EUGENIO PACELLI: HIS DIPLOMACY PRIOR TO HIS PONTIFICATE AND ITS LINGERING RESULTS

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A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

August 2011

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The objective of this study is to analyze the controversy surrounding Pope Pius XII by looking specifically at the Reichskonkordat of 1933 and the papal encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* of 1937. These documents show Pius XII’s tendency toward diplomacy with the German Reich even before he was elected as Pope in 1939.

This study evaluates several scholarly works on Pope Pius XII from the time he was still Pope until recent history. Chapter one focuses on these various schools of thought throughout the decades on Pius XII’s relationship with the Third Reich, including works from his critics, his defenders, and moderate historians. Chapters two and three are studies on the Reichskonkordat and *Mit brennender Sorge*; Pius XII, known as Eugenio Pacelli at the time, played a major role in bringing these documents to fruition.

Chapter one explains the three schools of thought on Pius XII’s relationship with the Nazis, and results in the conclusion that historians should adopt a moderate point of view on Pacelli until more information is available. Pacelli was a tremendously diplomatic pope, who believed that speaking out against the Nazi party would only result in further persecution of the Church, as well as the Jews and others facing the Nazi crimes against humanity. Pacelli believed that the Church would violate the terms of the Reichskonkordat of 1933 if he specifically mentioned Nazi atrocities, thereby breaching the treaty and losing all protections given the Catholic Church therein. He also stated that *Mit brennender Sorge*, released in 1937, had already clearly stated the Church’s criticism of the Third Reich, although it never mentioned the party by name.
This study has found that Pacelli’s involvement with the Reichskonkordat and *Mit brennender Sorge* affected his interaction with the Third Reich before and during World War II, and has led to the ensuing controversy which continues today. These documents are not normally thoroughly studied by historians, but they had a profound influence on Pius XII’s actions during his papacy.
This thesis is dedicated to my parents, whose love and support has made this possible.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my advisors, Dr. Beth Griech-Polelle for History and Dr. Theodore Rippey for German. I would also like to thank my other committee members, Dr. Douglas Forsyth for History and Dr. Geoffrey Howes for German. Their countless hours helping me to research, editing, and giving me greater insight into the thesis process is very much appreciated. I would also like to thank my family, who has always been supportive of my education and various enterprises. Thanks to my friends at St. Thomas More University Catholic parish in Bowling Green, Ohio for their kind words and support, but mostly their friendship. Also thank you to my colleagues in the German and History departments for their help and support throughout the past three years.
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INTRODUCTION

Pope Pius XII has gone down in history as one of the most controversial Popes in recent centuries. There have been several questions about his actions and so-called “silence” on the plight of the Jews and other persecuted persons during the Third Reich, and especially during World War II. Did he actually speak out or help the Jews and others during the war, or was he afraid to take action for fear of what would happen to those persecuted persons or to the Catholic Church? Before Pope Pius XII became pope on March 2, 1939, he also had several encounters with the Nazis and the German Reich that were controversial. Today there are three main schools of thought on Pope Pius XII’s words and actions during the Third Reich. These three include his defenders, his critics, and a group which I will name moderates. These historians often focus on Pope Pius XII’s words and deeds during World War II, however, I will mainly focus on his actions before being elected pope, including two of the more historically relevant documents that he had a great influence on prior to the outbreak of the Second World War.

One of these documents is the Reichskonkordat, which Pope Pius XII, who was then still Cardinal Secretary of State Eugenio Pacelli, and the Vatican negotiated and signed with Hitler and the Nazi government in 1933. The Reichskonkordat was one of many concordats the Vatican signed with various governments in hopes of protecting the rights of the Catholic Church under that government. The Reichskonkordat, however, was often violated in the years following its signing, and the Vatican sent numerous informal complaints to the Reich protesting these breaches. These Vatican grievances went largely ignored, and Pope Pius XI, Cardinal Pacelli, German Cardinal Michael von Faulhaber, and the German bishops decided that the situation should be resolved through a formal protest in 1937.
Cardinal Faulhaber wrote the draft of the second document to be considered, the papal encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge*, and Cardinal Pacelli added content and edited the final version of the encyclical, which was secretly distributed throughout the German Reich and read from each Catholic Church’s pulpit on Palm Sunday, March 14, 1937. The Nazi regime reacted with greater crackdowns and Catholic persecution, and the Catholic Church never again issued a formal protest to the Nazi government.

These two documents, largely influenced by Cardinal Pacelli, were the most important documents that the Vatican issued concerning the Third Reich prior to World War II. Pacelli’s role in the creation of these documents shows his diplomatic tendency to negotiate and never directly threaten the Nazi government, even with the many Nazi violations of the Reichskonkordat and its continued persecution of the Church and others. I will show how these two documents illustrate Pacelli’s diplomatic tendencies and unwillingness to directly challenge the Nazi government’s policies before and during the war. I will, therefore, be taking a moderate point of view in my analysis of Pacelli before the war. Pacelli stated after the war that he didn’t challenge the Nazi government for fear that greater persecutions of those already suffering would follow any such condemnation. He also believed, however, that the Church’s opinion of Nazi policies was abundantly clear to those who listened closely enough to his statements during the war. Pacelli also pointed to *Mit brennender Sorge* as evidence of the Church’s stance on the policies of the German government. The Nazi government also agreed that he was critical of its policies, but was unable to single out any statements that he made directly against its regime. It appears that Pacelli and his actions will remain a topic of controversy for many years to come. Even when the Vatican archives release documentation in 2015 from the wartime years when
Pope Pius XII was Pope, it appears that the evidence will never fully demonstrate the reasoning behind his “silence” on Nazi persecutions before and during the war.

**Background**

Eugenio Maria Giuseppe Giovanni Pacelli was born in Rome on March 2, 1876, as one of four children to devout Catholic parents Filippo and Virginia Pacelli. His family was closely tied to the papacy, and his grandfather even founded the Vatican newspaper *L’Osservatore Romano* in 1861. Growing up, Eugenio seemed destined to join the Church; even as a child, his “preferred play was to dress up and act out the celebration of the Mass in his bedroom.”

Eugenio Pacelli attended both Catholic and state-run schools in his youth, with his family remaining strongly Catholic. According to his siblings, Eugenio was “headstrong. Spindly, constitutionally delicate, he showed impressive intelligence and powers of memory from an early age … He was independent and solitary.” Pacelli was a very intelligent child, and enjoyed reading and learning throughout his life; he was especially gifted in learning languages, and spoke several languages fluently, including German. In 1894 he entered the Capranica Seminary and also enrolled at the Gregorian University, but was forced to move home after a year because his stomach could not handle the food served there and he often became sick. He continued his studies, however, and instead enrolled at the Sapienza School of Philosophy and Letters and the Papal Athenaeum of St. Apollinaris for Theology. These schools were closer to his home, and he was able to continue his education. Pacelli then received his baccalaureate and licentiate degrees from these institutions and in 1899 he became an ordained Catholic priest.

After becoming ordained, Pacelli was assigned as a curate to the Chiesa Nuova and continued his studies, eventually receiving a doctorate in canon law and civil law at the

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2 Ibid. 17-18.
Apollinaris. Pacelli was known to the Vatican as early as 1901, when he was given the duty of delivering a handwritten letter from Pope Leo XII to London to give to King Edward II upon the death of Edward’s mother, Queen Victoria. Three years later, in 1904, Pacelli attained the rank of Monsignor. Cornwell maintains that this quick paced promotion was no mere advancement based solely on achievement, but rather that Pacelli was on the fast track to the Papal seat based on his family connections. It would be another 13 years, however, until Pacelli was elevated to the rank of bishop, then he was quickly moved to archbishop in 1917. He was also appointed to become nuncio to Bavaria in this same year and he moved to Munich. He would stay in Germany the next seven years, developing an affinity toward the people of Germany, and even keeping his German housing staff throughout his papacy. While in Bavaria, Pacelli was integral in the signing of the concordat with the government of Bavaria in 1924. He was further promoted the same year, to the rank of Cardinal, and moved back to Rome, eventually being appointed Cardinal Secretary of State on February 7, 1930.

As Cardinal Secretary of State, Pacelli worked with various state governments to sign concordats that the Church felt would help to protect the Catholic faith. This included playing an integral role in negotiating the controversial Reichskonkordat, which was signed in 1933 under the pontificate of Pope Pius XI. Also as cardinal, Pacelli wrote and edited much of the Vatican’s encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge*, which was the only formal protest of the Nazi government’s violations of the Reichskonkordat; the encyclical also acted as a condemnation of Nazi actions such as forced sterilization. Pacelli’s knowledge of the German people and culture, as well as his vast experience with diplomatic matters during a time of turbulence and potential war in Europe, helped to promote his candidacy to the Papal seat when Pope Pius XI died on February 10, 1939.
Pacelli was elected the 262nd Pope on the third ballot by the College of Cardinals on March 2, 1939, his birthday, with a relatively quick vote.

The future Allies’ news sources pointed to Pacelli’s record on supporting democracy throughout Europe, and were happy with his election. Both they and the Axis powers identified him “as anti-Nazi … largely because of his association with his predecessor but also because of a few anti-Nazi statements he had made.”\(^3\) The Nazi press was unsure about Pope Pius XII’s intentions as pope, and believed that he would probably continue the increasing anti-Nazi rhetoric of Pius XI. German diplomats at the Vatican, however, were less critical than the Nazi press. They saw Pacelli as a diplomat, and believed that he would be someone they could work with in comparison to Pius XI.

**Diplomacy and Controversy**

In many ways the Nazi officials were correct about Pope Pius XII’s diplomatic tendencies. Pius XI appeared to be coming closer to denouncing the Nazi government, but Pius XII never took such action during his papacy. He preferred instead to never directly place responsibility on the Nazi government for its persecutions of the Jews or others during the war. Pius XII spoke in generalities about the war, attempting to maintain the neutrality of the Holy See, to not breach the articles of the Reichskonkordat, and to preserve the Catholic Church. One main reason that Pius XII himself stated for not speaking out more bluntly and purposefully was to prevent greater persecution of those already facing tremendous trials and sufferings. Whether this statement is plausible is questionable, given the Nazi persecutions during the war, but it is the official reason that he gave, and he appears sincere in this statement, never wavering from it even in the post-war years. Other historians have given further reasons for Pius XII’s “silence,”

but there seems to be little evidence to back up their claims. Some of these accusations include that Pius XII was anti-Semitic, was merely concerned about the security of Vatican City, feared being captured by the Nazi government, and feared that the destruction of Rome would come about by speaking out. ⁴ There is much more evidence that Pacelli was an anti-Nazi rather than an anti-Semite, and he had already maintained a policy of neutrality and non-confrontation before Rome was really under any immediate threat from destruction. His diplomatic training in regard to Germany seems to remain steady from the earliest evidence of his time as a priest throughout his papacy. He believed in the ultimate success of diplomacy, and thought that if the Church strayed from this policy it would find itself in more trouble than if it maintained a steady course.

Pope Pius XII was one of the most prolific writers of the papacy, writing on topics such as family, morality, sexuality, theology, and Biblical readings. He was well loved during his pontificate and respected by many as a fighter for those without voices during the Second World War. Pius XII remained revered throughout his time in office until his death on October 9, 1958. He spoke out much more fervently against the Nazis after the war in Europe was over, and he continued to speak out very directly on the evils of Marxist communism, especially as seen in the Soviet Union. Only the appearance of Rolf Hochhuth’s play *The Deputy* in 1963 brought about a change in the perception of Pope Pius XII, particularly of his words and actions during the war years.

Little is made of Pacelli’s role before becoming Pope in 1939, which shows us his tendencies and beliefs before being placed in the highest authority of the Church. I believe his words and deeds before the war paint a clearer picture of why Pius XII remained “silent” about

⁴ Ibid. 69.
the Nazis and the German government during the war. He felt bound by the Reichskonkordat and felt that *Mit brennender Sorge* as well as other Church writings during the war clearly showed which side the Church was on. To do any more would risk, in his eyes, endangering those already facing persecution. The Church, being bound by the Reichskonkordat, even when the Nazis continually violated it, felt that the only solution was to let others speak out for those persecuted. Bishops, cardinals, and other clergy members were able to speak out for the Jews and others during the war, and some of their opinions were published in the Vatican newspaper *L’Osservatore Romano*. Pius XII believed that he did all he could diplomatically do to help, and left the rest of the actions in the hands of individuals. Whether this is morally wrong or not seems to be a subject that will continue to be debated for years to come, and we may never know the full truth, but can only work with the written evidence that we are presented with as historians. What we do know, however, is that his diplomacy before the war shows a clear record of his hesitancy to speak out directly against the Nazi government during the war.
CHAPTER I.

THE CONTROVERSY

Eugenio Maria Giuseppe Giovanni Pacelli, later known as Pope Pius XII, is regarded as perhaps one of the most controversial figures in the history of the papacy. His actions or inactions are the subject of several studies on the Papacy, the Holy See and the German Third Reich. Prior to the 1963 opening of Rolf Hochhuth’s play Der Stellvertreter: Ein christliches Trauerspiel or The Deputy: A Christian Tragedy, a majority of historians regarded Pius XII highly as a great leader of the Church during a time of crisis. When The Deputy made its debut in Berlin on February 20, 1963, however, many historians began to see Pope Pius XII in a much different and harsher light than they previously had. The Deputy marked a shift in the presentation of Pius XII from a savior and defender of the Jewish people to an indecisive, passive figure, who largely allowed for the persecution of the Jews by not publicly speaking out against the actions of the Nazi government in the German Reich. In A Cross Too Heavy: Eugenio Pacelli, Paul O’Shea argued that Hochhuth’s “scathing summation of Pacelli opened the way for re-evaluation of the role of the man who had been widely credited with the saving of thousands of Jewish lives.”5 This chapter will look at the various schools of thought since the 1950s on Pope Pius XII’s role before and during World War II, and will evaluate these schools based on the plausibility of the evidence they present.

Historians after The Deputy who reevaluated Pius XII tend to fall into three groups with respect to their opinion of the Pope. The first group includes those who believe that Pope Pius XII should have done more to protect the Jews and other persecuted groups by speaking out and

protesting their treatment. The second group believes that Pius XII did all that he could to protect the Jews from further persecution, while the third group takes a moderate approach in evaluating what he did or did not do or say during World War II and the Holocaust. Another critical view came from Guenter Lewy, who was one of the first historians after the emergence of *The Deputy* to argue that Pius XII did not take the moral high ground to do anything to stop the Nazi war machine, fascism, or the persecution of the Jews and others, let alone speak out against these actions. His book *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany* (1964) attacks Pope Pius XII for what he considered Pius XII’s fear to speak out against a moral injustice, because of Pius XII’s own motivations to preserve the Church and maintain a thoroughly diplomatic and neutral state.\(^6\) The first group of historians also includes John Cornwell, an English journalist and practicing Catholic, who wrote one of the most controversial attacks on Pius XII’s actions in his book *Hitler’s Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII*. His accusations reignited the controversy in 1999, and brought about even more research, both supporting and arguing against Cornwell’s book. Other prominent critical works on Pius XII include Michael Phayer’s *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust* and Susan Zuccotti’s *Under His Very Windows*, which will be discussed in further detail later.\(^7\)

The second camp of historians holds a much more favorable view of Pope Pius XII’s actions during World War II. Among these historians is Pierre Blet, a Jesuit priest who was among a group of priest scholars assigned to review and publish several documents from the Vatican archives following the scandal of *The Deputy*. He presented some of the more relevant

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documents and his interpretation of the documents in a one-volume book called *Pius XII and the Second World War: According to the Archives of the Vatican* (1997) (reduced from the original massive 11 volume documentation from the Vatican archives).\(^8\) Other historians who take the more favorable position regarding Pius XII include Sister Margherita Marchione, a nun and avid defender of the Pope’s actions during WWII, as well as Rabbi David G. Dalin, a defender of the Pope. Marchione has written several works defending Pope Pius XII during WWII, including *Consensus and Controversy: Defending Pope Pius XII* (2002) and *Did Pope Pius XII Help the Jews?* (2007).\(^9\)

The third camp of historians takes a moderate approach in presenting its viewpoints on Pope Pius XII’s actions before and during World War II. These historians present evidence that Pope Pius XII was an extremely conflicted man; they show Pius XII’s struggle on how best to serve as Vicar of Christ during this time of conflict and crisis. Most would argue that Pius XII chose to be ever the diplomat, and although he was heavily burdened by the tragedies brought by the Third Reich and the war to various peoples, he felt that his hands were tied. He wanted the Catholic Church and Vatican City to remain neutral, and felt that any break in this status or any actions against Nazi Germany would only lead to further persecutions of Jews, Catholics, and other groups already under attack by the Nazi regime. One of the earliest moderate historians was John Conway, who wrote *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches 1933-1945* in 1968, and has also presented several articles on the topic that also hold a moderate tone.\(^10\) Other moderate historians include José Sánchez, a history professor at the Catholic university Saint Louis


University, who wrote *Pius XII and the Holocaust: Understanding the Controversy*. Sánchez presents both the positive and negative views of Pius XII, and attempts to lay out the facts from both, while evaluating each side’s documentation and the likelihood of their arguments. Another recent moderate historian is Paul O’Shea, whose book, *A Cross Too Heavy: Eugenio Pacelli* (2008), reflects many of the perspectives of the moderate historical viewpoint.

Books on Pope Pius XII before the 1963 opening of Rolf Hochhuth’s *The Deputy* displayed a great deal of praise for the Pontiff and his actions before and during World War II. It was nearly impossible to find any kind of credible negative allegations against Pius XII prior to *The Deputy*. Historians, the public at large, and the Jewish community, largely supported the Pope as one of the great defenders against Nazi Germany before and during the war. Even Albert Einstein stated in *Time* magazine in December of 1940 that:

> Only the Church stood squarely across the path of Hitler’s campaign for suppressing the truth … The Church alone has had the courage and persistence to stand for intellectual truth and moral freedom. I am forced thus to confess that what I once despised, I now praise unreservedly.

This near-universal praise for Pius XII, which practically bordered on hagiography, lasted throughout his term as Pontiff and past his death in 1958 until *The Deputy* appeared on stage in 1963.

One of the earliest pre-Hochhuth books shines a positive light on Pope Pius XII and is by Oskar Halecki and James F. Murray Jr.; this work is titled *Pius XII: Eugenio Pacelli, Pope of Peace*. Halecki and Murray, as one can assume from the title, focus on Pius XII’s role as diplomat and peace-maker. This includes his time before becoming pope and living in Germany,

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11 Sánchez, *Pius XII and the Holocaust*.
12 Marchione, *Did Pope Pius XII Help the Jews?*, 2.
his time as Cardinal Secretary of State, his years as pope during World War II, and finally his role in post-war reconstruction. Some of the chapters are clearly pro-Pius XII, as evidenced by chapter titles such as “Mission to Germany,” “The Five-Point Peace Plan,” “Guardian of Rome,” and “The Crusade of Charity.” The authors address various ways in which the Pope helped to fight against the tyranny brought about during World War II and the ways he helped persecuted people and those affected by the war.

One of the greatest ways Halecki and Murray believe that Pius XII’s aid to persecuted peoples can be seen is in his defense of the city of Rome. This includes the time during the roundup of the Roman Jews, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Pius XII made several efforts to have the city of Rome declared an open city by both the Allied and Axis powers. Declaring Rome an open city would have meant that it would not be bombed or invaded during the war; however, his efforts were not completely successful. While Rome was spared much of the Allied bombings, some strategic points, and unfortunately, some civilian areas, were bombed, much to Pius XII’s dismay. Pius XII had wanted to protect his home town of Rome; he often said it should be saved on account of the special character of Rome’s religious and cultural institutions and art. Upon hearing of the bombings, he had his driver take him to the affected civilian areas so he could distribute aid and words of comfort to those affected.14 The Allied bombings had also struck a cemetery in which the Pacelli family had been laid to rest, giving the bombings an even stronger connection to the Pope. Pius XII, while dismayed, did not issue an official protest to the Allies, though the Axis propaganda tried to convey to the public that he did. Pius XII did, however, issue a diplomatic statement on the bombings, which did not directly blame the Allies. It was published in the Vatican paper, *L’Osservatore Romano*. This statement

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14 Ibid., 183.
emphasized his efforts to make Rome an open city and stated that this hope had “been frustrated.”\textsuperscript{15} Pius XII’s efforts to make Rome an open city would later pay off, according to Halecki and Murray, when Mussolini was overthrown and Pietro Badoglio became the new leader of Italy. The new government was then asked to make inquiries on Rome’s becoming an open city, and “The papal message reached the Allied high command in Algiers just as final preparations for a new raid on Rome were being completed and the attack was cancelled just in time.”\textsuperscript{16}

\textit{Pius XII: Eugenio Pacelli: Pope of Peace} also addresses some of the criticism the Pope faced even during the first two months of his pontificate for “not formally condemning the new acts of aggression committed, on March 15, by Germany against what remained of Czechoslovakia after Munich, and, on April 7, by Italy against Albania.”\textsuperscript{17} The charges against Pius XII were voiced somewhat early on, but most of the accusations were taken lightly, due to the overwhelming support that Pius XII held with the majority of both historians and the public. Halecki and Murray answer these criticisms by explaining that Pius XII did not want to adversely affect his possible role as “mediator in the European crisis and therefore could not possibly take sides himself nor directly antagonize those whom he still hoped to persuade to enter peaceful negotiations.”\textsuperscript{18} These arguments would later be used both for and against Pius XII; his hands were tied by his diplomatic training and his desire to retain Vatican neutrality in order to try to end the war in a faster manner. Halecki and Murray also offer a further defense of the criticism leveled against Pius XII in the pre-Deputy era. They assert that the Pope had already issued “general words of indignation that ‘solemnly sanctioned treaties and the pledged

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 185.
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 95.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 96.
\end{itemize}
word are stripped of their force and security’”; this statement was issued two days after Italy’s aggression against Albania in April 1939.19 The authors believe that this papal statement voiced concern and disapproval of these aggressions, though the words seem to be indirect to the casual observer.

Another early book on Pius XII is *Portrait of Pius XII* by Nazareno Padellaro; his book was published in 1956, long before the controversy began on Pius XII’s relationship with Nazi Germany.20 Padellaro, in addition to his pre-*The Deputy* historical timeframe, also shows extra sympathy towards the Pope, likely because of his commonality of being a citizen of Rome. Padellaro was Catholic, and served as the President of the Central Committee for Popular Education in Rome. In addition, Padellaro had also met Pius XII at a small dinner party when Pius XII was still Cardinal Pacelli and serving as the Cardinal Secretary of State under Pope Pius XI. In *Portrait of Pius XII*, Padellaro’s affections for Pius XII are apparent even in some of the chapter titles; these titles include “Messenger of Peace,” “Defensor Civitatis,” and “Hope of the World.” Padellaro criticizes the vices attributed to modernity to the “repudiation of culture” and the hedonistic views of “Marxism, existentialism, and psycho-analysis”; he claims that “Pius XII, however, has dedicated both his faith and intellect to the restoration of culture.”21 He also praises Pius XII’s remarkable language skills and knowledge of “scientific, technical, artistic, philosophical, and other problems.”22 All of these skills and his steadfastness in the moral objectives of the Catholic Church made Pius XII a reputable Pope, of whom Padellaro was able to write: “Members of the Church take pride in the universal respect enjoyed by Pius XII.”23

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19 Ibid.  
21 Ibid., 252.  
22 Ibid., 252-3.  
23 Ibid., 252.
This sort of writing was typical of Pius XII in the years previous to *The Deputy*, and was all the more emphasized due to the personal connection that Padellero had with the Pope.

Padellaro tends to focus on the societal evils that Pius XII tried to battle as well as his role during World War II; however, he also writes more briefly on Pius XII’s defense of the Jews. Pius XII’s role in protecting the Jews during World War II was not controversial at the time, therefore, Padellaro also praised him and the Church as a whole for defending the Jews. He writes:

> The Sovereign Pontiff was the last hope of the Jews. He had already paid twelve kilogrammes of gold to save two hundred members of that race, when the Nuncio to Italy, Mgr Borgongini Duca, visited the concentration camps where foreign Jews were held, and heard them ask in anguish whether they were to be delivered to the Germans. The Nuncio assured them that the Pope would intervene on their behalf; and, despite repeated demands from the German authorities, he managed to do so. Meanwhile, the clergy did all they could to hide the Jews.24

The story of the Vatican loaning this gold by melting down its own resources for the ransom of the Roman Jews has since been proven false, but was considered a fact until years later when it was discovered that the Vatican offered to give the gold as ransom, but did not have to after the local Jewish and Christian communities came up with the gold on their own. The remainder of his statement is difficult to verify as well, because he does not cite his sources and I have not found any other documentation fully supporting his claims in this quote.

During World War II and until the advent of *The Deputy*, the majority of observers, including Jews, viewed Pius XII as a great and powerful voice against fascism, communism, and tyranny. Even the Chief Rabbi of Rome during the war, Dr. Israel Zolli, thanked “the Holy See for having condemned the anti-Semitic laws and diminished their effects.”25 This sentiment was

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later echoed at the time of Pius XII’s death in 1958 by then Chief Rabbi of Rome Elio Toaff. Pius XII’s wartime actions were praised by the Jewish community prior to The Deputy, who saw him as a “veritable saviour of the Jews of Europe.” Pius XII’s offer to loan ransom money to the Roman Jews during the Nazi roundup of 1943 and the press’s assumption that he had given the money to the Jewish leaders further solidified his reputation as the Roman Jews’ “protector against the Germans.” Furthermore, the Vatican newspaper, L’Osservatore Romano, condemned the roundup of the Jews of Rome as “unreasonable, unchristian and inhuman.” One can argue from this assertion that Pius XII also condemned the actions, however, the Vatican newspaper was not a direct extension of the Pope’s thoughts on the war, and it cannot be assumed that he would have known and approved of all of the newspaper’s editorial views. There have been several assertions that Pius XII was not as devoted to the Jews during the war as many first believed, but most of the Jews who lived through the war believed that Pius XII had done all that he could do. The Italian Jews also extended a special thanks to Pius XII’s wartime actions in an article published in L’Osservatore Romano on April 5, 1946. This article stated:

The delegates of the Congress of the Italian Jewish Communities … feel that it is imperative to extend reverent homage to Your Holiness, and to extend the most profound gratitude that animates all Jews for your fraternal humanity toward them during the years of persecution when their lives were endangered by Nazi-Fascist barbarism.

It is evident that most people immediately after the war almost universally accepted Pius XII as a protector of the Jewish people, and any serious doubts to that claim only became prevalent after the opening of Hochhuth’s The Deputy in 1963.

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26 O’Shea, A Cross Too Heavy, 35.
27 Ibid.
28 Sánchez, Pius XII and the Holocaust, 142.
29 Halecki and Murray, Pius XII, 194.
30 Marchione, Did Pope Pius XII Help the Jews?, 56-57.
There were also claims that Pius XII was anti-Semitic, and therefore did not have much compassion for the Jewish plight; evidence for this claim, however, has been proven false by historians. The records simply do not support the assertion that Pius XII made any outward expression of anti-Semitic feelings. Even Rolf Hochhuth, the author of *The Deputy*, freely admitted in an interview in 1964 that “Pius XII had without doubt no anti-Semitic feelings.”

*The Deputy*

In *The Deputy*, Hochhuth presents a picture of Pius XII as a cold-hearted, calculating man, who was afraid to defend the Jews due to the fear that his actions would affect the state of the Church. Pius XII is portrayed as a “heartless cynic who sought to act as mediator between the Western Allies and Germany, thereby preserving the balance of power in Europe and preventing a Stalinist victory in the heart of Central Europe.” Hochhuth asserts that Pius XII feared Nazi aggression as well as possible Allied bombings in Italy and the Vatican; these actions would have affected the factories and poverty-stricken workers who were already there. He also questions Pius XII’s feelings regarding maintenance of a powerful central European country in order to combat Soviet Communism which could have threatened the state of the Church. While Hochhuth admits that Pius XII did make some effort to protect Jews, especially by opening Church buildings in Rome to prevent the deportation of Roman Jews to concentration camps, he also makes accusations against the character and actions of the Pope. He portrays Pius XII as the eternal diplomat, who would not directly stand up to fascist forces or publicly protest Nazi wrongdoings. The last act of the play takes place in Auschwitz, and levels a more

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34 Ibid., 27.
generalized accusation at the Christian religion. The question arises in this act as to how God could “allow the Holocaust to take place” at all.\textsuperscript{35}

Such attacks on the Pope and the Church following \textit{The Deputy} left the Catholic Church in a state of shock, and Catholic authorities lashed back at these accusations by defending the actions of Pope Pius XII. \textit{The Deputy} had challenged the Church’s authority as a moral beacon of light in the darkness of the Nazi era in Europe. When Hochhuth “effectively accused the Pope of criminal negligence and moral culpability in the face of the Nazi destruction of European Jewry,” the Church took offense and reacted.\textsuperscript{36} Cardinal Giovanni Battista Montini, who would later become Pope Paul VI, was one of Pope Pius XII’s greatest defenders against Hochhuth. He believed Hochhuth was “vilifying a saintly man and not understanding the situation in which Pius XII found himself.”\textsuperscript{37} The extreme circumstances made it difficult for Pius XII to react in a diplomatic way while also condemning the Nazi regime that controlled much of Europe during World War II. Montini, like many of Pius XII’s other defenders, believed that any blunt wordings against the Nazi government would only have led to worse conditions for those already suffering. Montini stated that “An attitude of protest and condemnation … would have been not only futile but harmful: that is the long and short of the matter.”\textsuperscript{38} In a letter to the British Catholic newspaper, \textit{The Tablet}, in June of 1963, merely months after \textit{The Deputy} opened in Berlin, Montini wrote hypothetically about the situation Pius XII would have been in if he had openly condemned Nazism. He wrote that if Pius XII had “taken a position of violent opposition to Hitler in order to save the lives of those millions of Jews slaughtered by the Nazis, he would have been guilty of unleashing on the already tormented world still greater calamities involving

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{36} O’Shea, \textit{A Cross Too Heavy}, 35.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 23.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
innumerable innocent victims.”39 This theoretical argument has repeatedly been used by Pius XII’s supporters since Hochhuth’s accusations came out.

Hochhuth’s *The Deputy* was the most publicized accusation against Pius XII until that point, and caused a firestorm of debate among scholars on both sides of the controversy. This controversy was even a selling point for the play when it was promoted as “the most controversial play of our time.”40 Hochhuth was interviewed by Patricia Marx in February 1964 on WNYC, a “city-operated radio station of New York,” about the controversy his play had caused and his motivations for writing a relatively contemporary historical documentary play about the Pope’s actions.41 Although *The Deputy* was Hochhuth’s first written and published play, he defended his background in writing prose, and demonstrated his extensive usage of historical documentation. He began researching and wrote the play in early 1959, but did not originally focus on the role of Pope Pius XII during the war; instead, he began to write more generally on the Catholic Church as a whole.42 Hochhuth later focused his attention on the role of Pius XII, as evidenced in the final version of *The Deputy*, because he wondered “how in this so-called Christian Europe, the murder of an entire people could take place without the highest moral authority of this earth having a word to say about it.”43 Hochhuth admitted that he also had a problem with the Catholic Church overall and not just the actions of the Pope during the war. He criticized the Church’s celibacy rule, because he believed it made the clergy become detached from humanity’s sufferings in the present day. To prove the validity of this statement, he cited a conversation he had with a Jesuit priest. He received the impression from this Jesuit

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41 Patricia Marx, “Interview with Rolf Hochhuth,” 52.
42 Ibid., 55.
43 Ibid.
that “they do not think of the happiness of the living but of generations and generations to come – that eventually things will become better. But it is always terribly inhuman to think in this way.”

Since priests were unable to have a family of their own, he concluded that they could care only for the eternal soul of those on earth which “gives them that unbelievable hardness” according to Hochhuth. He also compared the Church’s call for priests’ self-sacrifice at the expense of their earthly bodies with the demands that both the Nazis and Bolsheviks place on their followers.

In another interview with Hochhuth, reporter Judy Stone notes that Cardinal Montini did not actively deny that Pius XII was not outspoken against Nazi atrocities during the war in his letter to the Catholic newspaper The Tablet. Rather, he defends the moral character of the Pope, and explicitly states that he refuses to answer the question that Hochhuth raised about Pius XII’s silence. Montini writes that he would not directly address Hochhuth’s question, “namely whether it was Pius XII’s duty to condemn in some public and spectacular way the massacres of the Jews during the last war.”

He did not want to address this question due to the hypothetical nature of what could have been done or said according to Hochhuth. Cardinal Montini, soon thereafter Pope Paul VI, states that Hochhuth put the play together in a dramatic fashion “cleverly but also ... ineptly.” He defends Pius XII’s actions, and condemns Hochhuth’s hasty and hypothetical criticism of the Pope’s actions during such an uncertain time as Europe under the influence of the German Reich and World War II.

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44 Ibid., 61.
45 Ibid.
48 Ibid., 68.
Hochhuth replied to Cardinal Montini’s defense of Pius XII and criticism of *The Deputy* soon after it was published by remarking on the deportation of the Roman Jews in October of 1943. He remarks that “Since His Holiness, Pope Paul VI, has now published an opinion of *The Deputy* ... I am unfortunately forced to quote from the appendix to my play those passages which deal with his role as Undersecretary of State during the deportation of Jews from Rome.”

Hochhuth then quoted Legation Secretary Gerhard Gumpert, who spoke of the situation at the Nuremberg trials. Gumpert gave testimonial about his interactions with Ernst von Weizsäcker, the German Ambassador to the Holy See from 1943 until 1945. In this testimonial he stated to Gumpert that he had advised Montini that “any protest by the Pope would only result in the deportations being really carried out in a thoroughgoing fashion.”

Hochhuth then states that while Weizsäcker made these claims, his threats were hollow, because the first round of Roman Jews had already been deported to Auschwitz at the time he made the statement. Also, Weizsäcker had warned Berlin of the possible backlash against the Roman Jews’ deportation if there was an official Papal protest, which made it appear that he feared the words of the Pope. O’Shea, however, states that Weizsäcker wrote in his letter to Berlin that “Pius had not allowed himself ‘to be drawn into any demonstrative censure of the deportation of the Jews from Rome.’”

Many historians debate whether Weizsäcker wrote this statement as an honest assessment, or was merely writing to please his superiors in Berlin. Other historians have also argued that Weizsäcker was a master diplomat in his language in bending the truth in order to please the government in Berlin. Hochhuth backed up his claim that a papal protest could have saved the Roman Jews by stating that the head of the German Gestapo in Rome, Herbert

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50 Ibid.
Kappler, requested the “release of two Jews from a deportation train which had already left, only because Pius XII had unofficially requested it.”52 He suggests that if Pius XII had issued a protest or threatened to issue one, the Nazi roundup of the Roman Jews would have saved at least some Jews from deportation. When asked in Patricia Marx’s 1964 interview, “Granting that the Nazis might have retaliated do you feel that the Pope should have protested anyway?,” Hochhuth replies “Absolutely.”53

The Roundup of the Roman Jews

The Nazi occupying force did not interfere in Vatican affairs, and the Vatican did not formally protest the roundup of the Roman Jews; however, according to Pierre Blet’s Pius XII and the Second World War, the Holy See did in fact make assertions that it would protest if the deportations were not stopped.54 The first Roman Jewish roundups began at around 5:30 a.m. on the morning of October 16, 1943, and Pius XII was informed by Italian princess Enza Pignatelli Aragona Cortez around 8:00 a.m. that the Germans had begun the arrest and deportation process.55 Cardinal Maglione, the Vatican Secretary of State under Pius XII, was asked to speak to German Ambassador Weizsäcker regarding the roundups. Weizsäcker then asked Maglione, “What would the Holy See do if things were to continue like this?” with Maglione replying that, “The Holy See does not want to be forced to utter words of disapproval.”56 Their conversation was then kept unofficial, and the deportations were not carried out as thoroughly as the German government had originally planned. According to the British minister to the Holy See, d’Arcy Osborne, Weizsäcker then “immediately intervened with the result that a good number (of Jews)

52 Rolf Hochhuth, “Reply to Cardinal Montini,” 70.
54 Blet, Pius XII and the Second World War, 216.
55 O’Shea, A Cross Too Heavy, 302.
56 Blet, Pius XII and the Second World War, 216.
were released. The Gestapo and SS had surrounded a Jewish ghetto with 365 SS and sent out another 200 throughout the city for this *Judenoperation*; this roundup resulted in 1,259 Jews, mostly women, children, and elderly, being arrested and taken away to the Collegio Militare near the Vatican. The Roman Jews had believed that the roundup aimed to find only Jewish laborers, so many of the men in the ghetto fled, leaving their unsuspecting families behind to be arrested. Later that day, 252 of the original 1,259 arrested were released from the Collegio Militare, likely due to the threat of a papal protest. Of the remaining 1,007 Jews arrested and deported, all but 196 were “gassed on arrival” to Auschwitz; those surviving until the end of the war only numbered 15. The threat of papal protest had stopped the roundup of several thousand of Rome’s estimated 8,000 Jews, but many were still taken away without any kind of official papal protest being issued.

Another action that was reportedly taken by the Holy See was a letter issued by the so-called Brown Bishop Alois Hudal, the “rector of the German church in Rome” to German General Rainer Stahel, “the military governor of Rome.” After Hudal was visited by Pius XII’s nephew Carlo Pacelli on the same day as the roundup, he sent a letter that threatened a public papal protest if the Roman Jewish roundup was not immediately stopped. General Stahel then referred the letter to Himmler, who suspended the arrests “out of consideration for the special character of Rome.” The Jewish arrests were halted at 2:00 p.m. on the same day they had begun, although the original plans had called for two days of arrests taking place. This

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57 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid., 302.
61 Ibid., 307, 309.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 Marchione, *Did Pope Pius XII Help the Jews?* (New York: Paulist Press, 2007), 5.
evidence presents doubts on Hochhuth’s claim that the Vatican, and specifically Pope Pius XII, did not intervene at all on behalf of the Roman Jews, whose arrests took place right under the windows of the Vatican. The protest may not have been official or directly from the Pope, but its effect on the number of Jews arrested and deported to Auschwitz by the German SS was substantial and not to be discredited. SS Lieutenant Colonel Herbert Kappler, who played a major role in the Roman Jewish roundup felt disappointed that the planned arrests and deportations were halted before all the Jews were found. Kappler “blamed the ‘hostile influence’ of the Pope and the Curia, who had for a long time ‘been assisting Jews to escape,’ for helping to create an anti-German atmosphere among the Romans.”65

Vatican Actions to Aid the Jews

Even before the Roman Jews’ deportation, the German government was pressuring the Jews of the city to buy their way to freedom from oppression and deportation. On September 20, 1943, SS Lieutenant Colonel Kappler called on the Jewish leaders of Rome for the delivery of 50 kilos of gold within 24 hours to the general headquarters of the SS; this gold was to serve as ransom money for the lives of the Jewish community.66 If the leaders failed to come up with the gold, then he threatened that “all men from within the Jewish population of the city” would face immediate deportation.67 The Jewish leaders then came up with 35 of the necessary 50 kilos of gold, and then made a plea to the Vatican for the remainder of the sum. Pius XII, upon hearing the appeal from Israel Zolli, Rome’s chief Rabbi, then offered to loan the Jewish leaders whatever they could not come up with for the ransom. This offer did not have to be taken up,

65 O’Shea, A Cross Too Heavy, 304.
66 The timeframe of twenty-four hours is debatable, as I have found several different times in various references. Some state that it was twenty-four hours, other thirty-six or forty-eight hours. Also, the exact amount of ransom money and/or gold varies in different sources which I have found.
67 Blet, Pius XII and the Second World War, 214.
however, because the Jewish and Christian community of Rome, who heard of the Jewish leaders’ plight, came up with the extra 15 kilos of gold needed. 68 Less than a month after this ransom had been paid, the Germans broke their agreement and began the Roman Jewish roundup. The ransom money had only temporarily delayed the Jewish deportations. Later in life, Chief Rabbi Zolli converted to Roman Catholicism. In addition to this, his adopted name for his baptism was Eugenio, Pope Pius XII’s original first name, to show his appreciation for all the efforts of the Pope on behalf of the Jewish people. 69 Zolli, among other Roman Jews, had also been hidden by the Pope inside the Vatican during the Jewish roundup and deportations, thereby probably owing his life to Pius XII. Even one of the Jews who had survived the Roman deportation to Auschwitz commented about Pius XII that “I believe he did what he believed was possible, entrusting action to others so that the fiction of papal neutrality was preserved.” 70 Pius XII held his reputation as a defender of the Jewish people, even with many Jews, until Hochhuth’s *The Deputy* questioned his motivations and actions in protecting the city of Rome and Vatican City before protecting the Jews living there.

According to Pius XII’s defenders, the Holy See also took other measures to protect Jews living in Rome under the German occupation. In *Did Pope Pius XII Help the Jews*, Marchione claims that “During World War II, the Pope provided false identification papers to potential victims of the Nazis and the Fascists. He ordered Vatican buildings, churches, convents, and monasteries to open their doors and find hiding places for Jews and other refugees.” 71 Marchione states that these types of direct measures saved thousands of Italian Jews, who would probably have been deported to concentration camps without them. Members of the Nazi resistance

68 Sánchez, Pius XII and the Holocaust, 142.
69 Marchione, *Did Pope Pius XII Help the Jews?*, 67.
71 Ibid., 2.
and underground in Rome were also given this same protection. Some of these resistance leaders said afterward that “without the sanctuary afforded by the Pope and the clergy of Rome the underground movement would hardly have been able to survive.”\textsuperscript{72} The Vatican permitted several thousand Jews to take refuge on Vatican City property, where German forces were not allowed to enter. The Vatican had signed an agreement with the Germans around the same time as the roundups which gave Vatican property a status of neutrality. This protection from German intervention allowed the Vatican to shelter around 5,000 Roman Jews from deportation.\textsuperscript{73} Marchione gave an even more precise statistic of 4,238 Jews “living in convents, parishes, and other institutions, while 477 were living in the extraterritorial buildings protected by the Holy See.”\textsuperscript{74}

It is difficult to state with certainty, however, if there were explicit orders from Pope Pius XII to open the Church’s institutions to the Jews, or whether the leaders of these institutions opened their doors on their own accord. There is much evidence that individual clergymen and clergywomen aided the Jews by providing them with shelter and hiding them in these institutions, but as of yet, there is no written documentation produced linking Pius XII directly giving instructions to open the properties of the Holy See and protect the Jews from Nazi persecution. Marchione, however, presented a number of testimonials from interviews she conducted with nuns and Jewish refugees who were housed at some of the institutions and claimed that the Holy Father had ordered their opening to the Jews. One such interview was with Sister Domenica Miteritonne in 1995, who stated that, “Having received orders from the Holy Father, we welcomed the families of Jews who sought refuge from the Nazis and

\textsuperscript{72} Halecki, \textit{Pius XII}, 190.
\textsuperscript{73} Sánchez, \textit{Pius XII and the Holocaust}, 147.
\textsuperscript{74} Marchione, \textit{Did Pope Pius XII Help the Jews?}, 56.
Fascists.”75 She conducted another interview with Sister Maria Pucci, who was also involved in hiding Jews in Italy from Nazi captors. Sister Pucci stated that, “At the Pope’s command to accept as many Jews as possible, they opened their doors.”76 These interviews show at the least that the clergy at some of these institutions believed that Pope Pius XII had issued the order to open the doors to Jewish refugees. Marchione also conducted interviews with Jewish refugees who lived in the Church’s institutions during the war. These refugees also believed that “the Sisters followed the instructions of the Pope.”77 Whether this provided substantial proof that Pius XII actually did order convents, monasteries and churches to open to Jewish refugees is questionable, however, and no evidence thus far revealed by the Vatican archives or other sources have either proven or refuted a direct papal linkage.

**Scholarship after *The Deputy***

In response to the controversy that *The Deputy* generated around Pope Pius XII’s actions or inactions during World War II and the Holocaust, several books have defended or accused the Pope on his moral stance. These books center much of their research on the extensive publishing of hundreds of Vatican documents released following *The Deputy*. Normally, the Vatican’s policy is to wait 75 years after the historical documents are produced to release them to the public. Pope Paul VI, who presided over the papacy from 1963 until 1978, made an exception to the rule, however, and opened the Vatican archives to a group of Jesuit priest-scholars. These Jesuits reviewed and edited thousands of war-time documents, and published them in an eleven volume series called the *Actes et documents du Saint Siege relatifs a la Seconde Guerre Mondiale*, or in English, *Acts and Documents of the Holy See related to the Second World War*.

75 Ibid., 24.
76 Ibid., 25.
77 Ibid., 20.
These volumes appeared in a series that was published between 1965 and 1981. Pope Paul VI hoped that the controversy would be settled by the early publishing of these documents, but just the opposite was true. The controversy has not been laid aside, and even with the revelation of more documentation since the *Actes*, the subject has not been conclusively decided.

There is ample scholarship on Pius XII’s role before and during his pontificate. Prominent opponents of Pius XII include Guenter Lewy, Susan Zuccotti, Michael Phayer, and John Cornwell among others. Guenter Lewy’s book, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany*, first appeared in 1964, a year after the controversial play *The Deputy* came out. This was the first major historical work to criticize Pope Pius XII’s actions. Lewy covers issues such as the Church’s relationship with Hitler before World War II, the Reich’s Concordat (Reichskonkordat), as well as the Church’s conflicts with Hitler, and Pius XII’s struggle to maintain Vatican neutrality. While critical, it seems that Lewy is not as harsh as later critics such as John Cornwell. Zuccotti discusses Pius XII’s and the Vatican’s roles in protecting the Jews in detail in her book, *Under His very Windows: The Vatican and the Holocaust in Italy*. She argues that the Church failed to help Italy’s Jews, as evidenced in the Nazi roundup of the Jews in October 1943, and that the Church also failed to help in other countries. Anti-Jewish sentiment in the Church prevented it from coming to the Jews’ aid, and in fact, the Vatican did not do much at all to come to their assistance. Phayer’s analysis of Pius XII extended to a larger criticism of the inaction of the Church as a whole in his book *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust 1930-1965*. He argues that Pius XII’s greater fear of Communist Bolshevism and his diplomatic training, as well as his love for the German culture, made him more forgiving of the Nazi Reich’s actions than he should have been. Phayer writes that if Pius XII had done more to
condemn the Nazis, more Catholics would have followed his lead and come to the support of the Jews.

Probably the most controversial and condemning of all the books on Pope Pius XII is by British author and journalist John Cornwell. His book *Hitler’s Pope* came out in 1999, and initiated another round of controversy. Cornwell, as a Catholic, claims to have begun his research in hopes of finally clearing Pope Pius XII’s name from the controversy, but when he began researching, he found that he could not clear the Pontiff’s name. Instead, he found evidence pointing to further condemnation. He states that he hoped to exonerate Pius XII, but his research led him into a state of “moral shock.”78 Cornwell finds that Pius XII was striving for “unprecedented papal power,” and that he had “betrayed an undeniable antipathy toward the Jews.”79 All the while, he allowed for his German diplomacy, namely allowing the Center Party to vote for the Enabling Act, thereby bringing Hitler into power, to take precedence over the plight of the Jews in order to negotiate for the Reichskonkordat.80 *Hitler’s Pope* comes with mixed reviews from the public as well as historians. Some believe that Cornwell has misinterpreted documents and has been selective in his research, while others believe that he has written a provocative and well-researched book that conclusively condemns Pius XII once and for all.

Cornwell was interviewed about *Hitler’s Pope* on a Canadian television show called “Hot Type” on October 8, 1999, and gives further insight into what his interpretations of Pius XII’s

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78 Cornwell, *Hitler’s Pope*, viii.
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
actions were.81 Evan Solomon, the interviewer for “Hot Type,” states that Cornwell’s research proved Pope Pius XII was:

a monumental moral failure, a man more concerned with centralizing church authority than with the murder of millions of people; a man not only complicit with the rise of the Nazi Party, but according to Cornwell, a man whose silence about the fate of the Jews betrayed a deeply embedded anti-Semitic attitude.82

It becomes evident relatively quickly that Cornwell is very much against Pius XII’s policies as Pope, as well as his actions and character before becoming Pope, i.e. the signing of the Reichskonkordat with Germany and implied latent anti-Semitic sentiment. Cornwell cites a document from Pacelli’s time as nuncio in Germany as being actively anti-Semitic. In this document, Pacelli was living in Munich during the time of the Bolshevik uprising, and describes a scene when Monsignor Schioppa, his _uditore_ or assistant, encountered the Bolshevik revolutionaries. He wrote of “a gang of young women, dubious in appearance, Jews like all the rest of them, hanging around in all of the offices with lecherous demeanor and suggestive smiles.”83 He went on to write about Max Levien, a local Communist leader, and described him as a Russian Jew who had “Pale, dirty, drugged eyes, hoarse voice, vulgar, repulsive, with a face that is both intelligent and sly.”84 This stereotyped view of Jews was used as evidence that Pacelli had been anti-Semitic at least since his time in Germany. In the “Hot Type” interview, however, Solomon takes the quote on Levien and applied it to all Jews, further bolstering the anti-Semitic character of the writing. When asked in the interview if this anti-Semitic tone ran throughout Pacelli’s life, Cornwell identifies this writing as “the only evidence that I’ve found

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82 Ibid.
83 Ibid. Hitler’s Pope, 75.
84 Ibid.
for that moral and physical disdain for Jewish people.” In a section titled “Pacelli and Anti-Semitism” in *Hitler’s Pope*, however, Cornwell claims that Pacelli had a “long-standing anti-Jewishness” and “displayed a secret antipathy toward the Jews, evident from the age of forty-three in Munich.”

Cornwell has no qualms in making his accusations of Pius XII, and especially attacks his failure to speak candidly against Nazism and the Holocaust. Since he did not actively speak out against the Nazis, Cornwell deems him “the ideal Pope for Hitler’s unspeakable plan. He was Hitler’s pawn. He was Hitler’s Pope.” Cornwell’s statement here is particularly troublesome to some scholars, but Cornwell is also praised for his assertions. In the “Hot Type” interview, Solomon concludes his interview with Cornwell by stating that *Hitler’s Pope* is a “well researched and thorough chronicle of the shameful, the deceitful acts of a pope who has up to this point been very well protected by church apologists.” Others, such as Kenneth L. Woodward, who wrote an article called, “The Case against Pius XII,” in *Newsweek*, are not as generous in assessing Cornwell’s research. Woodward’s critique of *Hitler’s Pope* states that “Errors of fact and ignorance of context appear on all most every page;” and further states that “This is bogus scholarship, filled with nonexistent secrets, aimed to shock.” Cornwell has since modified some of the assertions he made in *Hitler’s Pope*, but still stands by many of the accusations. The controversy from the book and the resulting scholarship looking into the questions raised in *Hitler’s Pope* seem to be the true legacy of his work.

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85 “John Cornwell on Hitler’s Pope.”
87 Ibid., 296-297.
88 “John Cornwell on Hitler’s Pope.”
90 Ibid.
Pius XII also has defenders, however, most notably Pierre Blet, Sister Margherita Marchione, and Rabbi David G. Dalin, as well as other historians such as Halecki and Padellaro who wrote before *The Deputy*. Pierre Blet is a strong defender of Pius XII, and is one of the original Jesuit scholar-priests who edited the collection of the *Actes et documents du Saint Siege relatifs a la Seconde Guerre Mondiale*. He has since also published selected documents from one of the volumes on the *Actes* which relates to the documents from World War II. In *Pius XII and the Second World War: According to the Archives of the Vatican*, Blet presents various documents from this time period and then explains them in a historical context while defending Pius XII. The description of the book perhaps best explains the reasoning for its publication. It describes the controversy from the allegations coming from Hochhuth’s play *The Deputy* in the 1960s, including “that Pius XII, in order to protect the interests of the church, made only ineffective efforts to save European Jews who fell into Nazi hands.”91 These beliefs, however, are repudiated in Blet’s book. The description goes on to state:

The actual record indicates otherwise. Not only did the pontiff intercede frequently with German diplomatic and military leaders, but Vatican agencies, in response to the pope’s orders, took active steps to protect Jews and others threatened with deportation.92

Blet also contests Cornwell’s assessment of the supposed anti-Semitic letter that Pius XII wrote in response to the 1919 Bolshevik uprising in Bavaria. He states that this letter which criticized the physical appearance and demeanor of the Bavarian Communists better reflects Pius XII’s anti-Communist stance than an anti-Semitic one, and was a political commentary rather than a social or racial one.

Sister Margherita Marchione is the self-proclaimed “defender of Pius XII.” In addition to being a nun, Marchione has written several books defending the actions and words of Pius XII.

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92 Ibid.
These works include *Pope Pius XII: Architect for Peace, Consensus and Controversy: Defending Pope Pius XII*, and *Did Pope Pius XII Help the Jews?*. Marchione uses documentation and personal interviews from religious clergy who claim that Pius XII did make several efforts to protect the Jews from Nazi persecution. Her books, however, often border on hagiography, and at no point does she question or accuse Pius XII of acting incorrectly. She presents much evidence of Pius XII’s efforts to protect Jews, including the opening of monasteries and convents to shelter Jews; Marchione believes this would not have been possible without the direct intervention and commands from Pius XII. She argues that “It is foolish to think that the assistance given Jews, in the Vatican and in Rome alone, would have been successful without his knowledge.” Marchione seems to represent the extreme wing of the defenders, and is frequently unrelenting in her positive assessments of the moves the Vatican and Pius XII made before and during World War II.

The last major defender who I will discuss is Rabbi David Dalin. Dalin and Joseph Bottum edit a book called, *The Pius War: Responses to the Critics of Pius XII*, which presents an 11 essay series defending Pius XII, as well as an enormous “Annotated Bibliography of Works on Pius XII, the Second World War, and the Holocaust.” They note that works defending Pope Pius XII are usually published by less recognizable publishers like *Our Sunday Visitor* or *Paulist Press*, while works that are more critical tend to be published by major companies such as *Doubleday, Houghton Mifflin* or *Viking*. They propose that this disparity in popular publishing companies has led the public to consider the defenders of Pius XII as “cranks, nuts, and

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95 Joseph Bottum and David G. Dalin, editors, *The Pius War: Responses to the Critics of Pius XII* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2004).
sectarians.”96 They also state that most defenders choose to publish articles instead of larger works, and that this was the reasoning for their editorial series of essays. This mainstreaming of the critics has led the public, according to Dalin and Bottum, to blame Pius XII for many of the world’s woes and led them to believe that Pius XII not only was silent, but actually “loved the Nazi leader.”97 Bottum claims, however, that recently released information actually backs the claim to the opposite. Interviews, as well as documents from the Nazi era, suggest that the Vatican was directly involved in helping the Jews escape at least some Nazi persecution. He suggests that this information would bring the “anti-Pius books … to an end.”98 Dalin also wrote a book in direct response to John Cornwell’s Hitler’s Pope called The Myth of Hitler’s Pope. In this work, Dalin confronts some of the bolder claims that Cornwell makes in his book. These claims include that Pius XII was an anti-Semite, and hence remained silent in order to prevent a backlash to the Catholic Church.

The last group of writers on Pius XII takes a more moderate approach than the ardent critics or defenders, and includes writers John Conway, José Sánchez, and Paul O’Shea. These authors attempt to remain unbiased and balanced throughout their works, and present both sides while analyzing the most plausible explanations based on the documentation available. John Conway has written several articles about Pope Pius XII and the Holocaust. His article The Silence of Pope Pius XII questions Pius XII’s alleged silence on the topic of the war and persecution of the Jews. He believes that Pius XII was faced with an overwhelming task, and did what he thought would be best. Conway gives three reasons why Pius XII remained largely silent on the war; namely, to stay neutral and broker a peace agreement between the warring

96 Bottum and Dalin, The Pius War, 2.
97 Ibid., 6.
98 Ibid., 11.
parties, to prevent further reprisals against those persecuted, and because of the potentially harmful effect of a Papal protest on the German people.\textsuperscript{99} Conway concludes that it is impossible to judge “how heavy was the burden of responsibility the Pope had to carry.”\textsuperscript{100} Sánchez’s \textit{Pius XII and the Holocaust: Understanding the Controversy}, provides an excellent overview of the arguments, and would serve as an excellent starting point in getting both points of view. He presents the evidence from the critics and defenders and attempts to sort out fact from opinion. Each chapter ends with his evaluation from the evidence each side argues. Paul O’Shea’s \textit{A Cross Too Heavy Eugenio Pacelli: Politics and the Jews of Europe, 1917-1943} is also considered more moderate in tone than many books on the subject. O’Shea can be critical in parts, but he also recognizes that it is impossible to get a full picture of the perspective that Pius XII had and his true motivations. He reasons that Pius XII did what he believed was the right thing to do, but he also believes that Pius XII should have done and said more than he did during the war. These three moderates are still critical of the Pope’s actions, but seem unsure whether historians are truly able to fully assess the situation, especially in dealing with what-if history; therefore, any judgments must be weighed carefully with documentation.

\textbf{Conclusions}

Historical opinion of Eugenio Pacelli, later Pope Pius XII, has changed over the decades since his pontificate. This change has varied from the early works by authors such as Halecki and Murray, as well as Padellaro, to later historians who wrote after Hochhuth’s play \textit{The Deputy} appeared in 1963. There are three perspectives in the controversy surrounding Pius XII’s actions and words before and during the Second World War. These three sides include critics Lewy, Cornwell, Zuccotti, and Phayer, the defenders, including Blet, Marchione, and Dalin and

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., 118.
Bottum, and the moderates, Conway, Sánchez, O’Shea. These are just a few of the more prominent names in the controversy, which appears to have a never-ending cycle of critique and backlash. Even when all of the Vatican documents are released after the mandatory 75 year waiting period on the archives, it appears that we may never definitively know all the answers behind this controversy. While these three sides usually evaluate Pius XII’s time as pope, I will look in detail at two major documents that he played a major role in before his election as Pope. Specifically, I will assess his pre-Papal Third Reich diplomacy with the Reichskonkordat and *Mit brennender Sorge.*
CHAPTER II.

THE REICHSKONKORDAT

One of the most controversial aspects of Pope Pius XII’s actions came six years before his election to the papal seat while he was still known as Cardinal Pacelli and was serving as Papal Secretary of State. The Reichskonkordat (or Reich’s Concordat in English), was a major treaty signed between the Holy See and the German Reich in July 1933, mere months after Hitler was appointed as Chancellor of the Reich in January 1933. The Reichskonkordat set out a legally binding agreement of 32 articles, a final protocol, and a secret annex. The articles list the various points of conflict within the empire that the Catholic Church and the German Reich hoped to resolve. Both sides had been negotiating periodically since 1919 for a larger Reich-wide concordat to standardize the German states’ concordats. The Holy See and the Weimar Republic of Germany, however, were not able to come to an agreement, and talks stalemated until the matter came to the forefront of the negotiating table once again late in 1932 and into 1933. When Hitler became Chancellor on January 30, 1933, he continued the Reichskonkordat negotiations and even intensified them in order to gain favor with the sizeable Catholic population in the German Reich.

The negotiations called for a number of concessions from both sides, but after four meetings on the terms of the Reichskonkordat, a draft was completed, and the final version was formally recognized by both parties on September 10, 1933. Hitler pushed for the Reichskonkordat to gain the German Reich international recognition and rights for the Catholic Church within the German Reich. Even if Hitler had little intention of keeping the promises listed in the articles of the Reichskonkordat, it served a political purpose for him, and gained support from many in the German Catholic population. Many critics later stated that this
concordat sanctified the Nazi Party, when once the Church had condemned its anti-Christian, pagan ideology. Pacelli and the Holy See, however, saw the Reichskonkordat as necessary for the survival of the Church in Germany, which was undergoing religious persecution throughout the Reich.

**Concordats Prior to the Reichskonkordat**

Pope Pius XI appointed Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli as his Secretary of State early in 1930, replacing the aging Cardinal Pietro Gasparri who had retired from the position. As Cardinal Secretaries of State, they played the main role for the Vatican in foreign affairs, both politically and diplomatically. Gasparri, as the Cardinal Secretary of State from 1914 until 1930, had negotiated and signed several concordats with various nations and regions, especially after World War I under the pontificate of Pope Pius XI. In fact, during his time as pope from 1922 until 1939, Pope Pius XI “had concluded more than thirty concordats,” of course with the aid of his Cardinal Secretaries of State Gasparri and Pacelli.\(^\text{101}\) Probably the most significant concordat negotiated and signed while Gasparri was Cardinal Secretary of State was the Lateran Accord, which the Vatican and the Kingdom of Italy ratified in 1929. The Lateran Accord normalized the previously felt strained relationship between the Vatican and the Italian government. It settled the property dispute, granting 108.7 acres to Vatican City, as well as 52 properties outside of the Vatican City.\(^\text{102}\) Furthermore, the Lateran Accord made Roman Catholicism the nation’s official religion, recognized Church marriages, made religious education mandatory for Catholic students, and granted “freedom to Catholic Action as long as it refrained from political

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\(^\text{101}\) Sánchez, *Pius XII*, 84.

involvement.” In return, the Vatican agreed to remain neutral in international conflicts, recognize Rome as the capital, and keep the Catholic Action groups out of politics in Italy.

The Vatican also concluded several other noteworthy concordats under Pope Pius XI, including state concordats within Germany. These concordats included Bavaria in 1924, Prussia in 1929, and Baden in 1932. Pacelli, as the Bavarian papal nuncio in the 1920s had helped Cardinal Secretary of State Gasparri in the negotiation of both the Bavarian and Prussian concordats. These concordats were signed in states with larger Catholic populations, and the Vatican had hoped to expand negotiations to a larger Reich-wide concordat even as soon as the end of World War I. Previous concordat negotiations had taken place from 1919 to 1922 with the Weimar Republic. These negotiations continued intermittently throughout the 1920s and early 1930s. The Reich-wide concordat failed under the Weimar government, however, largely due to the non-Catholic majorities representing the Reichstag and Reichsrat, and the Vatican settled for the time being for the states’ concordats instead. Another stumbling point in the Reich-wide negotiations with the Weimar government was the Catholic school question. Various non-Catholic factions in Germany, including “The extreme left and extreme right, liberals and Socialists, as well as the Protestant churches” were not willing to make concessions for a concordat, especially in regard to schools. The individual state concordats settled several points on Church policies, including the school question; however, they did not settle the “regulation of pastoral care in the armed forces of the Reich,” which later became an issue when the Reichskonkordat was negotiated in 1933.

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103 Ibid.  
104 Ibid.  
106 Ibid.  
107 Ibid.
When Cardinal Pacelli replaced Cardinal Gasparri as Cardinal Secretary of State in 1930, he continued the papal tradition of negotiating and signing concordats with various political entities. Pacelli served as the Cardinal Secretary of State from February 7, 1930, until his election to the Pontificate on March 2, 1939. As Cardinal Secretary of State he was considered Pope Pius XI’s “chief advisor and factotum. He carried out Pius’ policies, advised him on diplomatic matters, helped write Papal encyclicals, and handled most international matters. He continued the papal policy of seeking concordats.” Negotiations continued for a Reichskonkordat under Cardinal Pacelli, especially in 1931, and continued through to Hitler’s appointment as Chancellor on January 30, 1933. Hitler pushed for negotiations to move forward between the Vatican and the Reich after his appointment, and made several gestures toward the Church to promote good relations. Hitler promised to “work for peaceful relations between Church and State” in a March 23, 1933, policy statement, and made several other positive statements on relations with the Catholic Church and the role of Christianity in the German Reich in general.

**Changing Church View on the Nazi Party**

The Church had previously been skeptical of the Nazi Party’s claims to support positive Christianity, even going so far at the Fulda Bishops’ Conference in 1931 to propose that Nazi membership would be cause to deny the Church’s sacraments, such as communion, to Nazi Party members. The resolution they proposed, however, did not pass, and a more ambiguous statement was issued instead. Other individual bishops, for example in the Paderborn and Bavarian regions, forbade membership in the Nazi Party; that is, however, until negotiations for
a Reichskonkordat became more serious following Hitler’s promise of concessions to the Church’s demands. Several German bishops had also “repeatedly condemned the pagan ideas of Nazism,” and, along with the Catholic Center Party, served as hindrances to the Nazi cause.\footnote{Sánchez, \textit{Pius XII}, 84.} Hitler, however, pointed to National Socialism’s previous declaration in Article 24 of the National Socialist Worker’s Party, which had been in existence since February 20, 1920, as evidence of the party’s long-standing good intentions towards Christianity.\footnote{Lewy, \textit{The Catholic Church}, 7.} This article called for “liberty for all religious denominations,” with the stipulation that these denominations were not declared dangerous to the state’s welfare.\footnote{Ibid.} Hitler also promised “to respect the rights of the Church, by emphasizing the centrality of Christianity to a revived Germany, and by promising to defend Germany against Bolshevism.”\footnote{Sánchez, \textit{Pius XII}, 84.} In a radio address on February 1, 1933, he stated that Christianity served as a foundation to members of the Nazi Party, and expounded upon that by acclaiming the traditional family structure.\footnote{Lewy, \textit{The Catholic Church}, 25.} The Church saw these proclamations as steps in the right direction in dealing with the Nazi power that had taken hold in Germany. It also saw, however, many of the repressive measures that the Nazi Party had enforced against German Catholics, and wanted to sign a Reich-wide concordat to protect itself from these continuing harassments.

The German bishops at the Fulda Bishops’ Conference, after several promises from Hitler for greater respect and incorporation of the Church with the state and his continued negotiations with the Vatican for a Reichskonkordat, then decided to rescind “their bans against
membership in the Nazi Party.”

This rescinding took effect in March of 1933, just days after the passage of the Enabling Act, which gave Hitler and the Nazi Party greater political power and made Hitler the legal dictator of Germany. Catholic organizations also followed the bishops’ lead, and lifted the ban on Nazi membership. The Enabling Act was passed by the required two-thirds majority in the Reichstag, including the traditional defenders of the Catholic faith in the state, the Center Party. Hitler had gained their support for the Act by promising:

> to continue the existence of the German states, not to use the new grant power to change the constitution and to retain civil servants belonging to the Center party. Moreover, Hitler pledged to protect the confessional schools and to respect the concordats signed between the Holy See and Bavaria (1924), Prussia (1929) and Baden (1932).

The German Episcopate and a majority of German Catholics, therefore, supported the measures taken to continue negotiations for the Reichskonkordat. This group felt that the previously negotiated concordats between the Holy See and individual German states would not provide “adequate guarantees or assurances, of respect for their convictions, for their faith, rights, or their liberty of action.” The Center Party’s power had been diminished, along with the other political parties, and this eventually led to the dissolution of the party before the signing of the Reichskonkordat.

Hitler and the German Reich had proposed the revival of negotiations, and the Holy See found itself in a difficult position to deny striving for this long sought-after goal. If the Church had refused such a proposal to negotiate, it might have appeared to the public that the Church did not recognize the new German government. Such refusal could also have potentially estranged German Catholics who supported the Nazi regime, as well as making German Catholics and

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119 Ibid.
Catholic organizations that did not support the Nazis, face new persecutions.\textsuperscript{120} Restarting negotiations and coming to terms with an agreement, however, would give Hitler’s regime both national and international legitimacy. The Reichskonkordat would eventually serve this purpose, even when Hitler repeatedly broke several of the articles agreed upon within it. The Vatican, for its part, wanted the Reichskonkordat to “protect German Catholics in a political situation in which their traditional protector, the Catholic Center Party, no longer existed.”\textsuperscript{121} All political parties besides the Nazi Party faced persecution, especially after Hitler’s appointment as Chancellor, and these parties eventually dissolved just before the signing of the Reichskonkordat in the summer of 1933. The Holy See believed that the Reichskonkordat could protect German Catholics, and that it would serve as a formal means to protest persecution of Catholics. German Catholics support for the Reichskonkordat showed their inclination to make peace with the National Socialists for the sake of the Church, even if Pacelli also recognized the offer to negotiate as a “sword dipped in honey.”\textsuperscript{122} The Reich had already been oppressing Catholic causes in the time before the Reichskonkordat was signed, and the Vatican felt that a concordat could protect its followers. Marchione writes that leading up to the Reichskonkordat signing there had been a:

\begin{quote}
 dissolution of Catholic organizations; the gradual suppression of … Catholic schools … Next came the closing, dissolution and confiscations of religious houses and other ecclesiastical institutions as well as the complete suppression of the Catholic press and publishing houses.\textsuperscript{123}
\end{quote}

With the Reichskonkordat in hand, the Church believed that it would have a legal basis to defend itself against the German government’s injustices and persecution of Catholics.

\textsuperscript{120} O’Shea, \textit{A Cross Too Heavy}, 229.
\textsuperscript{121} Sánchez, \textit{Pius XII}, 82.
\textsuperscript{122} O’Shea, \textit{A Cross Too Heavy}, 223.
\textsuperscript{123} Marchione, \textit{Consensus and Controversy}, 13-14.
Reichskonkordat Negotiations

Other Catholic leaders agreed that the Reichskonkordat must be negotiated and signed in order to protect the best interest of the Church. Cardinal Pacelli, Monsignor Ludwig Kaas, the previous chairman of the Catholic-based Center Party in the Reichstag, and Reich Vice-Chancellor Franz von Papen played the main roles in the negotiations for the Reichskonkordat in 1933. Negotiations began anew at the new Reich government’s request, and continued throughout the spring and summer until the concordat was initialed on July 8, 1933 at 6:00 p.m. by Cardinal Pacelli and von Papen; the two signed the agreement on July 20, 1933, but it was not considered official until September 10, 1933, when it was finalized by both institutions.124 The Reichskonkordat had only seriously come to the negotiation table in June of the same year, and a draft concordat had been issued after only four sessions.125 The former Cardinal Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Gasparri, whom Pacelli replaced in 1930, had also approved of continued negotiations with the Reich, and wrote a memorandum in the summer of 1933 with his reasons why Pacelli should proceed. He stated that “As long as Hitler does not declare war on the Holy See or the Catholic Hierarchy in Germany,” the Church should not condemn Nazism, should not protest the dissolution of the Catholic Center Party, should allow Catholics to join the Nazi Party, and should also allow Catholics not to be a part of the Nazi Party if they so choose.126 Pacelli agreed with Gasparri’s reasoning for the Reichskonkordat, and proceeded with the negotiations under the approval of Pope Pius XI.

The more serious negotiations during June of 1933 likely came about for two reasons. One reason for the timing was the deterioration of the Center Party in the Reichstag. Without it,

124 Lewy, The Catholic Church, 76, 79.
125 Ibid. 73.
126 O’Shea, A Cross Too Heavy, 220.
the Catholic Church would lose much leverage in its ability to bargain with the Reich. The Social Democrats had already been outlawed under Nazi leadership, and the Staatspartei, or the Democrats, disbanded on June 28, 1933. The next day, the German Nationalists’ leader, Alfred Hugenberg, resigned from office and his party also dissolved itself. The Catholic Center Party saw an abysmal future for its party in the face of these failures of other parties, and eventually dissolved itself “in the late evening of July 5,” one day after the Catholic Bavarians’ state party disbanded. The Center Party was able to console itself somewhat, however, in that the Vatican was negotiating for the Reichskonkordat, which would help to protect German Catholics’ interests.

The second reason for the intensified negotiations was the Nazi crackdown during the last half of June on German Catholics and the Center Party. This included multiple arrests and firings of Catholic employees of the Reich government. The Nazis insisted to the Vatican, however, that the foreign press was merely exaggerating these claims, and should not be listened to at all. The Vatican was leery of these cases of Catholic persecution, but continued with the negotiations for the Reichskonkordat. The negotiations had been held up for years for a variety of reasons, but the main point of contention for the new negotiations came mainly from Article 31.

**Controversial Reichskonkordat Articles**

Article 31, which would later be modified into Article 32 of the Reichskonkordat, proved to be the most problematic in settling the agreement. This article stated in part that “the Holy See will publish stipulations which exclude the clergy and members of Orders from membership

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128 Ibid., 76.
in political parties, and activity for such parties.”\textsuperscript{130} The article was especially problematic, because it would mean that several representatives in the Reichstag, who were in the Catholic Center Party, would no longer be able to serve. This included priests such as Monsignor Ludwig Kaas, who would have to step down from leadership roles in the Center Party so that the Reichskonkordat could be passed. The Vatican decided to present a draft of the Reichskonkordat at the annual Fulda Bishops’ Conference in Germany held between May 30 and June 1 of 1933, in order to get their opinion of the agreement.\textsuperscript{131} As Pacelli suspected, the bishops also did not like this article, which denied clergy any political role. They would eventually relent, however, and just over a month later, the Center Party, as well as all non-Nazi parties in Germany, was dissolved anyway. Article 32 in the final Reichskonkordat was kept towards the end of the agreement, according to Ambassador Bergen the day after its signing:

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in order to place at the end the discussion of removing the clergy from politics … and to confront the Curia with the difficult decision whether it could take the responsibility for sacrificing all the concessions attained with difficulty in the earlier articles solely on account of Article 32.\textsuperscript{132}
\end{quote}

The German Reich seemed to be using the carrot and stick approach; by prodding the Church into giving up any political aspirations with the promise of several concessions granting greater religious freedom and the halting of religious persecution against the schools and members of the Church, Hitler and the Reich were able to eventually gain acceptance of this controversial article.

Another article that caused great discussion between the Holy See and the German Reich would later become Article 31 in the finalized version of the Reichskonkordat. This article stated that “Those Catholic organizations and societies which serve exclusively religious, purely

\textsuperscript{130} “Reich Concordat between the Holy See and the German Reich (July 20, 1933).” German History in Documents and Images. Volume 7. Nazi Germany, 1933-1945. \url{http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1570}.
\textsuperscript{131} Lewy, \textit{The Catholic Church}, 71-72.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid, 74.
cultural and charitable purposes … will be protected in their establishments and their activity.”\textsuperscript{133} These Catholic organizations and societies could, therefore, exist as long as they did not have any activities involved in the political realm. For example, they could not call for outright support for the Catholic Center Party, or any other political party or any individual representative for that matter. This would also mean that these organizations could not support or protest certain political matters or issues. The ambiguous wording in this article for defining what constituted political party activity would later give the German Reich great flexibility in interpreting this clause. Article 31 also stated that “It is reserved to the Government of the Reich and the German Episcopate, to determine by joint agreement which organizations and associations come within the scope of this article.”\textsuperscript{134} The organizations were not decided upon in the final version of the Reichskonkordat, however, and the two never reached a “joint agreement” on which organizations would be included or excluded. This would prove to be an error for the Catholic Church, which later saw many of its organizations facing Nazi persecution based on accusations that they were meddling in politics. Hitler had guaranteed to maintain the Catholic organizations in an April 23, 1933, meeting with German Bishop Berning and Monsignor Steinmann.\textsuperscript{135} In addition to keeping the state-friendly Catholic organizations, Hitler also vowed to keep the confessional schools, because “Devout soldiers are the most valuable, for they risk all.”\textsuperscript{136} With these promises to the Vatican to stop current harassment and actually protect the Catholic Church’s interests in the form of schools, organizations, and clergy, as long as they maintained a separation from politics, it seemed as if the Holy See could not refuse to agree to the Reichskonkordat.

\textsuperscript{133} “Reich Concordat.”
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{135} Lewy, \textit{The Catholic Church}, 52.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid.
When concluded, the Reichskonkordat was composed of a total of 32 articles, a final protocol, as well as a secret annex. The concordat begins with an opening paragraph that states the reason why this treaty was necessary, and who the respective representatives of each party involved were. Pope Pius XI and the President of the German Reich were “moved by the common desire to consolidate and promote the friendly relations existing between” the two parties in order to conclude the Reichskonkordat.\(^{137}\) The Reichskonkordat would act as a supplement to the existing concordats signed with the various German states and would provide uniformity across the German Reich. Pope Pius XI appointed Cardinal Pacelli to serve as his plenipotentiary for the proceedings, and Vice-Chancellor Franz von Papen served for the German Reich. As plenipotentiaries, Pacelli and von Papen were able to be ambassadors on behalf of their respective parties with full authority to negotiate independently from their higher authorities.

**Summary of the Articles**

The first article in the Reichskonkordat guarantees the freedom to profess and practice Catholicism in public and allowed the Church to independently administer itself. Article 2 recognizes the state concordats as valid. The third article calls for a German ambassador to live at the Vatican, and a Vatican ambassador to live in Berlin in order to “foster good relations.”\(^{138}\) Article 4 allows the Holy See to communicate freely with the German clergy, and also allows for the publishing of official Church business without interference by the state.

Articles 5 through 10 pertain to the “legal status of the clergy.”\(^{139}\) Clergy and members of orders were allowed to carry out their official duties under protection of the state, and were

\(^{137}\) “Reich Concordat.”

\(^{138}\) Ibid.

\(^{139}\) Lewy, *The Catholic Church*, 80.
exempt from being forced to take public office. They were only allowed, however, to serve the state after receiving a nihil obstat from their diocesan bishop. The nihil obstat is an official statement of non-opposition by the Church to an action; the Church could also withdraw this statement at any time for valid reasons. The Reichskonkordat also exempted the clergy and orders from paying taxes, and allowed them to keep the secrecy of the confessional. Article 10 allows the clergy to keep their style of dress, and prohibits other, non-clergy members from wearing their dress under penalty of law. If a non-clergy member was found wearing their dress, then the state could prosecute them the same as if someone had misused wearing a military uniform.

The next article lays out the rules for keeping the present boundaries of dioceses. Article 11 also provides for the then-hypothetical situation of the German Reich expanding or reorganizing its territory. In this case, the Church would have to again confer with the Reich for further approval of changing diocesan boundaries. Article 12 is similar to Article 11, but allows for ecclesiastical offices to be established freely if no state funds are to be used for that purpose. Article 13 also handles the Church property and authority question. It allows for “Catholic parishes, parish and diocesan associations, Episcopal Sees, bishoprics and chapters, religious orders and congregations, as well as institutions, foundations and property” under the domain of the Church to remain corporations in the civil arena. In the final protocol this article also guarantees the right of the Church to levy taxes.

Article 14 is one of the lengthier articles in the Reichskonkordat and deals with the requirements of clergymen and the appointment of bishops within the Reich. Clergy members had to be German citizens, had to have a diploma which would allow them to study at a German

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140 “Reich Concordat.”
university, and had to have completed three or more years of “philosophical and theological study at a German state university, a German ecclesiastical academic institution or a pontifical institution of higher learning in Rome.”\textsuperscript{141} These requirements could be waived in exceptional cases where the Church and state consented. The second point of this article is the nomination of higher ranked clergy, such as archbishops and bishops. The Church would be able to select candidates to make these appointments, but the state would have to make the final approval to make sure “that there are no objections of a general political nature against the person.”\textsuperscript{142} This article is significant, because it gives much control to the state government in deciding Church authority figures.

Article 15 also limits the appointment of superiors to religious orders. These superiors had to have German citizenship if they resided within the Reich. It also places no special restrictions on these orders, and allows for “their activity in pastoral work, in education, in nursing and charitable work, in the ordering of their affairs and the administration of their property.”\textsuperscript{143} Article 16 relates back to Article 14 and the appointment of new bishops in the Reich. Any bishops appointed after the signing of the Reichskonkordat had to not only be appointed with the approval of the state, but also after their approval had to swear an oath of allegiance to the German Reich. They would have to swear to “respect, and to have my clergy to respect, the constituted government”; they also need to swear to “try, in the exercise of the spiritual office entrusted to me, to prevent any injury that might threaten it (the German State).”\textsuperscript{144} This oath obligated them to fulfill their duty not only to the Church, but also to the German Reich, which later caused a conflict of interest for some bishops who had to decide if

\textsuperscript{141} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid.
they should take the oath. Article 17 allows and guarantees the Catholic Church the right of ownership to its property, and protects it from having this property destroyed or harmed for any reason not agreed upon by both parties. Article 18 keeps the payments from the state to the Church, a practice which was surprisingly maintained throughout the years of the war, albeit in somewhat reduced amounts from the era prior to World War II.

The next interrelated articles are numbers 19 through 25, and guarantee the rights of the Catholic educational system in the Reich. This includes keeping the “Catholic theological faculties in State institutions of higher learning” (Article 19), as well as keeping and establishing training for the clergy without state interference (Article 20). The next article 21 deals with the Catholic religious instruction in the schools and “marked an improvement over existing provisions” as far as the Catholic Church was concerned. This article states that religious education is and would be a regular subject in the schools from the primary age up to institutions of higher education, and this education would follow the guidelines of the Catholic Church. The trade-off for this clause was that the religious instruction would also emphasize “a patriotic, civic, and social sense of duty in the spirit of Christian religious and moral law.” The instruction, in essence, would promote and justify some of the values of the state in a religious education setting. The instructors of religious education would be appointed through an agreement with the local bishop and Land government according to Article 22. The next article also guarantees that current Catholic schools would remain open, and new ones would also be allowed. Article 24 states that within these Catholic institutions, the primary schools would only employ religious teachers who are members of the Catholic Church and who promise to abide by

145 Ibid.
146 Lewy, The Catholic Church, 82.
147 “Reich Concordat.”
the Church’s teachings. The last article dealing with the Church and the educational system allows for “Orders and religious congregations . . . to establish and conduct private schools.”\textsuperscript{148} These private schools would hold the same privileges as state schools. The religious schools and religious instruction at state institutions was a vital concern to the Church in negotiating the Reichskonkordat, enough so that it directly mentioned education in seven of the 32 articles.

The next few articles concern miscellaneous affairs between the Church and state. Article 26 allows for a Church marriage to take place before a civil ceremony in the case of “serious moral emergency.”\textsuperscript{149} This supplemented the previous law, which stated that a Church wedding prior to a civil wedding could only be granted if one of the betrothed had a critical illness. This article would later be used by some priests to marry couples who would not normally have been allowed to marry couples in a civil ceremony because of certain racial laws.\textsuperscript{150} Next, Article 27 exempts pastoral care for men in the \textit{Reichswehr} (the German army), and also allows the German Reich to vote for or against Vatican nominations for an Army Bishop. Article 28, however, did allow for pastoral care to continue in “hospitals, penal institutions, and other public establishments.”\textsuperscript{151} Historian Guenter Lewy states that this provision was soon violated after the signing “when the regime refused the offer of the Church to hold services in the concentration camps.”\textsuperscript{152} Article 29 allows non-German minorities to hold services in their native tongue without repercussions, and Article 30 requires the Church to offer a prayer “for the welfare of the German Reich” on every Sunday and religious holiday. Article 31, which was discussed earlier as one of the major problems in negotiating the

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{150} Lewy, \textit{The Catholic Church}, 83.
\textsuperscript{151} “Reich Concordat.”
\textsuperscript{152} Lewy, \textit{The Catholic Church}, 83.
Reichskonkordat, deals with the protection of non-political Catholic organizations. One of Hitler’s most sought after articles was Article 32, which bans clergy members from the political realm. As previously mentioned, by the time the Reichskonkordat was officially signed, all parties, except the Nazis, were banned in the German Reich, but most had just dissolved themselves due to increased Nazi pressure. The last two articles are more official in tone, and call for mutual agreement in any future interpretations of the Reichskonkordat, as well as the hope to ratify it as soon as possible in both the German and Italian forms of the text. It was then signed by the respective plenipotentiaries Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli and Vice-Chancellor Franz von Papen. In addition, a final protocol was included to clarify certain aspects of the articles, and a secret annex was added that was also signed on July 20, 1933.

The Secret Annex

The secret annex to the Reichskonkordat was not made public until it was discovered several decades after the signing of this agreement. This annex is oddly prophetic to what would happen six years later. It states that:

In the event of a reorganization of the present German military system by the introduction of general military service, the induction of priests and other members of the secular and regular clergy for the performance of military service will be regulated in agreement with the Holy See.  

In other words, if the German Reich decided to implement a draft and/or in the event of a war, the government would come to an understanding with the Church based on four principles, which it then listed. One point exempted seminarians from military service unless there was a general mobilization of the military. If, however, there was a general mobilization, then clergy members and those engaged in the direct work of the Church would not be required to mobilize. This included parish priests, bishops, and professors in seminaries, among others. Those who

were not considered exempt from military service would enter “under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Army Bishop,” and would serve as either pastoral workers or enter into the medical service. Those clergy members who had not taken their vows to become priests would be commissioned to serve in the medical field of the military. This secret annex came at the suggestion of the Fulda Bishops’ Conference which had taken place May 30-June 1, 1933.

Reactions to and Effects of the Reichskonkordat

Once the Reichskonkordat was negotiated and signed by Pacelli and von Papen on July 20, 1933, it was sent on to their superiors, and became official on the afternoon of September 10, 1933, when Pope Pius XI finalized it. The public generally saw the Reichskonkordat as a victory for Hitler, but it can also be said that it was an “achievement for the Papal Secretary of State, Eugenio Pacelli, who had worked toward it ever since his appointment as Papal Nuncio in Germany in 1920.” As has been noted, the Weimar Republic had been unwilling to cooperate in negotiating a concordat, and the Church had to settle on individual concordats until Hitler’s rise to power. Hitler had worked toward a resolution with the Church from his appointment as Chancellor, and made several promises to guarantee its success. He also made several conciliatory moves toward Catholics to show his good will, and helped move the negotiations forward. This included several statements on the good faith of the Reich towards the Church. One powerful statement just before the ending of the negotiations was issued on July 9, 1933. Hitler promised in this statement to rescind the dissolution of Catholic organizations that had been unfairly dismissed, and promised to stop “All coercive measures against priests and other leaders of the Catholic organizations.”

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154 Ibid.
155 Lewy, The Catholic Church, 57.
156 Ibid., 77.
the German Reich, who had been facing persecution under the Nazis. This announcement is also significant in that it states that Hitler’s government strove for reconciliation with Protestant churches.

Hitler was not significantly worried about the “fine print of the treaty, which he had no intention of keeping”; he was, however, concerned about getting the international recognition that would come with signing the Reichskonkordat.\footnote{Ibid., 79.} He mentioned three main advantages that he would receive by concluding the concordat. One benefit he saw was in the Church’s acceptance to negotiate with the Nazi Party at all. This is because the Church had previously condemned the un-Christian and pagan principles that Nazism had propagated. He was also pleasantly surprised at the Church’s willingness to “obligate the bishops to this State.”\footnote{Ibid., 78.} Lastly, he was happy to see the exclusion of the Catholic parties and unions from political activity. These Church concessions helped the agreement to go quicker than expected, making the Reichskonkordat one of the faster negotiations in concordat history. Pacelli followed several of the guidelines set out in the 1929 Lateran Accord with Italy by his predecessor, Cardinal Secretary of State Gasparri, when negotiating the Reichskonkordat, such as clergy staying out of politics and Catholic organizations remaining neutral in the political realm.

Hitler’s claim that the Reichskonkordat meant that the Church approved of the Nazi regime was popularly accepted, and this argument was used to persuade the public to vote for Hitler and the Nazi Party in the November 12, 1933, election. This election was the first one-party election held in the German Reich after Hitler and the Nazis came to power. The election asked whether voters approved or disapproved of Hitler’s list of Nazi members in the Reichstag,
and if the referendum to withdraw from the League of Nations should pass. Both votes eventually passed with over 92% of the vote; over 7% of the voters submitted invalid ballots in protest of the unfair election. One pre-election poster touted the Catholic Church’s approval of the Nazi Party to attract voters for the Nazi Party. This poster asked “Why is a Catholic obliged to vote for the parliamentary list of Adolf Hitler?,” and answered “Because in the National Socialist state intrinsically and through the Reichskonkordat …” multiple rights are guaranteed to Catholics. It then listed eight benefits that the Reichskonkordat gave Catholic voters. This included maintenance of the Catholic schools and the protection of the faith. It also included the release from the burden of the Catholic conscience from adhering to National Socialism, among other reasons listed. The Reichskonkordat meant that the Church’s previous condemnation of the Nazi Party was no longer in effect; therefore, voters would not have a conflict with their religious beliefs when voting for the Nazi Party. Hitler and the Nazis gave obvious importance to the conclusion of the concordat, enough so to promote it in pre-election campaigning.

Pacelli, however, disagreed with Hitler and the Nazis’ assessment of the implications of the Reichskonkordat. In two articles published in L’Osservatore Romano, the Vatican newspaper, Pacelli said that “Hitler’s claim that the Church now approved of Nazism was absolutely wrong.” Also, the claim that the “Vatikan habe im Konkordat seine Zustimmung zum Verschwinden der katholischen Partei in Deutschland gegeben” was renounced by Pacelli in L’Osservatore Romano. In other words, this meant that the Nazis had claimed the Vatican had given its approval in the Reichskonkordat to the disappearance of the Catholic Center Party

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160 Ibid.
161 Sánchez, Pius XII and the Holocaust, 86.
in Germany, a claim dismissed by this Vatican sponsored article. Pacelli and the Church insisted that the Reichskonkordat was merely a means of protecting the Catholic Church in the German Reich, and did not mean that the Church approved of Nazi policies or the end to the Catholic party, while Hitler insisted that the Reichskonkordat meant just that.

In the month following the signing of the Reichskonkordat, Cardinal Secretary of State Pacelli met with a member of the British Legation to the Vatican and reiterated his disapproval of the Nazi government. In this meeting he expressed his “disgust and abhorrence of the reign of terror to which Hitler’s government had subjected Germany.”163 Years later, in June of 1945, after the end of the war, then-Pope Pius XII commented on the Reichskonkordat signing. He stated that “it must be recognized that the Concordat in the years that followed brought some advantages, or at least prevented worse evils.”164 Pacelli recognized then, as he had earlier, the precarious situation the Church had been left in to negotiate a Reichskonkordat that had been proposed to them after years of futile negotiations with the previous Weimar government.

Reichskonkordat Controversy

Others, however, do not approve of Pacelli and the Vatican’s negotiations with the Nazi government for a Reichskonkordat. Rolf Hochhuth, writer of The Deputy, argues that Pius “should have unilaterally abrogated the Reich Concordat of 1933 as a protest against the Nazi government’s unchristian behavior.”165 Before the Reichskonkordat negotiations intensified, most German bishops had prevented Nazi members from receiving the sacraments in the Church, but repealed this ban as a result of Hitler’s promises of good will to the Church. Hochhuth believes that the Reich’s Concordat could have been an opportunity for Pacelli and the papacy in

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163 Lewy, 87.
164 Sánchez, Pope Pius XII, 60.
165 Ibid., 25.
general to explicitly show resistance to Hitler and the Third Reich. He also argues for other
diplomatic means on the part of the Vatican that could have prevented the extreme atrocities
committed during the war. When Pacelli became pope and found out about the concentration
camps, he should have obligated the Catholics in the East and in Germany not “to participate in
the mass murder,” according to Hochhuth.166

Pacelli and the Vatican are criticized for not doing more to protect the Jews and other
persecuted groups during the Third Reich, and perhaps the Reichskonkordat hindered the Church
from speaking out in a more thorough and explicit manner. The Church’s priority in 1933 was to
protect the rights of Catholics in Germany, and popular sentiment at the time believed that
Hitler’s regime would not last for very long, but the Church’s concordat would last. The
Reichskonkordat was meant to protect the Church, but it also seemingly tied the Church’s hands
when dealing with the German Reich after its signing. Paul O’Shea argues that “the concordat
ruled out official interventions on behalf of any persecuted group except German Catholics.”167
Hitler had bypassed the German bishops in taking any steps towards reconciliation, and had gone
straight to the Vatican for the Reichskonkordat. The Church and state had a long history of
struggle in Germany, most noticeably in the form of the Kulturkampf, or culture war, of the
1870s. The Prime Minister of Prussia at that time, Otto von Bismarck, had placed a number of
restrictions on Catholics in Germany, and the Catholic Church faced severe persecution during
this time. Hitler promised to end this struggle once and for all; even if Hitler did not agree with
Christianity, he found it useful to get what he needed. The Reichskonkordat helped him to get
international recognition and also forced the Church to make concessions; while Hitler also made
concessions, he never intended to keep most of them. The Church could protest any violations of

166 Bentley, The Storm Over The Deputy, 64.
167 O’Shea, A Cross Too Heavy, 222.
the Reichskonkordat, as it often did, most notably in the papal encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* in 1937; however, it was diplomatically bound, according to O’Shea, not to protest anything other than the Reichskonkordat articles. He states that “the Pope could not make statements about any matter outside those expressly mentioned in the concordat.”\(^{168}\) This included the mistreatment of German Jews, who were not mentioned in the Reichskonkordat. After the signing of the concordat any Vatican attempt to speak on their behalf was “rendered diplomatically ineffective.”\(^{169}\) If a protest against the persecution of German Jews came from Church authorities, it would have to be from the German bishops or from those outside of Germany. Those Catholics who were of Jewish descent would also not be protected by the Reichskonkordat, an issue that the Vatican struggled with before and during the war when “Catholic Jews” were facing persecution.\(^{170}\)

**Conclusions**

The Reichskonkordat seemed to be beneficial to both Hitler and the Vatican at the time of its signing in 1933. The Church had previously concluded several other treaties both with various German states as well as with other countries, and saw a great opportunity to conclude a Reichskonkordat with the new Nazi government, which seemed quite willing to cooperate fully with the Holy See. Pacelli, as Cardinal Secretary of State, was largely responsible for the content of the Reichskonkordat, but based the treaty on previous experience with the treaties with the German states and the Lateran Accord with Italy. As Papal nuncio to Bavaria, he had had much experience in this diplomatic area, and proceeded with the Reichskonkordat as directed by Pope Pius XI and encouraged by the Catholic Church’s historical usage of concordats.

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\(^{168}\) Ibid., 230.

\(^{169}\) Ibid., 228.

\(^{170}\) Ibid., 230.
with political entities. The Reichskonkordat was meant to protect the Church and Catholics in the German Reich, and the Church strove to keep its end of the bargain on the treaty, even when Hitler and the rest of the Nazi government violated it consistently after its signing and up until the end of the Third Reich. The Catholic Church protested these Nazi violations of the Reichskonkordat, but never renounced it in fear of facing greater persecution and losing more of the rights guaranteed in it. After several denunciations of the Reichskonkordat violations, the Catholic Church decided to issue a stronger protest in the form of the papal encyclical, *Mit brennender Sorge*, sometimes translated as *With Deep Anxiety*, or *With Burning Concern*. This encyclical was distributed and read at every Catholic parish in the German Reich on Palm Sunday 1937, and caused a Nazi backlash to the Catholic challenge it faced. The next chapter will discuss the background and implications of *Mit brennender Sorge*, an encyclical in which Cardinal Secretary of State Pacelli played a significant role.
CHAPTER III.

MIT BRENNENDER SORGE

Almost immediately after the signing of the Reichskonkordat between Nazi Germany and the Vatican, Nazi violations of the concordat became apparent. German bishops appealed to the Nazi government to end harassment and persecution of the clergy and Catholic organizations in the German Reich, but to no avail. Their pleas went unheard, even after several written complaints on the breaches of the Reichskonkordat. The German bishops also appealed to the Vatican, which was more receptive to hearing their grievances. The Vatican then responded by writing dozens of protests over the next several years to the Nazi government. These complaints cited the many violations of the Reichskonkordat and asked for these infringements to end immediately. Hitler and the Nazi government, however, largely ignored these protests, and the persecutions of the Church continued. These persecutions included:

impeding the work of its organizations, suppressing its press, engaging in arbitrary harassment, and launching a wide-ranging campaign of incitement and defamation against clerics, many of whom were arrested and charged with corruption and moral crimes.171

Cardinal Pacelli received many of the German bishops’ complaints, and wrote at least 55 diplomatic notes to the German Reich on their and the Church’s behalf. Few of the notes he sent received any reply at all, and the violations of the concordat continued to pile up; Hitler had no intention from the beginning of the negotiations for the Reichskonkordat of keeping the agreement he had proposed to the Holy See. The Holy See, for its part, kept its side of the agreement, but still faced persecution. Out of all of the complaints the Vatican issued to the

German government, however, only one became a formal measure of protest, *Mit brennender Sorge*, translated to *With Deep Anxiety* or *With Burning Concern*, issued on March 14, 1937. Other complaints were later directed at the Nazi government, but never in such a formal manner.

**Church Protests Prior to *Mit brennender Sorge***

Before the Church’s formal protest in 1937, there were several other written, informal notes, protesting the Reichskonkordat violations, most notably Cardinal Pacelli’s *Promemoria*, issued on May 14, 1934. He had written several other *Promemoria* prior to and after the *Promemoria* issued on May 14, 1934; these include the first detailed *Promemoria* issued on October 19, 1933, which “protested the violence and restrictions directed against Catholic Youth organizations, the repression of the Catholic press, and the dismissal of Catholic government officials.” He repeated several of the protests in the months following the October *Promemoria*, and threatened public intervention by Pope Pius XI if the violations continued, but his pleas went largely ignored. The May 14, 1934, *Promemoria* is one of the lengthier informal protests, and is also “the most detailed and critical.” Pacelli attacked the neo-pagan movement developing in Nazism, the over-reaching of the state in Church affairs, and the many violations of the Reichskonkordat. He was especially critical of the “government’s gradual suppression of the Catholic youth movements” in the May 1934 *Promemoria*. The German Catholic youth had been subjected to much anti-Catholic propaganda by the Nazi government, which denounced the Catholic faith and practices. It also “vilified the Pope, bishops and the clergy and asserted that Christianity was a derivative of oriental Judaism and responsible for the decline of

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174 Ibid., 237.
Pacelli criticized the arbitrary persecution of the Church and its organizations, and used Catholic theology to support his statements. He was also critical of Nazi racism, which he saw as a “substitute religion” and “crazy.” Pacelli criticizes other topics in the May 1934 Promemoria, including the violations of Reichskonkordat articles on education, violations of the freedom of the Catholic press, and harassment of the clergy and bishops, among other actions not covered by the Reichskonkordat such as forced sterilization. This May Promemoria was an attempt to “force Hitler to curb the anti-church measures and allow the implementation of Article 31 according to the Church’s interpretation.” This Promemoria, like the other complaints, fell on deaf ears in the German government. Only when the Holy See wrote the official protest Mit brennender Sorge in 1937 did the German government pay attention and react violently to the pleas of the Church.

Although Cardinal Pacelli had written several protests previous to Mit brennender Sorge, the Church saw little reaction to or benefit from its appeals. The Church had few means to threaten consequences for Reichskonkordat violations besides a public or official plea. In July 1936, Pacelli, as Cardinal Secretary of State, had mentioned the possibility of a Papal pastoral based on the comprehensive documentation of the breaches of the Reichskonkordat. This sentiment increased enough in the ranks of the Church to have the German bishops meeting at the August 18, 1936, Fulda conference to request “a statement by the pope about the situation in Germany.” This appeal was made not only after the anti-Catholic events in the Reich, but also

175 Ibid.
176 Ibid.
177 Ibid.
178 Hubert Wolf, Pope and Devil: The Vatican’s Archives and the Third Reich, Translated by Kenneth Kronenberg (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010), 265.
after the beginning of “immorality trials and the failed renegotiations for the Reichskonkordat.”

### Background of Mit brennender Sorge

The German bishops continued to resort to the Vatican with their complaints, and, at another Fulda conference in January 1937, they drafted responses to 17 violations of the concordat. Less than a week later, German Cardinal Michael von Faulhaber wrote the first draft of Mit brennender Sorge at the request of Pius XI and Cardinal Pacelli. He then gave it to Pacelli on January 21, 1937 after working on it at night to avoid detection. Pacelli then “edited the draft and added material on the history of the concordat.” Pacelli wrote much of the concordat and would eventually become the main author of the document. Pacelli, at first, was uncertain about the proposed encyclical, and feared that it would make it appear as if the Holy See was taking sides and condemning fascism. Perhaps this is the reason why five days after the issuance of Mit brennender Sorge another Papal encyclical was issued condemning atheistic communism. The Divini Redemptoris was a lengthier encyclical than Mit brennender Sorge, and was quite forceful in its accusations of the godless perspective of communism. According to Wolf it seemed to Cardinal Pacelli that “Only a policy of symmetric condemnation could preserve Rome’s nonpartisanship.” Pacelli was a careful diplomat, and wanted to make sure that both encyclicals came out around the same time, so as to not make it appear the Vatican was being too harsh against the Nazi government. Mit brennender Sorge “was never intended to be a condemnation of all aspects of Nazism, much less an outcry against Nazi anti-Semitism per

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179 Ibid.
180 Cornwell, “Hitler’s Pope,” 181.
181 Ibid.
182 Wolf, Pope and Devil, 266.
se.” Pacelli was careful in his editing not only to not directly mention the Nazi Party, but also not to break any of the articles of the Reichskonkordat through speaking out.

*Mit brennender Sorge* was kept in absolute secret before its public reading at the pulpit of every Catholic Church in the German Reich on Palm Sunday, March 14, 1937. It was smuggled into the Reich from the Vatican and was delivered to the churches mostly by young boys who traveled by either bicycle or on foot to their destinations. Many of the boys would travel “across fields and through woods in order to avoid public roads” and ultimately, they escaped detection by Nazi officials. The encyclical never went through the official postal service in order to maintain its secrecy as long as possible. Cornwell explains that once the couriers arrived at their destination, they would often deliver the encyclical in the confessional, with the priest sometimes storing the document in the tabernacle with the Eucharistic host until it was to be read.

Cardinals Faulhaber and Pacelli wrote the Papal encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* in German, and had it read by the priest at every parish in order to best disseminate the Church’s complaints to the German Catholics who had seen increased Nazi persecution, especially after the signing of the Reichskonkordat.

The Church’s timing for the release of *Mit brennender Sorge* is explained in the forty-second paragraph of the encyclical. It tells German Catholics that during “the holy time of Lent and Easter, which preaches interior renovation and penance, turn Christian eyes towards the Cross and the risen Christ … that will fill your souls with heroism, patience and victory.”

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184 Cornwell, *Hitler’s Pope*, 182.
185 Ibid.
encourages German Catholics to be assured that through their actions, “the enemies of the Church, who think that their time has come, will see that their joy was premature, and that they may close the grave they had dug.” ¹⁸⁷ The encyclical was meant to be a powerful statement to the Nazi government, which had broken the Reichskonkordat numerous times, and which had received several informal complaints previous to Mit brennender Sorge. It protested these violations and also “condemned the Nazi doctrines of racism and statism.” ¹⁸⁸ Although Faulhaber had written the draft encyclical, Pacelli elaborated and expanded the text, especially in the first part of the document, which discusses Nazi violations of the Reichskonkordat. ¹⁸⁹ He also wrote much of the second part, which is more theological in nature than the first part, and he made sure to contrast, “true Catholic doctrine and nationalistic and racist reinterpretations.” ¹⁹⁰ Neither the word Nazi or Jew can be found in the encyclical, which was meant to give a voice answering to the Reichskonkordat violations and the immoral acts of the Nazi government which opposed Catholic teaching. It does, however, refer to race in six sentences of the 43 total paragraphs. ¹⁹¹ Mit brennender Sorge was meant to represent a last attempt to get the German government’s attention and to show support for German bishops, and it was carefully written to express that the Church had no other choice than to resort to a public denouncement.

**Summary of the Paragraphs**

The encyclical begins by stating that “It is with deep anxiety and growing surprise that We have long been following the painful trials of the Church and the increasing vexations which

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., Point 42.
¹⁸⁸ Sánchez, *Pius XII and the Holocaust*, 17.
¹⁸⁹ Wolf, *Pope and Devil*, 266.
¹⁹⁰ Ibid.
afflict those who have remained loyal in heart and action.” Mit brennender Sorge was
obviously aimed at the Nazi government, but never expressly mentioned it by name to avoid
diplomatic repercussions. There are a total of 43 paragraphs in the encyclical, and I will not
mention all of its points, but rather the more relevant matters listed therein. Mit brennender
Sorge makes extensive use of Biblical references to justify the universal truths of the Church and
its case against the violations of the Reichskonkordat and the Church’s rights. In the third point
listed, Pacelli and the Church rationalize the Church’s reasons for negotiating with the Nazis for
a Reichskonkordat. It states that it was for the benefit of the souls of Germany, and helped spare
the faithful from “trials and difficulties they would have had to face, given the circumstances,
had the negotiations fallen through.” The encyclical states that the experiences the Church has
faced in the recent years in the German Reich have proven that (presumably the German state)
has “from the outset only aimed at a war of extermination” against the Church. Little did the
Catholic Church know at the time that this war of extermination was to become much larger than
it had originally thought, and include many groups outside of the Church, including the Jews.

The encyclical goes on to criticize the “other contracting party” involved in the
Reichskonkordat, which has broken several of the laws it was bound to by the treaty signed in
1933. It then appeals directly to German Catholics to preserve the faith in Germany in a “pure
and unstained” manner. Point 8 indicts those who exalt “race, or the people, or the State” and
“divinizes them to an idolatrous level” as being far from the true faith, and criticizes them from
straying so far into what is presumably pagan self-love. It repeats the falsehoods of this pagan

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192 “Mit brennender Sorge,” Vatican.
193 Ibid. Point 3.
194 Ibid., Point 4.
195 Ibid., Point 5.
196 Ibid., Points 6-7.
197 Ibid., Point 8.
ideology several times, and states that only the real, true, Christian God can be exalted and not any kind of national God who values race or country above God. *Mit brennender Sorge* also states the value of the doctrines of the Old Testament, especially in teaching its beliefs in the Church and in the schools. This is particularly important, because the Nazi government was trying to eliminate the books of the Bible that are also used by people of the Jewish faith. The Church defended its own holy book as well as the holy book of the Jews in several of the points it makes throughout the encyclical. Another indirect reference to the Jews comes in point 18 of *Mit brennender Sorge*. In this paragraph, Pacelli writes that “The Church founded by the Redeemer is one, the same for all races and all nations.” There were several thousand people of Jewish descent who had been baptized into the Catholic Church, or had never been practicing Jews; they, however, also faced persecution by Nazi racial laws and harassment.

*Mit brennender Sorge* often directly names the German Catholics as “Venerable Brethren,” and calls upon this force to bring the German Reich back in line with Christian values. It also simultaneously empathizes with them for the trials that they have suffered for their religious beliefs. The encyclical calls upon the people who are facing this persecution to rise to “heroism” against those who are calling for the denial of Christ and the faith. Pacelli and the Church see it as the only alternative to the pressures of a state that calls upon its people for complete fidelity to the nationalist cause of the *Volk*. This “seduction of a national German Church … is nothing but a denial of the one Church of Christ and … betrayal” of the mission of the Church. If the people of Germany fall into the trap of nation worship and the paganism of their time, Pacelli and the Church argue, they will “open wide every door to the forces of

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198 Ibid., Point 18.
199 Ibid., Point 21.
200 Ibid., Point 22.
destruction.” 201 The German people must make sure not to live by the rules and practices of man, but those of Christ and the Church. To do otherwise would merely bring about their own destruction and the destruction of future generations. The faith should be protected by not only Catholic parents, but also by the school system. *Mit brennender Sorge* calls for the right to Catholic education in point 31, and states that when the parents request this education for their children they should not be denied this right, or else it would be going against the natural law and freedom of the parents.

Paragraph 32 of the encyclical speaks to the next two points, which are directed to the young of the Church. The next paragraph sympathizes with the youth who are facing trials or persecution from others who question their loyalty to the state because of their Church affiliation. It speaks of the Hitler Youth, again in a non-specific manner, and posits that if the state organizes such an institution, then the youths and parents should see to it that this organization is “purged of all manifestations hostile to the Church and Christianity.” 202 The Church does not object to a state-run youth organization, but rather to the principles which that youth organization holds. They believe that national education should not interfere with religious duty, and that state youth events should not interfere with the keeping of the Sabbath.

Next, priests and clergy members in the orders are exalted for their devotion to the Church in these difficult times. Points 35 through 37 give them encouragement to serve the faithful, and point 36 states that this also means being able to serve those imprisoned in jail or in concentration camps. Point 39 is addressed specifically to Catholic parents, and asks them to be vigilant in the protection of religious education of their children. It also cites the pressures brought on the parents to vote for non-confessional schools. The Church challenges the fairness

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201 Ibid., Point 29.
202 Ibid., Point 33.
of this vote, and states that “We know, dear Catholic parents, that your vote was not free, for a
free and secret vote would have meant the triumph of the Catholic schools.”

This is one of the
most direct accusations of the Nazi persecutions that Catholic parents felt in their everyday lives.

The last few paragraphs of *Mit brennender Sorge* speak of the necessity of writing the
encyclical at this time. Pacelli and the Church state in paragraph 41 that

> We have weighed every word of this letter in the balance of truth and love. We wished
neither to be an accomplice to equivocation by an untimely silence, nor by excessive
severity to harden the hearts of those who live under Our pastoral responsibility.

Pacelli and the Church wanted to retain diplomatic relations with the German Reich, and come to
an agreement that would be satisfactory to both parties while abiding by the articles set forth in
the Reichskonkordat. If peace between the two did not come about, paragraph 43 states, it would
not be the fault of the Church, which had made every effort to reconcile itself with the state, but
the Church also felt obligated to defend its rights.

**Reaction to *Mit brennender Sorge***

The distribution of this encyclical in secret to all the German Catholic churches
throughout the Reich made Hitler and the Nazis quite angry, as one might suspect. A little over a
week after the Palm Sunday reading, an internal memorandum in the Nazi government stated
that *Mit brennender Sorge* was “almost a call to do battle against the Reich government.”
The Nazi government moved quickly to confiscate as many of the copies of the encyclical as
possible. The head of the Sicherheitsdienst, or Security Service, Reinhard Heydrich, ordered all
copies to be immediately found, and Reichsminister of Church Affairs Hanns Kerrl wrote a letter
to the German bishops exclaiming that the encyclical was “in flat contradiction to the welfare

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203 Ibid. Point 39.
204 Ibid., Point 41.
and the interest of the German nation.”206 One church in Oldenburg even faced the arrest of seven young girls as the girls distributed copies of *Mit brennender Sorge* after the Palm Sunday mass.207 Besides confiscating the encyclical, police suspended Church publications, and the 12 presses that printed copies of *Mit brennender Sorge* were seized and shut down. Many of the editors of these presses were also arrested for their actions. In addition, the “morality and currency trials that had been suspended in July 1936 were resumed.”208 These trials against the clergy had been halted, but this seeming insult to the German Reich renewed Nazi persecution, especially of the clergy. The clergy again faced the charges of immorality and slander of the Nazi government. The day after the reading of *Mit brennender Sorge*, “Das Schwarze Korps called it ‘the most incredible of Pius XI’s pastoral letters: every sentence in it was an insult to the new Germany’.”209

The Nazi government was tremendously offended by the encyclical, and Hitler asked why the Vatican had not approached him personally if they had a problem with the Reichskonkordat violations and other matters. What he did not acknowledge, however, was that the Vatican had sent several informal protests to the Reich which went largely ignored until the formal *Mit brennender Sorge* was issued. In fact, between the official signing of the Reichskonkordat in September 1933 until the issuance of *Mit brennender Sorge* in March 1937, Cardinal Pacelli had written over 70 “diplomatic notes and memoranda to the German ambassador to the Holy See, von Bergen, or directly to the Foreign Ministry in Berlin.”210 Hitler also responded by writing a formal letter of protest to the Pope for what he considered to be

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208 O’Shea, *A Cross too Heavy*, 244.
Church interference in matters of the state, and he also mentioned the encyclical during a May Day rally a couple of months later. Publicly, Hitler was more collected about the encyclical, but he privately raged at the civil disobedience he faced from the Church, and he made sure to step up measures against the Church and its clergy. Pacelli stated that the words written in *Mit brennender Sorge* were truthful, and could not be refuted; the Church had had to make a statement in protest of the many violations of its 1933 treaty with Nazi Germany. He reminded the Nazi Reich in a message sent to Berlin on April 30, 1937, that the encyclical was not meant to be a political weapon.²¹¹ He also recognized the relationship the Vatican valued having with Germany, and hoped that both could fight against the impending danger of the many Bolshevist movements arising in Europe. Pacelli, however, also stated that the Holy See “recognizes that the Germans are using the same methods of the Bolshevists against the Catholic Church. The authority of the Church cannot tolerate such treatment. We are solely interested in the well-being of souls.”²¹²

*Divini Redemptoris*

Five days later, the Vatican released another encyclical; this time, however, the topic was atheistic communism. The *Divini Redemptoris* was given on March 19, 1937, the Feast of St. Joseph, the Patron Saint of the universal Church, at St. Peter’s in Rome. This encyclical criticized communism and its increasing threat to the Church, especially in Europe. This encyclical was meant as a balance to the anti-German Reich encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge*. *Divini Redemptoris* would continue to serve as the official Church view on communism until the 1960s.²¹³ This encyclical came at a time of widespread persecution of the Church in Spain.

²¹¹ Ibid., 10.
²¹² Ibid.
²¹³ O’Shea, *A Cross too Heavy*, 244.
which was going through the Spanish Civil War at the time, a war between conservative and leftist forces for control of the Spanish government. In this internal war, the leftist forces killed “nearly seven thousand priests and religious.”\(^{214}\) The Vatican obviously felt pressured from both leftist and rightist factions throughout Europe, and saw the direct opposition and oppression that they faced from communism. To the Church “communism had no place for God – and therefore robbed humanity of its inherent dignity and with it, morality, family life and the true destiny of the human race.”\(^{215}\) It saw the immediate threat of Nazism, and also the long-term threat of communism to the Church’s existence.

The Divini Redemptoris consists of 82 points condemning the falsehoods of atheistic communism and its impact on the Church. It lists the evils of communism explicitly, stating that “This all too imminent danger, Venerable Brethren, as you have already surmised, is bolshevistic and atheistic Communism, which aims at upsetting the social order and at undermining the very foundations of Christian civilization.”\(^{216}\) Pius XI, as well as many others in the Church like Cardinal Pacelli, saw communism as a threat to western civilization and the Church in particular. Perhaps one of the clearest statements is point 58 in the encyclical. This states “See to it, Venerable Brethren, that the Faithful do not allow themselves to be deceived! Communism is intrinsically wrong, and no one who would save Christian civilization may collaborate with it in any undertaking whatsoever.”\(^{217}\) Divini Redemptoris is a much harsher critique on communism and the associated Soviet Union than Mit brennender Sorge is on the Nazi state. Stalin is famously quoted as saying in 1935, when asked if he cared what the Pope thought, “How many

\(^{214}\) Sánchez, Pius XII and the Holocaust, 104.

\(^{215}\) O’Shea, A Cross too Heavy, 245.


\(^{217}\) Ibid. Point 58.
divisions has the Pope?"218 Stalin did not see the Catholic Church as having a significant role in the political realm, but Hitler realized the impact Church policy and rhetoric could have on the German people. It appears that the Church felt freer to criticize the Soviet Union and communism, which it saw as a great threat to the maintenance of the Church for generations to come. Communism made no concessions or compromise with the Church, unlike the willingness of the German Nazi Reich to negotiate and promote Catholic education and morals.

**Church-Reich Relations after *Mit brennender Sorge***

1937 was perhaps the year of greatest strain between the Vatican and the Nazi Reich, but the issuances of *Mit brennender Sorge* and *Divini Redemptoris* were not able to end the political problems the Church faced in Europe. The Reichskonkordat remained in place throughout the era of the Third Reich, and the violations of the concordat also continued. The Church refused to recognize any new territories that the Reich obtained during the war, and Hitler replied by not allowing the concordat to be in effect in these lands acquired since September 1939. Hitler stated to some close associates on July 4, 1942 that, “The Saar territory, Sudetenland, Bohemia and Moravia, the Reich district of Danzig-West Prussia, the Warthegau, a large portion of Silesia, and Alsace-Lorraine” were not bound to the articles of the Reichskonkordat.219 In these new territories, then, any problem the Church had with Nazi persecution was to be handled solely on a regional or state-by-state basis. Hitler also stated in this meeting that the Reichskonkordat “represented a continuation of concordats with the various states, so that when the states were absorbed into the German Reich, the state concordats actually lapsed.”220 Hitler

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219 Friedländer, *Pius XII and the Third Reich*, 162.
220 Ibid.
attempted to justify Nazi violations of the Reichskonkordat through legal loopholes and avoided replying to the Church’s grievances.

There were many other complaints by the German bishops in the years during the war, with 1942 being another year of great tension between the Church and the German Reich. *Mit brennender Sorge* did not seem to halt Nazi persecutions of Catholics in the Reich, and actually had the opposite effect in many cases of ramped-up persecution. German bishops from the Diocese of Wuerzburg wrote a pastoral letter in 1942 again complaining of the broken promises of the Reichskonkordat. They wrote five main grievances against the Reich government’s persecution of the Church. These include the restriction and oppression of worship, religious instruction and education, the punishment and internment of clergy, the restriction of Catholic orders and seizure of their property, and the confiscation of seminaries.\(^{221}\) The German bishops were not as legally restricted by the Reichskonkordat as the Vatican, and felt freer to take action or speak out directly against the persecutions by the Nazi government. Later that same year, on October 9, the Vatican, through the new Cardinal Secretary of State Luigi Maglione, threatened a public papal protest if the persecutions of the Church and other persons did not halt. The telegram from Carl-Ludwig Diego von Bergen, who was the ambassador to the Holy See until 1943, was sent to Berlin to warn the Reich of this possible protest.\(^{222}\) In the telegram he told the Reich that if the Church in the Wartheland (Poland) continued to be threatened, the “Holy See will enter the public arena with appropriately worded protests of some kind.”\(^{223}\)

A few months later in the 1942 Christmas address at the Vatican, Pope Pius XII issued one of the more strongly worded speeches on the topic of the war and oppressed peoples. Being

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\(^{222}\) Friedländer, *Pius XII and the Third Reich*, 166.

\(^{223}\) Ibid.
the diplomat that he was, however, he never directly mentioned any government involved in these persecutions, but rather made generalizations. His address does not mention fascism, Germany, or the Soviet Union, but does specify the dangers of Marxist Socialism.\footnote{Vincent A. Yzermans, editor. \textit{The Major Addresses of Pope Pius XII}. Volume II: Christmas Messages, (St. Paul, Minnesota: The North Central Publishing Company, 1961).} There are numerous references to the dangers that society currently found itself in, such as the world war, godlessness, the lack of order in a society which does not rely on God, and the harm brought about to innocent people by these institutions. This Christmas message was probably the closest the Pope ever came during the war to naming the Nazi government’s persecution of Jews, perhaps because of the turning tide against the Axis powers during the same year. The Allies were also pressuring Pius XII to make some sort of statement against the German Reich, as the U.S., U.K., and the Soviet Union had released on December 17, 1942, mere days before the Pope’s speech.\footnote{O’Shea, \textit{A Cross too Heavy}, 290.} This statement was a joint proclamation condemning the Germans for their persecution of the Jews. Pius XII wanted to remain neutral in the war, however, perhaps to have a chance to broker the peace or merely to retain the neutral status of the Holy See in political matters.

In the Christmas address, Pius XII stated that:

\begin{quote}
The Church would be untrue to herself, ceasing to be a mother, if she turned a deaf ear to her children’s anguished cries … She does not intend to take sides … But on the other hand … the Church cannot renounce her right to proclaim to her sons and to the whole world the unchanging basic laws.\footnote{Yzermans, \textit{The Major Addresses – Christmas Messages}, 52.}
\end{quote}

These are the laws of God, and Pius XII recognized that the Church should be the moral authority to the world, however, he stopped short of specifically mentioning specific persecutions. In one of the most frequently cited passages of the speech, he did state, however,
that mankind needs to bring society back to its “center of gravity, which is the law of God.”

He stated that mankind owes this to those who have died on the battlefield, to the mothers who have lost loved ones, as well as to “those numberless exiles whom the hurricane of war has torn from their native land and scattered in the land of the stranger,” to “the hundreds of thousands of persons who, without any fault of their part, sometimes only because of their nationality or race, have been consigned to death or to a slow decline,” to the thousands of civilians living through warfare, and to those suffering with sorrow and bitterness.

Those “hundreds of thousands of persons” are often cited as a direct reference to the Jews, who faced staggering persecution and death at the hands of Nazi Germany. The American diplomat Harold H. Tittman, Jr. lived in Vatican City during World War II and states in his memoirs that this reference is indeed referring to the Jews among other persecuted persons. He says that in an audience he had with Pope Pius XII on December 30, 1942, the Pope gave him the impression that he had spoken clearly enough in the Christmas address that those “persons” were in reference to the “Poles, Jews, and hostages.”

Pius XII was strategic, diplomatic, and careful in his wordings throughout the war, and never mentioned Nazism or the German Reich in the public arena. Perhaps he felt bound diplomatically by the Reichskonkordat, or thought that the German bishops should be the ones to speak out; however, it is obvious that he did not feel the same way about communism or the Soviet Union.

Conclusions

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227 Ibid., 64.
228 Ibid., 64-65.
229 Ibid.
231 Ibid., 123.
*Mit brennender Sorge* was the strongest condemnation of Nazism and the Third Reich, even though the encyclical never directly mentioned them specifically. Pacelli had played a significant role in writing and editing the encyclical which would be read across the German Reich enraging Hitler and other Nazis. The encyclical was timed to come out mere days before the release of *Divini Redemptoris*, which condemned the evils of Marxist socialism and the Soviet Union. These were likely planned so as to make the Vatican appear balanced in its stance between the two vehemently opposed forces of fascism and communism. Pacelli, later Pope Pius XII, also addressed the Nazi violations of the Reichskonkordat and the persecution of persons throughout the war, again indirectly, and most vividly in his Christmas address of 1942. In his mind, however, it seemed clear that he was being as forceful as possible against the Nazi regime without alienating them or breaking off diplomatic relations, which would nullify the Reichskonkordat and any concessions the Nazis might make. Pius XII seemed to avoid speaking out so directly so, in his mind, he would not cause greater persecutions of those already suffering.

After the war, however, Pope Pius XII felt free to speak out on his feelings toward Hitler and the Nazis. He condemned the imprisonment of priests and others and said that now, finally, Germany could “cast off the Satanic specter raised by National-Socialism.” He obviously had no love for the regime, but felt diplomatically and politically obligated not to speak out directly. Pope Pius XII thought that he and the Church had said as much as the circumstances would allow, and especially pointed to *Mit brennender Sorge* as proof that the Church did not idly stand by during the war. He stated on June 2, 1945, after the war had ended in Europe, in reference to *Mit brennender Sorge* that “No one can accuse the Church of not having denounced and exposed

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in time the true nature of the National-Socialist movement and the danger to which it exposed Christian civilization.” He was correct in pointing to *Mit brennender Sorge* as an exposure of the crimes of the German Reich, but like all his public views before the end of the war, he never specified the evils of the German Reich, thereby leaving him open to criticism throughout the decades since his death and the release of Hochhuth’s play *The Deputy*.

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233 Ibid., 61.
CHAPTER IV.

CONCLUSION

Eugenio Pacelli, later Pope Pius XII, remains one of the most controversial popes in recent history. His inability to confront the Nazi regime during his time in the papacy and while he was Cardinal Secretary of State show his tendency toward diplomacy and his belief in indirect political means. Historians, especially since the appearance of Rolf Hochhuth’s *The Deputy* in 1963, have debated whether his indirect, diplomatic means of interacting with the Nazi regime was actually beneficial to those facing persecution or not. His critics believe that he should have been much more direct in his condemnations of the Third Reich government, actually calling the Nazis out on their actions, not just in their violations of the Reichskonkordat, but also in their violations of human rights toward the Catholic Church, the Jews, and other persecuted persons before and during the Second World War. The historians who consider themselves defenders argue that Pius XII’s diplomatic style was what the Church needed at a time of great disorder in Europe and the world in general, hence his quick election to the papacy in 1939. These defenders believe that Pius XII did all that he could to help save people from further Nazi persecutions, even if his methods were diplomatic and underwhelming. The moderate historians, whose perspective I find most convincing, believe that Pius XII did what he felt was best for the Church and others facing persecution, but he could have, and should have, spoken out more before and during his papacy.

In 1933, Hitler and the new Nazi government took power over from the democratic Weimar Republic government, and a renewal in talks for a German-wide Reichskonkordat took place. Pacelli and the Catholic Church had concluded several of these concordats before, especially during the papacy of Pius XI, and saw the Reichskonkordat as a way to guarantee
Catholic rights in the German Reich. Although the Nazis were not traditionally considered a Christian-based political group, Hitler made several conciliatory remarks to Christian groups and made several promises that Nazism would stress the need for Christianity, and specifically the Catholic Church. The Church was leery of the pagan ideas of Nazism and recalled the past Nazi persecution of the Catholic Church, but thought that the Reichskonkordat would give the Church the legal means to protest further persecutions. The Church would have to make concessions in the Reichskonkordat, however, in order to gain other protection. This includes, for example, Article 32, which banned clergy members from politics, and Article 31, which banned Catholic organizations that had any involvement in the political realm. What the Church could not have foreseen, however, was the transformation and scope of the persecution of Catholics, Jews, and many others under the Third Reich. Although Pacelli and the Church are often criticized for signing the Reichskonkordat, they could not have possibly seen what horrors were later to come under the Nazi regime.

The Church saw the Reichskonkordat as a normal diplomatic means to reconcile the Church with the German government and prevent Church persecutions like those it had seen under Bismarck’s government during the Kulturkampf of the 1870s. Although the Nazis violated the Reichskonkordat repeatedly from its signing until the end of the war, it was still legally binding in the Church’s eyes, and perhaps this was one of the reasons why Pius XII did not speak out more against the Nazi regime. If he had, he would have involved the Catholic Church in politics, and faced the risk of losing the benefits accorded by the Reichskonkordat. He could only speak out on the violations specifically listed in the concordat, and on nothing else in specific terms.
Pope Pius XI decided in 1936-1937 that there had been too many Nazi violations of the Reichskonkordat, and that a formal means of protest should follow. Cardinal Michael von Faulhaber and Cardinal Secretary of State Eugenio Pacelli then proceeded to write and edit the papal encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge*, the Catholic Church’s only formal protest against Nazi violations of the concordat. This encyclical listed several of the violations and the Church had it secretly distributed and read at every Catholic Church in the Reich on Palm Sunday, March 14, 1937. It called on Catholics to be heroes for the faith, and to ensure that the Church remained a staple in their lives. It stated that German Catholics should not listen to those who believe in a type of national god or ideology, but rather listen to the truths of the Church itself. The Nazi regime was never specifically mentioned in the encyclical, but it is obviously directed at the Nazi government. The Nazis responded to the encyclical with further persecutions, and the Church would never again so directly challenge the Nazi government. Five days after *Mit brennender Sorge* was issued, *Divini Redemptoris* was also issued, condemning the evils of Marxist socialism. Pacelli felt this was necessary to serve as a balance in the Church’s condemnations. As pope, Pacelli would continue to directly name the evils of communism, and would also speak out against the war and the great number of people being persecuted. He did not, however, ever directly name the Nazi government.

Pope Pius XII’s words and deeds before and during the war have been controversial for decades, and when the Vatican archives are opened in 2015, I am convinced that the new evidence provided will not satisfy any group of historians’ point of view. The Church is also pushing Pius XII for beatification, which would be a step to making him a Saint in the Catholic Church. Since his role before and during World War II still remains controversial, however,
many scholars have advocated for the Vatican to reconsider his candidacy, and take its time in beatifying him until the questions surrounding his role are more thoroughly resolved.

Pius XII’s actions before and during his papacy will perhaps remain controversial for decades to come. His words and deeds during the war have often been examined, but his role previous to the war, especially as seen in the Reichskonkordat and Mit brennender Sorge are focused on in this thesis in order to better understand his later interactions with the Nazi government. Pacelli acted before and during his papacy in the way he truly felt was most beneficial to all who were facing persecution, and stated as much throughout his lifetime. Several historians, however, see his actions as not strong enough, and I also believe he could have done more to help save people from Nazi persecution.

Pope Pius XII felt bound by his diplomatic chains, especially in the form of the 1933 Reichskonkordat, and thought that the Church had already made its position on the Nazi government clear with the issuance of Mit brennender Sorge in 1937. On June 2, 1943, he stated to the Sacred College of Cardinals:

> Every word We address to the competent authority on this subject, and all Our public utterances, have to be carefully weighed and measured by Us in the interests of the victims themselves, lest contrary to Our intentions, We make their situation worse and harder to bear.

Pius XII spoke and did what he felt would protect the Church and persecuted persons, a path that also followed his diplomatic tendencies and his unwillingness to break the Reichskonkordat. Perhaps he was correct, that by not speaking out directly he prevented further persecution, but perhaps his words and actions could have done much more to save millions of persecuted persons under the Third Reich. Historians cannot determine the “what-ifs” of history, but it is

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234 Friedländer, Pius XII and the Third Reich, 143.
hard for many to imagine a worse outcome if Pius XII had spoken out and condemned the Nazi government before and during World War II.
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