

**PIUS XII AND THE JEWS:  
THE WAR YEARS, AS REPORTED BY THE *NEW YORK TIMES***

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**Introduction**

In 1998, the Vatican issued a document entitled, “We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah.” The result was a flurry of interest in the Church during the Holocaust.

I decided to do a brief research project, employing readily available historical sources that would reveal the contemporary scene during the War. What did the Roman Catholic Church do during World War II concerning the Nazi’s and their racial policies? One of the most accessible sources of information concerning the War years is the New York Times. Most major American libraries, university, public, or private have the New York Times on microfilm with a thorough index. While not being a source offering complete information, the New York Times does provide a view of what was publicly known and what was publicly done by the Church concerning European Jewry and the Nazis.

The present brief study is based primarily upon entries in the New York Times during the War years. It provides a marvelous source of contemporary information that has rarely been used by historians in their treatment of the War.<sup>1</sup>

The commonly held view, propagated first by the communist party near the end of the war, and popularized since the 1963 production of Rolf Hochuth’s play, “The Deputy”, is that Pius XII dropped the ball, and that the Church, while not actively supporting the genocide of the Fuhrer or the Duce, did little to stop it. The New York Times provides a very different view. It reported that both Pius XI and Pius XII spoke out repeatedly against the racist policies of the totalitarian governments, and worked to save hundreds of thousands of Jews from extermination. Among the many Jewish voices raised during the war to extol Pius XII and the Church was Albert Einstein’s:

“Only the Church stood squarely across the path of Hitler’s campaign for suppressing the truth. I never had any special interest in the Church before, but now I feel a great affection and admiration because the Church alone has

had the courage and persistence to stand for intellectual truth and moral freedom. I am forced thus to confess that what I once despised I now praise unreservedly.” (*Time Magazine*, December 23, 1940).

This paper reports what the *Times* reported and commented upon concerning Pope Pius XII. It is as complete as was the *Times* in its reporting; if the *Times* didn't report an event during the War, then that event is not considered in this paper. Nevertheless, the *Times* does provide evidence that the Pope and the Church did much to save the Jews, and that the entire world applauded Pius XII and publicly thanked him for his efforts. The *Times* also reported that Pope Pius XII and the Church hierarchies in Europe recognized and condemned the horrible reality of the ultimate goal of Hitler. Hitler worked to redefine the human person, making all drones of the deified state, destroying peoples and institutions that did not fit into his new world order. Among the many victims were the Jews and the Church.

There are four sections to this paper: An Introductory section concerning the moral and theological principles established by Popes Pius XI and XII relative to totalitarian governments. Pope Pius XI was the first to face the Nazi and Fascist regimes. The principles he laid down and the work he began, formed the basis for the work by Pope Pius XII; the second section treats of the application of these principles by the Church in defense of the Jews and of the Church; the third section concerns the Nazi reaction to the Church's protests against the Nazi and Fascist governments; the fourth section briefly treats of the origin of the charge about the alleged “silence” and pro-Nazi sentiments of Pope Pius XII. References to the *N.Y. Times* articles will list the date of the issue, the page number and the column reference.

### **Pope Pius XI and Pope Pius XII:**

On February 6, 1922, Ambrogio Damiano Achille Ratti, Archbishop of Milan, was elected pope, and took the name Pius XI.

Europe was in shambles following World War I. Pope Pius XI attempted to offer a stabilizing influence by working to maintain peace. He was determined to work for a lasting world peace forged by the efforts of the Church. Under the rule of Christ the King, the Church would labor to unify the nations of the world and uphold the natural rights of God's image, the human person. Hence the origin of the liturgical Solemnity of Christ the King.

Essential to his efforts was a Christian anthropology diametrically opposed to that held by the emerging totalitarian governments. Pope Pius XI outlined this anthropology repeatedly in his eight encyclicals condemning the underlying principles of totalitarian governments :

July 5, 1931

*Non Abbiamo Bisogno*, Encyclical against Italian Fascism;

Sept. 29, 1932

*Acerba Animi*, Encyclical on Persecution of the Church in Mexico;

June 3, 1933

*Dilectissima Nobis*, Encyclical on oppression of the Church in Spain;

March 4, 1937,

*Ardenti Cura*, Encyclical condemning unchristian teachings and practices of National Socialism;

March 14, 1937

*Mit Brennender Sorge*, Encyclical on the Church and the German Reich;

March 19, 1937

*Divini Redemptoris*, Encyclical on Atheistic Communism;

March 28, 1937

*Nos es Muy Conocida*, Encyclical on the Religious Situation in Mexico;

Sept. 29, 1937

*Ingravescentibus Meis*, Encyclical on the Rosary, in which he commends prayer, especially the Rosary, as the only remedy to the inevitable madness of war and suffering brought about by totalitarianism.

For Pius XI, and Pius XII, the fundamental errors of modern society were 1) the denial of the natural law as the foundation of all public law, including international law; 2) the deification of the state, and a resultant excessive nationalism; 3) racism, which glorified a mythological purity of race. The result of these three errors was the removal of God from His creation, and the consequent debasing of the human person in modern society. God was replaced by the state; the individual human person became its servant, a mere cog in the totalitarian national machinery of Communist Russia, National Socialist Germany, and Fascist Italy. Men and women derived their dignity from their usefulness and productivity in the state. Some, deemed undesirable by the all powerful state, could be easily eliminated. Hence, the question of race became important, especially within the Nazi sphere of influence. The dignity of man, the rights of the human person, the “final solution” for undesirable races, groups and individuals, all were considered to be political questions with political solutions by the totalitarian governments.

These are religious questions, and Pius XI dealt with them as such, as would Pius XII.

Pius XI reiterated traditional Roman Catholic theology: there is only one God, the creator of the universe, who has established laws written in the

hearts of men, the natural law. To Him, alone, is worship offered, not to the state. Men and women are created by God in His image and likeness, and perfected by the redeeming sacrifice of Christ. No individual, no power, no institution, no government or state may take this inherent dignity from any human person. We are fully human, and our work truly human, only when ordered to pleasing God in accord with His natural law.

Despite protests by the totalitarian governments of Hitler and Mussolini that the pope was interfering in political matters, Pius XI repeated that the deification of the state and the question of race were religious in nature; and the *Times* published what he said: (*N.Y. Times*, September 1, 1938, p. 10, 6; September 8, 1938, p. 4, 2; September 20, 1938, p.10, 4, 5, 6; December 25, 1938, p. 1, 1).<sup>2</sup>

In his encyclical *Mit Brennender Sorge*, smuggled into Germany, secretly printed, and read from all Catholic pulpits throughout Germany in March, 1937, Pius wrote:

“Whoever exalts race, or the people, or the State, or a particular form of State, or the depositories of Power, or any other fundamental value of the human community-however necessary and honorable be their function in worldly things-whoever raises these notions above their standard value and divinizes them to an idolatrous level, distorts and perverts an order of the world planned and created by God; he is far from the true faith in God and from the concept of life which that faith upholds.” (par. 8).

“None but superficial minds could stumble into concepts of a national God, of a national religion; or attempt to lock within the frontiers of a single people, within the narrow limits of a single race, God, the Creator of the universe, King and Legislator of all nations before whose immensity they are ‘as a drop of a bucket (Isaiah, 40, 15)’” (par. 11)

“You will need to watch carefully, Venerable Brethren, [Catholic Hierarchy of Germany] that religious fundamental concepts be not emptied of their content and distorted to profane use. ‘Revelation’ in its Christian sense, means the word of God addressed to man. The use of this word for the ‘suggestions’ of race and blood, for the irradiations of a people’s history, is mere equivocation. False coins of this sort do not deserve Christian currency. ‘Faith’ consists in holding as true what God has revealed and proposes through His Church to man’s acceptance. It is ‘the evidence of things that appear not’ (Heb. 2. 1). The joyful and proud confidence in the future of one’s people, instinctive in every heart, is quite a different thing from faith in a religious sense. To substitute the one for the other, and demand on the strength of this, to be numbered among the faithful followers of Christ, is a senseless play on words, if it does not conceal a confusion of concepts, or worse.” (par. 23)

“Such is the rush of present-day life that it severs from the divine foundation of Revelation, not only morality, but also the theoretical and practical rights. We are especially referring to what is called the natural law, written by the Creator’s hand on the tablet of the heart (Rom. 2, 14) and which reason, not blinded by sin or passion, can easily read. It is in the light of the commands of this natural law, that all positive law, whoever be the lawgiver, can be gauged in its moral content, and hence, in the authority it wields over conscience. Human laws in flagrant contradiction with the natural law are vitiated with a taint which no force, no power can mend. In the light of this principle one must judge the axiom, that ‘right is common utility,’ a proposition which may be given a correct significance, means that what is morally indefensible, can never contribute to the good of the people. But ancient paganism acknowledged that the axiom, to be entirely true, must be reversed and be made to say: ‘Nothing can be useful, if it is not at the same time morally good’ (Cicero, *De Off.* 2, 30). Emancipated from this moral rule, the principle would in international law carry a perpetual state of war between nations; for it ignores in national life, by confusion of right and utility, the basic fact that man as a person possesses the rights he holds from God, and which any collectivity must protect against denial, suppression or neglect. To overlook this truth is to forget that the real common good ultimately takes its measure from man’s nature, which balances personal rights and social obligations, and from the purpose of society, which by a give and take process, every one can claim for his own sake and that of others. Higher and more general values, which collectivity alone can provide, also derive from the Creator for the good of man, and for the full development, natural and supernatural, and the realization of his perfection. To neglect this order is to shake the pillars on which society rests, and to compromise social tranquility, security and existence.” (par. 30)

During the last years of his life, Pius XI condemned Nazi and Fascist notions of race, blood, soil, and nation. He referred to the Nazi swastika as “the cross which was not the Cross of Christ” (*N.Y. Times*, February 12, 1939, IV, p. 3, 7). During an audience with French nuns, the pope decried the anti-Semitic laws of Germany and Italy as direct results of “excessive nationalism”. He spoke of a “great question at present agitating the world under the name of nationalism, a nationalism in many ways exaggerated—an ill-conceived nationalism which we have already had painful occasion to denounce as erroneous and dangerous.” (*N.Y. Times*, July 17, 1938, p. 1, 1). In September, 1939, he told a group of pilgrims, “Abraham is called our patriarch, our ancestor. Anti-Semitism is not compatible with the reality of this text; it is a movement which Christians cannot share. No, it is not possible for Christians to take part in anti-Semitism. We are Semites spiritually.” *The New York Times* published these words for all to read (December 12, 1938, p. 1, 1). Pius XI battled against

the Italian government's implementation of laws against the Jews, (*N.Y. Times*, December 25, 1938, p. 1, 1) , and condemned the violence against the Church wherever Nazi influence held sway.

Near the end of his life, the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, met with Pius XI to discuss racial and religious persecution in Europe. The *Times* editorialized that the meeting "was intended as recognition of a moral alignment which unites those who strive to buttress the established moral order against a new worship of force, race or State." (*N.Y. Times*, Jan. 16, 1939, p. 14, 5).

One of the last tributes to Pope Pius XI during his lifetime came from the Jewish Congress, meeting in Geneva in January, 1939. The chairman, Dr. Nahum Goldman and the committee adopted resolutions concerning the Jewish people of Europe, one of which stated, "We record the Jewish people's deep appreciation of the stand taken by the Vatican against the advance of resurgent paganism which challenges all traditional values of religion as well as inalienable human rights upon which alone enduring civilization can be found. The Congress salutes the Supreme Pontiff, symbol of the spiritual forces which under many names are fighting for the re-establishment of the rule of moral law in human society." (*N.Y. Times*, January 17, 1939, p. 1:3)

In the brief period between the death of Pope Pius XI and the election of his successor, the *Times* reported that "the Jewish issue in Italy is growing more intense and is one of the gravest of the many serious problems being considered by the Cardinals who will enter the conclave . . . to elect a new Pope. . . . That the [Italian government's] feeling against the church since the stand that Pope Pius [XI] took on the anti-Jewish policies of Germany and Italy is much stronger in Rome seems certain." (*N.Y. Times*, February 28, 1939, p. 6,4)

Eugenio Maria Giuseppe Giovanni Pacelli was elected pope on March 2, 1939, and took the name, Pius XII.

Immediately after his election, Pius XII met with the German cardinals who had been present in the conclave, in order to ascertain the real situation of the Church in Nazi Germany. These meetings influenced his decision to issue a call for a peace conference at the Vatican, and provided him with direct proof and information which formed the content of his first encyclical of October 29, 1939. This began his efforts to defend the dignity of the human person in general, and formed the basis for his words and acts to assist the Jewish people, in particular.

In his first encyclical, *Summi Pontificatus*, Pius XII linked his works to those of Pius XI,

" . . . We should take the opportunity of paying homage to the King of kings and Lord of lords (I Tim. vi., 15) as a kind of Introit prayer to Our Pontificate, in the spirit of Our renowned predecessor [Pius XI] and in the

faithful accomplishment of his designs. . .by consecrating them all to the spread of the Kingdom of Christ.” (par. 2)<sup>3</sup>

Pope Pius XII lay to rest any thoughts that he would follow a plan more conciliatory to the totalitarian states than did his predecessor. Pius XII employed the weapons in his arsenal: prayers, the liturgy, words, and international law to reveal the truth about the governments that threatened to debase and destroy the human person by the deification of the state; to restore the foundations of human society squarely upon natural law, whose source is the only true ruler of all men and women of all nations and races, Christ. Pius asked, “What age has been, for all its technical and purely civic progress, more tormented than ours by spiritual emptiness and deep-felt interior poverty?” (par.5) The world had abandoned Christ’s cross for another [the Swastika] which brings only death. (par. 6) The consecration of the world to Christ the King “is a penetrating wisdom which sets itself to restore and to ennoble all human society and to promote its true welfare.” (par. 6)

The *New York Times* published an article by Anne O’Hare McCormick on October 30, 1939, which clearly expressed what was at stake.

“The present war is fought for many ends. It is fought on various fronts with new methods. In a way, it is a war too big to fight, at least with military weapons, for the reason that its fundamental issue cannot be resolved on a battlefield, and everybody knows it. In the broadest sense it is a religious issue, and perhaps that is why the Pope has put his finger on it more surely than any secular statesman. The central theme of his long encyclical is the function of the State in the modern world, and that is the crux of the struggle of our time. The dictatorship of today is not simply a form of government; it is a form of life, a usurpation of every human and divine right, a growth of power so abnormal that it is like a tumor pressing on the whole social body and preventing other nations from functioning naturally.”(*N.Y. Times*, Oct. 30, 1939, p. 16, 5)

According to Pius XII, there were two errors resulting from this religious and moral agnosticism that was at the heart of the impending war:

The first error: “the forgetfulness of that law of human solidarity and charity which is dictated and imposed by our common origin, and by the equality of rational nature in all men, to whatever people they belong, and by the redeeming Sacrifice offered by Jesus Christ on the Altar of the Cross, . . .” (par. 35)

This was an attack upon the racial theories of the Nazi regimes. The dignity of an individual derives not from blood, race, nationality, or utility. We have a dignity no one can take away or diminish because we are made in the image of God. This dignity is further ennobled by the sacrifice of Christ, a Jew. There is both a natural and a supernatural unity of all persons on the planet and

throughout history, which even Hitler's racist claims of blood and soil cannot supersede. The Pope took clear aim at these:

"A marvelous vision, which makes us see the human race in the unity of one common origin in God 'one God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in us all' (Eph. 4, 6); in the unity of nature which in every man is equally composed of material body and spiritual, immortal soul; in the unity of the immediate end and mission in the world; in the unity of dwelling place, the earth, of whose resources all men can by natural right avail themselves, to sustain and develop life; in the unity of the supernatural end, God Himself, to Whom all should tend; in the unity of means to secure that end." (par. 38)

The Church recognizes and welcomes all peoples with their individual characteristics and heritage. "Her aim is a supernatural union in all-embracing love. . ." (par. 44)

"The Church hails with joy and follows with her maternal blessing every method of guidance and care which aims at a wise and orderly evolution of particular forces and tendencies having their origin in the individual character of each race, provided that they are not opposed to the duties incumbent on men from their unity of origin and common destiny." (par. 45)

The second error Pius attacked was the deification of the state:

"It is the error contained in those ideas which do not hesitate to divorce civil authority from every kind of dependence upon the Supreme Being—First Source and absolute Master of man and of society—and from every restraint of a Higher Law derived from God as from its First Source. Thus they accord the civil authority an unrestricted field of action that is at the mercy of the changeful tide of human will, or of the dictates of casual historical claims, and of the interests of a few." (par. 52)

He continued,

"Once the authority of God and the sway of His law are denied in this way, the civil authority as an inevitable result tends to attribute to itself that absolute autonomy which belongs exclusively to the Supreme Maker. It puts itself in the place of the Almighty and elevates the State or group into the last end of life, the supreme criterion of the moral and juridical order, and therefore forbids every appeal to the principles of natural reason and of the Christian conscience." (par. 53)

The function of the state, according to Pius, is to direct the private and individual activities of the national life towards the common good. The common good is defined "according to the harmonious development and the natural perfection of man. It is for this perfection that society (the state) is designed by the Creator as a means." (par. 59) The state is a means to an end—the happiness of its citizens, and not an end in itself, for which the human person is relegated to the position of cog.

He continued with a plea for the family as the essential cell of human society, whose existence is antecedent to the state, and whose rights are sacrosanct, which the Church will defend against the encroachments of the state. (par. 61-63)

“Goods, blood, it [the state] can demand; but the soul redeemed by God, never. The charge laid by God on parents to provide for the material and spiritual good of their offspring and to procure for them a suitable training saturated with the true spirit of religion, cannot be wrestled from them without grave violation of their rights.” (par. 66)

Christ is the only solid foundation for any state or government, the pope continued. All others are founded on the shifting sands of human wisdom.

For Hitler, blood, soil, and usefulness to the state were the criteria for the determination of who the human person is. The Church objected strenuously.

### **The Moral Order and the Human Person:**

*Mit Brennender Sorge* (1937) of Pius XI, and *Summi Pontificatus* (1939) of Pius XII, formed the basis for every protest against Nazi and Fascist policies by the Church, either by the Vatican, the popes themselves, or by local bishops and hierarchies.

“In the first encyclical of his reign Pius XII. . . denounced the violation of treaties, the ruin of Poland and the forcible transfer of populations and proclaimed his determination to fight the Church’s pagan enemies and defend the rights of family and individual against dictatorial encroachments.” So reported the *N. Y. Times* (Oct. 28, 1939, p. 1, 4), under the front page banner, “POPE CONDEMNS DICTATORS, TREATY VIOLATORS, RACISM; URGES RESTORING OF POLAND.” Without compromising his or the Church’s position super parties, above the political fray, the pope condemned the moral foundations of these regimes.

To underscore his teaching of racial equality before God, he ordained twelve native priests as bishops of missionary dioceses the day after the publication of his first encyclical in 1939. On November 10th, the feast of Pope Leo the Great, who sent missionaries to the lands of the “barbarians” in the fifth century, during a routine address to a new ambassador to the Vatican, the Pope repeated his teaching that the natural law must be the basis of the modern state, that law must rule, not force, and that there is an equality among all men, based upon the unity of mankind: no race is inferior. The new black ambassador was Haiti’s. (*N.Y. Times*, Nov. 11, 1939, p. 1, 6)

In January, 1940, against protests by Mussolini’s government, the Vatican appointed two Jews to the Vatican Academy of Science. (*N.Y. Times*,

Jan. 10, 1940) In March, he appointed another Jewish professor to the Vatican Library to restore ancient maps, twelve hours before the new Italian laws went into effect prohibiting Jews from all professional life . (*N.Y. Times*, March 2, 1940 )

Near the Ides of March, the German Foreign Secretary, Joachim von Ribbentrop came to the Vatican for an official visit. The *Times* reported that the Pope defended the Jews in Germany and Poland, and that von Ribbentrop left the audience “downcast.” The *Times* called the visit, “Hitler’s Canossa.” (*N.Y. Times*, March 14, 1940)

In a letter to the editor of the *Times*, the Provost of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America reminded the readers that the foundational concept of democracy is the “supreme worth and dignity of the individual.” Louis Finkelstein continued, “The hostility to all forms of religion, characteristic of modern totalitarianism, is directed at this most fundamental religious concept, and leads us to the conclusion that the preservation of freedom is inextricably bound to the preservation of religion.” He then stated that it was the Christian churches that offered resistance to the Third Reich. “No keener rebuke has come to Nazism than from Pope Pius XI and his successor, Pope Pius XII.” (*N.Y. Times*, March 31, 1940, p. 8, 7)

Later in that month, Albert Einstein spoke out in favor of the Pope, as quoted above.

In his Christmas address to the College of Cardinals, Pius XII once again took aim at Hitler. *The Times* editorialized,

“If the Pope in his Christmas message had intended to condemn Hitler’s system, he could not have done it more effectively than by describing the ‘moral order’ which must govern human society. . . . The Pontiff pointed out that the foundation of the moral order is trust, ‘fidelity in the observance of pacts.’ Without trust—and this war has demonstrated the truth of his words—the coexistence of powerful and weak peoples is impossible. The moral order, he added, cannot be based on hatred, on the principle that ‘might makes right,’ on economic maladjustment, on ‘the spirit of cold egoism’ which leads to the violation of the sovereignty of states and the liberty of their citizens. The moral order, in a word, is in complete contradiction to Hitler’s order.” (*N.Y. Times*, Dec. 25, 1940, p.26,2)

### **The Church and the Jewish Community. Defending the Dignity of the Human Person**

The Catholic hierarchies throughout Europe followed the lead of Popes Pius XI and Pius XII and spoke out against the racist, and in particular anti-Semitic, policies of the Nazi government as pursued in Germany and in all the occupied countries. Their words, both written and spoken, were based on the

encyclicals of these two popes, often quoting directly from them, especially once the deportation of the Jews began. These protests continued throughout the war and in most European countries.

For example, the *New York Times* reported that Bishop Fidel Garcia y Martinez, Bishop of Calahorra in Spain, condemned Nazi propaganda and racism in a pastoral letter published in February, 1942, based on *Mit Brennender Sorge* of Pope Pius XI. In his pastoral letter, the bishop included texts by the German Catholic Bishops in their 1941 pastoral letter from Fulda as well as sections from the pastoral letter by the Catholic bishops of the Netherlands. Circulation of all these works, the *Times* pointed out, was forbidden in Germany. (*N.Y. Times*, May 24, 1942, p.4, 1-2)

The German Catholic bishops issued a second pastoral letter on March 22, 1942, the first having been published in the autumn of 1941. Both were formal protests against policies of the Nazi regime, and were read publicly in every Catholic pulpit throughout Germany. The first was a general condemnation of Nazi doctrines. The second, read on Passion Sunday, protested vehemently against Hitler's then new policies of interfering in Church affairs and education, and strongly protested against "all violations of personal freedom," against the killing of insane persons and the proposal to kill incurables, against unjust seizure of individuals and of property. (*N.Y. Times*, June 7, 1942, p. 12, 1-5)

The *Times* expressed its opinion in an editorial on June 8, 1942, "A courage no less exalted than that of the Christian martyrs in pagan Rome inspires the Passion Sunday letter of the German Bishops read in all Catholic churches of the Reich." After listing the Reich's atrocities as denounced by the bishops, the editorial continued, "They [the bishops] go on to show with irrefutable logic that this assault on the church is only part of a broader attack on all human rights, human freedom and the human spirit."

Late in the summer of 1942, the Vichy government began its deportation of Jews in unoccupied France. Pope Pius XII intervened to save the Jews, joined by what the *Times* called a "spirited written protest against racial and religious persecution" by Emanuel Celestine Cardinal Suhard, Archbishop of Paris, and by Pierre Cardinal Gerlier, Archbishop of Lyon. The local bishops protested the government's action after the Vatican learned that the Germans had asked for Jewish deportations to supplement farm and mine labor in Silesia and Poland, and was to extend this policy throughout Germany, Austria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the Baltic states to include all Jews who had sought refuge since 1936. (*N.Y. Times*, August 27, 1942, p. 3, 5) The *Time's* editor called the Church's work "a noble insistence" to the Vichy government to save the Jews. (*N.Y. Times*, August 29, 1942, p. 14, 2)

In its September 3, 1942 number, the *Times* reported that the French people were aiding Jews throughout the country to avoid arrest and deportation.

The Vatican, through the Papal Nuncio to Vichy, “repeated its past appeals to the Vichy government for tolerance for the Jews, “. . . but the Vichy government said they could do nothing in the face of German demands. (*N.Y. Times*, September 3, 1942, p. 5, 1) Bishop Aliege of Toulouse denounced the Jewish persecution openly. In a pastoral letter read from all pulpits of Diocese of Toulouse in late August, 1942, the bishop said, “In the concentration camps in our diocese horrible things are happening against the Jews, who are human beings like we are. Every imaginable cruelty is permitted against them. There are rights of man given by God to the human race which should not be violated. Jewish children, women and men are treated like cattle.” (*ibid.*) Numerous other protests by Catholic and Protestant leaders against the mistreatment of Jews were made, and the *Times* noted, “Some of their remarks have scarcely been veiled.” (*N.Y. Times*, September 5, 1942, p. 3, 1)

Efforts by the Church to save the Jews in France and elsewhere went beyond words, as the *Times* noted later in the year. “Many Catholic leaders in unoccupied France are sheltering children of Jews, and their defiance of orders to surrender them has brought about an open rift between the Vichy government and priests.” (*N.Y. Times*, September 9, 1942, p.9, 4, 5) In Belgium, a priest was shot for having hidden 100 Jewish children. (*N.Y. Times*, January 10, 1943, p. 9, 1) In occupied France the letters and protests by the Catholic bishops were read from church pulpits urging Catholics to help persecuted Jews.

The numerous protests by the Catholic hierarchy against the treatment of Jews in France created a “difficult situation” for the Vichy government, according to the *Times*. “It is semi-officially reported from Vatican sources that Pope Pius, through the Nuncio in Vichy, has sent to Marshal Petain a personal message in which he intimated his approval of the initiative of the French Cardinals and Bishops on behalf of the Jews and foreigners being handed over to the Germans. It is understood the Pope asked the French Chief of State to intervene.” (*N.Y. Times*, September 10, 1942, p. 9, 7, 8) Later in the month, Pius XII met for more than ninety minutes with Myron Taylor, President Roosevelt’s personal representative to the Vatican. The *Times* expressed the general opinion that the Vatican was on the verge of doing something more directly to help the Jews in the various occupied countries. (*N.Y. Times*, September 20, 1942, p. 25, 5)

In early January, 1943, the *Times* reported that Cardinal Suhard of Paris visited Rome “with a detailed report on the results of French collaboration with the Axis, particularly the trend toward complete elimination of Jews from France.” (*N.Y. Times*, January 8, 1943, p. 4, 6) After the war, Pius XII removed a number of French bishops who had cooperated with the Germans and Vichy Governments. (*N.Y. Times*, November 7, 1945, p. 12, 4) As the situation worsened, the pope received various petitions from Jewish rabbis and groups

asking his help. One came from Rabbi Herzog, the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, to which to pope replied promising “to do all in his personal power to aid persecuted Jews in Europe.” (*N.Y. Times*, February 7, 1943, p. 29, 4)

The manner in which the Pope spoke out was from the point of view of the papacy as a moral authority. As such, he had to speak to the moral issues, and not descend to the level of politics. He condemned the ideologies supporting the political policies and actions of the governments, but remained above the political fray.

Both Protestant and Catholic clergy in the Netherlands sent an open letter to Arthur Seyss-Inquart, the Reich Commissar. The letter decried the regime’s treatment of Jews and other minorities. Thereupon the Reich Commissar threatened both Protestants and Catholics to remain silent, lest baptized Jews be rounded up. The Catholic Church refused, and there followed a Catholic pastoral letter read from all Catholic pulpits in the Netherlands on February 21, 1943.

“In all the injustices that are now being committed,” the Catholic bishops wrote, “our sympathy goes out particularly to the youths who are being violently taken away from their parental homes. It goes out to the Catholic believers of Jewish origin and to those persecuted for their belief in religious freedom.

“Moreover, we are deeply moved [with shame] that in the execution of this persecution against our charges the collaboration of our own fellow-countrymen has been demanded.

“Conscience cannot allow collaboration in such things. If the refusal to collaborate implies sacrifices for the individual, then he must be strong and steadfast in the knowledge that he is doing his duty before God and man.

“The church does not wish to take sides in the conflict between States and people attempting to solve immense problems of national collaboration, but only as long as they respect divine law. With the mandate of Christ as guardian of Christian principles, it must not fail to proclaim inviolate the word of God, which is to obey Him rather than man.” (*N.Y. Times*, March 14, 1943, p. 10, 6)

The response of the National Socialist Mayor of Rotterdam was, “when the terrorism of the church widens its scope and calls for sabotage, as it did in these letters, the time has come for the party to react in an appropriate manner.” (*N.Y. Times*, March 14, 1943, p. 10, 6) Jewish converts to Catholicism were rounded up, as a consequence, including Blessed Edith Stein, and sent to the camps; Jewish converts to Protestantism were left unharmed.

Similar protests by eight Catholic bishops were sent to Minister of Justice, Thune Jacobsen in Denmark later that year. The arbitrary arrest of Danes, as well as the German anti-Semitic propaganda, were condemned. (*N.Y. Times*, April 1, 1943, p. 10, 2) Later in the month both Protestant and Catholic

bishops issued a joint pastoral letter condemning the deportation of 400 Jewish children from Eastern Europe, and against the German treatment of Jews. (*N.Y. Times*, April 22, 1943, p.7,2)

Catholic protests continued through May and June, following mass deportations of youths, and the implementation by German occupation authorities in the Netherlands of a policy of forced sterilization of those entering mixed-marriages between Jewish and non-Jewish parties. The bishops wrote, "After all that has befallen the Jewish citizens of our country there is now taking place something so monstrous that it is impossible for us to refrain from addressing you in the name of Our Lord." (*N.Y. Times*, June 11, 1943, p. 4, 1) The *Times* published a report in that same issue, "Reich Churches resist Nazi Rule". The paper stated that the Catholic and Protestant Churches had been hard at work against the Nazi regime. It refuted charges made by some religious leaders in other countries that German churches followed a policy of resignation and inactivity in the face of Nazi tyranny. The churches had, in fact, protested frequently against the persecution of Jews, working hard for their benefit. Catholic bishops, the report continued, had protested the persecution "of both Poles and Jews by affirming the fundamental rights of all men. . ." (*N.Y. Times*, June 11, 1943, p. 4, 4)

Later in June, the *Times* reported a marked rise in the opposition to Roman Catholicism in particular, and Christianity in general by the Nazi party in the occupied countries. *Storm*, the official organ of the Netherlands Nazi party, attacked the Catholic clergy in the Netherlands as "the prime instigator" of the general strike in May. The strikers, according to *Storm*, were "mostly sheep of the Roman Catholic Church, who incited our people until they stood opposite German firing squads."

The Nazi Norwegian publication *Ragnarok* stated, "We Nazis reject Christianity because we reject Judaism, and have acknowledged that both are inextricable allies. As a consequence both are capable of doing anything against us. "We reject Christianity because we consider the Bible in its entirety a Jewish delusion, created in order to break the earthly will for life and the immortal belief of all Nordic peoples in their own part in things divine."

The *Times* also reported a fresh wave of opposition against the French Catholic clergy because of its protests against the Vichy Government. (*N.Y. Times*, June 19, 1943, p. 2, 5) Broadcasting to occupied France, the Vatican Radio reiterated its denunciation of the Nazi racial laws, stating that "He who makes a distinction between Jews and other men is unfaithful to God and is in conflict with God's commands." (*N.Y. Times*, June 27, 1943, p. 16, 2) The Vatican continued, "the peace of the world order and justice will always be compromised so long as men discriminate between members of the human family." Paraphrasing Scripture, the Vatican continued, "There are neither

Greeks nor Jews. There are only men facing their God and their Father, and those who make distinctions between them abandon God and enter into disorder.” (*N.Y. Times*, June 28, 1943, p. 8, 3)

By July, the Catholic hierarchy in Germany incurred the wrath of the Nazi regime again. All Catholic bishops in Nazi Germany signed a protest against the Nazi party plan to extend the wearing of the Star of David to “mischlings”, the offspring of mixed marriages. The three most outspoken of Germany’s Catholic bishops, Michael Cardinal von Faulhaber Archbishop of Munich, Clemens Count von Galen Bishop of Muenster, and Konrad Count von Preysling Archbishop of Berlin, were subjected to house arrest. The Nazi response was to seize convents, Catholic hospitals and other church property throughout Germany; Catholic labor organizations were disbanded, and religious images removed from schools. (*N.Y. Times*, July 6, 1943, p. 9, 1)

In August, during their annual meeting known as the Fulda Conference, the German Catholic bishops reiterated their protests against the Nazi practices and teachings. The *Times* reported the bishops’ pastoral letter, writing that, “The letter abounds in sly but fearless thrusts at the false god and Nazi tenets. The Bishops addressed themselves also to ‘those who saw fit to create a god after their own hearts, or one designed only for national or racial consumption.’” They ended by thanking Pope Pius XII for leading the way in seeking peace and preserving human dignity. (*N.Y. Times*, September 6, 1943, p. 7, 1)

By early December, the Vatican protested the decision of the Italian government to intern all Jews in Italy, even Catholics of Jewish descent, and to confiscate their property. (*N.Y. Times*, December 5, 1943, p. 3, 4)

Churches began to be searched early in 1944 in Rome, as the church continued its work to save Jews. In February, the Roman police forced entry into the Basilica of St. Paul’s Outside the Walls and arrested eighty-four persons, including twenty-eight Jews who had been given sanctuary there. Any priests assisting “traitors” were to be arrested. (*N.Y. Times*, February 8, 1944, p. 7, 1; February 9, p. 7, 4; February 11, 1944, p. 3, 2) After the protests by the Pope, Castel Gandolfo was bombed three times, along with other Vatican property. (*ibid.*)

By spring 1944, Nazi attacks began in earnest against the Jewish communities in Hungary. Justinian Cardinal Seredi, Catholic Primate of Hungary, protested against the forced movement of more than 300,000 Jews to “collection camps” in Hungary. (*N.Y. Times*, April 28, 1944, p. 5, 5). This was one of many protests by the Cardinal. His first was in 1934, according to the *Times*, when the Cardinal attacked totalitarian principles and ideologies. In a pastoral letter that year, Cardinal Seredi wrote, “It is not possible for a Catholic priest to approve Nazi principles, and I decidedly prohibit participation in this

movement or even a benevolent attitude of any of my priests toward it.” (*N.Y. Times*, April 14, 1945, p. 15, 1) Repeating the principles put forward by Pius XI and XII, Seredi issued his first attack against Nazi-inspired racial discrimination in 1940. In 1942, he again protested, stating, “Christ’s teachings do not acknowledge differences between men and do not know prerogatives which would entitle a man or a nation to oppress another man or nation on racial or national basis.” (*ibid.*) In another protest he said, “Slavery and oppression are the antithesis of freedom. The Christian Church declared war on slavery and oppression because they are in contradiction to Christ’s teachings. The Church is fighting not only against the physical but also against the spiritual oppression of humanity. Even if we see today that international law has received a new interpretation and innocent people have to suffer under physical and spiritual oppression, the church is fighting with all its might against the fashionable currents and for the protection of human rights. . . . The endeavors which we witness today and which caused so much sufferings also to the Christian church, will provoke such reaction, such vengeance, that also innocent people will fall its victims.” (*N.Y. Times*, January 23, 1943, p. 3, 8)

Despite the Church’s repeated interventions, by the summer of 1944, hope for Hungarian Jews was nearly gone. In an address to the English House of Commons, Foreign Secretary Eden stated, “The principal hope of terminating this tragic state of affairs must remain the speedy victory of the allied nations.” (*N.Y. Times*, July 6, 1944, p. 6, 6)

In her weekly column “Abroad,” Ann O’Hare McCormick of the *Times* observed that despite the horrors of the war, there was hope that it would end. Even in the face of the tragic persecution of the Jews in Hungary, there was hope. She wrote, “But as long as they exercised any authority in their own house, the Hungarians tried to protect the Jews. The Italians, according to the testimony of the chief rabbi and every hunted Jew in Rome, did not carry out the Fascist racial laws, and endangered their own lives to hide Jews when the Germans took over. The Pope does not think it is hopeless. The Vatican and the religious institutions under its authority were sanctuaries not only for Italian but for refugee Jews in Italy, of whom there were many, and Pius XII now addresses an urgent appeal to Admiral Horthy and instructs Cardinal Seredi of Budapest to intervene in behalf of the Jews of Hungary. “It is not hopeless because we can still count on forces of Christianity and humanity inside Europe to resist Nazi fury.” This, plus the Russian advance into Germany, gave hope that the atrocities of the Nazi regime would soon come to an end. (*N.Y. Times*, July 15, 1944, p. 12, 5)

Just one week after McCormick’s column, Rome was liberated. The Pope, who gave no audiences to German forces during the war, received more than 150,000 Allied soldiers, according to the paper. The chief Rabbi of Rome, Israele Anton Zolli, formally expressed the gratitude of Roman Jews “for all the

moral and material aid the Vatican gave them during the Nazi occupation.” (*N.Y. Times*, July 27, 1944, p. 3, 4)

Anne O’Hare McCormick added her observations in her weekly column, “Abroad:”

“Presiding over a world-wide church in a world-wide war that is also a civil and religious war, Pius XII comes out of the ordeal a stronger figure, as far as liberated Italy is concerned, than he was before.” She interviewed “an old liberal” about the Italian Christian Democratic party in the coalition, who said, “The last thing that I expected in the crisis was the resurgence of the Catholic party in greater force than the Communists and Socialists. An equally surprising phenomenon is the rising prestige of the Pope. Mussolini has gone, the King has gone, and nobody mourns. The Pope remains the winner of Italy’s one victory—the saving of Rome.” (*N.Y. Times*, August 21, 1944, p. 14, 5)

McCormick continued that the Pope was credited with having saved Rome. “But this is not the only cause for the popularity of Pius XII”, she continued. “During the nine months between the armistice and the entry into Rome, the Vatican was a refuge for thousands of fugitives from the Nazi-Fascist reign of terror. Jews received first priority—Italian Jews and Jews who escaped here from Germany and other occupied countries—but all the hunted found sanctuary in the Vatican and its hundreds of convents and monasteries in the Rome region.”

“What the Pope did was to create an attitude in favor of the persecuted and hunted that the city was quick to adopt, so that hiding someone ‘on the run’ became the thing to do. This secret sharing of danger cleared away fascism more effectively than an official purge. The Vatican is still sheltering refugees. Almost 100,000 homeless persons from the war zone and devastated areas are fed there every day.”

The *Times* used the word “purge” to describe the pope’s acceptance of forced resignations, which began in November, 1945, of Catholic bishops in France who had spoken out against the French resistance and the Allies, and cooperated with the German occupational forces. (*N.Y. Times*, November 7, 1945, p. 12, 4)

After the war, numerous tributes and public gratitude were given to the Pope, the Church and the clergy for their work to save the Jews in Italy and throughout Europe. One was in the form of a gift of \$20,000. to the Vatican by the World Jewish Congress “in recognition of the work of the Holy See in rescuing Jews from Fascist and Nazi persecution.” (*N.Y. Times*, October 11, 1945, p. 12, 2)

It was clear from reading Hitler’s writings, or listening to his speeches, that the Jews were his immediate target for persecution and extermination—they were charged with being the cause of every evil in the Reich. The Roman Catholic Church was the next target, and Hitler pursued a systematic and tireless war against the Church throughout the war years.

## War on the Church

Following the publication of the pastoral letter by the German Catholic bishops who met at their annual conference in Fulda in 1939, “which was one of the sharpest attacks ever made by Catholics against Nazis”, Nazis seized Catholic presses and closed printing facilities used in production and distribution of the pastoral letter. (*N.Y. Times*, January 14, 1939, p. 5, 3)

The *Times* reported that among recent Nazi measures “against the Roman Catholic Church” in German held territories, was the billeting of soldiers in convents, one of which, the convent and girls school of St. Francis de Sales in Vienna, was to house 150 soldiers for two years. (*N.Y. Times*, Jan 21, 1939, p. 4, 6)

These and other measures were part of the organized “war on Christianity” waged throughout the Reich territories by the Nazi regime, according to a letter written in June, 1941 to Pope Pius XII by the Catholic bishops of the Third Reich. During their annual meeting in Fulda, at the tomb of St. Boniface, they related to the pontiff the severity and depth of the systematic war against the church by the Third Reich. They informed the pope that Catholic organizations were disbanded, pressure was brought to bear on influential men in German society to deny their faith, schools and Catholic institutions closed, printing houses closed, monasteries and religious closed and confiscated, holy days canceled in favor of work days, priests and religious sisters arrested and sent to concentration camps. “In this and in other ways freedom of conscience is repressed to a degree that is simply intolerable for man made to the image of God and for Christians.” (*N.Y. Times*, October 20, 1945, p. 4, 2-5)

The Pope responded in September, lamenting the attempt to destroy the Church in Germany. He then put the sufferings of the Church in the context of grace, “In congratulation, allow Us to address you and our beloved children who at your side are fighting the battle of our Lord, in the words of St. Cyprian:

‘Your present confession of faith is more illustrious and honored because of your greater strength in suffering. As the combat waxed in intensity, the glory of the combatants grew. If the battle calls you, if the day of your struggle has come, fight bravely, fight constantly, knowing that you are battling beneath the gaze of our Lord who is ever present, that you are by your confession of His name attaining to His glory who not merely watches His warring servants but Himself joins battle, Himself crowns and is crowned by the decisive contest of our trial.’”

Christ had predicted that the world would seek to destroy the Church. This was but the most recent in a long history of that prophesied struggle. (*N.Y. Times*, *ibid.*) This is how the Pope and the bishops saw World War II: a fundamentally religious war, fought for the very soul of humanity.

Michael Cardinal von Faulhaber issued a similar report to the Holy See in 1942. This reported the confiscation of Church property, arrest of bishops, priests, and religious, the closing of Catholic printing houses, labor organizations, and other Catholic institutions, the pressure upon Catholic workers and students to absent themselves from Mass, the characterizing of the Church as a “super-national organization” which Germans loyal to the Reich and to the new world order should shun. (*N.Y. Times*, May 9, 1942, p. 1, 2+3; p. 5, 2)

The Reich even published a hymnal under the auspices of the “Institute for the Examination of Jewish Influence on the Church Life of Germany.” Much of the traditional hymnody was replaced by songs touting Nazi themes of race and homeland, such as a baptismal hymn titled, “Tender Child of German Blood.” There were, as well, reports that Hitler would establish his own national church. (*N.Y. Times*, May 10, 1942, p. 14, 3)

Nothing brought home the reality of Hitler’s systematic war against the Catholic Church in particular, and against Christianity in general, so much as did the pastoral letter signed by all the Roman Catholic bishops in the Reich territories, issued on March 22, 1942 and read from every Catholic pulpit throughout the Third Reich. They asserted “that Hitler would blot out from the entire earth every vestige of Christianity, if he should find it advisable in his military undertakings.” (*N.Y. Times*, June 9, 1942, p. 12, 6) The bishops condemned Hitler’s policies of official murder of the innocent and of those judged “unproductive citizens.” (*N.Y. Times*, June 7, 1942, p. 12, 1-5) The *Times* observed that, since Germany’s population was ninety-five percent Christian, “this, then, means that the Nazi dictatorship is waging war on its own people.” The editorial continued, “Indeed, the bishops specifically call it a war and publicly protest its continuance. Step by step they traced the Reich’s broken promises to protect the church, the restriction of both worship and religious education, the expropriation of church property, the expulsion and internment of priests for no other crime than the practice of their faith.” It went on,

“They [the Catholic bishops] go on to show with irrefutable logic that this assault on the church is only part of a broader attack on all human rights, human freedom and the human spirit. . . . Nobody’s life is safe, they [the bishops] assert, if the state assumes the power to kill at will. Above all, they repel the sickening charge that refusal to submit to this brutal creed is lack of patriotism.” The editorial ends, “The measure of Nazi madness is to have precipitated a civil war in the midst of an effort to conquer the world.” (*N.Y. Times*, June 8, 1942, p. 14, 2)

Anne O’Hare McCormick summarized the systematic protest against the Nazis by the Churches of Europe. In her weekly column “Abroad,” she had this to say about Hitler’s war on Christianity and the Churches’ response:

“When the history of this new Reign of Terror is written, it will appear that the strongest centers of opposition to the claims of the God-State were not universities, trades unions, political parties, courts or organized business. In Germany and the occupied countries the institution that stands up most stoutly against the pretensions of the Nazi New Order is the church.

“The Protestant pastors of Norway dared to go on strike rather than accept orders from Quisling [Nazi head of the government]. The [Catholic] Primates of Holland and Belgium have defied the Nazi authorities as boldly as Cardinal Mercier did in the last war. Resistance to the collaborationists in France has been nourished by the parish priests, whose influence among their people has never been so strong, according to all reports, as it is today.

“Judging from the open resistance offered by the churches in Hitler’s Europe, one might infer that of all human freedoms, freedom of conscience is the most cherished.

“Year after year the [Catholic Bishops’] Fulda Conference has issued statements denouncing the systematic attempts of the regime to destroy the last vestiges of religious liberty in the Third Reich. But the letter read in the churches on March 22, this year, goes further than any previous pastoral. The Bishops have taken the unusual step of circulating among the people the official protest they have addressed to the Government. Thus the document is not an underground report or a picture drawn from isolated incidents but a detailed disclosure of the actual situation of the church in Germany.

“The indictment confirms reports that the Catholic Church has succeeded the Jews as the scapegoat of the Nazis. This is a logical consequence. A regime that starts by oppressing one group must find another when the first is exhausted. A nation acquiescing in the persecution of one minority cannot expect any minority to escape the same fate, and since the majority is only the sum of minorities, eventually the policy of proscription will extend to the whole population.

“The Nazis, the bishops say, ‘wish to destroy Christianity in Germany during the war before the soldiers return home.’”

“All we know for certain is that religion plays a vital part in this war.” (*N.Y. Times*, June 10, 1942, p. 20, 5)

Throughout June, 1942, the *Times* published a series of articles titled, “Churchmen who defy Hitler”, offering brief biographies of Catholic and Protestant clergy who had stood up to Hitler within the Reich. Bishop Eivand Berggrav, Lutheran Bishop of Oslow, and Professor Karl Barth were two Protestants noted; Patriarch Gaurilo of Yugoslavia, the Greek Orthodox prelate, and Bishop Clemens August von Galen, Bishop of Muenster, Archbishop J. De Jong, Archbishop of Utrecht, and Cardinal van Roey, Archbishop of Malines, the three Catholics noted.

The *Times* observed that the church leaders “are virtually the only Germans still speaking up against the Nazi regime.” (*N.Y. Times*, June 8, 1942, p. 6, 2) Bishop von Galen of Muenster repeatedly condemned Himmler and the Gestapo as “tyrants and murderers.” (ibid.) During the summer of 1941, Bishop von Galen preached three sermons denouncing Nazi racial and anti-religious principles. The immediate outcome of the Bishop’s first sermon was that the Nazi government dissolved all Roman Catholic religious orders in the Province of Westphalia, and a number of prominent Roman Catholics were imprisoned. The next week, the Bishop mounted his pulpit to decry the injustices within the country that “cried aloud to heaven for redress.” The *Times* stated that the bishop “in outspoken terms has condemned unauthorized killings of invalids and the insane, and Nazi racial doctrines.” (*N.Y. Times*, June 8, 1942, p. 6, 2-3) On August 3, 1940, a pastoral letter by the Catholic bishops of the Netherlands, secretly prepared and sent to all parishes, was read in every Catholic pulpit. Archbishop de Jong was the force behind the condemnation of Nazi policies, and forbade Catholics from joining any Nazi organization, without the explicit denial of Nazi ideology, under pain of being refused the sacraments. In 1941 the bishops issued a fresh protest: “We raise our voices in protest against the injustice inflicted upon tens of thousands—to force them to accept a conception of life which is contrary to their religious convictions.” (*N.Y. Times*, June 10, 1942, p. 10, 4-5)

Joseph Ernst Cardinal van Roey, Archbishop of Malines in Belgium, voiced continued protests as well. The *Times* observed that he “insists on heeding the voice of the Pope rather than the precepts of National Socialism.” (*N.Y. Times*, June 12, 1942, p. 10, 2) Any member of the Belgian Fifth Column, a Nazi military group, was refused the sacraments. Van Roey instructed his priests to refuse communion to any pro-German or German in uniform; men in uniform were forbidden even to enter Catholic churches in Belgium. The Cardinal and his priests repeatedly denounced the Nazi theories of blood and soil from their pulpits, recounting Nazi wrongs. After the reading of the Cardinal’s pastoral letter condemning Nazi policies, the government closed all Catholic churches throughout Belgium for three days, newspapers attacked the Church, and the Cardinal’s residence was smeared with abusive graffiti. “It is true,” the Cardinal had written in his pastoral letter, “that the Catholic Church adapts itself to all governments that safeguard her liberty of conscience, but as for adapting herself to governments that oppress the rights of conscience and persecute the Catholic Church, Never!” (*N.Y. Times*, June 12, 1942, p. 10, 2)

In May, 1943, the Nazi-controlled Paris radio blamed the Catholic Church for having unleashed the war. (*N.Y. Times*, May 25, 1943, p. 6, 6) The Vatican responded, as the *Times* observed, “recalling the Nazi charges that the Catholic Church in Germany had invited oppression by opposing Adolf Hitler’s

theories of 'racialism'. . . " (*N.Y. Times*, May 28, 1943, p. 4,5) In September, the Nazi-controlled Paris newspaper, *Aujourd'hui* said that "Pope Pius XII was responsible for the hostile attitude of the French clergy toward German authorities and that his last speech had a particularly disquieting effect." This was the second attack against the Pope by the French press and radio in just a few months. (*N.Y. Times*, October 2, 1943, p. 3, 6)

The German Bishops repeated their protests again in their annual pastoral letter of August 29, 1943, expressing grave regret that even "in this dangerous and costly period of our fatherland" the battle against the Church continues within the Reich. (*N.Y. Times*, September 5, 1943, p. 7, 7)

The persecution of the Church by the Nazis resulted also in the incarceration of thousands of Catholic priests, religious sisters, and brothers. A report circulated by the Catholic International Press Agency of Freiberg, Switzerland in 1943, claimed that Protestant and Catholic clergy were systematically being starved to death in the death camp at Dachau. It claimed that at least 1,500 Polish priests interned in Dachau had died of starvation. German clergy met the same fate. The report claimed that 3,000 Catholic priests were still confined in Dachau, (*N.Y. Times*, April 26, 1943, p. 6, 5; May 22, 1943, p. 2, 7)1,200 of whom were German. "The arrests are linked," the *Times* reported, "with strong anti-Nazi and anti-war movements in the preponderantly Roman Catholic section of Germany, in which Catholic students as well as priests are said to be active." (*N.Y. Times*, August 13, 1943, p. 4, 3)

By October, 1943, the *Times* reported that the Nazis had tortured to death a Catholic Bishop and Archdeacon of the diocese of Plock, both over 80 years of age. "The German slaughter of Catholic priests is raging through all Poland. . . . The Nazi concentration camp at Inowroclaw is filled with priests awaiting execution. . . . In West Poland alone more than 1,600 priests have already lost their lives." (*N.Y. Times*, October 6, 1943, p. 4, 6)

In February, 1944, the *Times* provided a partial list of Catholic church property confiscated by the Reich. Reported by the British Broadcasting Corporation, it was claimed that by May 1, 1943, more than 3,400 Catholic monasteries and clerical institutions in Germany had been confiscated by the Nazis. 16,495 Catholic priests and seminarians were inducted forcibly into the German Army. Of these 1,597 were killed at the front, 593 were missing, and about 100 were so seriously wounded that they could not resume their priestly tasks. (*N.Y. Times*, February 29, 1944, p. 9, 1) The arrests of priests continued through the year, especially in Bavaria and in the more industrialized areas of Germany. (*N.Y. Times*, November 19, 1944, p. 24, 6) In November, the *Times* claimed another 400 priests had been seized by the Reich in Germany since the

beginning of October. (*N.Y. Times*, November 19, 1944, p. 24, 6) More priests were reported imprisoned in Dachau by the summer of 1945. (*N.Y. Times*, June 24, 1945, p. 27, 7)

As the Reich unraveled by the spring of 1945, the extent of the Reich's war on the Church became more evident. In May, a photograph of the beer cellars of the Burger Brau Haus in Munich showed Nazi paraphernalia used by the Brown Shirts. "Statues of Jews hanging from gallows, a saluting Nazi and desecrated Catholic crosses with swastikas hanging from them" were shown. (*N.Y. Times*, May 7, 1945, p 3, 2-3)

In June, 1945, the Pope addressed the Sacred College of Cardinals. His intention was to set the record straight concerning the conduct of the Church in Germany during the war, Hitler's attempt to destroy the Church, and to warn against Soviet aggression. Despite having entered into diplomatic relations with the Vatican, which afforded the Church some temporary juridic protection from the government, the Hitler government had inflicted severe injury upon the Church. The Pope stated,

"The struggle against the church did, in fact, become ever more bitter: there was the dissolution of Catholic organizations; the gradual suppression of the flourishing Catholic schools, both public and private; the enforced weaning of youth from family and church; the pressure brought to bear on the conscience of citizens and especially of civil servants; the systematic defamation, by means of a clever, closely organized propaganda, of the church, the clergy, the faithful, the church's institutions teaching and history; the closing, dissolution and confiscation of religious houses and other ecclesiastical institutions; the complete suppression of the Catholic press and publishing houses."

There was also the arrest, deportation, and murder of thousands of priests and religious in the camps. (*N.Y. Times*, June 3, 1945, p. 22. The full document takes all of pages 1 and 22) Reports about the bombing of the Vatican by the Nazis on November 5, 1943 emerged (*N.Y. Times*, July 2, 1945, p. 5, 3). In September, 1945, documents were uncovered in Berlin revealing what the *Times* called "A secret struggle between the German Gestapo and the Catholic hierarchy which lasted from the rise of Nazism to its fall." The *Times* said that Gestapo agents stole, bribed and worked to get access to messages from the Holy See to Catholic bishops in Germany and western Europe during the war years. The churchmen were seen as enemies of Hitler's new order. (*N.Y. Times*, September 26, 1945, p.10, 4) This late revelation made sense of the earlier attempts to vilify the Pope and the Catholic hierarchy by the Nazi regimes and, later by the Soviets.

## The Pope as Traitor to Humanity: Origins of His Alleged “silence”

Since the Pope and the Church had worked to save the Jews during the war, where did the charges claiming the contrary arise? The *Times* reports and editorials gave some idea, even before the war in Europe ended.

During his Christmas address in 1942, the Pope reaffirmed the Church's teaching on the dignity of the human person, and its denunciation of Marxist socialism, while calling on the world to reestablish the international rule of law. The *Times* reported that “He also castigated the authoritarian form of government for its denigration of the human person, and he called upon all those who recognized Christ to join the crusade for a new social order based on the Christian precept that to serve is better than to dominate.” (*N.Y. Times*, December 25, 1942, p. 1, 7) The Pope said,

“He who would have the star of peace shine out and stand guard over society should cooperate for his part in giving back to the human person the dignity given to it by God from the beginning; he should oppose the excessive herding of men; as if they were a mass without a soul; their economic, social, political, intellectual and moral inconsistency; their dearth of solid principles and strong convictions, their surfeit of instinctive sensible excitement and their fickleness.”

“He should favor, by every lawful means, in every sphere of life, social institutions in which a full personal responsibility is assured and guaranteed both in the earthly and the eternal order of things.” (*N.Y. Times*, December 25, 1942, p. 10, 2-5)

The error of today's life, he said, was to believe that civil life was based on the principle of gain. It was here that he reiterated the Church's stand against Marxist Socialism. He ended by castigating a large part of humanity, including Christians, who “collectively bore the responsibility for the present universality of war.” He continued:

“Did the peoples of the world wish to remain inert before the development of these disastrous events or should not the best of them unite against this ruin of the social order?”

“A new and higher order must soon be born. It was demanded by the sacrifices of those who had lost their lives in this war, by the mothers, the widows, and the orphans, by the countless refugees in flight, by the thousands of men who through no fault of their own but for reasons of nationality or race had been doomed to death or decay.” (*ibid.*, p. 10, 2-5)

The *Times* was quick to applaud the Pope. “This Christmas,” the *Times* wrote, “more than ever he is a lonely voice crying out of the silence of a continent. “No Christmas sermon reaches a larger congregation than the

message Pope Pius XII addresses to a war-torn world at this season.” The *Times* understood what the Pope said, whom and what he condemned, even if the proper names were not pronounced. The *Times* reported:

“But just because the Pope speaks to and in some sense for all the peoples at war, the clear stand he takes on the fundamental issues of the conflict has greater weight and authority. When a leader bound impartially to nations on both sides condemns as heresy the new form of national state which subordinates everything to itself; when he declares that whoever wants peace must protect against ‘arbitrary attacks’ the ‘juridical safety of individuals’; when he assails violent occupation of territory, the exile and persecution of human beings for no reason other than race or political opinion; when he says that people must fight for a just and decent peace, a ‘total peace’—the ‘impartial’ judgement is like a verdict in a high court of justice.” The editor ends, echoing the Pope’s words that these new states “must refuse that the state should make of individuals a herd of whom the state disposes as if they were lifeless things.” (*N.Y. Times*, December 25, 1942, p. 16, 2)

Both Hitler and Stalin blamed the Pope and the Catholic Church as responsible for the war and for the sufferings of millions, including Jews and Catholics. These accusations were repeated by both Nazis and Communists during the remaining years of the war in an attempt to weaken the loyalty of the peoples of Europe to Pius XII and to the Roman Catholic Church. This is the origin of the numerous unfounded accusations, the “silence” of Pius XII, as reported by the *Times*, which are repeated even today.

On January 30, 1943, Hitler broadcast a speech in which he tried to revive the myth that Nazi Germany was the last barrier against the conquest of Europe by Bolshevism. (*N.Y. Times*, January 31, 1943, p. 37, 2) In the April number of the Fascist periodical *Regime Fascista*, Roberto Farinacci accused Vatican Radio of “inciting the people of Poland to make common cause with the Russian Army.” (*N.Y. Times*, April 26, 1943, p. 9, 1) In May, the Nazi controlled radio, *Aujourd’hui*, reported that the Catholic Church had “a crushing responsibility in unleashing the present war.” The Nazis charged that the Catholic Church had invited oppression in the Reich by opposing Hitler’s racialist theories. (*N.Y. Times*, May 28, 1943, p. 4, 4) Clearly, Pius XII had not been silent.

The February 1, 1944, issue of the Soviet government newspaper, *Izvestia* asserted that Vatican foreign policy had disillusioned Catholics throughout the world, and earned the contempt of the Italian masses because the Vatican had supported fascism. The paper charged that the Vatican had pledged its support to Italian fascism following the conclusion of the Lateran Treaty in February, 1929. However, “the Vatican’s support for fascism wasn’t limited solely to Italy, *Izvestia* continued. It approved many acts of aggression

by fascism although the true meaning of these aggressions was no secret.” (*N.Y. Times*, February 2, 1944, p. 1, 6) The Vatican, according to the *Izvestia* article, supported Italy’s aggression into Abyssinia, and had played a “disgraceful role” in Hitler’s and Mussolini’s intervention in the Spanish civil war. The Church had supported Franco’s Spain which was “the image of the clerical States of post-war Europe” which the Vatican wanted to emerge. The Vatican’s “silence” when France was attacked in 1940 and its swift support of the Vichy government were typical of its policy, *Izvestia* charged. (ibid., p. 11, 5) The Vatican, *Izvestia* trumpeted, despite the Pope’s claims to neutrality, had worked to support the Nazi regime, and for the destruction of other states.

This is the first report in the *Times* in which the Pope and the Church are attacked as cooperators of Hitler, and falsely condemned for the supposed “silence” of the Pope. It is significant that the *Times* reported the *Izvestia* charges, gave them no credence, and, in later pieces, expressed consternation that anyone could believe the charges as anything other than Communist propaganda against the Church.

An earlier U.S. Foreign Policy Report had stated that the Pope supported neither the modern dictatorships nor modern democracy. “. . . but is just what he claims to be—indifferent to political forms, accepting any government which will meet the minimum demands of the church.” (ibid.)

An American rebuttal of these charges was swiftly made by Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen on the same day the *Izvestia* article appeared. He stated that the report was an attempt to confuse the political atmosphere in Europe in preparation for a separate peace by Moscow with the German Army after the expected overthrow of Hitler. Sheen predicted an alliance between Communist Russia and the Nazis, minus Hitler, for the “bolshevization” of Europe, and declared that the *Izvestia* article was designed to help destroy religion as the one great obstacle to the achievement of this objective. “The Vatican within the last six months has been called Communist by the Nazis, Nazis by the Communists and anti-Fascists by the Fascists. And they all mean the same thing, namely, the Vatican is opposed to every anti-religious ideology.” (ibid.) Sheen observed that Russia’s plans were to control Europe after the war. The only outspoken obstacle to Russia’s plan in Europe was the Catholic Church. Sheen continued, “As Soviet Russia has already served notice that America and Great Britain may not interfere in the question of Poland, so now it serves notice on religion that it may not interfere in the question of Europe.” (ibid., p. 11, 6)

The first attacks claiming that the Church had silently endorsed the atrocities of the Nazi’s came from Communist Russia. Soon to control Poland, and other vast areas in eastern Europe, Russia saw the need to break the loyalty to the Pope of Catholic majorities in those countries. The plan was a simple one: convince all that the Pope supported the hated Nazis during the war, and,

therefore, neither he nor the Church could be trusted after the war. The destruction of the Church would leave the field wide open for Russian influence and control.

The *Times* published an angry editorial: "Of all the incendiary literary bombs manufactured in Moscow. . . and thrown with such light-hearted recklessness into the unity of the Allied nations, none is likely to do greater damage than *Izvestia's* unjust and intemperate attack upon the Vatican as "pro-Fascist." (*N.Y. Times*, February 4, 1944, p. 14, 2) The Vatican is a neutral state, the editor continued, with which Russia's two allies, the United States and Great Britain, have "confident relations." The United States and Great Britain "have no doubt where the real sympathy of the Vatican lies in this struggle. They recognize the inescapable neutrality of the Pope's position; but they have had no difficulty in finding in his eloquent declarations clear evidence of his detestation for those who have violated the rights of the little nations who have committed bestial acts from one end of Europe to the other and who have attempted to elevate the dogma of Totalitarianism to the dignity of a new religion. *Izvestia's* attack is damaging to the unity on which victory depends."

American protests were not limited to those by churchmen or by the *Times*. Politicians made protests in local and state assemblies throughout the country, denouncing as false the accusations that the Pope was pro-Fascist or Nazi. (*N.Y. Times*, February 8, 1944, p. 7, 1) The New York State Legislature voted on March 18, 1944, unanimously to deplore the action of *Izvestia*, recognizing it as an official act of the Soviet government against the Vatican. The Legislature pointed out in its resolution that both Pius XI and Pius XII had condemned Fascism and Nazism and "all other forms of totalitarian government in both public and private pronouncements dating back to 1931." (*N.Y. Times*, March 19, 1944, p. 32, 1)

The Russians continued their accusations. On February 8, the *Times* related that the Russian Army newspaper, *Red Star*, printed extracts from a pamphlet on Vatican policy in Europe. Written by a Leopold Mannaberg, a German businessman, the pamphlet was a criticism on "the constant interference of the Vatican in other lands' policies and the Vatican's intrigues on 'the international arena.' According to Mannaberg, the Vatican played a leading role in the rise of the Nazi and Fascist regimes in Europe. A strong peace in Europe was impossible unless the Vatican was completely deprived of its political power, the pamphlet argued. (*N.Y. Times*, February 9, 1944, p. 3, 8)

Monsignor Sheen was quick to reply. He said it was only natural that the Catholic Church be opposed by a government "that has between eight and ten million political prisoners doing slave labor in Russia. No democratic nation has charged the Vatican with 'lack of sympathy.'" (*ibid.*)

Hanson W. Baldwin penned an interesting article in the March 8, 1944 issue of the *Times*, "Dual Policy of Russia Traced: Soviet Union Demands Voice

in Western Europe's Problems While Pursuing Unilateral Course in East." (*N.Y. Times*, March 8, 1944, p. 5, 2, 3, 4)

"Since Teheran there have been many disturbing trends," he wrote. "Some of these stemmed from Moscow. The *Pravda* article rumoring that Britain was feeling out the Germans on a separate peace, the *Izvestia* denunciation of the Vatican as pro-Fascist, the virtual insistence of Russia upon settling her boundary dispute with Poland on her own terms and without Anglo-American mediation and the companion piece to this— establishment by Moscow of a Polish National Council, which obviously might be groomed to replace the Polish Government in Exile, are all straws in the wind."

He continued,

"Russia plainly holds many of the cards in Europe and is playing them aggressively. She has demanded, on the one hand, a voice in the affairs of Western Europe; . . . but she refuses similar representation to Britain and the United States in Eastern Europe. . .and her cards are military power, international communism used to forward Russia's national ends and pan-Slavism.

"One part of the Russian pattern is plain. Russia's insistence on taking eastern Poland up to the Curzon Line and the Baltic States, parts of Finland and Bessarabia may represent the limits of her territorial ambitions."

In addition to the acquisition of territory, Russia established Governments friendly to her in contiguous territories, or was laying the groundwork to do so, according to the article: Tito in Yugoslavia, the establishment of the Polish National Council in opposition to the Polish Government in Exile, the continued support of the Free German National Committee and some communist support for Greek factions. She also made a treaty of mutual assistance with Czechoslovakia. Russia was interested in most of the European area east of a line drawn from Koenigsberg in East Prussia to Fiume on the Adriatic. (*N.Y. Times*, March 8, 1944, p.5, 4)

The Church and the Vatican were in the way. But it was in the way of Russia's plans for an easy territorial conquest, not simply because the Catholic Church was so strong in those countries, but because the Pope publicly opposed Soviet aggression and unconditional surrender for Germany. The reasons are not because of any alleged pro-German sentiments on the part of Pope Pius XII or of the Church. He opposed unconditional surrender on principles of Christian mercy. An eye for an eye had been replaced by Christian forgiveness, and the Pontiff applied this, not only to personal relationships, but also to the relationship of one state to another, one government to another: Christian morality was to form the basis for international law and relationships—a truly new world order after the war. He was opposed because of this, especially by Russia.

On June 2, 1944, two days before the Allies entered Rome, the Pope addressed the Sacred College of Cardinals in which he deplored “reports of ill-dissimulated violence or openly declared vengeance.’ He announced himself to be against what he characterized as the alternative of complete victory or complete destruction.” (*N.Y. Times*, July 6, 1944, p. 7, 1)

The *Times* reported that the Pope, in this address and “through other channels” wants a “negotiated peace with as many elements of compromise in it as possible.” This was in opposition to the Allied demands for unconditional surrender, which would have rendered Germany incapable of waging war for many years to come. This did not endear the Pope to some Americans or British, either. However, as Herbert L. Matthews closed his article, “The Pope’s feelings are unquestionably anti-Nazi and anti-Fascist. There can be no doubt about his personal feelings so far as Hitlerites are concerned. His only worry must obviously be that of the danger of communism in Europe, and on that score the Russians are understood to be giving assurances that religious feelings will be respected.” (*ibid.*)

Anne O’Hare McCormick commented in her column on August 21, 1944, concerning the postwar period, McCormick observed, “The idea that the Pope does not want a complete and decisive victory is erroneous. What concerns him is the policy to be pursued by the victors after the decision has been won. As a spiritual ruler he can hardly be expected to take the same view as the military and political leaders.” (*N.Y. Times*, August 21, 1944, p. 14, 5)

In January 1945, Harry Hopkins met with the Pope and Myron Taylor, President Roosevelt’s personal envoy to the Vatican. “The Pope did most of the talking,” according to the report, and set before the men his ideas concerning Poland, Germany, and war rehabilitation. The two envoys promised to convey the Pope’s thoughts to “the Big Three.” The report claimed that the Pope had proposed three main points: 1) the Vatican backed the plea of the Polish Government in London for a joint allied government in Poland until a plebiscite was possible; 2) the Pope felt that it was time that the Big Three worked out a definite outline of armistice terms for the Germans— “possibly severe but consistent with his previous declarations on the distinction between the more and less guilty Germans and his known critical attitude toward the formula of unconditional surrender”; 3) The Vatican wanted the postwar rehabilitation and relief program to be as broad and comprehensive as possible throughout the distressed areas of Europe. (*N.Y. Times*, January 31, 1945, p. 3, 5-6) The report said the Pope had “intense interest in the Polish question,” especially concerning totalitarian government control of postwar Poland.

The Vatican continued its swipes at Communism. In January 1945, the *Osservatore Romano* issued a strongly worded condemnation of Communism to clarify that Communism and Catholicism were incompatible. The reason for

the repeated condemnation was that the Catholic Communist Party in Italy, then renamed the Left Party, while its platform and ideology were Marxist, claimed to represent Christian principles and sought Catholic membership. The Vatican was justifiably anxious about the growth of Communism in postwar Italy and Europe. (*N.Y. Times*, January 3, 1945, 5, 4)

On February 9, 1945, and for some time thereafter, Moscow launched a series of attacks on the Pope. The bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church, gathered with their newly elected patriarch, Alexis, to broadcast a statement by Moscow radio accusing Pope Pius XII of condoning Fascism by attempting to excuse Germany for its crimes. The Vatican, so the argument ran, was attempting to absolve Hitler and Germany “who drenched all Europe in the blood of innocent victims,” and to continue Fascism in Europe. The statement said that the Russian Orthodox Church was conferring its blessings “both on the arms that are now winning liberty from the Hitler tyranny for all peoples and on the great leaders of progressive humanity in the postwar organization of the world which will be theirs to undertake.” (*N.Y. Times*, February 10, 1945, p. 3, 5)

In an article by Herbert L. Matthews, “Stalin’s Hand Seen in Vatican Attack,” appearing in the February 12th edition of the paper, it was reported that the Vatican had reacted to the attacks by Moscow. The Italian newspaper *Quotidiano*, an organ of Catholic Action, reported that Moscow attacked the Vatican because the Roman Catholic Church stood for liberty against dictatorship. The *Times* commented that “the fact that this attack came from the Patriarch and was addressed to the peoples of the world gives it a more serious aspect than the recent accusations in the Russian newspaper Pravda . . .” The *Quotidiano* continued that “The Church of Rome in Poland, Czechoslovakia and the Balkans represents freedom of spirit. It represents an obstacle to dictatorship. Hence it must be fought. Moscow intends to make use of ‘her’ [Orthodox] church for gigantic imperialistic aims.” (*N.Y. Times*, February 13, 1945, p. 11, 1)

In the midst of these European attacks against the Church by the Soviet Union, *The Protestant*, a New York periodical, published a declaration issued by 1,600 Protestant ministers and religious leaders in America, stating that the Vatican should not have any influence in the postwar deliberations, “since the papacy has thrown its weight into the present human struggle on the side of the enemies of democracy.” (*N.Y. Times*, February 10, 1945; February 19, 1945, p. 22, 6) Addressed to Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Joseph Stalin, the petition repeated what would become standard misrepresentations of the Pope’s actions during the war, demanding that no religious body, especially not the Vatican, have any part in the postwar deliberations. (*N.Y. Times*, February 28, 1945, p. 22, 6-7)

Other than the *Izvestia* articles, this is the first time such accusations appeared. A similar action against the Church had been taken following World War I. The usual anti-Catholic rhetoric of nineteenth-century America was repeated then and now, as the second war came to a close.

The Soviet attacks, employing the Russian Orthodox Church to keep the Vatican out of the peace talks, could only have enhanced Russia's position at the table, since, without the Vatican's voice, Stalin could press his demands without much opposition. The traditional anti-Catholic bias of Protestant America unwittingly cooperated with Russia, lending its weight to the same goal, resurrecting all the old Anglo-American anti-popey rhetoric in their petition to the Big Three. The American Protestant intervention raised another element, the Jewish claims to Palestine and the Vatican's lack of support for such a proposal. One of the signatories of the Protestant document wrote, "these are national, not ecclesiastical claims," and the Vatican should be kept out of the discussions. (Ibid.)

Another Russian attack on the Pope was issued February 10, by the former Russian ambassador to Rome, Boris Stein, who claimed that the Vatican was a "tremendous danger to world peace and postwar security." The Vatican had never been a purely religious institution, he charged, and favored only the winning side in any war. (*N.Y. Times*, February 11, 1945)

In an address to the Central United Russian War Relief, Inc. in New York City, Metropolitan Benjamin, head of the Russian Orthodox Archdiocese of the Aleutian Islands and North America, attacked the Catholic Church for its "attitude of harmful leniency" toward defeated fascist nations. The Russian archbishop enthusiastically endorsed Stalin and other Soviet leaders since "they were doing everything possible to nourish the resurgence of religion now sweeping the Soviet Union." The Russian Orthodox prelate continued, "And speaking of politics, what must the world think of those Roman Catholics who suddenly have become lovers of peace. These are the same priests who were so silent when their fascist friends were killing women and children in Spain, when Hitler was ravaging all of Europe, murdering millions of human beings by the foulest of means. But now that the Red Army has snatched victory from defeat, when the Soviet Union and her allies have brought fascism to its knees, these once so silent Roman Catholics suddenly clamor for what they call a just peace." (*N.Y. Times*, April 9, 1945, p. 3, 6)

C. L. Salzberger, the former publisher of the *Times*, rightly observed, "The Soviet attitude toward the Vatican and the Roman Catholic Church in general strikes most Americans as rather amazingly caustic and perhaps somewhat ludicrous when one considers that this is the largest state in the world and Vatican City is the smallest." He reported the contents of an article published in the Communist Party magazine, *Bolshevik*, which made fantastic

claims about the Vatican having marshaled the world's Catholics into an immense international army financed by unlimited funds, guided by the bishops and clergy who served as Vatican spies around the globe. The Pope was not neutral, the argument ran, but had intervened in purely political affairs, especially his support for the Fascist and Nazi governments. The *Bolshevik* claimed that the present Pope, a friend of Germany, approved of Hitler and his policies. (*N.Y. Times*, April 17, 1945, p. 5, 1) The *Times*, here and whenever these false charges were made against the Pope throughout the war, decried these Russian accusations as pure fantasy.

As the European war neared its conclusion, important international meetings were being held in San Francisco to consider plans for postwar Europe. The major question was Poland. Compromise between Russia, the United States, and Great Britain was thought to be at hand when sixteen leaders of the Polish underground, gathered in Moscow to confer with Red Army chiefs and others, were arrested. What was becoming clearer was that "the liaison between the Soviet official mind and ours [the U.S. and Britain] is still pretty tenuous," as Anne McCormick wrote. It all boiled down to the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Keeping up its own pressure, Russia sent out other attacks against the Vatican. In mid-May 1945, *Izvestia* spoke of German war criminals it claimed the Vatican was hiding or was treating leniently. "At the head of these advocates stands the Vatican, which in the darkest years of the war never raised its voice against Hitler's barbarism." (*N.Y. Times*, May 14, 1945, p. 3, 1) In a radio broadcast inside Germany later in the month, Moscow repeated its charge that "high standing officials connected with the church are pro-Nazi." Moscow continued, "Pope Pius, in calling for mercy and a more forgiving attitude, had not a word to say about the responsibility of those who had inundated the world with blood and carried out the most monstrous of crimes." (*N.Y. Times*, May 26, 1945, p. 4, 5)

On June 2, 1945, Pius XII addressed the Sacred College of Cardinals. It was time to set the public record straight, the Pope told them. While the war had ended in one part of the world, grave perils still existed in Europe, not the least of them, a new Communist tyranny. Among those perils were ". . . those mobs of dispossessed, disillusioned, disappointed, hopeless men who are going to swell the ranks of revolution and disorder in the pay of a tyranny no less despotic than those for whose overthrow men planned."

In a clear reference to the control of the Soviet Union in eastern Europe, Pius XII said that the people of smaller and medium sized nations "are entitled to refuse to accept a new political or cultural system which is decisively rejected by the great majority of their people." (*N.Y. Times*, June 3, 1945, p. 1, 3) The Pope reviewed the "sorrowful passion" of the Church under Germany's

National Socialist regime, and hoped that Germany “can rise to a new dignity and a new life after it has laid to rest the satanic specter raised by National Socialism and the guilty have expiated the crimes they have committed.” (ibid.) Speaking of the Church and the Nazi regime during the war, the Pope stated that, while the Church entered into a concordat with Germany, unable to avoid the invitation by Hitler, it did so in order to provide for itself some juridic protection from possible encroachment by the government. Despite this, the Church suffered great hardship as the Nazis pursued its plan to systematically destroy the Church.

The Pope continued that the Church’s protests began with Pope Pius XI, who constantly called for fidelity to one’s pledged word, after the concordat had been broken repeatedly by Germany. Finally, in 1937, his encyclical *Mit Brennender Sorge* condemned the reality of Hitler’s regime as “the arrogant apostasy from Jesus Christ, the denial of His doctrine and of His work of redemption, the cult of violence, the idolatry of race and blood, the overthrow of human liberty and dignity.” (ibid., p. 22) The world did not listen to the Church’s warning, the Pope continued. “But in any case nobody could accuse the church of not having denounced and exposed in time the true nature of the National Socialist movement and the danger to which it exposed Christian civilization.” (Ibid.) Pius XI was clear in his encyclical: “Whoever sets up race or people or the state or a particular form of state or the depositaries’ power or any other fundamental value of the human community to be the supreme norm of all, even of religious values, and divinizes them to an idolatrous level distorts and perverts an order of the world planned and created by God.” Pius XII continued, “The radical opposition of the National Socialist State to the Catholic Church is summed up in this declaration of the encyclical. When things had reached this point the Church could not without foregoing her mission any longer refuse to take her stand before the whole world.” (ibid.)

“But by doing so she became once again ‘a sign that shall be contradicted’ (Luke 2, 34), in the presence of which contrasting opinions divided off into two opposed camps.” The year of the encyclical, 1937, began the violence against the Church in Nazi Germany. The next two years, and throughout the war, National Socialists “still flattered themselves with the idea that once they had secured victory in arms they could do away with the church forever.” Plans and more intense activity to destroy the Church continued, especially of late in Austria, Alsace Lorraine, and, “above all, in those parts of Poland which had already been incorporated in the old Reich during the war: there everything was attacked and destroyed; that is, everything that could be reached by external violence.”

The Pope wrote, “Continuing the work of our predecessor, we ourselves have during the war and especially in our radio messages constantly set forth the demands and perennial laws of humanity and of the Christian faith in contrast

with the ruinous and inexorable application of national socialist teachings, which even went so far as to use the most exquisite scientific methods to torture or eliminate people who were often innocent.” (Ibid., p. 22)

Such suffering alone convinced people to listen to the Church. The Christmas message of 1942, in particular, was studied widely in Germany, “despite every prohibition and obstacle.” The witness of thousands of Roman Catholics interned in prisons and camps is before us, whose only crime was fidelity to Christ.

Those who suffered most were the Polish priests: From 1940 to 1945 approximately 2,800 Polish ecclesiastics and religious were imprisoned in Dachau. By April 1945, only 816 survived. Priests from dioceses in Bavaria, the Rhineland, and Westphalia, as well as from the occupied territories of Holland, Belgium, France, Slovenia and Italy had died in the death camps.

Pius XII concluded,

“Poor world to which might be applied the words of Christ: ‘And the last state of that man becomes worse than the first’ (Luke, 11, 24-26). “The present political and social situation suggests these words of warning to us. We have had, alas, to deplore in more than one region the murder of priests, deportations of civilians, the killing of citizens without trial or in personal vendetta. No less sad is the news that has reached us from Slovenia and Croatia.”

## Conclusion

Silent, Pope Pius XII and the Roman Catholic Church were not.

Pope Pius XII and the Roman Catholic Church did much throughout the war to bring the world’s attention to the plight of the Jews of Europe, to reverse the genocidal policies and practices of Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and the regimes operating in the conquered countries of Europe, and to assist tens of thousands of Jews to survive and escape these regimes and their death camps. This is proved simply by looking at the *New York Times* of the period. The *Times* reported that the Pope was not silent concerning the Jews, and applauded him for what he did do and say—often. Whatever the editorial policy of the *Times* or the background of the reporters and their work, the newspaper itself proved that the Pope was not silent, and that the Church was quite active during the war.

Following the war, numerous tributes were made to the Pope by members of the Jewish Community worldwide. On December 1, 1944, the *Times* reported that the World Jewish Congress publicly thanked the Holy See’s protection of Jews, especially in Hungary; in October 1945, the World Jewish Congress made a financial gift to the Vatican in recognition of the Vatican’s

work to save the Jews; in May 1955, the Israel Philharmonic played at the Vatican as a gesture of thanks to the Pope for his services to Jews during the war. At the Pope's death, numerous tributes were made, so many that the *Times* could list only the names of their authors in the October 9, 10, and 11 issues. For example, in the October 9, 1958, issue: Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (p. 24, 2); the Synagogue Council of America (p. 21, 12); in the October 9, 1958, issue: Bernard Baruch; Rabbi Theodore L. Adams, president of the Synagogue Council of America; Irving M. Engel, president of the American Jewish Committee, and Jacob Blaustein and Joseph M. Proshauer, honorary presidents, (p. 12, 1); Rabbi Joachim Prinz, president of the American Jewish Congress; Dr. Israel Goldstein, chairman of the Western Hemisphere Executive of the World Jewish Congress; Rabbi Alan Steinech, president of the New York Board of Rabbis; Mrs. Moise S. Cahn, president of the National Council of Jewish Women; Rabbi Jacob P. Rudin, president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, (p.12, 1); in the October 10, 1958 issue: Rabbi Emanuel Rockman, president of the Rabbinical Council of America; Isaac H. Herzog (p. 13, 2); in the October 11, 1958 issue among the tributes was one by the Jewish Labor Committee (p. 2, 5). All referred to the work the Pope and the Vatican had done to save the Jew and humanity during the Second World War. In the October 12, 1958 issue, the *Times* reported the numerous memorial services for the late Pope in the synagogues of New York City. (p. 5, 1-2) On October 10, 1958, the *Times* reported that Leonard Bernstein began the performance of the New York Philharmonic the previous evening with a tribute by Harold C. Schonberg, asking the audience to stand in silence for one minute, in tribute to Pius XII. (p. 35, 4)

Among the very many tributes to Pope Pius XII printed or mentioned by the *Times*, there was only one negative, coming from Paris. The Communist official organ *L'Humanite* accused the late Pope of allowing his doctrinal condemnation of Marxist atheism "to be transformed into an arm of anti-Soviet policy in Europe and the world." While the Pope had spoken out against the arms race, the communist paper contended, criticism should be made against the Pope "for not having taken a stand against the Nazi concentration camps during the war." (*N.Y. Times*, October 11, 1958, p. 2, 4-5) The origin of the false accusation that Pope Pius XII had been silent concerning the Holocaust, was Soviet Russia. It was propaganda for Communist ends.

As seen in the news reports and editorials of the *New York Times* during the war years, contemporary evidence shows everyone knew the Pope was speaking about the Jews in his numerous condemnations of Nazi policies. It was clear the Pope was speaking about their situation and trials, but in religious terms. He spoke on a higher moral level than merely condemning

individual actions. The condemnations were clear, and were understood by his contemporaries. The Pope and the Church had not been silent.

The efforts to save the Jews by Popes Pius XI and Pius XII and by the Catholic hierarchies of Europe were only part of a greater good the Church tried to accomplish: the protection of all human persons. This was threatened by the enslavement by totalitarian governments of all peoples of the world. The attempted extermination of the Jews and of the Church by the Nazi government was very real. The Church's work was to uphold and defend the foundational truth that the human person is the image of God.

Stalin's cynical question about the Pope's power was an important one: "How many divisions has the Pope?" Stalin was correct then and now: the Pope may condemn moral wrongs in the world, but he has no military might to support his words. Pius XII did strongly and clearly condemn the Nazi and Fascist government extermination of the European Jewish community, but he had only words and prayers in his armory. Hitler was moved by neither; he respected only guns and armies. None but Hitler and the Allied forces could stop the killing. Hitler refused; the Allies arrived too late.

We must never forget the tragedy of the Holocaust of World War II. We must, likewise, never forget the efforts of Pius XI and Pius XII to save the Jews and to save mankind from debasement and destruction at the hands of the Nazi machine and the totalitarian governments.