

## The Vatican, Anti-Semitism, and the Holocaust

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In Spring 1975, Historian Judah L. Graubart wrote: "There are few issues in the historiography of the Holocaust that are colored by more emotion and based on less knowledge than the Vatican's response to the *final solution to the Jewish question*."<sup>1</sup> At the time of Pope Pius XII's death in 1958 the Jewish newspaper *L'Arche* published a bitter essay about *Las Silences de Pie XII* which accused Pius XII of anti-Semitism. In 1963, Rolf Hochhuth, a German writer, published *The Deputy*, a play which indicted the whole Catholic Church of pro-fascist attitudes. The essay and the play, both written prior to the publication of most of the relevant documents, marked the beginning of an era of accusations against the Holy See and initiated a fierce historical controversy. In reaction to the storm of attack on Pius XII in the 1960s, Pope Paul VI authorized the publication of the papers of the Secretariat of State of Pope Pius XII. The papers were edited by a group of Jesuit historians of different nationalities and intended to exonerate Pius XII. The first volume was published in 1965, the last in 1988.<sup>2</sup> The following years were characterized by furious and polarized debate. Defenders of the Vatican emphasized the Pope's, the Vatican's and the episcopacy's readiness to help individual Jews in finding hiding places or in escaping from German-occupied territories. The critics of the Holy See, and especially Pope Pius XII, for not having *officially* condemned the National Socialist policies toward the Jews in Germany and the occupied countries. Further release of documents did not silence the critics of Pius XII. Finally, in Fall, 1988, the bishops of West Germany, East Germany, and Austria decided to issue an eighteen page long "word of the bishops concerning the relationship between Christians and Jews." In this memorandum the bishops admitted the church's failure and fault during the Nazi regime and expressed their regret.<sup>3</sup>

In discussing Vatican diplomacy during the Holocaust we must

<sup>1</sup>John F. Morley, *Vatican Diplomacy and the Jews During the Holocaust 1929-1943* (New York: Ktav Publishing House), 1980, 1.

<sup>2</sup>Robert A. Graham, *Pius XII's Defense of Jews and Others: 1944-1945* (Milwaukee: Catholic League for Religious & Civil Rights) 1984, 7.

<sup>3</sup>Rolf Steininger, "Katholische Kirche und NS-Judenpolitik," in *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* (Innsbruck: Theologische Fakultät Innsbruck) 1982, 179.

remember that the first priority of the Vatican had to be survival of the institution itself over a vast and heterogeneous area in time of total war. Moreover, Vatican diplomacy was characterized by distinctive levels. On the highest level was the Pope himself. The nuncios acted on the lowest level within the Vatican. They received instruction from the Vatican's Secretariat of State and more specifically from the Secretary of State in the 1930s, Cardinal Luigi Maglione. Below the level of the Vatican itself, most of the Vatican's official policies had to be supported and guided by the representatives of the Church in the invaded countries and in Germany.<sup>4</sup> Finally, the Vatican's traditional approach of maintaining official neutrality in international disputes faced unprecedented challenge by the Nazi regime.

The primary field of interest here must certainly be the German episcopacy and their connections with the Vatican and the Vatican diplomats. Before 1933 the German Catholic Church had severely condemned National Socialism especially for its anti-religious and anti-moral teachings. Yet, after Hitler's rise to power and especially after the conclusion of the Concordat between Berlin and Rome in July 1933, this changed very quickly. Some historians argue that the Concordat provided the Nazi regime with a legitimate basis which persisted throughout the next twelve years and which persuaded many faithful Christians in Germany that, after all, Hitler's regime was not amoral and anti-religious. Other historians have argued that the Concordat represented not a reconciliation between Nazi Germany and the Catholic Church but the first stage in a long-lasting struggle for independence by the Church from Nazi "coordination." During these years the German Episcopacy divided into two camps. The anti-Nazi group was led by Konrad von Preysing, Bishop of Eichstätt and later of Berlin. He insisted that it was the Church's duty to warn the Catholics of the dangers for religion and morals that the Nazi ideology had inherent.<sup>5</sup> On the other side stood the chairman of the Fulda Bishop's Conference, Adolf Cardinal Bertram of Breslau, the Bishops Wilhelm Berning of Osnabrück and Heinrich Wienken, who from 1937 onwards was the leader of the Fulda Bishop's Conference, and the Apostolic Nuncio in Berlin, Cesare Orsenigo.<sup>6</sup> The Hitler Regime was not willing to allow the Church any freedom outside religious affairs. The Church, on the other side, tried to defend both religious press and religious organizations from the intervention of the state. Historian Ludwig Volk argues that the main effort of the National Socialists was to contain Church activities within Church buildings and to prevent any interference of religious institutions in national affairs.<sup>7</sup> As long

<sup>4</sup>Fred E. Katz, "Old Wounds and New Lessons," in *Society*, March/April 1983, 27.

<sup>5</sup>Stainingier, "Katholische Kirche," 187.

<sup>6</sup>Reif Hochhuth, *The Deputy* (New York: Grove Press), 1964, 13.

<sup>7</sup>Dieter Albrecht (ed.), *Katholische Kirche und Nationalsozialismus. Ausgewählte Aufsätze von Ludwig Volk* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag), 1987, 83.

as Pius XI was alive, the Concordat represented nothing more than a *modus vivendi* between the German state and the Vatican. Throughout the 1930s Pius XI fought to preserve the Church's influence and to protect its institutions from Nazi persecution.

Vatican diplomatic action during the Nazi regime took two forms. On the one hand, bishops, Cardinals and the Holy See intervened and helped individuals, including many Jews, through private protests directed at the German government. They constantly helped baptized Jews and continuously interfered with state officials when the latter tried to implement racial laws. On the other hand, the Vatican also conducted an official and public diplomacy. Here two periods of time have to be distinguished. Diplomacy underwent considerable change when Pope Pius XI died in 1939 and Eugenio Cardinal Pacelli was elected and became Pius XII. He then constantly challenged the Nazis through both personal intervention and open criticism. He had considerably contributed to the deterioration of the relations between the Vatican and Berlin and was not afraid of a public confrontation with the Nazi regime. When Eugenio Pacelli became pope the situation changed very rapidly. The new pope's major interest was to remain neutral and to work for peace. To achieve this aim he refrained from condemning any nation and relied on diplomatic discussions to solve the problems of the time. However, Pius XII's retreat from an aggressive policy and silence regarding growing Nazi persecutions has, at the time and since, often been interpreted as a policy of "by-standing", or tacit approval.

Yet, during Pius XII's candidature, the Church continued to help many individuals evade German persecution. Among others, the Apostolic Nuncio in Berlin, Cesare Orsenigo helped individual Jews. During the war years he also made repeated inquiries about other victims of German atrocities. He made frequent pleas for clemency on behalf of individuals who had been condemned to death by Nazi authorities, although most of the time the German authorities remained uncompromising and his attempts were fruitless.<sup>8</sup>

The main effort of the Catholic church, however, was to intervene for Jews converted to Catholicism. The Vatican considered these Christian non-Aryans as full members of the Church and attempted to save them from Nazi persecution. Some interventions of the Vatican for these baptized Jews were successful. After a request by the representatives of the German Catholic hierarchy, Vatican diplomacy succeeded on June 20, 1939 in obtaining 3,000 immigration visas for German Catholic Jews to settle in Brazil. Historian John Morley stresses that the Brazil project shows that the Vatican's interest in the early years of the war was directed exclusively towards Christian Jews. The Church justified its intervention for these Jews by stating that the baptized Jews rightly concerned the Church and

<sup>8</sup>Morley, *Vatican Diplomacy*, 120, 126.

that these Jews were cut off from Jewish relief organizations.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to negotiating on behalf of individual Jews, the Holy See also tried to undermine racist legislation in different countries. Racist legislation, especially the prohibition of intermarriage between Jews and Christians, stood in complete opposition to the Church's moral teachings. However, the reaction of the German episcopacy to the establishment of the so-called Nuremberg Laws, the German racial laws, of September 15, 1935, was divided. Some clergymen, as for example Bishop Hudal, the head of the German Church in Rome, welcomed the laws as a necessary measure of self-defense of the German people against the "influx of foreign elements." Others, like Waldemar Gurian, a German Catholic in exile, condemned the racial laws as violations of natural law and the moral teachings of the Christian faith.<sup>10</sup> Many historians cite the following as an articulation of the Church's overall standpoint on racist legislation. At the beginning of August 1941 the French ambassador to the Holy See, Léon Bérard wrote a letter to Marshal Pétain, who had asked him about the Church's opinion on the French anti-Jewish legislation. In it he stated that the Church was basically against racism but that it did not repudiate every action taken by different countries against the Jews. Bérard mentioned that there were certain gradations and distinctions that the Church made. Furthermore he reported that the Vatican had only expressed its desire that no additional laws concerning marriage should be added and that "the precepts of justice and charity be taken into account in the application of the law."<sup>11</sup>

As mentioned, the Church's priorities shifted somewhat when Pius XII was elected in 1939. Dieter Albrecht's document-collection shows that during Pius XII's reign the Holy See was increasingly concerned with the situation of the Church in Germany and later in the German-occupied territories.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, in the view of historian Walter Laqueur, it probably was the Vatican who first in Europe learned of the Final Solution.<sup>13</sup> Already in the summer of 1941 the nuncio in Bucharest sent a report describing the killing of the Jews in the East. A similar report came from Poland in October 1941. In 1942, after Action Reinhardt (the final roundup of Jews) began, the memoranda poured in from all sides: the nuncio of Switzerland sent a memorandum of the World Jewish Congress to Rome. Reports came to the Vatican from Slovakia, Belgium, Berlin and Poland. Colonel Kurt Gerstein, a German soldier, reported about what he saw in the death camps at Belzec and Treblinka—the document would enter history as the "Gerstein Report" and would later become the main topic in Rolf Hochhuth's *The Deputy*. On

<sup>9</sup> Morley, *Vatican Diplomacy*, 18-21.

<sup>10</sup> Lewy, *Catholic Church*, 281.

<sup>11</sup> Morley, *Vatican Diplomacy*, 51-52.

<sup>12</sup> Albrecht, *Notenwechsel*.

<sup>13</sup> Lipstadt, "Bystanders," 22.

December 29, 1942, the Holy See received a copy of the joint declaration of Great Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union condemning the persecution of the Jews.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, there were many who pleaded with the Holy Father forcefully and openly to criticize German atrocities. The Polish president wrote a letter to the Vatican. American Catholics presented their alienation with the Church in Rome through their official voice, Francis Cardinal Spellmann. Eugène Cardinal Tisserant already in 1940 begged Pius XII to issue an Encyclical about the "individual duty to obey the imperatives of conscience."<sup>15</sup> On March 19, 1941, Pius XII replied to a letter sent to him by Bishop Preysing of Berlin, in which Preysing had reported and pleaded as follows:

Your Holiness has certainly been informed about the situation of the Jews in Germany and in its adjacent countries. ... I would like to mention that both Catholics and Protestants have asked me if the Holy See could do something about this matter. [like] make an appeal in favor of those unhappy people.

Pope Pius XII's reply did not address this plea. It simply ended with the words: "We recommend all your requests and anxieties to the kind protection of Holy Joseph and the compassionate love of Our Savior."<sup>16</sup> The Vatican refused officially to condemn Nazi atrocities towards the Jews in Germany and the occupied countries. In the words of Monsignor Charles Rodonski, a priest from the Warthegau, in this case silence was interpreted as giving consent.<sup>17</sup>

Historians have indeed pointed out that as soon as Pius XII succeeded in Rome the public conflict between the Vatican and the Third Reich disappeared. Following his election in March, 1939, Pius XII sent his warm greetings to Hitler without even mentioning the German occupation of Prague. The German response was forthcoming: as early as May, 1939, the Nazi press became noticeably less critical of the Holy See, although the Nazi government remained suspicious as Pius XII began his candidature trying first to preserve, and later to restore, peace and mediate between the powers involved in the war.<sup>18</sup>

Shortly after the beginning of the war, England and France asked the Pope to condemn Germany as an aggressor against Poland. But Pius XII refused. The Germans understood this as a sign that he wanted to avoid direct intervention in international conflicts, which was traditional policy in Vatican diplomacy, and that he also feared that such an intervention would damage the situation of the Catholics in Germany.

<sup>14</sup> Morley, *Vatican Diplomacy*, 115-119.

<sup>15</sup> Lipstadt, "Bystanders," 24.

<sup>16</sup> Burkhardt Schneider (ed.), *Die Briefe Pius XII. an die deutschen Bischöfe, 1939-1944* (Munich: Matthias-Grunewald-Verlag), 1966, 134.

<sup>17</sup> Donald J. Dietrich, "Historical Judgments and Eternal Verities," in *Society*, March/April 1983, 33.

<sup>18</sup> Kent, "A Tale," 605.

Nevertheless when the encyclical *Summi Pontificatus* was issued on October 27, 1939, Nazi officials forbade its publication and diffusion within Germany. The encyclical indirectly expressed the Pope's sympathy for the invaded Polish nation, where Christian charitable relief work had been suppressed, priests had been imprisoned, and Church property had been seized. From the perspective of the Nazi government the encyclical damaged Germany's reputation in the eyes of the world.<sup>19</sup> In the same manner the official voice of the Vatican refused to condemn or accuse any nation throughout the entire duration of the war. Only once, in 1944 did the Holy See intervene for the civil victims of German atrocity.<sup>20</sup>

Open criticism was problematic not only for the Pope and the officials presiding in Rome. The decision to act or not to act on a public level was often influenced by the representatives of the Church hierarchy in the occupied countries and Germany itself. For the episcopacy in Germany it was particularly difficult to decide whether it was better for a priest to be a patriotic German who should lead his community towards the greater ideal of the German nation, or protest against Nazi policy and thus risk becoming an outcast of society and losing all influence, or even worse, being arrested by the Nazis. Indeed, most Cardinals and Bishops attempted to play a role as mediators. Very rarely did they protest either to German officials or from the pulpit.

At the beginning of World War II it became even more difficult for the church leaders in Germany to remain neutral. Apparently, overwhelming patriotism allowed them to forget even the attacks Hitler made on the Church in Germany. Already in 1937 the Fulda Bishops' Conference had praised the patriotic actions of the clerics in World War I. The author of a work praising the Catholic priests' involvement in that war added that this was the right time to honor the patriotism of the Church because it was now that "the German people, through their leaders, have again become a nation." In September, 1939, a Fulda Pastoral letter issued by the Bishops of the Fulda Conference exhorted:

In this decisive hour we encourage and admonish our Catholic soldiers, in obedience to the Führer, to do their duty and to be ready to sacrifice their whole person. We appeal to the faithful to join in ardent prayers that God's providence may lead this way to blessed success and peace for fatherland and people.<sup>21</sup>

In October, 1941, the deportation of the Jews began and the Church soon realized how seriously the Nazis implemented their ideology. However, as Michael Cardinal Faulhaber expressed it, many clergymen thought that the German officials would pay no attention to interference of the

<sup>19</sup>Rhodes, *Vatican*, 287.

See also the different notes concerning the reaction of German officials to the Encyclical, in Albrecht, *Notenwechsel*, 1969.

<sup>20</sup>Albrecht, *Notenwechsel*, 1969, 197.

<sup>21</sup>Guenter Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany* (New York, Toronto: McGraw-Hill), 1964, 225.

Church and that therefore it was futile even to try. Cardinal Bertram's opinion was that the deportation of the Jews was the execution of a principle of ideology which could not be stopped and that the bishops should "in the meantime be concerned about other, ecclesiastically more important, and farther-reaching matters."<sup>22</sup> Moreover, within Germany the admiration for the Führer after his first victories did not stop at the church-doors. After the defeat of France, Archbishop Schulte of Cologne and Bishop Bornwasser of Trier issued a proclamation sending special thanks to heaven for the victory of the German army.<sup>23</sup> Cardinal Bertram of Breslau who in 1930 had said that the "National Socialist movement is no longer purely political. It teaches a mishapen philosophy which must be combated with all firmness,"<sup>24</sup> in April, 1940 congratulated Adolph Hitler on his birthday, pronouncing that the words should be seen "in connection with the passionate prayers, which the German Catholics send to heaven on the alters on April 20 for the people, the army, and the fatherland, for the State and the Führer." Bertram congratulated Hitler in the name of the German episcopacy without having the consent of the German bishops. The result was fierce protests by the German bishops which threatened further to divide the German Catholic hierarchy. Despite this, Cardinal Bertram apparently thought it was his duty to congratulate Hitler on his birthday every from then on until 1944.<sup>25</sup>

Only once, between 1943 and 1945, did Cardinal Bertram protest the systematic murder of the Jews. He protested not openly but in a private letter to Heinrich Himmler and the *Reichsicherheitshauptamt*. This letter, for the first and only time, not only mentioned the non-Aryan Catholics but also the deported non-Aryans (Jews). In this letter Bertram spoke of the inhuman conditions under which the "prisoners" had to live in the concentration camps all over Germany and urged that, considering the reputation of the German name at home and abroad, the situation in the camps should be examined and where necessary changed. However, Hitler himself never received this letter and it was neither published nor openly spread throughout Germany.<sup>26</sup>

The voices that did speak out publicly were scarce and hardly ever successful. However, in one famous instance a Catholic Bishop did suc-

<sup>22</sup>Steininger, "Katholische Kirche," 176.

<sup>23</sup>Lewy, *Catholic Church*, 223.

<sup>24</sup>Rhodes, *Vatican*, 166.

<sup>25</sup>Steininger, "Katholische Kirche," 174, 177-178.

In the end the situation became nearly macabre. When Bertram received the news about Hitler's suicide in the evening of May 1 or in the morning of May 2, 1945 he personally instructed all parishes in the archdiocese to "celebrate a festive Requiem in remembrance of the Führer and of all those members of the German Wehrmacht who died in the fight for the German fatherland." Remarkable about this is, as historian Schieder insists, that a Requiem according to Catholic Church law can only be celebrated for religious members and only for very important matters concerning an official affair of the church. In Steininger, "Katholische Kirche," 178.

<sup>26</sup>Steininger, "Katholische Kirche," 177.

possibility of saving lives, which might have been in vain in any case, but it also failed to "give witness to the humanitarian commitment which [they] proudly claimed as the hallmark of Vatican diplomacy."<sup>31</sup>

The Church rightly feared open attack on Catholics within Germany. Albrecht von Kessel, a staff member of Ernst von Weizsäcker, later confirmed that this fear was not unsubstantiated.<sup>32</sup> Vatican reaction to accusations of "by-standing" was defensive. On April 30, 1943, Pius XII replied to a letter of Konrad von Preysing, Bishop of Berlin. The Pope underlined that the Vatican had to remain silent "*ad maiora mala vitanda*"<sup>33</sup> and he defended the Vatican policy towards the Jews as follows:

The Holy See for both the Catholic non-Aryans and for the Jews has charitably done everything that was within its economic and moral power. The executive authorities of our relief organizations needed a maximum of patience and self-sacrifice to meet the requirements — or one rather has to say — to meet the demands of the help-seekers and to gain control over emerging diplomatic problems. We do not even want to mention the high amounts of money in American currency that we made available for overseas emigrants; we gave them [the high amounts of money] with pleasure, because these people needed them; we helped in return for rewards by God, and were well advised not to expect earthly gratitude. ... As far as the actions taken against non-Aryans in German-influenced territories are concerned we already put in a word in our Christmas message. It was short but love and paternal anxiety is intensely concerned with non-Aryan and half-Aryan Christians... The situation right now does not allow us to give them more effective help than our prayers. However, we are determined, depending on whether the circumstances allow it or not, to again raise our voices for them.<sup>34</sup>

In short, Pius XII was afraid. As Mr. Tittmann, the American Chargé d'Affaires at the Vatican in September, 1942, reported to the State Department, official statements could worsen the situation of the Catholics in Germany.<sup>35</sup> The German Bishops' Conference announced as well that not only would an official statement be ineffective, it would jeopardize what still could be done to help the Jews on a personal basis. Even well known opponents of the National Socialists, like Bishop Preysing, decided not to intervene because they feared that the Church would lose its last ability to offer refuge and help. Furthermore, as historian Ludwig Volk argues, while the euthanasia of the disabled and sick was an "open" secret, which was deeply deplored and criticized among the people, the knowledge of Jewish extermination was very limited. Therefore an official statement against the killing of the Jews would not have

been in effecting a reversal of Nazi policy. In August, 1941, the Bishop of Münster, Count von Galen, in a sermon in the church of Lambert condemned the killing of the sick, disabled, and old. Subsequently the whole German episcopacy protested so fiercely that Hitler still in August, 1941, actually ordered the cessation of the murder of innocent "unproductive life." In a letter to Bishop von Galen, Pope Pius XII expressed his approval of the bishop's actions, and added that the sermons were "proof of how much can still be achieved through open and manly behavior within the Third Reich."<sup>37</sup> Before that, though, the Bishops had protested unsuccessfully against the Nazi treatment of the disabled internally for over a year. Von Galen's sermon outraged the people and thus forced the suspension of the terror against the disabled.<sup>38</sup> However, it took Pius XII several months before he himself spoke out against the killing of the deformed, the insane, and the incurable. In July, 1943, in the encyclical *Mystici Corporis* he condemned the killing of innocent life.<sup>39</sup>

In 1942 the Vatican did become more critical of German policies. As a result, in a telegram on October 21, 1942, Joachim von Ribbentrop, German Minister of Foreign Affairs, ordered that confrontation with the Vatican had to be avoided, and that the Holy See should be informed that since July 30, 1941, no Church property had been confiscated, and that anti-religious press propaganda had been forbidden. Despite these disclosures, on Christmas eve the Pope spoke out against the persecution of innocent people. But in his only allusion to the Jews in this Christmas radio address, Pius XII still remained incomprehensibly vague, expressing his concern about "the hundreds of thousands who, through no fault of their own, and solely because of their nation or race, have been condemned to death or progressive extinction." In the speech, the words "Jews" or "Germany" were not mentioned. Pius XII also refused to speak out against Nazi aggression any further. The reason for this might be found in an exchange of letters that followed the radio address between von Ribbentrop and Diego von Bergen, the German Ambassador to the Vatican. Von Ribbentrop had instructed von Bergen to inform Pius XII that Germany did not appreciate the Pope's renunciation of his neutral standpoint and that he should keep in mind that Germany did not "lack physical means of retaliation." Von Bergen responded that Pius XII was "firmly convinced that the majority [of the German Catholics] will remain true to their Faith. And that the German Catholic clergy will screw up its courage, prepared for the greatest sacrifices."<sup>40</sup> Yet, Pius XII's further actions did not reflect a firm belief in German Catholicism. He did not touch the Jewish question again. By not supporting the deported Jews, John Morley admits, the Church did not only forgo the

<sup>31</sup>Morley, *Vatican Diplomacy*, 196-201.

<sup>32</sup>Lipstuck, "Bystanders," 26.

<sup>33</sup>to prevent major evils. Schneider, *Briefe*, 240.

<sup>34</sup>Schneider, *Briefe*, 241-242.

<sup>35</sup>Rhodes, *Vatican*, 347.

<sup>37</sup>Steininger, "Katholische Kirche," 166.

<sup>38</sup>Albrecht, "Katholische Kirche," 93.

<sup>39</sup>Morley, *Vatican Diplomacy*, 196-201.

<sup>40</sup>Rhodes, *Vatican*, 271-274.

received as much public support as the euthanasia protest did.<sup>36</sup> In the words of historian Guenter Lewy "the bishops knew that here [with the killing of the disabled] they had the public behind them. When Hitler proceeded to 'The Final Solution of the Jewish Question,' no such sentiments showed themselves, and the episcopate therefore hesitated to risk a clash with the regime."<sup>37</sup>

From 1939 to 1945 the Vatican focused on two main issues. As mentioned, Pius XII was concerned with achieving peace throughout Europe and therefore refrained from abandoning neutrality and ceasing to serve as mediator. Beyond this, however, the first priority of both Pius XI and Pius XII was always to accumulate all their forces to oppose Bolshevism's influence in Western Europe. For the Vatican, Communism was more than just an ideological system which preached militant atheism; communism was another religion, with the same strength that Islam had had in previous centuries. Pius XI's encyclical *Divini Redemptoris*, issued on March 19, 1937, and directed against atheistic Communism, expressed much of the feelings the Church nourished against the system.<sup>38</sup>

Therefore, as historian Anthony Rhodes argues, when Germany attacked the Soviet Union in June, 1941, for many Catholics the war became something like a crusade.<sup>39</sup> Although Pius XII at this point decided not to condemn Communism any further, his standpoint was clear. Communism was the Church's first enemy, and Germany could help to defeat this enemy. Historian Saul Friedländer already in 1966 pointed out that the Holy See saw in the Nazi regime the savior of Europe from Bolshevism, no matter what form the Nazi regime took. Friedländer concluded that Pius XII feared the Bolshevization of Europe and hoped that Hitler's Germany would be able to stop the advance of the Soviet Union toward the West.<sup>40</sup>

Interestingly, the Church never spoke openly of the war against Russia as a religious crusade. For Nazi Germany this silence of the Holy Father in 1941 was a clear sign: if the Pope raised his voice against the evils of Communism he undoubtedly would also have to raise his voice against the "anti-clerical measures and anti-Christian tendencies in Germany." Paradoxically, his silence signaled that he approved the German invasion of Russia and was satisfied with the Germans' attempt to fight against evil Communism. To maintain the appearance of "neutrality," he could not state this openly. In a speech on June 29, 1941, Pius XII said:

Certainly in the midst of surrounding darkness and storm, signs of light appear which lift up our hearts with great and holy

<sup>36</sup> Albrecht, *Katholische Kirche*, 111.

<sup>37</sup> Lewy, *Catholic Church*, 257.

<sup>38</sup> Terence P. McLaughlin, *The Church and the Reconstruction of the Modern World. The Social Encyclicals of Pius XI* (New York: Image Books), 1957, 368-369.

<sup>39</sup> Rhodes, *Vatican*, 256.

<sup>40</sup> Friedländer, *Pius XII*, 235.

expectations—these are those magnanimous acts of valour which now defend the foundations of Christian culture, as well as the confident hope of victory.<sup>41</sup>

Pius XII's fear of Communism was greater than of anything else. His- torian Peter Kent explains that Pius XII's hatred of Bolshevism began in April, 1919, when the future Pope personally faced the Bolshevik invasion of the Munich nunciature. But, unlike Pius XI, who never missed an opportunity to condemn Bolshevism and Nazi Germany at the same time, Pius XII, who during his long stay in Germany had already been pro-German in the 1930's, did not continue Pius XI's anti-Nazi campaign.<sup>42</sup>

In addition to anti-Bolshevism there is yet another, almost equally strong traditional component of Vatican policy that might help to explain Vatican silence on the Holocaust. Historians have repeatedly accused the church of anti-Semitism and have argued it that was the reason why church officials did not stand up for the descendants of Abraham. Indeed, while the Church had criticized the Nazi glorification of race and blood and attacked the Nazi's criticism of the Old Testament, most of the Church officials said practically nothing about the acts of violence against the Jews. As mentioned earlier, when the Holy See and the episcopacy did address the problem, they never attacked Germany directly and did not name the Jews specifically as *the* example of a people predestined to violent extinction through the Nazi regime; the clergy mostly referred to "foreign races." Anti-Judaism was indeed known to be not uncommon among church officials and the Holy See's refusal to speak up for the Jews let the bitter feeling arise that church officials supported Hitler's campaign not only against Communists but also against the Jews. The Vatican's silence provokes the question: did the Church view Hitler's fight as a possibility to finally solve two of her "problems" — Judaism and Communism?

Historian Guenter Lewy argues that the "attitude of the Roman Catholic Church toward National Socialist anti-Semitism must be seen in the context of the still partially unresolved 2,000-year-old conflict between Church and Synagogue." Lewy admits that the differences between the Church's traditional anti-Judaism and the Nazi's anti-Semitism were big. However, it was to a large degree the Christian hostility to the "witness people" throughout previous centuries that had created the climate which allowed such unprecedented violence against the Jews. Some Christian clergymen also assisted in spreading the growth of the new anti-Semitism in the nineteenth century. Moreover, when the Catholic Church came in conflict with the National Socialists prior to 1933 the Nazi's anti-Semitism was not a point of discord. On the contrary, as pointed out, some clergymen were also known for their racial anti-Semitism. In 1923 Curate Josef Roth wrote:

<sup>41</sup> Rhodes, *Vatican*, 257-258.

<sup>42</sup> Kent, "A Tale," 583.

If in the course of proceeding against the Jews as a race some good and harmless Jews, with whom immorality because of inheritance is latent, will have to suffer together with the guilty ones, this is not a violation of Christian love of one's neighbor as long as the Church recognizes also the moral justification of war, for example, where many more 'innocents' than 'guilty' have to suffer.<sup>43</sup>

Still in 1933 the *Encyclopædia for Theology and Church* explained that the Jews had a "demoralizing influence on religiosity and national character."<sup>44</sup> From here it was a small step to Father Senn's, a veteran National Socialist priest's, outcry in 1934 that Hitler was "the tool of God, called upon to overcome Judaism."<sup>45</sup>

Indeed, historians do well know that many Vatican diplomats also did nourish at least anti-Zionist feelings and expressed them during these critical years. The Vatican's Secretary of State, Luigi Maglione himself, on two occasions expressed his opposition to the Jewish homeland, and one of his principal assistants Monsignor Domenico Tardini also expressed anti-Zionism on several occasions. Anti-Zionism is not equal to anti-Semitism. Yet, expressing anti-Zionist feelings while at the same time the Holocaust was working with full speed, seems at the least rather improper.<sup>46</sup> It is not irrelevant that diplomatic relations between the Vatican and Israel have been taken up only recently.

In conclusion, the record of the Vatican and the Catholic Church as a whole during World War II in regard to the Holocaust is profoundly mixed. Although Vatican activity during the Holocaust admittedly saved few Jews from Nazi persecution, some representatives of the Church did raise their voices and show their solidarity with the suffering of individual Jews. For this reason, historians should not unconditionally attack the Vatican or the Church as a whole.<sup>47</sup> Yet, many historians and analysts agree that what was missing was open criticism of Nazi policy.<sup>48</sup> Historian Rolf Steininger argues: "The Catholic Church was mainly concerned with her own matters. She did not think of the Jews but she was rather concerned with the unity of the organization. Nobody wanted a Church struggle with the Third Reich."<sup>49</sup> And John Morley regrets:

The greater tragedy, therefore, is not the death of thousands of innocent people, but that the diplomats of the Vatican, which claimed such a unique and spiritual status for their diplomacy, concurred by their silence. This was a concurrence which the Germans had come to expect and, in the most daring move of all,

<sup>43</sup>Lewy, *Catholic Church*, 269-272.

<sup>44</sup>Lewy, *Catholic Church*, 279.

<sup>45</sup>Lewy, *Catholic Church*, 279.

<sup>46</sup>Morley, *Vatican Diplomacy*, 207.

<sup>47</sup>Morley, *Vatican Diplomacy*, 2-6.

<sup>48</sup>Steininger, "Katholische Kirche," 163.

<sup>49</sup>Steininger, "Katholische Kirche," 172.

prove would also be forthcoming in Rome.<sup>50</sup>

Moreover, as Rolf Hochhuth points out, the Holy Father did not condemn Hitler even when it was already clear that Germany would lose the war and while the daily killing at Auschwitz was reaching its zenith. Hochhuth continues that "the papal legations were in fact the only authorities Hitler continued to respect following the unwelcome entry of the United States into the war."<sup>51</sup> And indeed, a papal protest could have reached the ears of millions of Catholics who, no matter what the Führer's teachings were, might still have heeded the man that they believed, after all, to be God's deputy on earth.<sup>52</sup>

Historians sometimes point out that the Vatican's by-standing was not a unique phenomenon in the history of the Holocaust. Hardly any other institution or government condemned Nazi atrocities or attempted to help the Jews. Anti-Judaism was part of people's mentalities in many nations throughout the world; by-standing was common reaction when confronted with the Holocaust. Yet, record of the Holy See remains particularly troubling, not least because of the moral authority claimed by the Church. Additionally problematic for those seeking to explain or excuse the record of the Church is the fact that historians have found evidence that the Holy See after May 1945 supported the escape of Nazi criminals to countries mostly in South America. Vatican expert Robert A. Graham explains that the disorder of the aftermath of World War II made it almost impossible for Christian personnel involved in the relocation of displaced persons to identify war criminals. Furthermore, he maintains, refugee workers "were not equipped to recognize criminals of any kind."<sup>53</sup> However, this hardly discredits the evidence that other historians bring forward. Historian Ernst Klee writes that "in the aftermath of World War II Rome was the most popular place of pilgrimage for fugitive Nazis. In the Eternal City they found hiding-places and fake papers which helped them to escape to foreign countries." With the help of a German priest, Adolf Eichman, the organizer of the *Final Solution* escaped to Argentina. Other prominent Nazi fugitives helped by members of the Church were "SS-Standardenführer" Walter Rauff, Auschwitz-doctor Josef Mengele, Franz Stangl, commander of the extermination-camps Sobibor and Treblinka, and his deputy Friedrich Warzok, leader of the concentration-camp Lemberg-Janowka. Also Dr. Kurth Christmann, leader of the "SS-Special-Commission 10a", Dr. Gerhard Bohne, former organizer of the Nazi-Euthanasia, and Werner Baumbach, most success-

<sup>50</sup>Morley, *Vatican Diplomacy*, 194.

<sup>51</sup>Rolf Hochhuth, "The Vatican and the Jews," in *Society*, March/April 1983, 5-6.

<sup>52</sup>Lipsstadt, "Bystanders," 21.

<sup>53</sup>Vincent A. Lipomarda, "Some Reflections on Catholics and the Holocaust," in *America*, Dec. 27, 1986, 426.

## The Dreyfus Affair and the Influence of the International Press

BY AMY LINDEMAN

The late nineteenth century became a significant turning point in France and around the world. French society was shifting from one era to another.<sup>1</sup> France claimed to be establishing democracy and its related institutions. However, many of its "traditional institutions," such as the church and the army, were pursuing a return to "traditional France." As a result, discrepancies arose between those in favor of a liberal democracy and those seeking tradition. Thus, the two emerged with two differing systems of values. In addition, France became xenophobic.<sup>2</sup> These conditions set the scene for a controversial crisis in France known as the Dreyfus Affair. Through the influence of the media, what began as an issue of military espionage and anti-Semitism became a battle against the institutions of traditional France.

The Dreyfus Affair began on October 15, 1894, when the army falsely arrested Captain Alfred Dreyfus for conveying military secrets to Germany. In September, General Mercier, the Minister of War, was informed that a note, known as the *bordereau*, had been discovered in the office of General Schwartzkoppen, a German ambassador to France. The document revealed that someone of high command in the French army was leaking information. General Du Paty de Clam discovered that Dreyfus' handwriting resembled that found on the *bordereau*. Dreyfus' peers found him guilty almost immediately. Not only was his handwriting similar to that on the *bordereau*, but many did not like Dreyfus, and higher officials had given him a poor evaluation in 1893.<sup>3</sup> More importantly though, Alfred Dreyfus was a Jew from Alsace. The fact that Dreyfus originated from Alsace raised suspicion. Alsace, which lay on the border between Germany and France, often changed hands between the two countries. Therefore, many questioned his patriotism to France.<sup>4</sup> Growing anti-Semitism in France contributed immensely to Alfred Dreyfus' conviction.

Hatred of Jews in France became a more pressing issue in 1870 during the Franco-German War. Algerian natives began a revolt within their country at this time. France decided to take measures to strengthen their influ-

<sup>1</sup>Jeffrey Mehler, *L'Affaire*, trans. Jean-Denis Bredin (New York: George Braziller, 1986), 587.

<sup>2</sup>Frederick Busi, "A Bibliographical Overview of the Dreyfus Affair," in *Jewish Social Studies* XL (1978), 39.

<sup>3</sup>Mehler, 63.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 533.

ful bomber-pilot of Hitler's Germany escaped through Rome.<sup>54</sup> Pope Pius XII himself intervened for the Governor of Wartheland, Arthur Greiser, whose murder commandos were accused of having killed over 300,000 Jews, Poles, and mentally ill in the extermination camp Chelmnno. Pius XII filed a plea for clemency in favor of Arthur Greiser to the Polish Government.<sup>55</sup>

On March 16, 1994, the *Chicago Tribune* announced that a trial against Paul Touvier, former intelligence aide to Klaus Barbie, head of the Gestapo and "Butcher of Lyon," was about to reopen in Paris. After the war Touvier had been condemned to death twice but he "succeeded in avoiding arrest by taking refuge with his family and among sympathetic Catholic organizations, at one time hiding in the Vatican." After the French Christian philosopher Gabriel Marcel filed a plea for clemency, Touvier was pardoned in 1971, but outraged Jews and Resistance groups forced him into hiding anew, "again aided by right-wing Catholics." Finally he was arrested in 1989 in a monastery in Nice and in 1992 a French court ruled that Touvier's alleged personal ordering of the execution of seven Jews did not constitute a crime against humanity. A national uproar compelled review of the decision. Touvier now is waiting for the trial, hoping to prove that he "merely" acted on the orders of Nazi superiors.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Ernst Klee, *Persischeins und falsche Presse. Was die Kirchen den Nazis helfen*. (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag), 1991, 25.

<sup>55</sup>Klee, *Persischeins*, 57.

<sup>56</sup>Sheron Waxman, "War Crimes Case Fails France on Trial. Nazi Collaborator's Day in Court may End '50 Years of Amnesia," in *Chicago Tribune*, March 15, 1994, 1, 11.