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The Holy See and Hitler

When I started my research on Pope Pius XI, “*Mit brennender Sorge*” or the English translation “*With Deep Anxiety*” on the church and The German Reich to the Venerable Brethren, The Archbishops of Germany and Other Ordinaries in Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See. Vatican, March 14, 1937.¹ It was my intention to find out the Holy See’s role of appeasement and claims of collaboration, during the Holocaust, with Hitler and the Nazi Party. The 1963 play “*The Deputy*” written by Rolf Hochhuth and the 1999 book “*Hitler’s Pope: The Secret History of Pope Pius XII*” by John Cornwell, which portrayed the Holy See and specifically Pope Pius XII of failing to speak up or take action against the Third Reich’s treatment of Jews, have distorted the truth about the Holy Father’s handling and dealings with the Holocaust. What I found was that both Pius XI and his successor in 1938 Pius XII, spoke out strongly against Nazism and took action to help Jews escape Nazi persecution. Pope Pius XI was credited with the encyclical but it was Bishop Eugenio Pacelli (soon to be Pius XII) who wrote the encyclical. As Nuncio (Ambassador of the Vatican to Germany) from 1917 to 1929, his Eminence Eugenio Pacelli had first knowledge of German politics and the National Socialist. Pius XI and Pius XII spoke strongly against fascism, anti-Semitism and racism. Pope Pius XI letter to the German Catholics was read on Sunday March 21, 1937.

The Encyclical of Pope Pius XI (letters written by the Holy Father) a follow-up to the breaking of terms in the *Concordat* that the Holy See and the Reich had signed in July 1933. The Holy Father also expressed concern of the “flocks” of German Catholics straying from the teachings of the Church and the embracing Nazism. Throughout the early rise of Nazism, specifically in 1931 and 1932, the German bishops were giving orders of excommunication and exclusion of the sacraments to any Catholic who joined the Nazi Party. Although, “The only

¹ Accessible at: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_14031937_mit-brennender-sorge_en.html

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formal measure of protest to come from the Holy See was the papal encyclical of March 14, 1937, which condemned the breach of the Concordat by the National Socialists as well as the racial-ideological, anti-Christian foundations and measures of their regime. It was distributed and read in all Catholic congregations of the Reich, and this, in turn, triggered another wave of persecution against the clergy.”² The Encyclical was given at the Vatican on Passion Sunday on March 14, 1937. Over 300,000 copies, written in German, were secretly smuggled into Germany on Palm Sunday March 21, 1937 and read throughout all of the pulpits.³

Nottingham Journal. “Pope Accuses Germany – Encouraging Anti-Christian movements – Grave Position.” March 22, 1937.

While searching for news articles I was able to find this journal distributed in Nottingham, England that reported on the Pope’s encyclical. The paper opens with this paragraph, “Berlin Sunday, Pope Pius XI, in an encyclical read in the Cathedral here this morning flatly accuses the Nazi regime of having violated the Concordat, and of encouraging anti-Christian movement.”⁴ Speaking of the bishop the paper states, “Bishop Preysing, who read the encyclical addressing Catholic men’s societies, spoke of the gravity of the situation and asked them to prepare for an open fight.”⁵ Bishop Konrad von Preysing mentioned in the Nottingham Journal was the Bishop of Berlin, who read the encyclical to the faithful in Berlin’s Cathedral. His Eminence was appointed by Pius XI on July 5, 1935 and served until December 21, 1950 as per Wikipedia.⁶ Carlton J. H. Hayes, *Patriotism, Nationalism and the Brotherhood of Man – A Report of the Committee on National Attitudes*, Pamphlet No 25, New York, 1937.⁷

2 GHDI website:

http://germanhistorydocs.ghidc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1571

3 Sidney Z. Ehler & John B Morrall, “*Church and State Through the Centuries*”, org pub 1954, reissued 1988, Biblo & Tannen, 1988, pp. 518-519

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mit_brennender_Sorge

4 Nottingham Journal, “*Pope Accuses Germany- Encouraging Anti-Christian Movement – Grave Position*.” Monday March 22, 1937

<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001898/19370322/021/0001>

5 Ibid 2nd paragraph

6 Konrad von Preysing, TIME Magazine. [Milestones](#), January 1, 1951

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Konrad_von_Preysing

7 https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/bitstream/handle/10822/1045157/CAIP_25.pdf?sequence=1

Carlton J.H Hayes was a historian, educator, diplomat and devout Catholic and academic. He was born in Afton, New York on May 16, 1882 and died in Sidney, New York on September 2, 1964. He served as United States Ambassador to Spain during World War II.⁸ As the chairman of the National Attitudes Committee, Carlton J.H. Hayes and committee wrote in support of Catholic teaching and in support of Pius XI and the follow up encyclical “*Divini Redemptoris*” on March 19, 1937. This pamphlet also addresses the ideal and problems of Nationalism worldwide but does not limit it to German Nazism, it includes Italian Fascism, other European countries, Asian and American nationalism like that of the Ku Klux Klan. Hayes writes on the difference between Patriotism and extreme nationalism, aligning himself with Pope Pius XI and Christian teaching.

Dr. Zsolt Aradi, *Pius XI: The Pope and the Man*. New York, 1957

Dr. Aradi was the biographer of Achille Ratti who was to become Pope Pius XI.

Born in Sombor, Serbia on April 29, 1908 and died in New York on April 22, 1963, Dr. Aradi was an author and journalist.⁹ In this biography of Pope Pius XI, Dr. Zsolt Aradi addresses that which is falsely attributed to the Pope. Pius XI was said to be friendly with Mussolini and the Fascists, but as Dr. Aradi notes, “Despite these friendly gestures...he bitterly denounced fascist excesses.”¹⁰ In 1937 Pope Pius writes four encyclicals starting with March 14 *Mit Brennender Sorge* directed at Nazism; March 19, *Divini Redemptoris*, which denounced atheistic communism; March 28, *Firmissimam Constantiam* that addressed the conditions in Mexico’s Cristero Revolution; and on September 29, *Ingravescentibus Malis* was on the Rosary.¹¹ Pope Pius XI was more confrontational than his successor Eugenio Pacelli, who took the name of Pius XII. Pope Pius XII’s non-confrontational approach has been interpreted by some to imply that he was a Nazi sympathizer, yet there are some in his defense who argue that his knowledge of Hitler’s temperament (having been in Germany as a nuncio) guided his diplomatic approach to avoid any further actions by the Nazis on Christians.

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carlton_J._H._Hayes

⁹ https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zsolt_Aradi#Biografia

¹⁰ Dr. Zsolt Aradi, *Pius XI: The Pope and the Man*. New York, 1957, Pg. 202

¹¹ Ibid Pg. 252

Frank J. Coppa, *Pius XII: Eugenio Maria Giuseppe Giovanni Pacelli*, New York, 1998.¹²

Frank J. Coppa is an American Historian, author and educator who wrote widely on the Papacy.

Coppa was born in New York on July 18, 1937.¹³

Nuncio Pacelli would be sent to Bavaria in 1917 as an initiative by the Vatican to end World War I. By 1920 Pacelli was then sent as the Apostolic Nuncio to the new Weimar Republic. There Nuncio Pacelli would fail in discussions with the Weimar Republic with regards to the *Concordat* but would get Prussia and Bavaria agreements on the Concordat to preserve the Church's privileges and freedom of actions with these regions. According to Coppa, by the end of 1929, Pope Pius XI made Pacelli a Cardinal. In 1933 Pacelli negotiated the Concordat with Hitler and in 1935 became the papal chamberlain. Pacelli and Pope Pius XI had very different personalities. Pius XI was confrontational and Cardinal Pacelli was more cautious and diplomatic.¹⁴ This caution and diplomacy is what some have used to mischaracterize Pacelli as a Nazi sympathizer. Pacelli was fluent in German and was familiar with German life and therefore served as Pius XI's advisor on Hitler and the Nazi Party. Coppa states that at the Pope's command, Pacelli helped draft the anti-Nazi Encyclical "*Mit Brennender Sorge*" which generated a backlash to the church in Germany at the hands of the Gestapo and the Nazis.

Gary L. Krupp, *Pope Pius XII and World War II: The Documented Truth*, New York, 2012. Gary and Meredith Krupp are founders of the Pave The Way Foundation, which is a non-sectarian organization whose mission is to identify and eliminate non-theological obstacles between religions.¹⁵ The book is a compilation of international evidence that reveals the acts of the Vatican during World War II. The documents compiled for this book were downloaded at: http://legacy.ptwf.org/vatican_docs_register.aspx. This book has a treasure trove of documents and newspaper clippings that refute Rolf Hochhuth and John Cornwell's claims of Pius XII being Hitler's puppet.

Gary Krupp is of Jewish decent who as stated in the introduction of the book, "Honestly, I, like many Jewish people, grew up hating Pius XII, believing him to have been a virulent anti-Semite

12 <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Pius-XII>

13 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frank_J._Coppa

14 <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Pius-XII> - Article Pius XII, Paragraph 3

15 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pave_the_Way_Foundation

and a Nazi collaborator.”¹⁶ Krupp called ‘fate’ that Dan Kurzman, who was writing a book on Pius XII, asked him if he could help Kurzman gain access to the Vatican. At this time Krupp was willing to help Kurzman but did not want involvement in the project. Krupp explains in the introduction for the book that it was at a later meeting that Kurzman explained that he was writing about a plot to kidnap Pius XII, kill the Curia and take over the Vatican. Krupp questioned how a Nazi collaborator and supposed ally of Hitler could be such a target. Kurzman explained that the exact opposite was true. Kurzman’s explanation of this was based on documents found of an interview that was granted by General Karl Friedrich Otto Wolff, Chief of Personal Staff of Heinrich Himmler and also an SS liaison officer to Hitler, after his release from prison in 1974.¹⁷ Krupp also states that the play *The Deputy* written by Rolf Hochhuth was a smear campaign against Pius XII that was started in 1963 by the KGB.

In researching Pope Pius XI encyclical, I, a cradle catholic was pleased to discover, through articles and books written by non-partisans, that Pope Pius XI and Pius XII were opposed to Hitler and that they condemned Nazism. On March 4, 2019 the subject for my source exploration gained relevance as Pope Francis (Jorge Bergoglio) announced that the Vatican would be allowing access to documents pertaining to Pope Pius XII and the Holocaust. The Holy Father (Pope Francis) stated that the Vatican does not fear history. This new public access to Vatican documents by the Pope should serve to motivate journalist and historians to revisit the narrative of Hitler’s Pope.

Annotated Bibliography

- http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_14031937_mit-brennender-sorge_en.html
Relevance: This is the translated version of the encyclical which is found in the Vatican website. This document was translated into German and 300,000 copies were smuggled into Germany.

¹⁶ Gary L. Krupp, *Pope Pius XII and World War II: The Documented Truth*, New York, 2012. (Pg. 10)

¹⁷ Ibid Pg. 11

- http://germanhistorydocs.ghidc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1571
Relevance: This is the link in the GHDI website that had the encyclical along with links to the copy of the Concordat. This was the starting point to the research.
- Sidney Z. Ehler, Sidney Z. et al, "*Church and State Through the Centuries*", org pub 1954, reissued 1988, Biblo & Tannen, 1988, pp. 518-519
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mit_brennender_Sorge
- *Nottingham Journal*, "Pope Accuses Germany- Encouraging Anti-Christian Movement – Grave Position." Monday March 22, 1937
<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001898/19370322/021/0001>
Relevance: This is a newspaper in Nottingham that reported the encyclical and what the words of the bishop of Berlin as he delivered the content of the letter and his sermon.
- TIME Magazine. Konrad von Preysing, [Milestones](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Konrad_von_Preysing), January 1, 1951
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Konrad_von_Preysing
Relevance: This was a Time Magazine article on the Bishop in Berlin from 1935 until his death in 1950. He was one of the bishops that read the Pope's Encyclical to his congregation. He also was one of the bishops that excommunicated Catholics that joined the Nazi Party.
- https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/bitstream/handle/10822/1045157/CAIP_25.pdf?sequence=1
Relevance: This was a pamphlet that was distributed in New York in support of Pope Pius XI stance and explained the Catholic Christian teachings on morality.
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carlton_J._H._Hayes
Relevance: This is a Wikipedia page that I used to get details on Carlton J. H. Hayes who was the author of Pamphlet No. 25.
- https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zsolt_Aradi#Biografia
Relevance: I used this Wikipedia page to find information on Pope Pius XI biographer.
- Aradi, Zsolt, *Pius XI: The Pope and the Man*. New York, 1957, Pg. 202"
Relevance: This was a biography on Pius XI and it listed all the encyclicals that were written in that time period of 1937 and 1938. It also speaks of his early years before becoming Pope.
- <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Pius-XII>
Relevance: I used this webpage to get biographical information on Pope Pius XII
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frank_J._Coppa
Relevance: I used this webpage to get biographical information on Frank J. Coppa who wrote many books on the Papacy.

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pave_the_Way_Foundation
Relevance: I used this page to get information on Gary L Krupp's foundation, which he started to hold interfaith dialogue and collaboration.
- Krupp, Gary L., *Pope Pius XII and World War II: The Documented Truth*, New York, 2012.
Relevance: This book was the most helpful. Gary through his connections with a Nuncio of Israel was able to obtain documents from the Vatican, which he used to refute the attacks and smears on Pope Pius XII. This book hold copies of documents and news papers staring as far back as 1930 through WWII.