the end result of negative evaluations of the role played by the Jesuits in Portugal. A diabolical causality made the Society of Jesus responsible for the degeneration of the church, the corruption of politics, the backwardness of education, and the laxity in morals. This essay focuses on two aspects of Pombal's campaign: first, the use of the church structures against a part of the church (the Society of Jesus); secondly, the identification of a philosophical authority, namely Aristotle, as supplying the intellectual underpinnings of the Jesuit order and symbolizing the allegedly outmoded forms of instruction associated with Jesuit pedagogy

Keywords

Marquis of Pombal (1699–1782) – Pombaline reforms – regicide – conspiracy theory – education – anti-Aristotelianism

1 Preliminary Considerations

During the reign of Portuguese king José I (r.1750–77), his prime minister, the Marquis of Pombal (1699–1782), paired an expansive program of Enlightenment reform with a dramatic anti-Jesuit policy whose impact extended far beyond Portugal and its territories. This policy culminated in the eradication of this religious order from the country and its overseas empire in 1759. In fact, the Society of Jesus, which had maintained a commanding presence in Portugal for two centuries, was ambushed by a concerted political campaign that preceded subsequent expulsions in the Bourbon kingdoms and reached its climax with the suppression of the order by Pope Clement XIV (r.1769–74). The Jesuits, as they had always done in relation to their adversaries, tried to defend themselves with reports, historiography, and apologetic writings, but this effort was not enough to save the order.

Pombaline anti-Jesuitism built upon a long legacy of complaints, attacks, and negative assessments of the role played by the Jesuits in Portugal and its domains ever since the order implanted itself in Portuguese lands in 1540. As historian Dauril Alden astutely remarks, in those centuries the Jesuits "had become virtually every articulate person's favorite scapegoat for the ills of the empire." The "allegations concerning the Order's shortcomings," as Alden goes on to note, "increased in number and intensity with each passing decade."[1] Many activities of the Society of Jesus were dealt with by the anti-Jesuits in a conspiracist hermeneutic key. The Pombaline polemic directed at the Jesuits inherited this conspiracism in interpreting and condemning their influence in the political, religious, and pedagogical spheres. A diabolical causality made the Society of Jesus responsible for the degeneration of the church, the corruption of politics, the backwardness of education, and the laxity in morals. For those committed to Enlightenment ideals, the Jesuits came to represent a vexing obstacle to social progress.[2]

The marquis of Pombal accompanied his campaign with extensive propaganda. In this way, Pombal responded to a need to justify to the public his draconian policy of a thorough expurgation of the presence and influence of the Jesuits from Portuguese soil. The justification appealed to a need to protect the State, purify the church, and reform education. With pamphlets and other printed material, buttressed by the appeal to diplomatic and church networks,

1 Dauril Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise: The Society of Jesus in Portugal, Its Empire, and Beyond, 1540–1750* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 612–13.

2 See Leon Poliakov, *La Causalité diabolique: Essai sur l'origine des persécutions* (n.p., Calmann-Lévy, 1980).

he sought to inspire the other European monarchies to follow his example and to put pressure on the papacy to deliver the final blow, universally extinguishing what was one of the most influential orders of the Catholic Church.

If the foregoing remarks outline a well-known narrative about Pombal's anti-Jesuitism, this essay will focus on two aspects of this program that have not received much attention. First, the ingenious nature of Pombal's campaign against the Jesuits is evident in his use of the church against a part of the church, namely the Jesuit order. Fighting and expelling the Jesuits required cooperation from different levels of the church hierarchy, including bishops who received instructions to denounce the Jesuits to the laity. After examining in detail how the anti-Jesuit program was implemented by co-opting high-ranking clerics, the essay will turn its attention to the ideology of Pombaline anti-Jesuitism, which curiously developed a pronounced aversion to a venerable philosophical authority, namely Aristotle (384–22 BCE). This aversion derived from the identification of Aristotelianism as one of the intellectual underpinnings of the Jesuit order. As a result, Aristotle was attacked as one of the obstructions the Jesuits had placed in the way of Enlightenment reform and social progress.

If these aspects of Pombal's anti-Jesuit campaign initially seem to conform with a narrative about an Enlightenment shift in power benefitting the state at the cost of the church and an Enlightenment overhaul of older intellectual paradigms away from Aristotelianism and towards modern science, there is much in this story to complicate the narrative. Not least, Pombal's own ruthless use of coercion and subterfuge is reminiscent of strategies that have been polemically denounced as "Jesuitical" and can seem divorced from Enlightenment ideals. As we will see, a prominent part of his strategy involved a conspiracy theory that was deployed by Pombal less because it was seen as true and more because it promised to be a highly effective instrument of propaganda in his relentless campaign against the Society of Jesus.

2 From Pretext to Practice

In the judicial process instituted to find the culprits for the attack against José I on September 3, 1758, the marquis of Pombal found the pretext he needed to introduce a final and comprehensive solution to the problem created by the Jesuits who opposed his reform program. In the wake of the assassination attempt, Pombal not only tied the accused nobles to a group of Jesuits, who were deemed to have mentored them but condemned the entire Society of Jesus in Portugal as being party to the conspiracy. Deciding against the Society, the *Junta da Inconfidência* (High Court of Judicature) determined that its

goods would be confiscated, that the bishops of the various dioceses would be ordered to circulate pastoral documents publicizing the Jesuits' responsibility in the attack, that their religious communities would be dissolved, that the Jesuits who had practiced commerce would be imprisoned, their teaching activity forbidden, and their replacement as educators financed with the proceeds of the confiscation of their goods. In 1759, all these measures were progressively implemented, culminating in the expulsion of the order in September and thus fulfilling an important stage of "the great Pombaline cause" (in the words of historian Pedro Paiva).[3]

After the sentence condemning the Távoras, one of Portugal's most prominent noble families, was read on January 12, 1759, and blame assigned to the Jesuits for the regicidal attack, the Pombaline government began a process of siege and despoliation of Jesuit institutions in Portugal. On January 19, 1759, royal letters were issued to the regent of the *Casa da Suplicação* (Supreme Court of the Kingdom) and to the governor of the Court of Appeal of Oporto, ordering the global confiscation of all movable and immovable goods, of the ordinary rents and of the pensions belonging to the religious of the Society.[4] It was determined that, from the goods confiscated for the benefit of the finances of the state, enough should be set aside to enable the celebration of normal liturgical services and to provide for the daily sustenance of each Jesuit kept in custody in the colleges.[5] While taking these measures, the Pombaline government informed the Holy See of its actions, stressing the Jesuit responsibility for the crime, in order to obtain approval from the church for the spoliations and other violations of immunities and privileges previously enjoyed by the Jesuits.

Throughout the kingdom, judges and soldiers acted on the orders by storming the residences and schools of the Jesuits. The interiors were thoroughly searched and examined by officials eager to find anything suspicious that might constitute additional evidence for the accusations against these

3 José Pedro Paiva, "A Igreja e o poder," in *História religiosa de Portugal*, ed. Carlos Moreira Azevedo, 4 vols. (Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores, 2000), 2:172. For the reverberations on the international level in the medium of printed images, see the contribution by Christine Vogel to this special issue.

4 See António Delgado da Silva, ed., *Supplemento a collecção de legislação portugueza (1750–1762)* (Lisbon: Typ. Luiz Correa da Cunha, 1842), 606–9.

5 See *Collecção dos Negócios de Roma do Reinado de el-Rey Dom José I: Ministério do Marquez de Pombal e pontificados de Benedicto XIV e Clemente XIII*, 3 vols. (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional, 1874), 1:79–82.

religious.[6] The soldiers, following royal orders, sought, in particular, secret hiding places, weapons, and valuable treasures. This search was inspired by the fantastic ideas of fabulous riches that the social imaginary had come to associate with the Jesuits. In this process of general devastation and confiscation, all the Jesuits' possessions were collected and then their houses were completely isolated and cut off from any communication with the outside world. As for the great wealth that the government hoped to collect, expectations were far from fulfilled in this regard.[7]

Government action and official declarations following the sentencing of the Távoras lead us to conclude that the judicial order was tailored less to punish the alleged noble regicides and more to suppress the Jesuits as their presumed mentors. In fact, after the alleged instigators and executors of the crime had been arrested and executed, attention quickly turned to the Jesuits and their doctrines. The Távoras were demoted to the status of a passive instrument wielded by the Society of Jesus, which according to the official propaganda did not shy away from regicide in pursuing its goals.[8]

3 Co-Opting the Church to Extirpate the Jesuit "Contagion"

On January 19, 1759, the same day that the royal order was issued to arrest the Jesuits and confiscate their property, the government decided to involve the highest echelons of the Portuguese church in the program of de-Jesuitizing the country. Pombal intended to cultivate anti-Jesuit public opinion across the length and breadth of the kingdom. Thus, the government sent a royal letter to all heads of dioceses where the Society of Jesus was presented as the instigators of the attack—a Society "whose lax government made itself not only a defender but spiritual head of the atrocious crimes of lese-majesty *de primeira cabeça* [i.e., particularly against the king's authority], high treason and parricide."[9]

6 See João Lúcio d'Azevedo, *O Marquês de Pombal e a sua época* (Rio de Janeiro–Porto: Annuário do Brasil-Renascença Portuguesa, 1922); Kenneth Maxwell, *Pombal, Paradox of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

7 See João Lúcio d'Azevedo, *Marquês de Pombal*, 198.

8 On the long prehistory of this habit of associating the Society with regicide, see the article by McKenzie-McHarg in this special issue.

9 *Collecção dos Negócios de Roma*, 1:84. (All translations of Portuguese texts are our own, unless otherwise noted.)

The sentence issued a week earlier became the source of legitimacy invoked in all governmental correspondence, and even in anti-Jesuit legislation, to combat the Society and its influence in the country. In accordance with this approach, the state authorities requested the collaboration of the prelates of all dioceses in isolating the Jesuits and suppressing their communication with secular and ecclesiastical society. This was justified as a protective measure to shield the "flock of God" from the danger represented by these "wolves." In a letter addressed to all the prelates, the king (and his minister) accused the priests of the Society of having repeatedly abused the exercise of their priestly ministry in the following manner:

> They corrupted the consciences of the delinquents [referring to the regicides], who were justly condemned for those very high crimes, using for this abominable end the execrable means that they had repeatedly applied in other similar cases; which were that by the aforesaid abuse of the sacred ministries they taught and persuaded with the same pestilential poison of Machiavellian deceptions and anti-evangelical doctrines which had been condemned, anathematized and proscribed by the Church of God as heretical, impious, seditious, and destructive of Christian society, of civil society and of the public peace of States.[10]

To the royal letter was attached a thirty-page booklet that listed the *Erros ímpios e sediciosos que os religiosos da Companhia de Jesus ensinaram aos réus que foram justiçados e pretenderam espalhar nos povos destes reinos* (Ungodly and seditious errors that the religious of the Society of Jesus taught to the defendants who were executed and intended to spread them among the people of these kingdoms)—thus the booklet's title.[11] This booklet aimed to enlighten the bishops about the doctrines that the Jesuits allegedly professed and taught. These doctrines were supposed to have inspired the regicidal conspiracy. The booklet exposes the major points of heterodoxy attributed to the theologians of the Society, such as the theories of tyrannicide and probabilism, and the secret instructions that governed the order, as well as presenting a synthesis of the invectives drawn from the national and international anti-Jesuit tradition.

10 *Collecção dos Negócios de Roma*, 1:84. This royal document was also published independently: *Carta régia de D. José I dirigida aos prelados de Portugal* (Lisbon: n.p., 1759).

11 *Erros Impios e Sediciosos, Que os Religiosos da Companhia de Jesus Ensinaraõ aos Reos, Que Foraõ Justiçados, e Pertenderaõ Espalhar nos Póvos destes Reynos* (Lisbon: Officina de Miguel Rodrigues, impressor do Eminentissimo Senhor Cardeal Patriarca, [1759]).

Machiavelli is presented as one of the most important augurs of the Jesuits' political theology. Furthermore, the letter cites famous anti-Jesuit critics who had combated the order's alleged deviations in the past, such as Arias Montano (1527–98) and Juan de Palafox y Mendoza (1600–59).

The crime targeting the king of Portugal was therefore integrated into a tradition of criminalizing the Jesuits by drawing upon numerous denunciations that had been supplied by prominent ecclesiastical and secular figures and that formed the arsenal of traditional anti-Jesuitism. The attack on José I was no longer seen as an isolated case but as part of a wider transnational conspiracy masterminded by the Society of Jesus and targeting European states. In this manner, the official version of events portrayed the Society of Jesus as a structurally degenerate, rebellious, perverse institution, unworthy of the trust of the Catholic kingdoms and the church itself, and an effective enemy of public peace.

In the framework of this criminological memorialization of the Society, the regicide against Henry IV (r.1589–1610) in 1610 featured prominently. This and other regicidal attacks carried out in France are remembered as paradigmatic expressions of Jesuit subversion. The French cases make the accusations implicating the Jesuits in the attack on the Portuguese king more persuasive. According to the *Erros ímpios*, sent to the bishops of Portugal by the Pombaline government, the Jesuits had been involved

> in the seditious and bloody discourses, councils and conspiracies, whose fatal effects were the first assassination attempted against Henry IV, King of France, in the year 1593, by Pierre Barrière; the second executed on December 27 of the following year by Jean Châtel, which led to the expulsion of the so-called religious of that kingdom, and to Father Guignard being condemned to death, and others put to torment and proscribed, and the last infamous blow, which deprived that monarch of his useful and glorious life, by the hand of the infamous François Ravaillac, on May 14, 1610; after the death of the same prince had been announced some time before in Naples by Father Lagona, and in the preceding Lent in San Severino by Father Hardi, both religious of the Society of Jesus; the death of the same monarch had also been predicted in Brussels and Prague, fifteen days before the success of that detestable insult.[12]

12 *Collecção dos Negócios de Roma*, 1:98.

The quotation portrays the order as a well-coordinated criminal network that cold bloodedly prepares, announces, and executes crimes in accordance with the instructions issued by its highest authorities.[13]

What strikes us as most relevant in this correspondence sent to the prelates of the kingdom is the cunning extrapolation that universalized the motives behind one event and made them thereby characteristic of the whole Society of Jesus. Accordingly, this order conspired not only against one monarch but targeted all sovereigns. In this way, the official argumentation of the Portuguese state gained more weight and acquired greater force in persuading the bishops to accede to the state's request. Moreover, the prophylactic measures to suppress Jesuitism that the prelates were ordered to take were no longer a mere punishment for a crime committed against the king but were framed as an authentic war to be urgently waged against an internal enemy of the church and society more generally.

Almost all the diocesan bishops who had religious communities of the Society of Jesus in their dioceses obliged the royal authority by publishing pastoral letters and edicts reproducing the official accusations against the Jesuits and warning the faithful against their dangerous doctrines. Whether out of flattery to the king (and to his chief minister, Pombal) or out of fearful obedience, they complied with the government order—and felt compelled to do so because it had been made clear that prelates who did not comply would be punished. The bishops imposed extreme measures prohibiting any contact between their diocesans and the Jesuits and threatened those who did not respect the prohibition with the most serious spiritual penalty, namely excommunication.[14]

The measures respectively taken by the holders of the dioceses of Miranda and Leiria immediately after the royal summons supply paradigmatic examples of concerted collaboration between ecclesiastical and political power in the campaign against the Jesuits. The Dominican Friar Aleixo de Miranda Henriques (1692–1771) had just been appointed bishop of the diocese of Miranda. The prospective prelate, while still in Lisbon, sent a proxy to the provisor of the bishopric to assume authority over the diocese until his official

13 On the rhetorical tradition that treats the Jesuits as "king-killers," see Andrew McKenzie-McHarg, "'A general murther, an universal slaughter': Strategies of Anti-Jesuit Defamation in Reporting Assassination in the Early Modern Period," in *Medieval and Early Modern Murder: Legal, Literary and Historical Contexts*, ed. Larissa Tracy (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2018), 281–308.

14 See A. Antunes Borges, "El-rei D. José I e o Marquês de Pombal visados de Roma à luz de dois séculos," *Resistência: Revista de cultura e crítica* 10, no. 157/160 (1977): 6–25.

accession, ordering this proxy to annul the prerogatives previously granted to the Jesuits in the diocese, whose college in Bragança had served as their Portuguese headquarters. However, the measures clashed with the precedent established by the Holy See, which immunized the priests of the Society from diocesan jurisdiction. In fact, the apostolic constitution *Superna magni patris familias* (issued on June 21, 1670, by Pope Clement X [r.1670–76]) forbade diocesan bishops from withdrawing the power of confessing and preaching from all the members of a religious community without the consent of the Roman Curia.[15]

Even before receiving the royal letter that the government sent in the name of the king to all the bishops, the bishop of Miranda hastened to publish a pastoral in which he reproduced that part of the Távoras sentence that incriminated the Jesuits for the attack on the king. Shortly after this pastoral was made public, the bishop of Miranda received the royal letter and the *Erros ímpios*, in which the king summoned all the bishops to take measures against the religious of the Society and their doctrines. On February 26, 1759, this bishop then wrote a new pastoral letter to disseminate the royal instructions in his diocese, in which he echoed the condemnation of the Society of Jesus even more strongly, and published a set of twenty propositions extracted and synthesized from the appendices of the royal letter and from other classical anti-Jesuit works well-known at court.[16] The doctrines that the bishop attributes to the Jesuits in the form of propositions create an image of an absolutely immoral and ungodly religious order. The Jesuits are presented as the creators of an immoral theory of homicide, which authorizes anyone, on the slightest pretext, to commit all manner of murders. Thus, while state power is presented as the expression and embodiment of the public interest and the common good, the Jesuits come to function as the negative counterimage.

In a different case, the bishop of Leiria, D. João Cosme da Cunha (1715–83), who was himself a member of the Távoras family, also toyed with the idea of sending a violent pastoral letter against the Jesuits in accordance with the government's wishes, even before he received the royal mandate to do so. Cosme da Cunha, as a member of the incriminated family, felt the need to double his commitment to Pombal's anti-Jesuit policy and thereby distance himself from the regicide conspiracy. Since the bishop of Leiria was not endowed with great intellectual talents, he commissioned for this purpose effectively a

15 See José de Castro, *O cardeal nacional* (Lisbon: Agência Geral das Colónias, 1943), 273.

16 See "Apêndice da pastoral do bispo de Bragança," transl. José Caeiro, *História da expulsão da Companhia de Jesus da Província de Portugal* (*séc. XVIII*), 3 vols. (Lisbon: Editorial Verbo, 1990), 3:203 (Appendix III).

ghostwriter in an Augustinian religious by the name of Friar José de Santa Rita Durão (1722–84). Santa Rita Durão, who had recently obtained a doctorate in theology with brilliant marks, was preparing his candidacy for a professorship at the University of Coimbra. The pastoral letter left no doubt about the side the bishop of Leiria had chosen; he censured the regicidal act committed by a member of his family and, above all, reproached the Jesuits as moral authors of the crime.[17] At the same time, he ordered the celebration of a feast and the singing of a *Te Deum* to give thanks for the preservation of the king's life.

Santa Rita Durão later admitted his collusion in this process, giving as his motive his pursuit of academic promotion and relating what he had agreed to do to acquit the bishop of Leiria of any mistrust the government might hold about the bishop's fidelity to the king. It was imperative to demonstrate the prelate's conformity with the anti-Jesuit orientation of the government. Santa Rita Durão gave the following account of his arrival in Leiria from Coimbra and of his offer of erudite services—an offer calculated to allay the bishop's anxieties:

> The bishop received me with extraordinary demonstrations of joy, but after a few words, he furtively slipped away to his room and could hardly hold back his tears. Then the most poignant affliction of his spirit was revealed, and he lamented the imminence of the danger that threatened him. He said […] that some great misfortune would soon befall his house; that even more than once by false reports he had received news of the arrest of his relatives;[18] that all these reasons made him decide to celebrate with all pomp a feast for the King's safety (which afterwards became an annual feast), and that I would preach in his presence the sermon that the city council had charged me with, in which I would have to incriminate both the Távoras, his relatives, and the Jesuits; that finally it was his wish that I should have this sermon printed and dedicated to him. I approved the plan and applied myself, heart and soul, to saving the man. I wrote the sermon in his house, taking as my theme these words from the Second Book of Kings: "Blessed be the Lord thy God, who hath destroyed the men that rose up against my lord the king." I preached it on the ninth of February 1759, to the enormous attendance of the people,

17 See "Pastoral de D. João de Nossa Senhora da Porta, bispo de Leiria," ANTT, *Impressos—série preta*, 3575n58.

18 The author refers here to family members other than those convicted and effectively arrested for the attempted regicide, i.e., the bishop feared widespread persecution of his family and apparently was receiving false reports of the incarceration of other relatives.

> with the Bishop himself pontificating. The sermon was a succession of rude invectives and slanderous accusations, especially against the Jesuits; when I then spoke of the Távoras, I began a most bitter objection which I immediately interrupted, using reticence, to spare the prelate's pain, although he had insistently ordered me to the contrary. I also preached in the afternoon, almost off-hand, on the text: "It is enough for me to know that my José [i.e., the king] is still alive."[19]

All this anti-Jesuit spectacle was increased by the publication of a new pastoral letter reinforcing the arguments of the previous one. It had been written by the same theologian on duty, who later reported that both the first and second pastoral had been made public against the opinion of the majority of the clergy who made up the Diocesan Council, whose opinion the bishop was obliged to hear.[20]

Interestingly, Santa Rita Durão later fell into the government's disfavor. He then fled to Ciudad Rodrigo in 1762 and arrived in Rome in 1764, where he recanted his anti-Jesuit texts and sermons, which he considered mere calumnies penned under pressure. He was then received by Pope Clement XIII (r.1758–69), to whom he offered a retraction of his anti-Jesuit writings. He also asked pardon from the general of the Jesuits, Lorenzo Ricci (1703–75), for the infamies he had uttered against his order. Although he was aware that it was not possible to remedy their dissemination, he wrote a second retraction, more extensive and detailed, in which he recounted the contribution he had made to implementing anti-Jesuit policy in Portugal.[21]

As for Cosme da Cunha, he earned the praise of Pombal, who considered him the most illustrious and exemplary of bishops. In fact, the reward exceeded his expectations; the bishop of Leiria was promoted to archbishop of Évora. Pombal, however, preferred to keep him at court, dispensing him from the duty to reside in his new archdiocese and giving him several additional offices: State Counselor, Regent of Justice, President of the Literary Providence Board, President of the Censorial Board, and then General Inquisitor—offices

19 Quoted in Artur Viegas, *O poeta Santa Rita Durão: Revelações históricas de sua vida e do seu século* (Brussels: L'Édition d'art Gaudio, 1914), 18–19.

20 See Manuel Lopes de Almeida, "Um sermão de frei José de Santa Rita Durão," *Biblos* 25 (1949): 161–80.

21 Cf. Joseph de S. Rita Duram, *Epitome rerum in Lusitania gestarum adversus venerabilem Jesu Societatem: Tum de conspiratione in regem fidelissimum per sumum rebus a viris principibus insentata* (APPCJ, folder 613, no. 12).

for which his competence was very doubtful. He always remained servile to Pombal's regal policy, and Pombal rewarded him with a cardinal's hat.

Not all clerics in Portugal obeyed the government's directives with the same degree of enthusiasm or servility, as illustrated by the pastoral letter issued by the principal priests of the Patriarchal See of Lisbon on February 19, 1759. Differing first in moderation from the strongly anti-Jesuit tone pervading most of the episcopal and chapter documents issued at the time and second in the caution it observed in naming the culprits or authors of the perverse doctrines that allegedly inspired the attack on the monarch, the canons of Lisbon tried to make it clear that the list of doctrinal deviations was determined by the royal charter and that this charter was responsible for the present wave of anti-Jesuit pastoralism, which had resulted in a general interrogation of the population to ascertain the existence of such doctrines and to impose a strict obligation to denounce anyone who professed them or appeared to follow them in any way.[22]

An example of even more overt opposition to Pombal's policies is supplied by the archbishop of Baía, D. José Botelho de Matos (1678–1767), who had been appointed visitator of Brazil to carry out an inquiry into the state of the Society of Jesus. Matos sent the government a memoir very favorable to the missionary action of the Jesuits in the Brazilian colony. This report did not please the government, and the bishop immediately suffered the consequences of his dissent: he was removed from the archiepiscopal palace and suspended from his functions. After being forced to officially request his resignation from office he was replaced by the Discalced Carmelite Manuel de Santa Inês (1704–71), whom Pombal could fully trust to carry out his directives.[23]

However, such examples were also exceptions. The promotion of a kingdom-wide raid to purge the Jesuits became even more coercive when the Inquisition Court was involved. The Holy Office observed the royal guidelines by publishing on May 2, 1759, an edict which obliged all vassals of the king of Portugal to denounce to the aforementioned court anyone who was known to profess so-called Jesuit doctrines.[24] These episcopal and inquisitorial measures, which aimed above all to restrict communication with the Jesuits, were a preventive measure to inhibit an eventual uprising. It complemented the other measure of using royal troops to cordon off the houses of the priests, thereby

22 See "Pastoral do cabido da sé patriarcal de Lisboa, que governava o patriarcado durante a vacância da Sé, 19 de fevereiro de 1759," *História da expulsão*, 3:199–200.

23 Archivio Segreto Vaticano, *Processus consistoriales,* vol. 159, fol. 297.

24 D. José, inquisitor-general, *Carta em forma de edicto dirigida a todos os fiéis destes reynos, e senhorios de Portugal* (Lisbon: Officina de Miguel Manescal da Costa, 1759).

isolating them from the outside world. Fueled by fears more imaginary than real and encouraged by government propaganda, rumors spread that these enemies of the king were well armed, preparing to unleash a prolonged resistance against the edicts of the government or even foment an actual civil war against the state.[25]

4 Evicting the Agents of Cultural Degeneration from Portuguese Learning and Education

Although the expulsion of the Jesuits took place in 1759, the denunciations against the Society intensified in the following years, especially with the publication of the work that would become an authentic catechism of Portuguese anti-Jesuitism. Signed by Adjunct Secretary of State José de Seabra da Silva (1732–1813) but with interventions penned by the marquis of Pombal himself, *Deducção Chronologica, e Analytica* (Chronological and analytical deduction) was printed in three volumes between 1767 and 1768. Aiming to bolster the legitimacy of the king and Pombal's power, the *Deducção Chronologica, e Analytica* inaugurates a new historiography that seeks to review the past in the light of the regalism, the ideology that Pombal's regime espoused and that demanded the submission of the church to the state in temporal matters, thus reinforcing the division between the temporal and spiritual powers. To this end, Seabra da Silva's enterprise identifies in the Jesuits the single cause of Portugal's ruin. This work represents the doctrinal enshrinement of the anti-Jesuit conspiracy theory. For the first time, a systematic revision of the past is made and the historical reading of the country is subjected to a dichotomous logic separating a prosperous *before* from a ruinous *after*, with the dividing line being located with surgical precision at 1540, marking the arrival of the Jesuits in Portugal.

The political instrumentalization of the anti-Jesuit myth takes on an outline in the narrative of the *Deducção*, which is simultaneously official, radical, and definitive. This magnum opus of Pombaline propaganda was widely disseminated not only nationally but also internationally with translations into Latin, Italian, French, German, and Spanish, as well as a summary translation into Chinese.[26] It should also be noted that, once published, these volumes were repeatedly cited in the preambles to laws and in official documents as an authoritative justification for reforms implemented in the most diverse sectors.

25 Caeiro, *História da expulsão*, 3:40–42, 74–75, 120–22.

26 See José Eduardo Franco, *O Mito dos Jesuítas em Portugal, no Brasil e no Oriente* (*séculos XVI a XX*), 2 vols. (Lisbon: Gradiva, 2006), 1:484–90.

The enormous critical apparatus that accompanies the text, with exhaustive and monotonous quotations or bibliographical references, aims to place the proof of the Society's plan for world domination beyond dispute.

In fact, if we analyze this discourse in the light of the basic typology that historian Geoffrey Cubitt has developed for classifying conspiracy theories, we easily recognize a mixture of rhetorical strategies, sometimes centered on the conspirators (the Society as a whole, or specific personalities such as Simão Rodrigues de Azevedo (1510–79), founder of the order in Portugal), and sometimes on a plan of action.[27] The conspirator-centered style comes to the fore in the arguments that repeatedly referenced the obedience that all Jesuits owed to the General and that allowed their detractors to portray them as a singular enemy. As Umberto Eco reminds us, "having an enemy is important not only to define our identity but also to provide us with an obstacle against which to measure our system of values and, in seeking to overcome it, to demonstrate our own worth. So, when there is no enemy, we have to invent one."[28]

The plan-centered style comes into view in the passages in which Seabra da Silva denounces the Jesuits' plan based on the historical analysis of the events that had led the country to a decadent and backward state in relation to the other European and civilized monarchies. From the reading of the *Deducção*, we can identify three essential mechanisms, which would lead the Society to a position of total domination:

1) Control of the royal family and the court through the appointment of Jesuits as confessors, counselors, and tutors for the princes and the heirs of the most influential families.
2) The fostering of fanaticism by the priests, namely through the creation of false idols in order to easily manipulate people.
3) Encouraging ignorance through the perversion of teaching in colleges (pre-university education) and at university.

It is important to highlight the relevance given from the very first lines to the pedagogical aspect. The Jesuits were known for their robust education system, whose proliferation through the construction of various colleges around the world was largely due to the initiative of the Portuguese king John III (r.1521–57). The harmful penetration of the Society into Portuguese society became so effective that, by a charter issued on August 13, 1561, they were guaranteed full hegemony over the University of Coimbra as a result of the requirement that

27 Geoffrey Cubitt, "Conspiracy Myths and Conspiracy Theories," *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* 20, no. 1 (1989): 18–24.

28 Umberto Eco, *Inventing the Enemy and Other Occasional Writings* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012), 2.

law students carry a certificate from their College of Arts before proceeding to advanced studies. Despite all the tricks used to dominate successive kings and courts, it was as teachers that the Jesuits were alleged to have struck one of the hardest blows against Portugal by plunging it into the darkness of obscurantism and ignorance:

> It is already demonstrated [...] that since Simão Rodrigues found himself a disputatious arbitrator of the spirit of the Lord King João III, he employed all his own forces, and those of his companions, for the destruction of the College of the Nobility of this Kingdom; and to establish his absolute dominion over the weakness of our ignorance.[29]

As regards the particular case of teaching, Pombaline propaganda was exquisitely attuned to bringing down the figure who became a remote mentor and benefactor of the Jesuit pedagogical edifice. We refer to Aristotle and the Scholastic tradition that was inspired by him and that some anti-Jesuits came to regard as a heavy monolith suffocating Portuguese learning.

Anti-Aristotelian current has a long tradition in Western culture, but it was with the Enlightenment that it achieved its fullest expression.[30] In a moment in which new values were being affirmed and the concept of reason was allied to that of empirical validation, there was a strong impulse to relegate to oblivion a figure whose thought was deemed to be incompatible with the new scientific paradigm. Although during the Enlightenment a certain image was created of a monolithic legacy uncritically passed down through the centuries and enshrined as Scholasticism, Aristotelian philosophy had actually been continuously contested in Europe as early as the Middle Ages. This was evident, for example, from the apostolic letter in which Pope Gregory IX (r.1227–41) in 1231 addressed the Faculty of Arts at the University of Paris and ordered it to correct Aristotelian texts and purge them of errors. This was followed by the condemnations later pronounced by the bishop of Paris, Étienne Tempier (*c*.1210–79), in 1270 and 1277.[31]

29 José de Seabra da Silva, *Deducção Chronologica, e Analytica*, 3 vols. (Lisbon: Officina de Miguel Manescal da Costa, 1767), 1:52.

30 See Carlo Natali and Stefano Maso, eds., *Antiaristotelismo* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1999); María Carmen Virginia Seisdedos Sánchez, *Antiaristotelismo y Lógica en el Renacimiento: Humanismo y Retórica en el Renacimiento* (n.p.: Editorial Académica Española, 2012).

31 See F. León Florido, ed., *Las Condenas de Aristóteles en la Edad Media Latina* (Valencia: Ed. Kyrios, 2013).

Very succinctly, we can say that the critique of Aristotle and his legacy has three thematic strands: first, the manuscript transmission of the corpus, which, in some cases, resulted in very deteriorated and fragmented texts, thus leading to an uncertain interpretation of the author's thought; second, the emphasis upon the evident antiquity of this figure, who had become obsolete with the modern technological and scientific advance; and third, the Scholastic reading of the philosopher's works, which is considered (somewhat contradictorily) both to misrepresent Aristotle and to transmit *ad nauseam* a legacy that is in itself obscure, filling medieval libraries with profuse commentaries, which as knowledge was useless, chimerical, or even metaphysical (as some eighteenth-century authors pejoratively insisted).[32] In the debate between ancients and moderns that dominated the Enlightenment, the commentaries and theoretical disputes, which had nothing empirical or practical about them, epitomized the learning of the medieval "school," against which the reformers were so uncompromisingly opposed. In the specific case of Portugal, it is very clear that the intellectual debate on this question was used by the political powers as propaganda to eradicate the Jesuits and dismantle their pedagogical edifice.

Building on the evidence gathered in the *Deducção*, José I created the Junta de Providência Literária (Literary Providence Board), with the purpose of collecting data on the situation of the university in Portugal. To this end, a report was published in 1771 under the title *Compêndio Histórico do Estado da Universidade de Coimbra* (Historical compendium of the University of Coimbra). It set in motion structural reforms of the University of Coimbra and paved the way for the approval of new statutes in 1772, in which it was conspicuous (especially if we take into account the previous statutes) how references to the works of Aristotle were completely removed. The attempt to purge teaching, science, and culture of Aristotle's nefarious influence, allegedly maintained and "fanatically" disseminated by the Jesuits in defiance of the scientific advances of modern authors, led the board to conclude that a radical change in the course of the university was necessary so that Portugal could combat the ignorance that Jesuit pedagogical practices had left in their wake. This report consists of two parts and an appendix: the first part diachronically describes the decline caused by the Jesuits in university education; the second part specifically analyses the "damages" inflicted upon the courses of theology, canonical and civil jurisprudence, and medicine; finally, the appendix

32 See Edward Grant, *Science and Religion from Aristotle to Copernicus 400 BC to AD 1550* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

compiles twenty-two "atrocities" that amount to evidence substantiating the sixth "damage" presented in the description of the jurisprudence course.[33]

Denounced as a "carnal," "heretical," or "atheist" author, Aristotle was severely criticized by the board—a situation that only becomes fully intelligible upon taking into account the anti-Jesuit context. The sixth "damage" is identified by the authors as one of the most noxious blows delivered by the Jesuits to the teaching of canonical and civil jurisprudence. It consisted in introducing the "highly corrupt" Aristotelian ethics into the field of moral philosophy. The text gives us a very descriptive expression of the dark and perverted image of Aristotle that it intended to establish:

> Aristotle has not only failed to sow the seeds in the soil but also instead of clean and good wheat, he has sown weeds and tares in it that contaminate it and harm the harvest. This is the most atrocious crime, for which the Morals that he taught should have been banished from the Statutes of our University.[34]

A few lines later, we can read in the same *Compêndio* a dramatic characterization of the morality promoted by the Jesuits and derived from Aristotle:

> This pernicious Arsenal of Moral Pyrrhonism, enough in itself to shake and destroy the most solid foundations of Religion and the State, this harmful production of Aristotle's Atheism, this abominable birth of the perversion of his spirit and the corruption of the customs, this exterminator of the true good, patroness of evil, matrix of all kinds of evil, sworn enemy of Religion, Piety and Probity of mind.[35]

The vituperations against the ancient authority who supplied Jesuit pedagogy and morals with its foundations were more concretely systematized in the appendix accompanying the *Compêndio*. Although not signed, the work of compiling the appendix is attributed to António Pereira de Figueiredo (1725–97), who revealed his role in a letter sent to Manuel do Cenáculo (1724–1814)

33 The authors of the *Compêndio* used different words with a pejorative tone, such as "damages," "atrocities," and "stratagem," to characterize the pedagogical action of the Jesuits. The second part of this work is even organized as a sequential enumeration of "damages" concerning the different university courses.

34 Junta de Providência Literária, *Compêndio histórico da Universidade de Coimbra* (Porto: Campo das Letras, 2008), 246.

35 Junta de Providência Literária, *Compêndio*, 254.

in 1774. The author imputes the Jesuits twenty-two "atrocities" that reveal how the implementation of Aristotle's philosophy in the morals they spread contributed to results highly damaging to Portuguese society. However, this work is not a novelty, since it is an elaboration upon a French libel entitled *Assertions,* published in the second volume of *Recueil par ordre de dates de tous les arrêts du Parlement de Paris, Déclarations, Edits, Lettres Patentes du Roi, & autres Pieces, concernant les ci-devant soi-disans Jésuites* (Collection in order of dates of all the judgments of the Parliament of Paris, declarations, edicts, letters patent of the king, & other pieces, concerning the former so-called Jesuits, 1766), which listed eighteen of the "atrocities" described by the Portuguese author (from blasphemy, to murder, regicide, corruption of authority, sacrilege, magic, etc.). The adaptation to the Portuguese context lies in the fact that it also takes into account four more reproaches applicable to the specific case of the Jesuits' intervention in Portugal, highlighting the influence that Aristotelian philosophy would have had on the construction of the Jesuit ideology.

Unlike the French author, Pereira de Figueiredo explicitly references the Greek philosopher by citing his name in the title of the appendix: *Apêndice ao Capítulo Segundo da Segunda Parte para Servir de Suplemento ao Sexto dos Estragos e Impedimentos que a Sociedade Jesuítica Fez e Acumulou para Corromper e Impossibilitar o Estudo da Jurisprudência Canónica e Civil com a Introdução e Propagação da Moral de Aristóteles* (Appendix to the second chapter of the second part to serve as a supplement to the sixth of the "damages" and impediments that the Jesuit Society has caused and accumulated to corrupt and impede the study of canonical and civil jurisprudence with the introduction and propagation of Aristotle's morals). This idea is reinforced throughout the text but is particularly stressed in the twenty-second and last "impiety," which laconically states that the introduction of Aristotelian philosophy in advanced studies (especially logic, metaphysics, and ethics), through the previous statutes of the University of Coimbra served the Jesuits' agenda by enabling them "to destroy not only Evangelical Morals and Christian piety, but also all the Dogmas of the Church."[36]

In the appendix (as in the other parts of the *Compêndio*), Aristotle is regarded as the philosopher whose consolidation as a central authority in the Western tradition is part of the Jesuits' plan, not because he was misinterpreted, but because he himself had developed a corrosive moral and philosophical system. To solidify this bond between the ancient thinker and the Jesuits, Pereira de Figueiredo demotes Aristotle to a kind of pejorative epithet attributed to the

36 Junta de Providência Literária, *Compêndio*, 470.

members of the Society. The Jesuits are derisively nicknamed "Missionaries of Aristotle," "Aristotelian Theologians," "Aristotelian and Atheistic Theologians," or even "Lascivious Hijackers of Aristotle's Morals."

5 Final Remarks

After the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1759, the following decade was marked by the full affirmation of Portuguese regalism. Consequently, the political practice of clamping down on all entities and institutions that dared to depart from the government's program became conflated with the ongoing policy to de-Jesuitize the Portuguese Empire. Any deviations or positions that questioned this policy were seen as a Jesuit-inspired usurpation of king's authority. Jesuitism was the phantom that the government conjured whenever there was a need to condemn individual or collective behaviors, attitudes or practices.[37]

But this program of completely "de-Jesuitizing" the country was not only felt at the ecclesiastical, pedagogical, cultural, and intellectual levels. The ghost of Jesuitism was habitually raised by the central administration to justify the most different reforms and served as the great operative pretext for disinfecting the old laws of Jesuit influence and thus promoting the modernization of the country. We often find in the preambles of the Josephine laws a reference to the main cause of the evils they were trying to combat, namely Jesuitism. The fight against Jesuitism became an obsession running through many of Pombal's legislative texts and political decisions; an obsession that at the same time supplied a simplistic explanation and an instrumental legitimacy by identifying in the order the single cause of all the difficulties that prevented Portugal from saying farewell to a dark and retrograde past and from moving forward into an enlightened future.

37 For a theorisation of the phantasmatic and obsessive character that anti-Jesuit mythification assumed in similar cases, see Michel Leroy, "Mythe, réligion et politique: La 'légende noire' des Jésuites," *Lusitania sacra* 12 (2000): 267–376.