In 1563, Cardinal Borromeo wrote from Rome to the nuncio in Spain that “agents of the Spanish clergy shout to the sky of the harms done to them by the exaction of the subsidy, complaining that it would be not only difficult but impossible for them to pay the sum...the pope cannot avoid hearing them because they are on every corner shouting; wherever the pope goes he encounters them.” Even though Borromeo may have exaggerated in his letter, he underscored how insistent the clergy were in their appeals to Rome. This did not bode well for Spanish ambassadors, who already had to contend with frequent papal hostility toward making a concession; for example, after the Turks were expelled from Malta in 1565, Cardinal Pacheco on his own initiative asked Pope Pius IV (1559–1565) to grant the king a subsidy. The pope responded: “Send him the quinquenio? He will be lucky if he gets it when he asks me for it.” Negotiations for subsidies, then, were never limited to Spain. A recurrent duty of the Spanish ambassadors in Rome was to negotiate for ecclesiastical concessions and a recurrent duty of the ecclesiastical agents was to oppose the concessions. The popes retained considerable control over royal access to ecclesiastical taxation, and papal concessions gave the popes leverage on the Spanish kings. To understand fully the negotiations between the crown and the Assembly, we must consider the papal dimension.

This chapter addresses three aspects of the negotiations in Rome for papal concessions between 1529 and 1556. First, it examines the obstacles, ranging from reluctant popes to French objections, that the ambassadors had to overcome to obtain these concessions. These

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obstacles illustrate the often hostile diplomatic climate in Rome and Spanish attempts to maneuver within it. Second, the terms and conditions for each concession were central to these negotiations, because they could determine the size of the concessions, how the concessions were used, and the ease with which the monies were transferred to royal coffers. Consequently, both sides tried to obtain through the negotiations what they considered the most suitable and advantageous terms. Third, the chapter examines the Assembly’s efforts to appeal to and to influence the pope. Royal ambassadors, in turn, monitored the Assembly’s agents in Rome, countering their assertions of royal excesses or abuses. The papacy then acted as arbiter between the crown and the clergy.4

The Obstacles

The Spanish crown could not obtain ecclesiastical contributions without the requisite papal bull.5 Such contributions provided the crown with 3,666,000 ducados between 1519 and 1555, but in each case the crown had to negotiate with the papacy. Maintaining amicable relations with the popes, then, was essential to securing the desired concessions. The Italian wars of the League of Cognac (1526–1529) between Pope Clement VII (1523–1534) and Charles V created a six year hiatus between concessions, while the hostility and subsequent war between Pope Paul IV (1555–1559) and Philip II created nearly four years of uncertainty concerning the validity of the previous concession and the possibility of future ones.6 In normal circumstances during Charles V’s reign, however, the popes conceded either an ecclesiastical contribution or a cruzada approximately every three years. These grants were nominally for the war against Islam. Although the impetus for a new concession could come from either the crown or the papacy, the correspondence

5 An ecclesiastical contribution, or subsidy, is not the same thing as an ecclesiastical loan to the crown. A papal bull was not needed to negotiate a loan with the ecclesiastical estate. In 1556, when Paul IV revoked Julius III’s bull for a dos quartas, the crown sought an ecclesiastical loan. For the 1556 loan, see Goñi, Historia de la bula, p. 541.
6 On August 4, 1559, Paul IV finally agreed to concede a cruzada. He died, however, before the bull was issued. Ibid., pp. 544–545.