

A Response to The Vatican and the Holocaust: A Preliminary Report by the International Catholic-Jewish Historical Commission

by Ronald Rychlak

(11/2000)

A Response to:

The Vatican and the Holocaust: A Preliminary Report by the International Catholic-Jewish Historical Commission

By Professor Ronald J. Rychlak, author of *Hitler, the War and the Pope* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2000)

In October 2000, the International Catholic-Jewish Historical Commission released to great publicity a "preliminary report" of its investigation into the actions of Pope Pius XII and the role of the Vatican in responding to the horror of the Nazi Holocaust during World War II. The committee's report was presented to the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews and the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations. Below, Professor Ronald J. Rychlak responds to the committee's questions based on his research for Hitler, the War and the Pope (Our Sunday Visitor 2000).

For the most part, the Committee asked in their questions for additional documentation, assuming that the documentation on these matters as supplied in the 11-volume set of documents assembled from 1965 through 1981 (Actes et

Documents du Saint Siege relatifs a la seconde guerre mondiale – ADSS) are lacking, or that more documentation exists. The Committee also asked in many cases for “confirmation” to questions where numerous witnesses have already supplied testimony. The questions concerning additional documentation when documentation already exists are not dealt with below, as well as questions asking for documents that may not exist within the Vatican archives. Additionally, Professor Rychlak has combined redundant or similar questions to answer together.

*The questions from the committee are repeated in **bold face** followed by Professor Rychlak’s response. Editing for clarification is included in certain of the questions and is printed in lightface. Professor Rychlak begins with an overall response, then deals with questions singularly or combined:*

I have set forth many of the 47 questions drafted by the committee and a number of points in response. In some cases, my responses are not full answers because there can be no answer to many of these questions. In too many of the questions, the Holy See is asked to disprove negative charges. They ask, for example, whether Pope Pius XII gave thanks for matters before they took place or whether the testimony of numerous witnesses, all of who support one another, can be confirmed. Under those conditions, what further confirmation would be acceptable? The committee also seems to expect to find documents that do not exist. Additionally, they raise questions about the veracity of four Jesuit priests who compiled the 11 volumes of documents, without themselves having each read the 11 volumes.

The point of this committee according to Dr. Eugene Fisher, who was one of the coordinators of the project representing the National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the United States, was to raise the level of the discussion. I think the committee has accomplished the opposite. The study group has – from the very beginning – rejected its charge.

This interim report is a polemic aimed at the Holy See and Pope Pius XII. It has raised the heat of the debate, not the level of it.

Questions and Responses:

#2. In 1938, after the Kristallnacht pogrom, only one prominent German prelate, Bernhard Lichtenberg, rector of Saint Hedwig's cathedral in Berlin, had the courage to condemn the outrages publicly. (Cardinal Eugenio) Pacelli (the future Pope Pius XII) was given a detailed report by the papal nuncio in Berlin but there appears to have been no official reaction by the Vatican. This issue is especially important because Archbishop Amleto Cicognani, Apostolic Delegate to the United States certainly informed the Vatican of the public broadcast of the American bishops' condemnation of Kristallnacht. Do the archives reveal internal discussions among Vatican officials, including Pacelli, about the appropriate reaction to this pogrom?

Point:

Pope Pius XI had issued a strong condemnation of Hitler only a few days before the infamous Kristallnacht of November 1938. On October 21, in one of his last public appearances, Pius XI personally attacked Hitler, likening him to Julian the Apostate (Roman Emperor Flavius Claudius Julianus), who attempted to "saddle the Christians with responsibility for the persecution he had unleashed against them."

Following Kristallnacht, for three days the Vatican's official newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano, ran a series of articles reporting on the anti-Semitic atrocities. For instance, such an article ran on November 13, under the headline "Dopo le manifestazioni antisemite in Germania" (After the manifestation of anti-Semitism in Germany).

The same month that Kristallnacht took place in Germany, racial laws in Italy were tightened with passage of the "law

for the defense of the Italian race.” That law prohibited interracial marriages involving Italian Aryans, and declared that such marriages would not be recognized. Civil recognition of Church marriages had been one of the most important aspects of the Lateran Treaty, and this seemed a clear breach, despite Benito Mussolini’s attempts to argue otherwise. Pope Pius XI was the first official to file a protest, but he had no influence with the Fascists or the Nazis. His protests, however, may have been part of the reason why Italians were never very willing to enforce racial laws. In addition, Vatican leaders set the example of helping Jews. Pursuant to the orders of Cardinal Pacelli, and with the agreement of Jewish leaders, the Torah and other Jewish ritual objects were removed from synagogues and transported for safe-keeping by Church officials.

4. A substantial part of Volume 6 (of the ADSS) is devoted to the aborted efforts to obtain Brazilian visas for Catholics of Jewish origin. Numerous questions have been raised concerning the failure of this project. In addition, it is known that a part of the money destined for the refugees came from funds raised by the United Jewish Appeal in the United States. Is there further documentation as to why this money was allocated to the attempted rescue of converted Jews rather than to Jews?

Point:

The Vatican provided papers indicating Latin American citizenship to many Jews in occupied France. When the papers were discovered to be illegal, the Latin American countries withdrew recognition of them. This made the Jews subject to deportation to the concentration camps. Pursuant to a request from the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada, and working in conjunction with the International Red Cross, the Vatican contacted the countries involved and urged them to recognize the documents, “no matter how illegally obtained.”

#5. From the outbreak of the war, appeals rained down upon the Vatican for help on behalf of the population of Poland, brutally victimized in a cruel and bloodthirsty occupation. And from the earliest days of the fighting, observers, ranging from the exiled Polish government to the British and French ambassadors to the Vatican, recounted the opinion of many Catholic Poles, both inside and outside Poland, that the Church had betrayed them and that Rome was silent in the face of their national ordeal. Is there any further documentation beyond what is already in the volumes concerning deliberations within the Vatican with regard to these insistent appeals on behalf of the Poles?

Point:

On January 19, 1940 Pope Pius told Msgr. Giovanni Battista Montini, the future Pope Paul VI, that Vatican Radio must broadcast a report on the conditions of the Catholic Church in German-occupied Poland. The first report, broadcast in German, took place on January 21. Two days later, in England, the Manchester Guardian reported: "Tortured Poland has found a powerful advocate in Rome... [Vatican Radio has warned] all who care for civilization that Europe is in mortal danger." On January 26, Vatican Radio broadcast in English that "Jews and Poles are being herded into separate ghettos, hermetically sealed and pitifully inadequate." The story was reported in the January 23 edition of the *New York Times* under the headline: "Vatican Denounces Atrocities in Poland; Germans Called Even Worse than Russians." (A separate story in that same edition of the *Times* reported that a Soviet newspaper had labeled Pius the "tool of Great Britain and France.") The Vatican report confirmed that "the horror and inexcusable excesses committed on a helpless and a homeless people have been established by the unimpeachable testimony of eyewitnesses." This same month, Pope Pius XII ordered the publication of a large volume (565 pages) of eyewitness accounts of the German efforts to crush the Church.

These broadcasts created a great deal of controversy. In the West, newspapers editorialized that Vatican Radio had set forth "a warning to all who value our civilization that Europe is under a mortal danger." The Germans, on the other hand, sent a representative to the Holy See to file a protest and warn that such broadcasts could lead to "disagreeable repercussions." According to John Cornwell, Vatican Radio "attracted a flow of protest implying that the Holy See was continuously breaking the terms of the Reich Concordat" by its reporting on events in Poland. In fact, the Germans ultimately decided that due to the hostile and anti-German attitude of the Vatican's press and radio, Catholic priests and members of religious orders in occupied Poland would be prohibited from leaving that country.

Pius had condemned German abuses in his first encyclical, *Summi Pontificatus*, and he was behind the radio broadcasts of Vatican radio. While he wanted to be more outspoken, he decided to personally maintain a lower profile because he thought that was his duty. On February 20, 1940, Pius wrote: "When the Pope would like to shout out loud and clear, holding back and silence are unhappily what are often imposed on him; where he would like to act and help, it is patience and waiting (that are imposed on him)." Nevertheless, it was clear by now that the Church was strongly opposed to Hitler's National Socialism. On January 26, an American Jewish newspaper reported: "The Vatican radio this week broadcast an outspoken denunciation of German atrocities in Nazi [occupied] Poland, declaring they affronted the moral conscience of mankind." This same month, the United Jewish Appeal for Refugees and Overseas Needs donated \$125,000 to help with the Vatican's efforts on behalf of victims of racial persecution. This was reported in the Jewish Ledger (Hartford, Conn), on Jan. 19, 1940, which called it an "eloquent gesture" which "should prove an important step in the direction of cementing bonds of sympathy and understanding" between Jews and Catholics.

#6. On November 23, 1940, Mario Besson, Bishop of Lausanne, Fribourg, and Geneva, sent a letter to Pope Pius XII expressing deep concern at the grave conditions of thousands of prisoners, including Jews, in concentration camps in southwest France. In his report he pressed for a public appeal by the Pope against the persecutions and a more active Catholic defense of the rights of all the victims. We know that it must have been taken seriously by the Vatican, especially since its observations were confirmed by the papal nuncio to Switzerland, Archbishop Filippo Bernardini, who forwarded Besson's message to the Pope. The subsequent responses by Luigi Maglione, Secretary of State, also indicate that he considered it worthy of attention, and he certainly would have discussed it with the Holy Father. Is there any evidence that Pius XII, Maglione or any other high Vatican official considered, then or subsequently, responding in the manner requested by Besson?

20 In August and September 1942, there were vigorous protests against the deportations of Jews from France by Archbishop Saliège of Toulouse, Bishop Théas of Montauban, and Cardinal Gerlier of Lyons. According to The New York Times, in an article published 10 September 1942, the Pope "sent to Marshal Pétain (Henri Philippi Petain of the Nazi puppet Vichy government in "unoccupied" France) 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." Is there confirmation in the Vatican archives of this news account?

Point:

From the very first day the opposition between the orientation of the Vichy government and the thought of Pius XII was evident. Shortly after the Germans took over, Pius XII sent a secret letter to Catholic bishops of Europe entitled *Opere et Caritate* ("By Work and By Love"). In it, he instructed the

bishops to help all who were suffering racial discrimination at the hands of the Nazis. They were instructed to read the letter in their Churches in order to remind the faithful that racism is "incompatible with the teachings of the Catholic Church."

From the summer of 1941 on, foreign Jews were rounded up and deported from Vichy with the full cooperation of Vichy officials. Eventually, some 40,000 citizens were murdered and 60,000 more deported to concentration camps for "Gaullism, Marxism or hostility to the regime." One hundred thousand others were deported on racial grounds.

The highest dignitaries of the Church immediately denounced the deportations and the treatment of Jews. As reported by The Tablet (London), on July 10 Pope Pius XII "spoke with exceptional decisiveness against the over-valuation of blood and race." Nuncio Valeri contacted Pétain, demanding that the deportations end. Pétain reportedly said: "I hope that the Pope understands my attitude in these difficult circumstances." The nuncio replied: "It is precisely that which the Pope cannot understand." Vatican Radio condemned "this scandal... the treatment of the Jews."

The Papal Secretary of State, Cardinal Maglione, told the French Ambassador to the Vatican "that the conduct of the Vichy Government toward Jews and foreign refugees was a gross infraction" of the Vichy Government's own principles, and was "irreconcilable with the religious feelings which Marshal Pétain had so often invoked in his speeches." A French Jesuit priest, Fr. Michel Riquet, who was imprisoned for his work in support of Jews later said: "Throughout those years of horror when we listened to Vatican Radio and the Pope's messages, we felt in communion with the Pope, in helping persecuted Jews and in fighting Nazi violence."

On July 16, 1942, at 3:00 in the morning, French police officers spread out through Paris, rounded up 13,000 Jews, and

locked them in a sports facility known as the *Vélodrome d'Hiver*. The French bishops issued a joint protest that stated:

"The mass arrest of the Jews last week and the ill-treatment to which they were subjected, particularly in the Paris *Vélodrome d'Hiver*, has deeply shocked us. There were scenes of unspeakable horror when the deported parents were separated from their children. Our Christian conscience cries out in horror. In the name of humanity and Christian principles we demand the inalienable rights of all individuals. From the depths of our hearts we pray Catholics to express their sympathy for the immense injury to so many Jewish mothers."

At the direction of Pope Pius XII, the protests from French bishops were broadcast and discussed for several days on Vatican Radio. Never, however, did mere words deter the Nazis from their goals. In fact, the statements of protest from Catholic leaders in France angered Pierre Laval of the Vichy leadership, and he reaffirmed his decision to cooperate in the deportation of all non-French Jews to Germany.

On August 6, 1942, a *New York Times* headline proclaimed: "Pope is Said to Plead for Jews Listed for Removal from France." Some writers have questioned this protest, but it is confirmed in a telegram sent from the German ambassador to France. *Ambassador Abetz in Paris to the Office of Foreign Affairs*, dated August 28, 1942, *Akten Zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik*, 1918-1945, Series E, Band III, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht in Göttingen (1974) no. 242 (discussing a protest from the Nuncio regarding the treatment of the Jews, instructions from the Archbishop of Toulouse telling priests "to protest most vehemently from the pulpit against the deportation of the Jews," and Laval's protest to the Vatican). Three weeks later, a headline in the *New York Times* told the story: "Vichy Seizes Jews; Pope Pius Ignored."

The Pope issued a formal protest to Pétain, instructed the nuncio to issue another protest, and recommended that religious communities provide refuge to Jewish people. In fact, the American press reported that the Pope protested to the Vichy government three times during August 1942, but Vichy officials tried to keep this from the public. This same month, Archbishop Jules Gérard Saliège, from Toulouse, sent a pastoral letter to be read in all churches in his diocese. It said: "There is a Christian morality that confers rights and imposes duties... The Jews are our brothers. They belong to mankind. No Christian can dare forget that!" *L'Osservatore Romano* praised Saliège as a hero of Christian courage, and as soon as the war was over, Pope Pius XII named him a cardinal.

According to the *Geneva Tribune* of September 8, 1942, Vichy ordered the French press to ignore the Pope's protest concerning the deportation of Jews. Despite this order, word spread rapidly due to the courageous attitude of members of the French resistance, who knew that they had the blessing of Rome.

The Canadian Jewish Chronicle, referring to Vichy leader Pierre Laval, ran the following headline on September 4, 1942: "Laval Spurns Pope: 25,000 Jews in France Arrested for Deportation." In an editorial dated August 28, 1942, *The California Jewish Voice* called Pius "a spiritual ally" because he "linked his name with the multitude that are horrified by the Axis inhumanity." In a lead editorial, *The Jewish Chronicle* (London) said that the Vatican was due a "word of sincere and earnest appreciation" from Jews for its intervention in Berlin and Vichy. The editorial went on to say that the rebuke that Pius received from "Laval and his Nazi master" was "an implied tribute to the moral steadfastness of a great spiritual power, bravely doing its manifest spiritual duty." *The Tablet* (London), quoting an article from *The Jewish Chronicle*, reported that "Catholic priests have taken a leading part in hiding hunted Jews, and sheltering the

children of those who are under arrest or have been deported to Germany.”

Late in June, 1943, the Vatican Radio warned the French people that “he who makes a distinction between Jews and other men is unfaithful to God and is in conflict with God’s commands.” The impact of any statement, however, was limited. A censorship order to the press said, “No mention is to be made of the Vatican protest to Marshal Pétain in favor of the Jews.”

As it did in other nations, the Church in France helped produce thousands of false documents that were used to deceive the Germans, and special efforts were made to protect Jewish children. Working with Jewish groups, French Christian organizations saved an estimated 7,000 Jewish children in France. At one point, a force of Protestant and Catholic social workers broke into a prison in Lyon and “kidnapped” ninety children who were being held with their parents for deportation. The parents were deported the next day. The children were sheltered in religious institutions under the protection of Cardinal Pierre Gerlier with the assistance of Father Pierre Chaillet, a member of the cardinal’s staff. When Cardinal Gerlier refused an order to surrender the children, Vichy leaders had Father Chaillet arrested. He served three months in a “mental hospital” before being released. On April 16, 1943, the *Australian Jewish News* ran an article quoting Cardinal Gerlier to the effect that he was simply obeying Pius XII’s instruction to oppose anti-Semitism.

#7. In August 1941 the French head of state, Marshal Philippe Pétain, asked the French ambassador to the Holy See, Léon Bérard, to ascertain the views of the Vatican on the collaborationist Vichy government’s efforts to restrict the Jews through anti-Jewish legislation. The response came, reportedly from Giovanni Montini, substitute Secretary of State, and Domenico Tardini, Secretary of the Congregation of Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, who stated that there

was no objection to these restrictions so long as they were administered with justice and charity and did not restrict the prerogatives of the Church. Was the Pope consulted on this matter? Are there any additional materials in the archives regarding this issue that are not contained in the ADSS?

Point:

In the July-August 1999 issue of *Commentary*, Robert S. Wistrich (a member of the committee) made reference to a memorandum sent from the French ambassador to the Vatican back to the Vichy leaders, the so-called "Bérard Report." Wistrich used that memorandum to argue that the Vatican originally supported Vichy's anti-Semitic legislation, and when the "Vatican's posture shifted" and it started opposing anti-Semitic legislation, it was disregarded by Vichy leaders because of this earlier report. I later wrote him with the details set forth below.

De Lubac has two chapters about the Bérard Report in his book, Christian Resistance to Anti-Semitism: Memories from 1940-1944. De Lubac explains that Pétain was being pressured by the Catholic hierarchy in France to abandon the anti-Semitic laws, and Bérard wanted a statement from the Vatican that he could use to silence French Catholics. Thus, in a letter dated August 7, 1941, he asked for a report on the Holy See's attitude towards the new legislation.

The response came in a long memorandum, dated on September 2, from Léon Bérard, French ambassador to the Holy See. The key phrase is as follows: "As someone in authority said to me at the Vatican, he will start no quarrel with us over the statute for the Jews." The ambassador was assured that "the Holy See had no hostile intention." He was persuaded that it did not wish to "seek a quarrel."

Rather than providing the official position of the Holy See, Bérard cited the above-mentioned "someone in authority," and

also gave a long justification for that position, based on Church history, including the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas. It seems highly suspect for a diplomatic report to go into historic Church teaching rather than relying on diplomatic sources. Moreover, the historic discussion omitted many more recent authoritative statements on anti-Semitism. Authoritative statements, however, would not have served Pétain's purposes.

It is certainly reasonable to conclude that Bérard drafted this memorandum to meet Pétain's needs, not to reflect the Church's actual position. As De Lubac says, "[i]f the ambassador had been able to obtain from any personage at all in Rome a reply that was even slightly clear and favorable, he would not have taken so much trouble to 'bring together the elements of a well-founded and complete report' obviously fabricated by himself or by one of his friends."

Bérard's report was dated Sept. 2, 1941. On September 13, at a reception at the Parc Hotel in Vichy, the apostolic nuncio, Bishop Valerio Valeri, criticized the anti-Semitic legislation. Pétain, citing the Bérard Report, replied that the Holy See found certain aspects of the laws a bit harsh, but it had not on the whole found fault with the laws. Valeri replied that the Holy See had made clear its opposition to racism, which was at the basis of this legislation. Pétain then suggested that the nuncio might not be in agreement with his superiors.

Bishop Valeri immediately wrote the Vatican's Secretary of State, Cardinal Maglione, and asked for more information. Then, around September 26, Valeri called upon Pétain and was shown Bérard's report. The nuncio judged it to be "more nuanced" than Pétain had led him to believe, and he gave Pétain a note concerning the "grave harms that, from a religious perspective, can result from the legislation now in force." Pétain replied that he too disagreed with some of the anti-Jewish laws, but that they had been imposed under

pressure from the Germans.

On September 30, Valeri wrote to Maglione, enclosing a copy of the Bérard Report. He explained the conversation at the Parc Hotel as follows: "I reacted quite vigorously, especially because of those who were present [ambassadors from Spain and Brazil]. I stated that the Holy See had already expressed itself regarding racism, which is at the bottom of every measure taken against the Jews...."

The Secretary of State wrote back on October 31 explaining that Bérard had made exaggerations and deductions about Vatican policy that were not correct. He fully approved of the note that Valeri had given to Pétain and encouraged him to continue efforts designed to at least tone down the rigid application of the anti-Semitic laws. *Actes et Documents*, vol. 8, no. 189. Valeri then drafted a note of protest that he sent to Pétain.

As such, it is clear that if Pétain ever thought that Bérard's accounting of the situation was legitimate, the "shift" in the Vatican's position was *immediately* brought to his attention. As De Lubac concludes, "from the very first day... the opposition between the orientation of the Vichy government and the thought of Pius XII was patent."

#8. In Romania, where Catholics were a small but significant minority, both the local Catholic authorities and the Vatican clung to the concordat of 1929 as defining the relationship between the Church and the dictatorial regime of Marshal Ion Antonescu. During 1940 and 1941, as persecution of the Jews intensified, the Vatican received a stream of communications from the nuncio, Archbishop Andrea Cassulo, relaying the strain that the anti-Jewish laws put upon what the Church saw as its prerogatives among others, the protection of the civil and religious rights of Catholics who had converted from Judaism. Cassulo repeatedly reported on his efforts to secure the "freedom of the Church" by insisting upon the need to

exempt converts from anti-Jewish laws, their rights to attend schools and vocational institutions. Did Cassulo or his interlocutors in the Vatican view these interventions as the only practical means by which a blanket of protection, or at least some protection, might be extended to Jews who were not converts? Are there any further documents to elucidate this issue?

#31. During the war the Vatican followed its traditional policy that Jews who had converted to Catholicism were full members of the Church, and therefore entitled to its protection. This protection was sometimes guaranteed by concordats, thereby according to the Church the means by which to intervene in specific and general cases. Was the recourse to such interventions derived purely from considerations of efficacy or were there moral or other considerations that were discussed among Vatican officials? Was there a broad strategy, policy guidelines, or theological discussions among Vatican officials to determine what principles should be applied to such interventions on behalf of converted Jews?

#32. In the repeated interventions against the application of racial laws and appeals on behalf of some of the deportees that appear in these volumes, the emphasis upon "non-Aryan Catholics" or converted Jews is striking to the contemporary reader. This is all the more so because of the lasting resentment, among Jews, of the Church's promotion and encouragement of such conversions. From the standpoint of the Vatican, of course, the purported reasons for this emphasis are threefold: first, what the Church understood as its responsibility to look after its own; second, that the Vatican did not believe that Jewish organizations took care of Jewish converts to Catholicism; and third, the claim that it was only in the cases of this particular class of "Jews" that the Vatican had locus standi with aggressive and dictatorial regimes and hence some prospect of success. To what degree was the latter a rationale for inattention to Jews qua Jews? And

how accurate was it to refer, as many regularly do, to interventions on behalf of "Jews" when that term frequently connoted baptized Jews? Are there any documents that would clarify this ambiguous use of terminology?

#46. In countries in which Vatican representatives clashed with the local authorities over the application of racial laws, there are repeated references to conversions. Governments, occupation authorities, nuncios, the Secretariat, and local Churches all raised questions about the sincerity of these conversions. Were such conversions a means to avoid the disabilities of discriminatory laws, regulations, and even worse, deportation and murder? To anyone familiar with the wartime persecution of the Jews, and this must include Vatican officials whose voices are represented here, such questions may appear cruel, or at best naïve. In light of certain Church officials issuing false identity papers to unconverted Jews, were such Vatican expressions of concern that conversions be "sincere" intended to hold persecuting and even murderous officials at bay? Or were these rather a genuine reflection of the priorities of the Church jealously guarding the integrity of its sacramental life, especially baptism, and unhesitatingly promoting, even in the midst of the Holocaust, what it felt to be its apostolic mission for the souls put in its care? Are there any documents that could shed light on this issue?

Point:

Many Jews were quickly converted for the purpose of avoiding Nazi persecution. Undoubtedly Church leaders would have been glad to welcome converts to Christianity. However, in a great many more cases, false baptismal documents were provided so that Jewish people could avoid persecution, even though they had not actually converted. This indicates compassion for the human suffering, regardless of religion.

Sometimes Church officials were embarrassed about how quickly

they would convert Jews to Catholicism for the purpose of avoiding persecution. One small church in Budapest averaged about four or five conversions a year before the occupation. In 1944, those numbers shot up dramatically. Six were converted in January, 23 in May, 101 in June, over 700 in September, and over 1,000 in October. Three thousand Jews became Catholics at this one small church in 1944. The Nazi occupying forces soon recognized that these conversions were being done only to avoid deportation, so they started persecuting the "converts." Since it no longer assured protection, the flood of conversions dried up.

The Catholic Church was so open to Jewish converts that some have argued that during the war this was the Church's primary interest. In a Papal Allocution of October 6, 1946, Pope Pius addressed the charge that the Church had engaged in "forced conversions." He found the best evidence to be a memorandum, dated January 25, 1942, from the Vatican Secretariat of State to the Legation of Yugoslavia to the Holy See. The Pope read from that document:

"According to the principles of Catholic doctrine, conversion must be the result, not of external constraint, but of an interior adherence of the soul to the truths taught by the Catholic Church.

"It is for this reason that the Catholic Church does not admit to her communion adults who request either to be received or to be readmitted, except on condition that they be fully aware of the meaning and consequences of the step that they wish to take."

A slant on this claim relates to children, particularly those under the age of six. The surest way to protect such young children from the Nazis was by actually baptizing and indoctrinating them, in case they were ever challenged. This practice could create resentment among some surviving Jews, especially when Christian clergy encouraged the children to

adopt this outward behavior. This probably varied from location to location, but the evidence suggests that most clergy did not undertake these conversions lightly.

In fact, classes were established to let the children study their own religion. (In parts of France and Belgium, Church officials forbade the actual baptism of Jewish children. Outward appearances were thought sufficient to deceive the Nazis. Even when parents requested the baptism, it was recognized that this was simply a matter of duress.)

During the winter of 1943-44, the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem, under the patronage of the High Commander for Palestine, sponsored a memorial evening to recognize and honor the Pontiff's efforts on behalf of Jewish children. Dignitaries from throughout the city, including the apostolic delegation, were in attendance.

The Secretary General of the World Jewish Congress reported on a meeting with Pius XII after the war to thank him for helping hide Jewish children. Pius promised to cooperate with returning the children to their communities. Chief Rabbi Herzog of Palestine also announced that he had the Vatican's promise of help in bringing "converted" Jewish children back into the Jewish fold. In 1964, Dr. Leon Kubovitzky, who directed this project, reported that there were almost no cases of Catholic institutions resisting the return of Jewish children.

#11. The Cardinal Archbishop of Krakow, Adam Sapieha, in a letter of February 1942 to the Pope, vividly described the horrors of the Nazi occupation, including the concentration camps that destroyed thousands of Poles. However, neither in this nor in any other communication to Rome, of which we are aware, did Sapieha make any specific reference to the Jews. Nor, to the best of our knowledge, did the Vatican ever request any information on the subject from him. Yet Sapieha undoubtedly knew what was happening in Auschwitz, which was

within his archdiocese. Was there any unpublished communication of Sapieha to Rome in which he alluded to the fate of the Jews? Can the archives tell us more regarding the interaction on this and related matters between the Vatican and Polish church leaders?

Point:

Early in the war, Sapieha had asked the Pope for a forceful statement, but he later changed his mind and recalled his letter. Sapieha worked to help Jews escape Nazi persecution. After the war, Pius made Sapieha a cardinal.

In 1943, a bishop wrote a memo from London urging the Pope to intervene in the matter, but it was then retracted by Adam Sapieha, the Archbishop of Krakow, who was still in Poland.

Certain Polish bishops, exiled in London, called for stronger statements by the Pontiff. Those who remained in Poland like Archbishop Sapieha, however, urged him not to speak.

On June 2, 1943 (the feast day of St. Eugenio), in an address to the cardinals which was broadcast on Vatican Radio and clandestinely distributed in printed form within Poland, the Pope, at the request of Polish Archbishop Sapieha, expressed in new and clear terms his compassion and affection for the Polish people and predicted the rebirth of Poland.

“No one familiar with the history of Christian Europe can ignore or forget the saints and heroes of Poland... nor how the faithful people of that land have contributed throughout history to the development and conservation of Christian Europe. For this people so harshly tried, and others, who together have been forced to drink the bitter chalice of war today, may a new future dawn worthy of their legitimate aspirations in the depths of their sufferings, in a Europe based anew on Christian foundations.”

Archbishop Sapieha wrote from Kracow that: “the Polish people

will never forget these noble and holy words, which will call forth a new and ever more loyal love for the Holy Father... and at the same time provide a most potent antidote to the poisonous influences of enemy propaganda." He also said that he would try to publicize the speech as much as possible by having copies printed, if the authorities would permit it.

Bishop Stefan Sapieha of Krakow wrote a letter to Pius, dated October 28, 1942, in which he said: "It displeases us greatly that we cannot communicate Your Holiness' letters to our faithful, but it would furnish a pretext for further persecution and we have already had victims suspected of communicating with the Holy See." Pius would later cite this experience in a letter to Bishop Preysing of Berlin:

"We leave it to the [local] bishops to weigh the circumstances in deciding whether or not to exercise restraint, *ad maiora mala vitanda* [to avoid greater evil]. This would be advisable if the danger of retaliatory and coercive measures would be imminent in cases of public statements by the bishop. Here lies one of the reasons We Ourselves restrict Our public statements. The experience We had in 1942 with documents which We released for distribution to the faithful gives justification, as far as We can see, for Our attitude."

#12. On 18 May 1941, Pope Pius XII received the head of the Croatia fascist state, Ante Pavelic. While the Vatican had received Pavelic as an individual Catholic, not as head of state, there were political implications as a result of this reception. Before his reception, the Yugoslav minister to the Holy See brought to the Vatican's attention Pavelic's involvement in committing atrocities against the Serbs and protested the reception of Pavelic in any capacity because he was the head of an "illegitimate" puppet state. Subsequently, Pavelic's regime was responsible for the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Serbs, Jews, gypsies, and partisans. It is not known how the Pope reacted to these atrocities. Are there any archival materials that can illuminate this issue?

#13.Many unanswered questions also surround the Archbishop of Zagreb, Aloysius Stepinac, beatified in 1999. While in 1941 he initially welcomed the creation of a Croatian state, he subsequently condemned atrocities against Serbs and Jews and established an organization to rescue Jews. Are there any archival documents or materials from the beatification process that can illuminate this matter?

Point:

Croatia came into being during the war. On March 25, 1941, Italy, Germany, and Yugoslavia signed an agreement bringing Yugoslavia into the Axis. Two days later, a group of Serbian nationalists seized control of Belgrade and announced that they were siding with the Allies. As a result, Hitler invaded Yugoslavia. Croat Fascists then declared an independent Croatia. The new Croat government was led by Ante Pavelic and his supporters, the Ustashe.

There had been a long history of hatred in this part of the world between Croats (predominantly Catholic) and Serbs (mainly Orthodox). The Ustashi government exacted revenge against the Serbs for years of perceived discrimination. According to some accounts, as many as 700,000 Serbs were slaughtered. Among the charges against the Catholic Church in Croatia are that it engaged in forcible conversions, that Church officials hid Croat Nazis after the war, that Nazi gold made its way from Croatia to the Vatican, and that Catholic leaders in Croatia supported the governments brutality toward the Serbs.

While some of these charges are recent in origin (and from suspect sources), there is no credible evidence that the Pope or the Vatican behaved inappropriately. For instance, the Vatican expressly repudiated forcible conversions in a memorandum, dated January 25, 1942, from the Vatican Secretariat of State to the Legation of Yugoslavia to the Holy See (addressing conversions in Croatia). In August of that

year, the Grand Rabbi of Zagreb, Dr. Miroslav Freiburger, wrote to Pius XII expressing his "most profound gratitude" for the "limitless goodness that the representatives of the Holy See and the leaders of the Church showed to our poor brothers." [*Actes et Documents*, vol. VIII, no. 441. See also *id.* vol. VIII, no. 537 (report on Vatican efforts to alleviate the sad conditions of the Croatian Jews); *id.* vol. VIII, no. 473 (efforts to find sanctuary for Croatian Jews in Italy); *id.* vol. VIII, no. 557 (insistence on "a benevolent treatment toward the Jews").] In October, a message went out from the Vatican to its representatives in Zagreb regarding the "painful situation that spills out against the Jews in Croatia" and instructing them to petition the government for "a more benevolent treatment of those unfortunates." In December 1942, Dr. Freiburger wrote again, expressing his confidence "in the support of the Holy See."

The Cardinal Secretary of State's notes reflect that Vatican petitions were successful in getting a suspension of "dispatches of Jews from Croatia" by January 1943, but Germany was applying pressure for "an attitude more firm against the Jews." Maglione went on to outline various steps that could be taken by the Holy See to help the Jews. Another instruction from the Holy See to its unofficial representatives (since there were no diplomatic relations) in Zagreb directing them to work on behalf of the Jews went out on March 6, 1943. On September 24, 1943, Alex Easterman, the British representative of the World Jewish Congress, contacted Msgr. William Godfrey, the apostolic delegate in London and informed him that about 4,000 Jewish refugees from Croatia were safely evacuated to an island in the Adriatic Sea. "I feel sure that efforts of your Grace and of the Holy See have brought about this fortunate result," wrote Easterman.

Croatian Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac originally welcomed the Ustashi government, but after he learned of the extent of the brutality, and after having received direction from Rome, he

condemned its actions. [The British Minister to the Holy See during the war years, Sir Francis D'Arcy Osborne, wrote that Stepinac always acted according to the "well-intended dictates of his conscience."] A speech he gave on October 24, 1942, is typical of many that he made refuting Nazi theory:

"All men and all races are children of God; all without distinction. Those who are Gypsies, Black, European, or Aryan all have the same rights... for this reason, the Catholic Church had always condemned, and continues to condemn, all injustice and all violence committed in the name of theories of class, race, or nationality. It is not permissible to persecute Gypsies or Jews because they are thought to be an inferior race."

The Associated Press reported that "by 1942 Stepinac had become a harsh critic" of that Nazi puppet regime, condemning its "genocidal policies, which killed tens of thousands of Serbs, Jews, Gypsies and Croats." He thereby earned the enmity of the Croatian dictator, Ante Pavelic.

Although Cornwell argues that the Holy See granted *de facto* recognition to the Ustashi government, in actuality the Vatican rebuked Pavelic and refused to recognize the Independent State of Croatia or receive a Croatian representative. [*Actes et Documents*, vol. IV, no. 400 ("Pavelic is furious... because... he is treated worse by the Holy See than the Slovaks").] When Pavelic traveled to the Vatican, he was greatly angered because he was permitted only a private audience rather than the diplomatic audience he had wanted. He might not even have been granted that privilege, but for the fact that the extent of the atrocities that had already begun were not yet known.

#14. On several occasions Konrad von Preysing, Bishop of Berlin, had vainly appealed to the Pope to protest specific Nazi actions, including those directed at the Jews. On 17 January 1941 he wrote to Pius XII, noting that "Your Holiness

is certainly informed about the situation of the Jews in Germany and the neighboring countries. I wish to mention that I have been asked both from the Catholic and Protestant side if the Holy See could not do something on this subject, issue an appeal in favor of these unfortunates." This was a direct appeal to the Pope, which bypassed the nuncio. What impression did von Preysing's words make on Pius XII; what discussions if any, took place about making such a public appeal as the German bishop requested, and was any further information about Nazi anti-Jewish policy sought?

Point:

Pius always was close to Preysing, but beginning in 1942, he really began to follow Preysing's lead. Preysing, of course, was a recognized opponent of Nazism. Not only did the Pope send a message congratulating Preysing for his defense of the rights of all people, he also took Preysing's advice when selecting episcopal candidates, avoiding those whom Preysing felt were sympathetic toward the Nazis.

In April 1943, Pius wrote encouraging Preysing to continue his work on behalf of the Jews: "For the non-Aryan Catholics as well as for Jews, the Holy See has done whatever was in its power, with charitable, financial and moral assistance.... Let us not speak of the substantial sums which we spent in American money for the fares of emigrants.... We have gladly given these sums, for these people were in distress.... Jewish organizations have warmly thanked the Holy See for these rescue operations.... As for what is being done against non-Aryans in the German territories, we have said a word in our Christmas radio message. The mention was short, but it was understood."

#15. On 6 March 1943, von Preysing asked Pius XII to try and save the Jews still in the Reich capital, who were facing imminent deportation which, as he indicated, would lead to certain death: "The new wave of deportations of the Jews,

which began just before 1 March, affects us particularly here in Berlin even more bitterly. Several thousands are involved: Your Holiness has alluded to their probable fate in your Christmas Radio Broadcast. Among the deportees are also many Catholics. Is it not possible for Your Holiness again to intervene for the many unfortunate innocents? It is the last hope for many and the profound wish of all right-thinking people." On 30 April 1943, the Pope indicated to von Preysing that local bishops had the discretion to determine when to be silent and when to speak out in the face of the danger of reprisals and pressures. Although he felt that he had to exercise great prudence in his actions as Pope, he made it clear that he felt comforted that Catholics, particularly in Berlin, had helped the "so-called non-Aryans" (sogenannten Nichtarier). He particularly singled out for "fatherly recognition" Father Lichtenberg, who had been imprisoned by the Nazis and who would die shortly afterwards. Are there earlier examples in the archives of the Pope's solicitude for Father Lichtenberg or any reference to the bishops' stand against the persecution of the Jews going back to 1938? Is there any evidence of discussion in the Vatican regarding the deportations from Berlin?

Point:

Shortly after Austria was annexed, the Archbishop of Vienna, Cardinal Theodor Innitzer, met with Hitler and, based on outward appearances and a German radio broadcast, he welcomed the *Anschluss*. [The report, translated into English, was sent to Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy by Cardinal Pacelli, who strongly disassociated it from the Vatican's position.] Austrian bishops also issued a public statement praising the achievements of Nazism. This was in accord with much of the feeling throughout Austria, where the German troops had been greeted as heroes rather than conquerors. Vatican Radio, however, immediately broadcast a vehement denunciation of these actions, and Pacelli ordered the Archbishop to report to

Rome. [Internal German records reflect that Nazi leadership wanted to “encourage Cardinal Innitzer and the Austrian bishops in their patriotic attitude.”]

Before meeting with the Pope, Innitzer met with Pacelli, who had been outraged by the German cardinal. This has been called one of the “most tempestuous” meetings of the whole pontificate. Pacelli made it clear that Innitzer had to retract his statements. He was made to sign a new statement, issued on behalf of all of the Austrian bishops, which provided: “The solemn declaration of the Austrian bishops on 18 March of this year was clearly not intended to be an approval of something that was not and is not compatible with God=s law.” The Vatican newspaper also reported that the bishops’ earlier statement had been issued without approval from Rome.

A German official in Rome, who saw Innitzer shortly after his meetings, reported: “I have the impression that the Cardinal, who seemed very exhausted from the conversations in the Vatican, had had a hard struggle there.” The same official reported later the same day that the retraction of the earlier statements “was wrested from Cardinal Innitzer with pressure that can only be termed extortion.” Before long, however, Innitzer was recognized as a true enemy of the Nazis.

#17. The Pope’s reply to von Preysing did not give a specific commitment to make any public appeal for the Jews. But on 2 June 1943, just over a month later, the Pope in a speech to the Sacred College of Cardinals did elusively refer to those “destined sometimes, even without guilt on their part, to exterminatory measures.” This was the second and last occasion on which Pope Pius XII would make any (indirect) reference to the Holocaust during the war years. Its proximity in time to his reply on 30 April 1943 to von Preysing suggests that there may have been a connection, though once again only a closer investigation of the Vatican archives could reveal whether this was the case. What unpublished documents regarding the

Pope's speech and his reply to von Preysing do the archives contain?

Point:

The question refers to the Pope's speech to the College of Cardinals as his "second and last" reference to the Holocaust. There are so many statements that he made. Let us start with an encyclical from that same month (June 1943), *Mystici Corporis Christi* ("On the Mystical Body"). It was an obvious attack on the theoretical basis of National Socialism.

In *Mystici Corporis Christi*, Pius wrote: "the Church of God... is despised and hated maliciously by those who shut their eyes to the light of Christian wisdom and miserably return to the teachings, customs and practices of ancient paganism." He wrote of the "passing things of earth," and the "massive ruins" of war, including the persecution of priests and nuns. He offered prayers that world leaders be granted the love of wisdom and expressed no doubt that "a most severe judgment" would await those leaders who did not follow God's will.

Pius appealed to "Catholics the world over" to "look to the Vicar of Jesus Christ as the loving Father of them all, who... takes upon himself with all his strength the defense of truth, justice and charity." He explained, "Our paternal love embraces all peoples, whatever their nationality or race." Christ, by his blood, made the Jews and Gentiles one "breaking down the middle wall of partition... in his flesh by which the two peoples were divided." He noted that Jews were among the first people to adore Jesus. Pius then made an appeal for all to "follow our peaceful King who taught us to love not only those who are of a different nation or race, but even our enemies." As Pinchas E. Lapide, the Israeli consul in Italy, wrote: "Pius chose mystical theology as a cloak for a message which no cleric or educated Christian could possibly misunderstand."

In June, Vatican Radio followed up with a broadcast that expressly stated: "He who makes a distinction between Jews and other men is unfaithful to God and in conflict with God's commands." On July 28, 1943, a Vatican Radio broadcast further reported on the Pope's denunciation of totalitarian forms of government and support for democratic ideals. It said:

"The life and activities of all must be protected against arbitrary human action. This means that no man has any right on the life and freedom of other men. Authority... cannot be at the service of any arbitrary power. Herein lies the essential differences between tyranny and true usefulness... The Pope condemns those who dare to place the fortunes of whole nations in the hands of one man alone, a man who as such, is the prey of passions, error and dreams."

Adolf Hitler's name was not used, but there was no doubt to whom the Pope was referring.

Jewish organizations had taken note of Pius XII's efforts, and they turned to him in times of need. In June, Grand Rabbi Herzog wrote to Cardinal Maglione on behalf of Egyptian Jews expressing thanks for the Holy See's charitable work in Europe and asking for assistance for Jews being held prisoner in Italy. The Rabbi, in asking for assistance, noted that Jews of the world consider the Holy See their "historic protector in oppression." The following month he wrote back thanking Pius for his efforts on behalf of the refugees that "had awoken a feeling of gratitude in the hearts of millions of people." On August 2, 1943, the World Jewish Congress sent the following message to Pope Pius:

"World Jewish Congress respectfully expresses gratitude to Your Holiness for your gracious concern for innocent peoples afflicted by the calamities of war and appeals to Your Holiness to use your high authority by suggesting Italian authorities may remove as speedily as possible to Southern

Italy or other safer areas twenty thousand Jewish refugees and Italian nationals now concentrated in internment camps... and so prevent their deportation and similar tragic fate which has befallen Jews in Eastern Europe. Our terror-stricken brethren look to Your Holiness as the only hope for saving them from persecution and death."

Later that same month, Time magazine reported: "...no matter what critics might say, it is scarcely deniable that the Church Apostolic, through the encyclicals and other Papal pronouncements, has been fighting totalitarianism more knowingly, devoutly, and authoritatively, and for a longer time, than any other organized power."

In September, a representative from the World Jewish Congress reported to the Pope that approximately 4,000 Jews and Yugoslav nationals who had been in internment camps were removed to an area that was under the control of Yugoslav partisans. As such, they were out of immediate danger. The report went on to say:

"I feel sure that the efforts of your Grace and the Holy See have brought about this fortunate result, and I should like to express to the Holy See and yourself the warmest thanks of the World Jewish Congress. The Jews concerned will probably not yet know by what agency their removal from danger has been secured, but when they do they will be indeed grateful."

In November, Rabbi Herzog again wrote to Pius expressing his "sincere gratitude and deep appreciation for so kind an attitude toward Israel and for such valuable assistance given by the Catholic Church to the endangered Jewish people." Jewish communities in Chile, Uruguay, and Bolivia also sent similar offers of thanks to the Pope.

August 1944 was the month when a group of Roman Jews came to thank Pius for having helped them during the period of Nazi occupation. In response, the Pontiff reaffirmed his position:

"For centuries, Jews have been unjustly treated and despised. It is time they were treated with justice and humanity. God wills it and the Church wills it. St. Paul tells us that the Jews are our brothers. They should also be welcomed as friends."

Similar acts and statements continued throughout the war. Details can be found in my book.

#21. Casimir Papée, the Polish ambassador to the Holy See, on 28 April 1943, sent Maglione an extract from a Zurich newspaper, describing the martyrdom of many Polish priests interned at Dachau. He reminded the Cardinal of the sentiments awakened among all civilized and Christian nations by German cruelty in the occupied territories adding: "My colleagues and I never failed to draw Your Eminence's attention to these painful facts." In concluding his letter, Papée asked what the Holy See had been able to do "to save lives precious to the Church," and which measures it proposed to take "in the face of so much injustice." There is no evidence of a reply in the ADSS, though the grievances of the Poles were noted on several occasions. Appeals such as these had been coming to the Vatican since 1939. Are there any materials in the archives regarding internal discussions as to how the Vatican was to respond?

Point:

In 1940, the Germans decided to put all priests from the concentration camps into one location where they could be tightly controlled. They were kept together in Dachau Barracks 26, 28, and 30 (later they were squeezed into barracks 26 and 28 which had room and beds for 360, even though there were rarely fewer than 1,500 priests interred there). These barracks were ringed with a barbed-wire fence, which restricted the ability of priests to minister to other prisoners during their few free hours.

These Dachau priests worked in the enormous S.S. industrial complex immediately to the west of the camp, but the Nazis had other uses for them as well. Some were injected with pus so that the Nazi doctors could study gangrene; others had their body temperature lowered to study resuscitation of German fliers downed in the North Atlantic; one German priest was crowned with barbed wire and a group of Jewish prisoners was forced to spit on him. Fr. Stanislaus Bednarski, a Pole, was hanged on a cross. In November 1944, three priests were executed "not because they were criminals," as one judge stated, "but because it was their tragedy that they were Catholic priests."

As the tide of the war began to turn, and the Germans needed to get all the labor possible out of the prisoners, the S.S. decided to use these generally well-educated prisoner/priests as secretaries and managers. With priests in the offices where they could manipulate labor schedules, they were able to engage in forms of sabotage. Thus, a planned gas oven at Dachau never became functional due, at least in part, to the efforts of these imprisoned Catholic priests.

In an allocution to the Sacred College on June 2, 1945, which was also broadcast on Vatican Radio, Pius noted the death of about 2,000 Catholic priests at Dachau and described National Socialism 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." With "the satanic apparition of National Socialism" out of the way, Pius expressed his confidence that Germany would "rise to a new dignity and a new life" He went on to point out that Nazi persecution of the Catholic Church both in Germany and occupied nations had been continuous, and that he had been aware of Nazism's ultimate goal: "its adherents boasted that once they had gained the military victory, they would put an end to the Church forever. Authorities and incontrovertible witnesses kept Us

informed of this intention”

The Vatican's efforts to win freedom for its bishops and priests imprisoned in Dachau were all frustrated, but no one really doubts the Holy See's desire to win their freedom. Pius, by the way, used no different technique in this effort than he did when trying to help Jews. As one bishop who was imprisoned at Dachau reported:

“The detained priests trembled every time news reached us of some protest by religious authority, but particularly by the Vatican. We all had the impression that our wardens made us atone heavily for the fury these protests evoked... whenever the way we were treated became more brutal, the Protestant pastors among the prisoners used to vent their indignation on the Catholic priests: ‘Again your big naive Pope and those simpletons, your bishops, are shooting their mouths off... why don't they get the idea once and for all, and shut up. They play the heroes and we have to pay the bill.’”

With concerns like this, Pope Pius XII had to weigh carefully the force of his words.

#24. In February 1944, the Pontifical Commission for the Vatican City State (Pontificio Commissione per lo Stato della Città del Vaticano), the administrative agency of Vatican City, recorded the presence of Jews and others who were given refuge within the Vatican. Are Pontifical Commission records and communiqués available with respect to the housing of refugees? Are there records of other people finding refuge in pontifical institutions, for example, the papal villa at Castelgondolfo?

I can send slide photographs of people sleeping and eating in the Vatican at this time.

#26. Rotta was the only nuncio to cooperate with the diplomatic representatives of neutral states, Spain, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland. On three occasions in late 1944, he and his

diplomatic colleagues submitted protests to the Hungarian government in defense of Jews and took active measures to save them. The Vatican expressed its approval of Rotta's actions at this juncture. Is there evidence of earlier Vatican approval or encouragement of Rotta's activities?

Point:

In March 1944, Germany invaded Hungary on the pretext of safeguarding communications, and the last great nightmare of the war began. Hungary had been a haven for refugee Jews. The Nazis immediately issued anti-Jewish decrees. After several oral protests, the papal nuncio, Monsignor Angelo Rotta, was the first foreign envoy to submit a formal note expressing Pope Pius XII's protest. Shortly thereafter, Rotta received a letter of encouragement from Pius XII in which the Pope termed the treatment of Jews as "unworthy of Hungary, the country of the Holy Virgin and of St. Stephen" From then on, acting always in accordance with instructions from the Holy See and in the name of Pope Pius XII, Rotta continually intervened against the treatment of the Jews and the inhuman character of the anti-Jewish legislation.

Of course there was no encouragement prior to this 1944 action. The Nazis were not yet there.

The question states that, "Rotta was the only nuncio to cooperate with the diplomatic representatives of neutral states, Spain, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland." I want to see their evidence of this allegation.

#27. In 1933, Edith Stein wrote to Pius XI asking him to issue an encyclical condemning anti-Semitism. This may have been the first of many appeals made to the Vatican for intervention on behalf of the Jews. Though the date falls beyond the parameters of our mandate, the document is relevant because of its content. How was this letter received? Is the letter

itself in the archives, and if so may we see it?

Point:

Her letter resulted eventually in *Mit brennender Sorge*. *Mit brennender Sorge* was one of the strongest condemnations of any national regime that the Holy See ever published. It condemned not only the persecution of the Church in Germany, but also the Neo-paganism of Nazi theories. "Whoever exalts race, or the people, or the State, or a particular form of State... above their standard value and divinizes them to an idolatrous level, distorts and perverts an order of the world planned and created by God," wrote the Pope. There was even a brazen swipe at Hitler:

"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 XI, 15)."

The encyclical concluded that "enemies of the Church, who think that their time has come, will see that their joy was premature."

Unlike most encyclicals, which are written in Latin, *Mit brennender Sorge* was written in German for wider dissemination in that country. It was smuggled out of Italy, copied and distributed to parish priests to be read from all of the pulpits on Palm Sunday, March 14, 1937. No one who heard the Pontifical document read in church had any illusion about the gravity of these statements or their significance. Certainly the Nazis understood their importance.

An internal German memorandum dated March 23, 1937, called *Mit brennender Sorge* "almost a call to do battle against the Reich government." All available copies were confiscated. German printers who had made copies were arrested and the presses

were seized. Those convicted of distributing the encyclical were arrested, the Church-affiliated publications which ran the encyclical were banned, and payments due to the Church from the Government were reduced.

The day following the release of *Mit brennender Sorge*, a Nazi newspaper, the *Voelkischer Beobachter*, carried a strong counterattack on the "Jew-God and His deputy in Rome." *Das Schwarze Korps*, official paper of the SS, called it "the most incredible of Pius XI's pastoral letters; every sentence in it was an insult to the new Germany." The German ambassador to the Holy See was instructed not to take part in the solemn Easter ceremonies, and German missions throughout Europe were informed by the Nazi Foreign Office of the "Reich's profound indignation" They were also told that the German government "had to consider the Pope's encyclical as a call to battle... as it calls upon Catholic citizens to rebel against the authority of the Reich."

Hitler verbally attacked the German bishops at a mass rally in Berlin, and he dictated a letter of protest to the Pope, complaining that the Vatican had gone to the people instead of coming to him. Vatican Secretary of State, Eugenio Pacelli (the future Pope Pius XII), rebuffed German protests, noting that the German government had not been cooperative in the past when the Vatican complained about the various matters (including the Nazis treatment of Jews). In May, Hitler was quoted in a Swiss newspaper saying, "the Third Reich does not desire a *modus vivendi* with the Catholic Church, but rather its destruction with lies and dishonor, in order to make room for a German Church in which the German race will be glorified."

#30.Finances are occasionally mentioned in the context of the relief of civilian suffering. For example, an accounting of the disbursement of funds is given in cases where Jewish organizations donated funds to the Vatican for relief and rescue. However, the volumes contain no documents regarding

the Vatican's own financial transactions relating to such efforts. Is there any archival evidence to indicate how the Vatican collected and disbursed its own or other funds in carrying out such activities, such as the annual Peter's Pence collection?

Pius spent his entire private fortune on their behalf. Pius spent what he inherited himself, as a Pacelli, from his family. This was apparently not an insubstantial amount. According to John Cornwell, the future Pope inherited \$100,000 in the mid-1930s.

#34. On March 18, 1942, Gerhart Riegner of the World Jewish Congress and Richard Lichtheim, representing the Jewish Agency for Palestine, sent a remarkably comprehensive memorandum on the fate of Jews in Central and Eastern Europe to Archbishop Filippo Bernardini, the nuncio in Switzerland, and a day later Bernardini forwarded the document to Maglione himself. While the report gave no clear sense of a European-wide "final solution," it left little to the imagination in its description of horrors organized on a continental scale. Is there any indication in the archives about what response, if any, was made to this report? For example, did the Holy See notify hierarchies or its diplomatic representatives regarding the contents of the report?

Point:

Gerhard Riegner's memorandum to the Holy See was dated March 18, 1942. It described Nazi persecution of Jewish people, and it was not published by the Vatican in its collection of wartime documents (*Actes et Documents*). By the same token, the letter of thanks that Riegner sent to Nuncio M. Philippe Bernadinon April 8, 1942 was also not published. In that letter, Riegner stated:

"We also note with great satisfaction the steps undertaken by His Excellence the Cardinal Maglione, with authorities of

Slovakia on behalf of the Jews of that country, and we ask you kindly to transmit to the Secretariat of State of the Holy See the expression of our profound gratitude.

"We are convinced that this intervention greatly impressed the governmental circles of Slovakia, which conviction seems to be confirmed by the information we have just received from that country....

It appears... that the Slovak Government finds it necessary to justify the measures in question. One might therefore conclude that it might be induced – in the application of these measures – to conform more closely to the wishes expressed by the Holy See which desired to revoke the recent measures against the Jews.

"In renewing the expressions of our profound gratitude, for whatever the Holy See, thanks to your gracious intermediation, was good enough to undertake on behalf of our persecuted brothers, we ask Your Excellency to accept the assurance of our deepest respect."

The reason that neither the memo nor the letter of thanks were printed in the *Actes et Documents* collection is that they were classified as "unofficial." Moreover, the memo was rather long and did not report a definite source of information, but reported on persecutions that were "more or less known to the public at large." (Judging Pius XII, Inside the Vatican, February 2000, at 61, 66, quoting Father Blet, who noted that the memorandum had been published in a well-known book prior to the Vatican's collection being published). Riegner's memo is, however, mentioned in the *Actes et Documents* collection. Le nonce à Berne Bernardini au Cardinal Maglione, March 19, 1942, *Actes et Documents*, vol. VIII, no. 314, p. 466. In fact, a footnote was added just to draw attention to receipt of the memo. It was certainly never hidden, concealed, or missing.

#35. There is evidence that the Holy See was well-informed by mid-1942 of the accelerating mass murder of Jews. Questions continue to be asked about the reception of this news, and what attention was given to it. How thoroughly informed was the Vatican regarding details of Nazi persecution and extermination? What was the Holy See's reaction, and what discussions followed the reports that flowed in describing evidence of the "Final Solution"? What, more specifically, were the steps leading up to the Pope's Christmas message of 1942? Are there drafts of this message?

#36. In light of the above, in September 1942 there were requests for a papal statement from the British, Belgian, Polish, Brazilian and American diplomatic representatives to the Holy See. In Volume 5 of the ADSS, only the response to Myron Taylor, the American representative to the Pope, is published. Might the responses to the other representatives be made available?

Point:

In September 1942, President Roosevelt sent a message to the Pope detailing reports from the Warsaw ghetto and asking whether the Vatican had any information that would tend to confirm or deny the reports of Nazi crimes. In mid-October, the Holy See replied, stating that it, too, had reports of "severe measures" taken against the Jews, but that it had been impossible to verify the accuracy of the reports. The statement went on, however, to note that "the Holy See is taking advantage of every opportunity offered in order to mitigate the suffering of non-Aryans."

At their annual meeting in November 1942, in Washington, D.C., the U.S. Bishops released a statement:

"Since the murderous assault on Poland, utterly devoid of every semblance of humanity, there has been a premeditated and systematic extermination of the people of this nation. The

same satanic technique is being applied to many other peoples. We feel a deep sense of revulsion against the cruel indignities heaped upon Jews in conquered countries and upon defenseless peoples not of our faith.... Deeply moved by the arrest and maltreatment of the Jews, we cannot stifle the cry of conscience. In the name of humanity and Christian principles, our voice is raised."

For his part, in late 1942, Pius sent three letters of support to bishops in Poland. The letters were intended to be read and distributed by the bishops to the faithful. The bishops all thanked the Pontiff, but responded that they could not publish his words or read them aloud, because that would lead to more persecution of Jews and of Catholics.

With the Vatican having recognized Nazi atrocities earlier than many other nations and having assisted western powers early during the hostilities, Allied leaders sought to have the Pope join in a formal declaration concerning the atrocities taking place in Germany and in German-occupied areas. In a message dated September 14, the Brazilian ambassador, Ildebrando Accioly, wrote: "It is necessary that the authorized and respected voice of the Vicar of Christ be heard against these atrocities." On that same day, British Minister D'Arcy Osborne and American representative Harold H. Tittmann requested a "public and specific denunciation of Nazi treatment of the populations of the counties under German occupation." Interestingly, neither Tittmann nor Accioly mentioned the treatment of Jews by the Nazis. Osborne, who did mention the treatment of Jewish people in his request to the Pope, reported back to London that the coordinated requests to the Pontiff looked like an effort to involve the Pope in political and partisan action.

Pius was non-committal in response to these requests, and a few weeks later President Roosevelt's representative, Myron Taylor, renewed the request on behalf of the Allies. American representatives ultimately reported back that the Holy See was

convinced that an open condemnation would “result in the violent deaths of many more people.” A secret British telegram from this same time period reported on an audience with the Pope:

“His Holiness undertook to do whatever was possible on behalf of the Jews, but His Majesty’s Minister doubted whether there would be any public statement.”

The Pope did not join in this condemnation, perhaps because as a *New York Times* editorial concluded, the joint statement was “an official indictment.” Pius did not want to breach the Church’s official neutrality by joining in a declaration made by either side, and he was concerned that the Allies’ statement would be used as part of the war effort (as happened with some of his earlier radio broadcasts). He did, however, make his own statement.

In his 1942 Christmas statement, broadcast over Vatican Radio, Pope Pius XII said that the world was “plunged into the gloom of tragic error,” and that “the Church would be untrue to herself, she would have ceased to be a mother, if she were deaf to the cries of suffering children which reach her ears from every class of the human family.” He spoke of the need for mankind to make “a solemn vow never to rest until valiant souls of every people and every nation of the earth arise in their legions, resolved to bring society and to devote themselves to the services of the human person and of a divinely ennobled human society.” He said that mankind owed this vow to all victims of the war, including “the hundreds of thousands who, through no fault of their own, and *solely because of their nation or race*, have been *condemned to death or progressive extinction*.” In making this statement and others during the war, Pius used the Latin word “*stirps*,” which means race, but which had been used throughout Europe for centuries as an explicit reference to Jews.

Pius also condemned totalitarian regimes and acknowledged some

culpability on the part of the Church: "A great part of the human race, and not a few – We do not hesitate to say it – not a few even of those who call themselves Christians, bear some share in the collective responsibility for the aberrations, the disasters, and the low moral state of modern society." He urged all Catholics to give shelter wherever they could.

The Polish ambassador thanked the Pontiff, who "in his last Christmas address implicitly condemned all the injustices and cruelties suffered by the Polish people at the hands of the Germans. Poland acclaims this condemnation; it thanks the Holy Father for his words...." British records reflect the opinion that "the Pope's condemnation of the treatment of the Jews & the Poles is quite unmistakable, and the message is perhaps more forceful in tone than any of his recent statements." The Pope informed the United States Minister to the Vatican that he considered his recent broadcast to be clear and comprehensive in its condemnation of the heartrending treatment of Poles, Jews, hostages, etc. And to have satisfied all recent demands that he should speak out.

A Christmas Day editorial in the *New York Times* praised Pius XII for his moral leadership:

"No Christmas sermon reaches a larger congregation than the message Pope Pius XII addresses to a war-torn world at this season. *This Christmas more than ever he is a lonely voice crying out of the silence of a continent.* The Pulpit whence he speaks is more than ever like the Rock on which the Church was founded, a tiny island lashed and surrounded by a sea of war. In these circumstances, in any circumstances, indeed, *no one would expect the Pope to speak as a political leader, or a war leader, or in any other role than that of a preacher ordained to stand above the battle, tied impartially, as he says, to all people and willing to collaborate in any new order which will bring a just peace.*

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 judgment' is like a verdict in a high court of justice.

Pope Pius expresses as passionately as any leader on our side the war aims of the struggle for freedom when he says that those who aim at building a new world must fight for free choice of government and religious order. They must refuse that the state should make of individuals a herd of whom the state disposes as if they were a lifeless thing."

The *London Times* also ran an editorial expressing similar sentiments about the Pope's statements since his coronation:

"A study of the words which Pope Pius XII has addressed since his accession in encyclicals and allocutions to the Catholics of various nations leaves no room for doubt. He condemns the worship of force and its concrete manifestation in the suppression of national liberties and in the persecution of the Jewish race."

To the Axis leaders the Pope's Christmas message was not hard to decipher. Mussolini was greatly angered by the speech. The German ambassador to the Vatican complained that Pius had abandoned any pretense at neutrality and was "clearly speaking on behalf of the Jews." An American report noted that the Germans were "conspicuous by their absence" at a Midnight Mass conducted by the Pope for diplomats on Christmas Eve. One German report stated:

"In a manner never known before, the Pope has repudiated the National Socialist New European Order... It is true, the Pope does not refer to the National Socialist in Germany by name, but his speech is one long attack on everything we stand for... God, he says, regards all people and races as worthy of the same consideration. Here he is clearly speaking on behalf of the Jews... he is virtually accusing the German people of injustice toward the Jews, and makes himself the mouthpiece of the Jewish war criminals."

German Ambassador Bergen, on the instruction of Foreign Minister Ribbentrop, immediately warned the Pope that the Nazis would seek retaliation if the Vatican abandoned its neutral position. When he reported back to his superiors, the German ambassador stated: "Pacelli is no more sensible to threats than we are."

#37. Questions have been raised regarding the attitude of the Vatican toward a Jewish national home in Palestine during the Holocaust period. Maglione generally responded to requests for assistance in sending Jews to Palestine by reminding appellants of all that the Holy See had done to help the Jews, and of its readiness to continue to do so. But in internal notes published in the volumes, meant only for Vatican representatives, the Secretary of State and his aides explicitly reaffirmed the Vatican's opposition to significant Jewish immigration to Palestine, stating that "the Holy See has never approved of the project of making Palestine a Jewish home. Palestine is by now holier for Catholics than for Jews." The documents also reveal that Angelo Roncalli (the future Pope John XXIII), apostolic delegate to Istanbul, aided Jews to reach Palestine notwithstanding his uneasiness concerning Jewish political aspirations there. Is there documentation regarding guidelines for rescue efforts and their implications concerning the Vatican policy with regard to Palestine?

Point:

Angelo Roncalli (the future Pope John XXIII), war time apostolic delegate in Istanbul, was thanked for his work on behalf of Jewish refugees. He replied: "In all these painful matters I have referred to the Holy See and simply carried out the Pope's orders: first and foremost to save Jewish lives."

In 1955, when Italy celebrated the tenth anniversary of its liberation, Italian Jewry proclaimed April 17 as "The Day of Gratitude." That year, thousands of Jewish people made a pilgrimage to the Vatican to express appreciation for the Pope's wartime solitudes. The Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra even gave a special performance of Beethoven's ninth symphony in the Papal Consistory Hall as an expression of gratitude for the Catholic Church's assistance in defying the Nazis. (According to the *Jerusalem Post* of May 29, 1955, "Conductor Paul Klecki had requested that the Orchestra on its first visit to Italy play for the Pope as a gesture of gratitude for the help his church had given to all those persecuted by Nazi Fascism.") Before the celebration, a delegation approached Msgr. Montini, the director of Vatican rescue services who later became Pope Paul VI, to determine whether he would accept an award for his work on behalf of Jews during the war. He was extremely gratified and visibly touched by their words, but he declined the honor: "All I did was my duty," he said. "And besides I only acted upon orders from the Holy Father. Nobody deserves a medal for that"

#38. On March 12, 1943, a consortium of rabbis in North America sent a passionate appeal to Maglione, describing the horrors in Poland and the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto, and asking for help from Rome. It is curious that there are no references in the volumes to the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Are there any documents relating to this event in the archives?

Point:

On April 19, 1943, Jewish residents of Warsaw staged a desperate uprising in the ghetto. The Nazis countered with a

block-to-block search, but they found it difficult to kill or capture the small battle groups of Jews, who would fight, then retreat through cellars, sewers, and other hidden passageways. On the fifth day of the fighting, Himmler ordered the S.S. to comb out the ghetto with the greatest severity and relentless tenacity. S.S. General Juergen Stroop decided to burn down the entire ghetto, block by block. Many victims burned or jumped to their death, rather than permit themselves to be caught by the Nazis.

The Jews in Warsaw resisted for a total of 28 days. On May 16, General Stroop reported that "the former Jewish quarter of Warsaw is no longer in existence. The large-scale action was terminated at 2015 hours by blowing up the Warsaw synagogue... Total number of Jews dealt with 56,065, including both Jews caught and Jews whose extermination can be proved." (About 20,000 Jews were killed in the streets of Warsaw and another 36,000 in the gas chambers.) Polish sources estimated that 300 Germans were killed and about 1000 were wounded.

Not only in Warsaw, but throughout Poland, Jewish people were in hiding. About 200 convents hid more than 1,500 Jewish children, mainly in Warsaw and the surrounding area. This was especially difficult, because Polish nuns in German-occupied areas were often persecuted and forced into hiding themselves. (In a small town near Mir, Poland, the Nazis executed 12 nuns in one day for suspicion of harboring Jews.) Nuns who lived in Soviet-occupied areas did not have it much better. They were sent to work for the Soviets, in areas as far away as Siberia. As such, the courage of the priests and nuns who provided shelter to Jewish people was truly admirable.

Why did people take these risks? Roncalli (the future Pope John XXIII) and Montini (the future Pope Paul VI) both gave all credit to Pope Pius XII. The end of the war saw Pius hailed as "the inspired moral prophet of victory," and he "enjoyed near-universal acclaim for aiding European Jews through diplomatic initiatives, thinly veiled public

pronouncements, and, very concretely, an unprecedented continent-wide network of sanctuary." He made hiding Jews on the run the thing to do.

#41. The Vatican radio from time to time addressed issues relating to Nazi persecution, and extracts from these broadcasts appeared in the London Tablet. It is said that Pius XII may have written or edited the texts for some of these broadcasts. Is there any documentary evidence regarding Pius XII's role and are the original broadcast transcripts available?

Point:

During the war it was not known how involved the Pope was with Vatican Radio. These broadcasts were so strongly worded and partisan that they regularly prompted vigorous protests from Mussolini and the German Ambassador to the Holy See. (Later, the Polish bishops would complain that papal statements created problems for them by infuriating the Nazis.) Vatican officials responded that Vatican Radio was run by the Jesuits as an independent concern. Recently, however, researchers discovered that Pius XII personally authored many of the intensely anti-German statements beamed around the world. In other cases, directives were found from the Pope regarding the content of the broadcasts. The late Father Robert A. Graham, one of the people assigned to go through the Vatican's wartime records, told *The Washington Post*: "I was stupefied at what I was reading. How could one explain actions so contrary to the principle of neutrality?"

#42. The case has repeatedly been made that the Vatican's fear of communism prompted it to mute and limit its criticism of Nazi atrocities and occupation policies. We are struck by the paucity of evidence to this effect and to the subject of communism in general. Indeed, our reading of the volumes

presents a different picture, especially with regard to the Vatican promotion of the American bishops' support for the alliance between the United States and the Soviet Union in order to oppose Nazism. Is there further evidence on this question?

Point:

Despite his concern over the spread of Communism, Pius recognized that Nazism presented a similar threat. He continued to condemn Communism, but as an observer of that time noted, "(w)ith it he bracketed Nazism in the same breath, for it strikes, no less ruthlessly, at the individuality of the home, the very heart of religion. Both are tyrannically pagan." In 1942, Pius told a Jesuit visitor, "the Communist danger does exist, but at this time the Nazi danger is more serious. They want to destroy the Church and crush it like a toad." When the Allies sought to have him speak out against Nazi Germany, he said he was unwilling to do so without also condemning the atheistic government of the Soviet Union, but he also refused Axis requests to bless their attack on the Soviet Union. In fact, by cooperating with Roosevelt's request that he encourage American Catholics to support extending the lend-lease program to the Soviets, Pius actually gave economic and military aid to the Soviets.

In the British Public Records Office, there is a short message dated May 10, 1943, from the British Embassy in Madrid. It reports on a message that had been forwarded by a member of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. According to this report, "In a recent dispatch the Spanish Ambassador reported that in conversation with the Pope[,] the latter informed him that he now regarded Nazism and Fascism, and not Communism, as he used to, as the greatest menace to civilization and the Roman Catholic Church." Others were also aware of the Pope's view. According to a post-war interrogation of Nazi official Joachim von Ribbentrop, Hitler thought that the Catholic Church sometimes worked with the Communists. As such, the

record simply does not support the conclusion that hatred of Communism blinded Pius XII to the evils of Nazism.

#43.In several of the volumes, the editors cite hundreds of documents which are not themselves published. For example, in Volume 10 alone the editors list 700 such documents. In some cases, the documents are briefly summarized or quoted. It would be helpful if these documents could be made available.

It would be helpful if scholars would read the documents that have been made available. Each member of the study group was assigned only two books out of the 11-volume set. One member reportedly read a third volume. Apparently none of them were very familiar with these documents prior to this project. At least they seem not to have had access to any other set. (The commission had one set to share. For a while, no one had volume 6.) I, at least, own a complete set.

#44.The Poles were major victims of the Nazis. Members of the Polish Government in Exile in London and some Polish bishops were often very vocal in their criticism of Pius XII's role. It has been reported that the Vatican commissioned the Jesuits to prepare a defense of its Polish policy. Is this correct and, if so, may we see the report? More generally, the subject of Vatican-Polish relations is an essential element for understanding the role of the Holy See during the Holocaust period and deserves further investigation in the Vatican archives. Is there other pertinent information on this subject in the archives that is not in the volumes, and may we see it?

I have a copy of the report from the Jesuits. America Press published it in English in 1942. A copy can be found in the New York City public library.

#45.The volumes contain urgent appeals to the Vatican for assistance, articulated by desperate Jewish petitioners. These petitions frequently are couched in language of effusive praise as well as gratitude for actions already undertaken.

Yet the volumes contain few examples of the assistance already given that gave rise to such expressions of praise and gratitude. What information can be obtained from either the archives or other sources concerning the concrete assistance already given which gave rise to these expressions of gratitude?

The best evidence, of course, is the testimony of these people who were there – which is what the study group seeks here to confirm. There are also 98 deposition transcripts from witnesses who saw things first-hand and testified under oath. This question, like many others, takes on the feel of the famous: “When did you stop beating your wife?”

#47. Did Pope Pius XII have serious doubts about the wisdom or correctness of his policy of “impartiality,” whether it related to Jews, Poles or any other victims of the Nazis? The published documents unfortunately provide little evidence, although Volume 2 gives us a valuable insight into his thinking during the wartime period, especially about the German Church, to which he felt particularly close. In his diary, Roncalli reports of an audience on 11 October 1941 with the Pope who asked whether his “silence” concerning Nazism would be badly judged. Are there any personal papers of Pius XII or records of his discussions with leading advisers, diplomats or important foreign visitors that would illuminate this issue, and, if so, could we see them?

There are occasional reports of expressions of concern over the course he chose. However in his first encyclical, *Summi Pontificatus* (“Darkness over the Earth”), released in 1939, Pope Pius XII set forth his position on Hitler, the war, and the role that he would play. He stayed true to that position throughout the war.

This encyclical made reference to “the ever-increasing host of Christ’s enemies” (paragraph 7), and noted that these enemies of Christ “deny or in practice neglect the vivifying truths

and the values inherent in belief in God and in Christ" and want to "break the Tables of God's Commandments to substitute other tables and other standards stripped of the ethical content of (Christianity)." In the next paragraph, Pius charged that Christians who fell in with the enemies of Christ suffered from cowardice, weakness, or uncertainty.

In paragraph 13, Pius wrote of the outbreak of war: "Our paternal heart is torn by anguish as We look ahead to all that will yet come forth from the baneful seed of violence and of hatred for which the sword today ploughs the blood drenched furrow." In the next paragraph, he wrote of the enemies of Christ (an obvious reference to Hitler's National Socialists) becoming bolder.

Paragraphs 24 through 31 laid out the Pope's belief that prayer (not public condemnation) was the only appropriate response for the Bishop of Rome. Obviously, Pius viewed this as an important act of faith. Moreover, it was the lack of Christianity that he identified as the cause of the "crop of such poignant disasters." Faith and prayer were the things he could contribute to the world at that time, not political or military strength.

Pius also expressed his belief in redemption. Thus, even though the enemies of Christ were committing horrible atrocities, it was still possible for even these very evil people to be redeemed. It was fundamental to the Pope's faith that anyone could ask and be forgiven.

Paragraphs 45 to 50 of the encyclical deal with racial matters and expressed the Pope's belief that the Church could not discriminate against any given race of people. This would have to be seen as a slap at the racial policies in both Germany and Italy. Pius expressly stated that all races and nationalities were welcome in the Church and had equal rights as children in the house of the Lord. In paragraph 48, he put meaning to those anti-racist statements by naming new bishops

of different races and nationalities. Moreover, he expressly said that the Church must always be open to all:

“The spirit, the teaching and the work of the Church can never be other than that which the Apostle of the Gentiles preached: A putting on the new (man) him who is renewed unto knowledge, according to the image of him that created him. Where there is neither Gentile nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free. But Christ is all and in all” (Colossians iii. 10, 11).

The equating of Gentiles and Jews would have to be seen as a clear rejection of Hitler’s fundamental ideology.

Paragraphs 51 to 66 seem to be Pius XII’s view of a just society. Here he asserts that the first reason for the outbreak of war is that people have forgotten the law of universal charity. The second reason is the failure to put God above civil authority. He argues that when civil authority is placed above the Lord, the government fills that void, and problems develop. This is exactly what Hitler had done. (This analysis would likely also apply to Pius XII’s view of the Soviet Union, which at that time had an agreement with Hitler.)

Pius said that nations must have a religious basis. He wrote that the goal of society must be development of the individual, not the power of the state. Again, this was a slap at Hitler’s dismantling of religious institutions and development of the state in Germany. In fact, paragraph 60 was a direct answer to Hitler’s view of the state as set forth in *Mein Kampf*:

“To consider the State as something ultimate to which everything else should be subordinated and directed, cannot fail to harm the true and lasting prosperity of nations. This can happen either when unrestricted dominion comes to be conferred on the State as having a mandate from the nation,

people, or even a social order, or when the State arrogates such dominion to itself as absolute master, despotically, without any mandate whatsoever.”

Similarly, Pius presented an answer to Hitler’s views of the family and of education in this section of the encyclical.

Pius made note of how “powers of disorder and destruction” stand ready to take advantage of sorrow, bitterness, and suffering in order to make use of them “for their dark designs.” This would seem to be a description of how Fascists in Italy and Nazis in Germany took advantage of the chaos following the First World War to rise to power. Pius also responded to the demands of Hitler and Mussolini (and, for that matter, Stalin) for stronger central governments. While acknowledging that there may be difficulties that would justify greater powers being concentrated in the State, the Pope also said that the moral law requires that the need for this be scrutinized with greatest rigor. The State can demand goods and blood, but not the immortal soul.

Paragraphs 73 to 77, dealt with the Pope’s ideas relating to international relations. Here, he wrote:

“Absolute autonomy for the State stands in open opposition to this natural way that is inherent in man... and therefore leaves the stability of international relations at the mercy of the will of rulers, while it destroys the possibility of true union and fruitful collaboration directed to the general good.”

Pius stressed the importance of treaties and wrote of an international natural law which requires that all treaties be honored. With Hitler having recently breached several treaties and the concordat, this must be seen as another swipe at the Nazi leader.

Interestingly, in paragraph 85, Pius accurately described the challenges he would face, and he set forth the code of conduct that he followed throughout the rest of the war:

“And if belonging to (the Kingdom of God), living according to its spirit, laboring for its increase and placing its benefits at the disposition of that portion of mankind also which as yet has no part in them, means in our days having to face obstacles and oppositions as vast and deep and minutely organized as never before, that does not dispense a man from the frank, bold profession of our Faith. Rather, it spurs one to stand fast in the conflict even at the price of the greatest sacrifices. Whoever lives by the spirit of Christ refuses to let himself be beaten down by the difficulties which oppose him, but on the contrary feels himself impelled to work with all his strength and with the fullest confidence in God.

In paragraphs 93 to 95, Pius expressed the importance that he attached to the spirit as opposed to the physical world. Here he made clear that the most important thing would be to open people to Christ. He said that the Church must be protected so that it can fulfill its role as an educator by teaching the truth, by inculcating justice, and by inflaming hearts with the divine love of Christ. Indeed, throughout the war, he would protect the Church so that it could carry out its life and soul-saving functions.

Paragraphs 101 to 106 drew distinctions between the Vatican and other secular nations and explained the Church's special role in the world. The Church “does not claim to take the place of other legitimate authorities in their proper spheres.” Instead, Pius wrote, the Church should be a good example and do good works. The Church:

“spreads its maternal arms towards this world not to dominate but to serve. She does not claim to take the place of other legitimate authorities in their proper spheres, but offers

them her help after the example and in the spirit of her Divine Founder Who "went about doing good" (Acts x. 38).

This same thought was expanded upon when Pius wrote "render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's." In other words, the Church plays an important, but limited role in resolving disputes in the secular world. His obligation was to pray for peace and offer comfort to the afflicted.

Pius expressed his confidence that the Church would always prevail in the long run. Any structure that is not founded on the teaching of Christ, he wrote, is destined to perish. Read in context, this was a promise of the ultimate failure of Nazism. In fact, he expressly foresaw that Poland would be resurrected:

"This... is in many respects a real 'Hour of Darkness,'... in which the spirit of violence and of discord brings indescribable suffering on mankind... The nations swept into the tragic whirlpool of war are perhaps as yet only at the 'beginnings of sorrows,'... but even now there reigns in thousands of families death and desolation, lamentation and misery. The blood of countless human beings, even noncombatants, raises a piteous dirge over a nation such as Our dear Poland, which, for its fidelity to the Church, for its services in the defense of Christian civilization... has a right to the generous and brotherly sympathy of the whole world, while it awaits, relying on the powerful intercession of Mary, Help of Christians, the hour of a resurrection in harmony with the principles of justice and true peace."

The reference to Poland resolved any doubts about to whom Pius was referring.

In paragraphs 107 to 112, Pius wrote that it was his duty to try for peace, and that duty had to be fulfilled even if it meant that the Church was misunderstood in the effort:

"While still some hope was left, We left nothing undone in the

form suggested to us by Our Apostolic office and by the means at Our disposal, to prevent recourse to arms and to keep open the way to an understanding honorable to both parties. Convinced that the use of force on one side would be answered by recourse to arms on the other, We considered it a duty inseparable from Our Apostolic office and of Christian Charity to try every means to spare mankind and Christianity the horrors of a world conflagration, even at the risk of having Our intentions and Our aims misunderstood." He encouraged people to keep faith that good will prevail, and he once again expressed his faith in the ultimate triumph of God's will.

This encyclical shows that Pius did not waver in his approach to Hitler and the Nazis. In 1939 he laid out his vision, which he followed for the rest of the war. Thus, it was not a matter of fear, nor did Pius change after he learned of the Nazi abuses. All along he thought that the best way to assure peace was through prayer. All along he thought that the best way to assure peace was through prayer. He charted his course and stayed with it.