



## The Vatican and the Holocaust: A Preliminary Report

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#### [Preface](#)

The International Catholic-Jewish Historical Commission (Historical Commission) is comprised of a group of three Catholic and three Jewish scholars appointed, respectively, by the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews (Holy See's Commission) and the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations (IJCC), to whom we are submitting this preliminary report.

The six scholars chosen to serve on the Historical Commission are: Dr. Eva Fleischner, Professor Emerita of Montclair State University in New Jersey; Reverend Gerald P. Fogarty, S.J., William R. Kenan, Jr., Professor of Religious Studies and History, University of Virginia; Dr. Michael R. Marrus, Chancellor Rose and Ray Wolfe Professor of Holocaust Studies and Dean of the School of Graduate Studies, University of Toronto; Reverend John F. Morley, Associate Professor, Department of Religious Studies, Seton Hall University; Dr. Bernard Suchecky, Researcher at the Department of Social Sciences, Free University of Brussels; Dr. Robert S. Wistrich, Professor of History and holder of the Neuberger Chair in Modern Jewish Studies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The scholars serve without compensation.

Coordinators for the project are Dr. Eugene Fisher, Bishops Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, National Conference of Catholic Bishops (USA), on behalf of the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews; Seymour D. Reich, Chairman of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations (IJCC); and Dr. Leon A. Feldman, Professor Emeritus of Hebraic Studies, Rutgers University, and Secretary of IJCC. Ariella Lang, doctoral candidate in Italian at Columbia University, served as research assistant to the Historical Commission and assisted in the drafting of this report.

IJCC's membership consists of the American Jewish Committee, Anti-Defamation League, B'nai B'rith International, World Jewish Congress, Israel Jewish Council on Interreligious Relations and

representatives of the three major branches of Judaism: Orthodox Union and Rabbinical Council of America (Orthodox); Rabbinical Assembly and United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism (Conservative), and Central Conference of American Rabbis and Union of American Hebrew Congregations (Reform).

The project was announced in Rome in October, 1999 by Cardinal Edward I. Cassidy, President of the Holy See's Commission and Mr. Seymour D. Reich, Chairman of IJCIC. The Historical Commission began its work with the proposal put to it by Cardinal Cassidy to examine critically the eleven volumes of archival material published by the Holy See's Secretariat of State (external division) between 1965 and 1981, entitled *Actes et Documents du Saint Siège relatifs à la seconde guerre mondiale* (ADSS). Each volume considers a different topic and time frame. Included in these documents are the diplomatic correspondence of the Holy See's Secretariat of State with its representatives and foreign officials, as well as notes and memoranda from meetings with diplomats and Church leaders from various countries. These documents are published in the languages in which they were originally written (primarily Italian, French and German, but also some in Latin and English), and each volume, apart from Volume 3 which is divided into two books, has a separate introduction. These introductions have been recently summarized by the last surviving member of the team of Jesuit editors for the ADSS, Rev. Pierre Blet, S.J.<sup>1</sup>

The mandate given to us by our sponsoring bodies was to review the volumes that make up the ADSS and to raise relevant questions and issues that, in our opinion, have not adequately

or satisfactorily been resolved by the available documentation, and to issue a report on our findings. In our review of the material, we have felt compelled to request additional documentation that could answer questions that arose as a result of our research. We first met in December 1999 in New York, followed by meetings in London in May, in Baltimore in July, and again in New York in September.<sup>2</sup>

Having reviewed the ADSS, we have prepared this preliminary report based on our assessment of the documents within the volumes. In fulfillment of our mandate, the major portion of this report consists of a selection of questions arising out of our study of the documents, after a brief summary of the circumstances that led to the establishment of this Commission.

The intense polemics surrounding Pius XII's reputation and the role of the Vatican during the Holocaust began in the early 1960s with the controversy surrounding Rolf Hochhuth's play *The Deputy*. This was also a period when a number of historians published highly critical accounts of the wartime Pope that contrasted sharply with the praise he had received both during and after the war, and until his death in 1958.

Many scholars, from the 1960s to the present, have taken seriously the mandate for historical objectivity and have written balanced accounts (albeit in many cases still critical of the Holy See). Others appear to have simply assumed that a particular allegation, if deemed to be damaging to Pius XII's reputation, must therefore be true. Still others, reacting to the charges against the Pope, have developed apologetical defenses, some of which are highly polemical. As a result, there have developed over the years increasingly contentious portraits, both condemnatory and adulatory, of a man whose office, the papacy, is revered by many as a sacred institution.

In 1964 the Vatican responded to the controversy and set in motion the editorial process that led to the publication of the ADSS. In authorizing that publication, Pope Paul VI made the unprecedented decision to override partially the Vatican's usual policy of not releasing such recent archival material.<sup>3</sup> The task of publishing these documents was entrusted by the Secretariat of State to three Jesuits, Blet himself, Angelo Martini, and Burkhardt Schneider. Subsequently Robert Graham, another Jesuit, was added to the team.<sup>4</sup> Father Blet later explained that the publication of the ADSS was the Vatican's response to "accusations" brought against Pius XII at the beginning of the

1960s.<sup>5</sup>

The volumes of the ADSS reveal the complexity and variety of the activities which the Holy See pursued on behalf of the "victims of the war". One of their valuable contributions is to illustrate the priorities of the Vatican during this conflict. At that time the Holy See was primarily concerned with its sacramental ministry, the institutional rights and even the survival of the Catholic Church, as illustrated, for example, by its diplomatic policy of relying on concordats.

The variety of the documents, and the moral questions that arise from some of them, attest to the serious endeavor on the part of the editors who prepared them, and the inclusion of documents that then, and subsequently, raised questions about the role of the Holy See speaks to the editors' efforts at objectivity. Indeed, the fact that such questions have been repeatedly raised within the Church itself illustrates the extent to which the Church's understanding of its role in the world has evolved dramatically since the events described in our report.

However, a scrutiny of these volumes of Vatican documents does not put to rest significant questions about the role of the Vatican during the Holocaust. No serious historian could accept that the published, edited volumes could put us at the end of the story. This is due neither to the complexity nor to the difficulty of the questions themselves, nor to the editorial quality of the documentary volumes. Rather, it reflects the fact that many of the documents are susceptible to different interpretations. Interpretation is unavoidable in the work of historians; it is particularly relevant and sensitive in this case because the Historical Commission is dealing with what the editors of the documents themselves acknowledge to be only a portion of the available evidence.<sup>7</sup> One of our goals is to understand the actions of Pius XII and the Vatican during World War II, how they decided upon the policies they followed, and why. But the ability to do so is limited by the fact that our Commission, and scholars in general, have at their disposal only a selection of the Vatican documents. One of the inevitable results of this limitation is that some commentators have relied more heavily on speculation than is desirable, and some have succumbed to sensationalism.

The published documents themselves often raise important questions to which they do not provide answers. The mere presence of a document, after all, says nothing about how it was received, what attention was devoted to its reception, or how it was regarded or treated in the various circles of Vatican diplomacy. Furthermore, the editors of the ADSS conceived of their project in a certain light, as do all scholars, and thus we are not only faced with the task of analyzing the contents of the volumes, but also of examining the aim and focus of the editors.

Many questions can be answered by reading the lengthy introductions that accompany each volume, a summary of which Father Blet has provided, but other questions still remain. In the introductions, the editors quote numerous documents, some of which are published in the volumes, and others of which are referred to but not published. In Volume 1, for example, the editors mention letters sent to the Pope by "anxious souls", who remain unnamed, beseeching him to work for peace, sometimes even submitting plans of action to him.<sup>8</sup> These appeals, however, are not included in the body of the volumes. Similarly, in the introduction to Volume 2 the editors explicitly quote in footnotes from some of the correspondence of the German Catholic hierarchy to the Pope. But the text of the volume contains only letters from Pius XII to the German bishops.

The editors themselves acknowledge that they used certain criteria in selecting the documents they published. In the Preface to Volume 1, they explain that the Secretariat of State

receives reports and sends instructions that concern both the internal life of the Catholic Church and the religious life of its faithful, and which have nothing to do with international relations. This is why the present volume is limited to the publication of documents that serve to explain the Holy See's involvement in issues relating to the war of 1939-1945.<sup>9</sup>

The editors likewise make the point in Volume 2, where they note that "the Pope deals with a great many issues that are strictly ecclesiastic and concerning religious life."<sup>10</sup> A generation later, historians might find relevant to their inquiry issues that previously appeared to be strictly ecclesiastical or religious in character.

What then can we bring to the discussion that others have not? We do not claim expertise on all of the subjects covered in the published volumes, although we are all part of the ongoing research and dialogue surrounding the Church and the Holocaust. Each of us came to the commission with distinct viewpoints based on previous work. We hope to provide a multiple dimension to the report that reflects scholarly difference and opinions inherent in any research. Our collaboration and joint review of the published documents has not only been mutually enriching but has also generated a forum for investigation and dialogue. This does not mean, however, that we have reached unanimous agreement on the interpretation of every document.

In accordance with our charge, we began our work with an analysis of materials that have been in the public domain for over two decades. We agreed to undertake this task for a variety of reasons. First, these volumes have been little used and little known, outside a small circle of specialists. Second, given the highly controversial and emotive nature of the subject matter, we agreed that it would be useful to engage in an independent inquiry by three Catholic and three Jewish scholars with a view to promoting a deeper and more mature level of historical discourse between and within our two communities. Third, we believe that such a common examination of the published documentation is a first step toward achieving access to further archival documentation and historical evidence.

In discharging our mandate, we hope to establish a more secure documentary basis for analyzing the actions and policies of Pius XII and the Vatican. Our task is not to sit in judgment of the Pope and his advisors. Rather, through analysis and study of their actions, statements and letters, we hope to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the role of the papacy during the Holocaust.

## Questions

What follows are some examples of questions that arose in our examination of the documents. For convenience we have grouped these questions into three categories: the first, of a very specific character arising from particular documents in the collection; the second, of a more general character, involving themes that appear in one or more of the volumes; and the third, general questions that occurred to us as we considered the broader picture.

### **a. Questions arising from particular documents:**

1. Eugenio Pacelli, then Secretary of State, and German cardinals played a central role in drafting the 1937 encyclical "Mit brennender Sorge" ("With Burning Concern"), which was a forceful condemnation of National Socialism. Soon after he was elected Pope, Pacelli met with the same group of German cardinals to discuss how they should deal with Nazism. In order to understand Pacelli's evolving policies as Secretary of State and as pope, can we see the drafts of Mit brennender Sorge, or any other relevant material pertaining to that encyclical or his meeting in 1939 with the German cardinals after his election?<sup>11</sup>

2. In 1938, after the Kristallnacht pogrom, only one prominent German prelate, Bernhard Lichtenberg, rector of Saint Hedwig's cathedral in Berlin, had the courage to condemn the outrages publicly. Pacelli was given a detailed report by the papal nuncio in Berlin<sup>12</sup> but there appears to have been no official reaction by the Vatican. This issue is especially important because

Archbishop Amleto Cicognani, Apostolic Delegate to the United States certainly informed the Vatican of the public broadcast of the American bishops' condemnation of Kristallnacht. Do the archives reveal internal discussions among Vatican officials, including Pacelli, about the appropriate reaction to this pogrom?

3. In June 1938 Pope Pius XI commissioned Father John LaFarge S.J. to draft an encyclical on racism and antisemitism. The editors of the ADSS affirmed that nothing was found in the Vatican archives on this subject.<sup>13</sup> However, in an article that appeared in the *Osservatore Romano* in 1973, Father Burkhardt Schneider, one of the ADSS editors, stated that "the texts prepared, as well as many on other topics, have ended up in the silence of the archives"<sup>14</sup>. May we review the drafts and materials relating to that document from the archives?

4. A substantial part of Volume 6 is devoted to the aborted efforts to obtain Brazilian visas for Catholics of Jewish origin. Numerous questions have been raised concerning the failure of this project. In addition, it is known that a part of the money destined for the refugees came from funds raised by the United Jewish Appeal in the United States.<sup>15</sup> Is there further documentation as to why this money was allocated to the attempted rescue of converted Jews rather than to Jews?

5. From the outbreak of the war, appeals rained down upon the Vatican for help on behalf of the population of Poland, brutally victimized in a cruel and bloodthirsty occupation. And from the earliest days of the fighting, observers, ranging from the exiled Polish government to the British and French ambassadors to the Vatican, recounted the opinion of many Catholic Poles, both inside and outside Poland, that the Church had betrayed them and that Rome was silent in the face of their national ordeal.<sup>16</sup> Is there any further documentation beyond what is already in the volumes concerning deliberations within the Vatican with regard to these insistent appeals on behalf of the Poles?

6. On November 23, 1940, Mario Besson, Bishop of Lausanne, Fribourg, and Geneva, sent a letter to Pope Pius XII expressing deep concern at the grave conditions of thousands of prisoners, including Jews, in concentration camps in southwest France.<sup>17</sup> In his report he pressed for a public appeal by the Pope against the persecutions and a more active Catholic defense of the rights of all the victims. We know that it must have been taken seriously by the Vatican, especially since its observations were confirmed by the papal nuncio to Switzerland, Archbishop Filippo Bernardini, who forwarded Besson's message to the Pope.<sup>18</sup> The subsequent responses by Luigi Maglione, Secretary of State, also indicate that he considered it worthy of attention, and he certainly would have discussed it with the Holy Father.<sup>19</sup> Is there any evidence that Pius XII, Maglione or any other high Vatican official considered, then or subsequently, responding in the manner requested by Besson?

7. In August 1941 the French head of state, Marshal Philippe Pétain, asked the French ambassador to the Holy See, Léon Bérard, to ascertain the views of the Vatican on the collaborationist Vichy government's efforts to restrict the Jews through anti-Jewish legislation. The response came, reportedly from Giovanni Montini, substitute Secretary of State, and Domenico Tardini, Secretary of the Congregation of Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, who stated that there was no objection to these restrictions so long as they were administered with justice and charity and did not restrict the prerogatives of the Church.<sup>20</sup> Was the Pope consulted on this matter? Are there any additional materials in the archives regarding this issue that are not contained in the ADSS?

8. In Romania, where Catholics were a small but significant minority, both the local Catholic authorities and the Vatican clung to the concordat of 1929 as defining the relationship between the Church and the dictatorial regime of Marshal Ion Antonescu. During 1940 and 1941, as persecution of the Jews intensified, the Vatican received a stream of communications from the nuncio, Archbishop Andrea Cassulo, relaying the strain that the anti-Jewish laws put upon what the

Church saw as its prerogatives - among others, the protection of the civil and religious rights of Catholics who had converted from Judaism. Cassulo repeatedly reported on his efforts to secure the "freedom of the Church" by insisting upon the need to exempt converts from anti-Jewish laws, their rights to attend schools and vocational institutions.<sup>21</sup> Did Cassulo or his interlocutors in the Vatican view these interventions as the only practical means by which a blanket of protection, or at least some protection, might be extended to Jews who were not converts? Are there any further documents to elucidate this issue?

9. Cassulo had very good relations with Jewish leaders in the core Romanian provinces of Moldavia and Wallachia. He appealed directly to Antonescu to limit deportations planned for the summer of 1942.<sup>22</sup> He toured Transnistria in the spring of 1943, visiting one of the principal killing grounds for Jews during the Holocaust. Cassulo reported extensively on his activities to Maglione.<sup>23</sup> He traveled to Rome in the fall of 1942 and was received by the Pope. Do any documents record what transpired during that visit? Were his actions approved by the Holy See?

10. At the end of August 1942, the Greek Catholic Metropolitan of Lviv (Lwow), Andrzej Szeptyckyj, wrote to the Pope and described with stark clarity the atrocities and mass murder being carried out against the Jews and the local population.<sup>24</sup> No other high-ranking Catholic Churchman, to the best of our knowledge, provided such direct eye-witness testimony and expressed concern for Jews qua Jews (and as primary targets of German bestiality) in the same way. Moreover, he indicated to the Pope that he had protested to Himmler himself. Finally, he publicly denounced the massacres of Jews in circumstances in which some Ukrainian Catholics themselves were collaborating with the Germans in these murders. Is there evidence of a discussion or a reply to Szeptyckyj's plea?

11. The Cardinal Archbishop of Krakow, Adam Sapieha, in a letter of February 1942 to the Pope, vividly described the horrors of the Nazi occupation, including the concentration camps that destroyed thousands of Poles.<sup>25</sup> However, neither in this nor in any other communication to Rome, of which we are aware, did Sapieha make any specific reference to the Jews. Nor, to the best of our knowledge, did the Vatican ever request any information on the subject from him. Yet Sapieha undoubtedly knew what was happening in Auschwitz, which was within his archdiocese. Was there any unpublished communication of Sapieha to Rome in which he alluded to the fate of the Jews? Can the archives tell us more regarding the interaction on this and related matters between the Vatican and Polish church leaders?

12. On 18 May 1941, Pope Pius XII received the head of the Croatia fascist state, Ante Pavelic. While the Vatican had received Pavelic as an individual Catholic, not as head of state, there were political implications as a result of this reception. Before his reception, the Yugoslav minister to the Holy See brought to the Vatican's attention Pavelic's involvement in committing atrocities against the Serbs and protested the reception of Pavelic in any capacity because he was the head of an "illegitimate" puppet state.<sup>26</sup> Subsequently, Pavelic's regime was responsible for the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Serbs, Jews, gypsies, and partisans. It is not known how the Pope reacted to these atrocities. Are there any archival materials that can illuminate this issue?

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

14. On several occasions Konrad von Preysing, Bishop of Berlin, had vainly appealed to the Pope to protest specific Nazi actions, including those directed at the Jews. On 17 January 1941 he wrote to Pius XII, noting that "Your Holiness is certainly informed about the situation of the Jews in Germany and the neighboring countries. I wish to mention that I have been asked both from the

Catholic and Protestant side if the Holy See could not do something on this subject, issue an appeal in favor of these unfortunates.<sup>27</sup> This was a direct appeal to the Pope, which bypassed the nuncio. What impression did von Preysing's words make on Pius XII; what discussions if any, took place about making such a public appeal as the German bishop requested, and was any further information about Nazi anti-Jewish policy sought?

15. On 6 March 1943, von Preysing asked Pius XII to try and save the Jews still in the Reich capital, who were facing imminent deportation which, as he indicated, would lead to certain death: "The new wave of deportations of the Jews, which began just before 1 March, affects us particularly here in Berlin even more bitterly. Several thousands are involved: Your Holiness has alluded to their probable fate in your Christmas Radio Broadcast. Among the deportees are also many Catholics. Is it not possible for Your Holiness again to intervene for the many unfortunate innocents? It is the last hope for many and the profound wish of all right-thinking people."<sup>28</sup> On 30 April 1943, the Pope indicated to von Preysing that local bishops had the discretion to determine when to be silent and when to speak out in the face of the danger of reprisals and pressures.<sup>29</sup> Although he felt that he had to exercise great prudence in his actions as Pope, he made it clear that he felt comforted that Catholics, particularly in Berlin, had helped the "so-called non-Aryans" (sogenannten Nichtarier). He particularly singled out for "fatherly recognition" Father Lichtenberg, who had been imprisoned by the Nazis and who would die shortly afterwards. Are there earlier examples in the archives of the Pope's solicitude for Father Lichtenberg or any reference to the bishops' stand against the persecution of the Jews going back to 1938? Is there any evidence of discussion in the Vatican regarding the deportations from Berlin?

16. Apart from von Preysing's direct observation of the Nazi deportations of Jews from Berlin, and what was reported to him, we know that he had been kept informed about the persecution through his frequent contact with Helmut James Graf von Moltke (the driving force of the anti-Nazi Kreisau Circle). Did the Pope receive other information from von Preysing about the Holocaust? Do the archives contain any additional information regarding von Preysing's and other German bishops' interaction with the Vatican about the persecution and murder of Jews?

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

18. In a letter to von Preysing in March 1944, the Pope stated: "Before me lie your eight letters of 1943 and five letters of 1944"<sup>31</sup>. Do these letters exist in the archives and can we see them?

19. Astonishingly detailed accounts of killings are reported in Volume 8. In one striking instance, on 7 October 1942, the Vatican received information on the massacres of Jews compiled by an Italian hospital train chaplain, Father Pirro Scavizzi, reporting two million deaths by that point.<sup>32</sup> It has been suggested that Scavizzi had four audiences with the Pope - two of which go unmentioned in the eleven volumes.<sup>33</sup> Relaying the views of Cardinal Innitzer of Vienna, Scavizzi deplored the timorous reactions of Archbishop Cesare Orsenigo, nuncio to Germany, to matters such as this, writing directly to the Pope in May 1942.<sup>34</sup> Were reports such as these ever discussed within the offices of the Secretary of State? Did the Pope himself refer to such accounts at meetings or in other conversations within the Vatican? Is there material from other Italian military chaplains in the archives?

20. In August and September 1942, there were vigorous protests against the deportations of Jews from France by Archbishop Saliège of Toulouse, Bishop Théas of Montaubon, and Cardinal Gerlier of Lyons.<sup>35</sup> According to The New York Times, in an article published 10 September 1942, the Pope "sent to Marshal Pétain a personal message in which he intimated his approval of the initiative of the French Cardinals and Bishops on behalf of the Jews and foreigners being handed over to the Germans. It is understood the Pope asked the French Chief of State to intervene."<sup>36</sup> Is there confirmation in the Vatican archives of this news account?

21. Casimir Papée, the Polish ambassador to the Holy See, on 28 April 1943, sent Maglione an extract from a Zurich newspaper, describing the martyrdom of many Polish priests interned at Dachau. He reminded the Cardinal of the sentiments awakened among all civilized and Christian nations by German cruelty in the occupied territories adding: "My colleagues and I never failed to draw Your Eminence's attention to these painful facts." In concluding his letter, Papée asked what the Holy See had been able to do "to save lives precious to the Church," and which measures it proposed to take "in the face of so much injustice"<sup>37</sup>. There is no evidence of a reply in the ADSS, though the grievances of the Poles were noted on several occasions.<sup>38</sup> Appeals such as these had been coming to the Vatican since 1939. Are there any materials in the archives regarding internal discussions as to how the Vatican was to respond?

22. There are letters from the bishops of Northeast Italy to the Holy See between 1943 and 1945 (for example, Giuseppe Nogara, bishop of Udine, Antonio Santin, bishop of Trieste, and other bishops).<sup>39</sup> They provide a detailed picture of the political-religious situation in those dioceses, such as the persecution of the Jews, the shooting of hostages, the dangers posed by the partisans, and the suffering of the Italians. Are there more such letters from these and other Italian bishops in the archives?

23. Early in 1944, the World Jewish Congress appealed to the Holy See through Archbishop Cicognani in Washington to intervene with Hungarian authorities, and to accept and assist Jews from Poland. During this period, Hungary was seen as a place of refuge for Jews. Maglione informed Angelo Rotta, nuncio to Hungary, of this appeal and instructed him to take whatever steps he thought "possible and opportune."<sup>40</sup> Other appeals came to the nuncios and delegates from various Jewish groups.<sup>41</sup> The nuncios then sent telegraphic summaries of these appeals. May we see the original documents to determine how closely they are reflected in the summaries?

24. In February 1944, the Pontifical Commission for the Vatican City State (Pontificio Commissione per lo Stato della Città del Vaticano), the administrative agency of Vatican City, recorded the presence of Jews and others who were given refuge within the Vatican.<sup>42</sup> Are Pontifical Commission records and communiqués available with respect to the housing of refugees? Are there records of other people finding refuge in pontifical institutions, for example, the papal villa at Castelgondolfo?

25. In April 1944, on the eve of the deportations of the Jews from Hungary, Rotta reported that the head of the Hungarian government assured him that he wanted to maintain cordial relations between the Holy See and Hungary. These assurances came after new anti-Jewish laws had been enacted under German influence. A note at the bottom of Rotta's report indicates that it had been seen by the Pope, but such notation is missing from most other such documents.<sup>43</sup> Is there any record of which reports the Pope actually saw? What was his reaction to Rotta's reports? Were there any discussions regarding the papal relationship with the Hungarian government?

26. Rotta was the only nuncio to cooperate with the diplomatic representatives of neutral states, Spain, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland. On three occasions in late 1944, he and his diplomatic colleagues submitted protests to the Hungarian government in defense of Jews and took active measures to save them.<sup>44</sup> The Vatican expressed its approval of Rotta's actions at this juncture.<sup>45</sup> Is there evidence of earlier Vatican approval or encouragement of Rotta's activities?



27. In 1933, Edith Stein wrote to Pius XI asking him to issue an encyclical condemning antisemitism.<sup>46</sup> This may have been the first of many appeals made to the Vatican for intervention on behalf of the Jews. Though the date falls beyond the parameters of our mandate, the document is relevant because of its content. How was this letter received? Is the letter itself in the archives, and if so may we see it?

**b. Questions arising from themes pertaining to one or more volumes**

28. Pius XII's spirituality was shaped by the times and circumstances in which he lived, and profoundly affected his outlook on such matters as the Jews and other victims of the war (such as Poles, Serbs, Gypsies, German civilians, Italian POWs and others). For example, in his letters to the bishops of Hamburg and other places, his theology of suffering deeply influenced how he responded to reports of persecution, bombing and other attacks on civilian populations. Are there other unpublished letters and documents that would shed further light on how the Pope viewed the Church's role during the war?

29. Under the Secretariat of State, the Congregation of Extraordinary Ecclesiastic Affairs dealt with relations between states. Meetings of the Congregation would discuss reports from nuncios and delegates and the Congregation's drafts of instructions to them. Minutes of these meetings would provide valuable information about the Vatican's reaction to activities of the Church within Nazi dominated Europe. Are there minutes of these meetings covering the war period? If so, could we have access to them?

30. Finances are occasionally mentioned in the context of the relief of civilian suffering.<sup>47</sup> For example, an accounting of the disbursement of funds is given in cases where Jewish organizations donated funds to the Vatican for relief and rescue. However, the volumes contain no documents regarding the Vatican's own financial transactions relating to such efforts. Is there any archival evidence to indicate how the Vatican collected and disbursed its own or other funds in carrying out such activities, such as the annual Peter's Pence collection?

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

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

33. Almost alone of the Vatican diplomats, Mgr. Domenico Tardini, principal assistant to Maglione,

wrote memoranda and office notes on a wide variety of topics, many of which are published in the ADSS. Did he write other notes relating to the fate of the Jews not published in the ADSS?

34. On March 18, 1942, Gerhart Riegner of the World Jewish Congress and Richard Lichtheim, representing the Jewish Agency for Palestine, sent a remarkably comprehensive memorandum on the fate of Jews in Central and Eastern Europe to Archbishop Filippo Bernardini, the nuncio in Switzerland, and a day later Bernardini forwarded the document to Maglione himself. While the report gave no clear sense of a European-wide "final solution", it left little to the imagination in its description of horrors organized on a continental scale.<sup>48</sup> Is there any indication in the archives about what response, if any, was made to this report? For example, did the Holy See notify hierarchies or its diplomatic representatives regarding the contents of the report?

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

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

37. Questions have been raised regarding the attitude of the Vatican toward a Jewish national home in Palestine during the Holocaust period. Maglione generally responded to requests for assistance in sending Jews to Palestine by reminding appellants of all that the Holy See had done to help the Jews, and of its readiness to continue to do so. But in internal notes published in the volumes, meant only for Vatican representatives, the Secretary of State and his aides explicitly reaffirmed the Vatican's opposition to significant Jewish immigration to Palestine, stating that "the Holy See has never approved of the project of making Palestine a Jewish home...Palestine is by now holier for Catholics than for Jews."<sup>49</sup> The documents also reveal that Angelo Roncalli (the future Pope John XXIII), apostolic delegate to Istanbul, aided Jews to reach Palestine notwithstanding his uneasiness concerning Jewish political aspirations there.<sup>50</sup> Is there documentation regarding guidelines for rescue efforts and their implications concerning the Vatican policy with regard to Palestine?

38. On March 12, 1943, a consortium of rabbis in North America sent a passionate appeal to Maglione, describing the horrors in Poland and the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto, and asking for help from Rome.<sup>51</sup> It is curious that there are no references in the volumes to the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Are there any documents relating to this event in the archives?

39. The Vatican chargé d'affaires in La Paz (Bolivia) wrote about the "invasive" and "cynically exploitative" character of the Jews - allegedly engaged in "dishonest dealings, violence, immorality, and even disrespect for religion."<sup>52</sup> His highly charged account may have negatively influenced Maglione, especially since he received similar reports from some other nuncios, such as Aldo Laggi, in Santiago (Chile). This nuncio claimed that Jewish immigration to Chile had already created "a serious problem". The Jews, he claimed, instead of becoming farmers as promised, had turned to small commerce and trade, provoking popular protests from secular and clerical circles in Chile. The nuncio, in advising against the immigration of "non-Aryan" Catholics took into account the violent mood triggered by what he called "the invasion of the Jews".<sup>53</sup> If other reports of this kind exist in the Vatican archives, could we see them? What internal discussions did this kind exist in the Vatican archives, could we see them? What internal discussions did they provoke and did they influence policy on the "Jewish question" at a time of pervasive antisemitism?

40. How regularly did Maglione, Tardini and Montini brief the Pope on wartime events, the activities of papal nuncios, and the policies they were handling? Are there notes of these discussions? Did Pius XII or his aides maintain diaries which alluded to these discussions?

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

**c. General questions**

42. The case has repeatedly been made that the Vatican's fear of communism prompted it to mute and limit its criticism of Nazi atrocities and occupation policies. We are struck by the paucity of evidence to this effect and to the subject of communism in general. Indeed, our reading of the volumes presents a different picture, especially with regard to the Vatican promotion of the American bishops' support for the alliance between the United States and the Soviet Union in order to oppose Nazism.<sup>54</sup> Is there further evidence on this question?

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

44. The Poles were major victims of the Nazis. Members of the Polish Government in Exile in London and some Polish bishops were often very vocal in their criticism of Pius XII's role. It has been reported that the Vatican commissioned the Jesuits to prepare a defense of its Polish policy.<sup>55</sup> Is this correct and, if so, may we see the report? More generally, the subject of Vatican-Polish relations is an essential element for understanding the role of the Holy See during the Holocaust period and deserves further investigation in the Vatican archives. Is there other pertinent information on this subject in the archives that is not in the volumes, and may we see it?

45. The volumes contain urgent appeals to the Vatican for assistance, articulated by desperate Jewish petitioners. These petitions frequently are couched in language of effusive praise as well as gratitude for actions already undertaken.<sup>56</sup> Yet the volumes contain few examples of the assistance already given that gave rise to such expressions of praise and gratitude. What information can be obtained from either the archives or other sources concerning the concrete assistance already given which gave rise to these expressions of gratitude?

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

47. Did Pope Pius XII have serious doubts about the wisdom or correctness of his policy of "impartiality", whether it related to Jews, Poles or any other victims of the Nazis? The published

documents unfortunately provide little evidence, although Volume 2 gives us a valuable insight into his thinking during the wartime period, especially about the German Church, to which he felt particularly close.<sup>57</sup> In his diary, Roncalli reports of an audience on 11 October 1941 with the Pope who asked whether his "silence" concerning Nazism would be badly judged.<sup>58</sup> Are there any personal papers of Pius XII or records of his discussions with leading advisers, diplomats or important foreign visitors that would illuminate this issue, and, if so, could we see them?

## Concluding observations

Our preliminary investigation of the eleven volumes has generated many significant questions. Those listed in this document are only a selection of those that could be asked. Raising such questions is not intended to detract from the work of those who edited these volumes several decades ago. No edited collection can put such an important historical issue definitively to rest. Just as every historian works by choosing to emphasize some facts and not others, to introduce some personalities and not others, and to tell some incidents and not others, so the work of the editors was also based upon their choices, exercised individually or as part of a team. Indeed, one of the four original editors, Father Robert Graham related the great difficulties the team experienced in selecting "what they judged to pertain to Pius XII and his Secretariat of State during World War II."<sup>59</sup>

In assessing the adequacy of the eleven volumes for an understanding of the role of the Vatican during the Holocaust, let us bear in mind that no history of the role of any government in a matter so broad as the Holocaust could be effectively undertaken on the basis of diplomatic exchanges alone - even when supplemented, as the ADSS occasionally are, with notes prepared as aides mémoires or other records. Furthermore, historians need to know what material is not in those volumes. Even without an inventory of the archives of the Holy See, it is plain from the ADSS that important pieces of the historical puzzle are missing from that collection. Some of these are the records of day to day administration of the Church and the Holy See. In addition, there are the numerous internal communications that every administration leaves behind - diaries, memoranda, appointment books, minutes of meetings, draft documents, and so forth that detail the process of how the Vatican arrived at the decisions it made.

Apropos the usefulness of having documents outside the official archives, it would be helpful to have access to the papers (spogli) of such prominent protagonists as Luigi Maglione, Amleto and Gaitano Cicognani, Giovanni Montini, Domenico Tardini, Alfredo Ottaviani, Valerio Valeri, Giuseppe Burzio, Angelo Rotta, Eugene Tisserant, Filippo Bernardini and other Vatican officials of the period. Similarly, it would be useful to have access to the various archives of the Society of Jesus, particularly for the papers of Wlodimir Ledochowski, Robert Leiber, Pietro Tacchi-Venturi, Gustav Gundlach, and Robert Graham.

More than thirty years have passed since the appearance of the first volumes of the wartime Vatican documents. Since that time many if not all of the then-living individuals referred to in those pages have died, removing some of the constraints upon publication that might have existed when the documents were first released. Restrictions which may have been appropriate then, need no longer apply.

We appreciate that even if full access to the archives were granted, this would not necessarily lay to rest all of the questions surrounding the role of the Holy See and the Holocaust. Nevertheless, we believe that this would be a very significant step forward in advancing knowledge of the period and enhancing relations between the Jewish and Catholic communities. Finally, we would like to recall what we said at our first meeting in December 1999: "It seems to us that the search for truth, wherever it may lead, can be best promoted in an environment in which there is full access to archival documentation and other historical evidence. Ultimately, openness is the best policy for a

mature and balanced historical assessment."

### Endnotes

1. Pierre Blet, *Pius XII and the Second World War*, trans. Lawrence J. Johnson (New York: Paulist Press, 1999).
2. Our statement from that first meeting in New York on December 7, 1999 set forth our common goal: As Jewish and Catholic scholars we are mindful of our joint responsibility and the gravity of the task we have undertaken. Our efforts, we hope, will assist the pursuit of truth, historical understanding, and better relations between the Jewish and Catholic communities. We recognize that the Vatican's role during the Holocaust has been a difficult and painful subject, the discussion of which has not always proceeded in a climate of historical understanding and dispassionate debate. It seems to us that the search for truth, wherever it may lead, can be best promoted in an environment in which there is full access to archival documentation and other historical evidence. Ultimately, openness is the best policy for a mature and balanced historical assessment. While maintaining full access and openness as our overriding objective, we are undertaking a critical examination of the eleven volumes of Vatican archival material, published between 1965 and 1981, which relate to the Holy See's role during the Holocaust. We expect to raise questions both with respect to the general issues noted above and to material not contained in these volumes.
3. The Vatican had an unofficial policy of keeping its archives closed for 100 years after an event. Paul VI changed this policy by opening the archives for the entire pontificate of Pius IX (1846-1878). Following that precedent, John Paul II subsequently opened the archives first for the pontificate of Leo XIII (1878-1903) and then for those of Pius X (1903-1915) and Benedict XV (1915-1922).
4. Pierre Blet, *Osservatore Romano*, no. 17, April 29, 1998, pp.16-17.
5. Blet, *Pius XII and the Second World War*.
6. "Les victimes de la Guerre" is the expression used in the title of several of the volumes of the ADSS.
7. For example, see ADSS, 8, pp. 767-781; ADSS, 9, pp.641-651; ADSS, 10, pp.637-652, which list the documents that are cited but not published.
8. ADSS, 1, pp.11-13.
9. ADSS, 1, p.VII.
10. ADSS, 2, p.60.
11. See ADSS, 2, Appendix I-IX, pp.385-436.
12. ADSS, 6, appendix 4, pp.536-7.
13. ADSS, 2, note 12, p.407.
14. Burkhart Schneider, "Un'enciclica mancata," *Osservatore Romano* (5 April 1973).
15. ADSS, 6, nr. 60, p.137; nr. 125-6, p.211-14; nr. 131, p.219; nr. 137, pp.224-5; nr. 341, pp.437-9 provide several examples of the discussion of these funds. Even within these documents, other reports are referred to but not published, and these letters could be of importance to historians.
16. In the ADSS, 1 there are claims advanced that the Pope viewed events in Poland with the greatest sorrow; that he agonized over how to respond; that everything possible that could be done was being done; and that to be more forceful was certain to prompt retaliation.
17. ADSS, 6, nr. 378, pp.477-480.
18. ADSS, 6, nr. 378, note 3, p. 479.
19. ADSS, 6, nr. 378, notes 4-5, p.479.
20. ADSS, 8, nr. 165, pp. 295-7; nr. 189, pp. 333-4.
21. ADSS, 8, nr. 581, pp. 762-3.
22. ADSS, 8, nr. 421, pp. 586-7.
23. Many of these documents appear in ADSS, 8.
24. ADSS, 3.2, nr. 406, p.625-29.

25. ADSS, 3.2, nr. 357, p. 539-41.
26. See Gerhart Riegner, "Observations on the Published Vatican Archival Material," unpublished paper, December 5, 1999, p. 6. ADSS, 4, nr. 398, pp
27. ADSS, 9, nr. 82, p.170. A letter from von Preysing to the Pope, dated 17 January 1941. The original letter read: "Eure Heiligkeit sind wohl über die Lage der Juden in Deutschland und en angrenzenden Ländern orientiert. Lediglich referierend möchte anführen, dass von katholischer wie von protestantischer Seite an mich die Frage getellt worden ist, ob nicht der Heilige Stuhl in dieser Sache etwas tun könnte, einen Appell zugunsten der Unglücklichen erlassen?" Von Preysing presents this request as coming from third parties, rather than in his own name, as if he were only the messenger - though in reality it clearly was a matter of some importance to him. It is interesting that the request has a more general Christian character (not self-evident at the time, given the strength of the Catholic-Protestant divide). Most significant of all, it tends to suggest that the German bishops (or at least some of them) were keeping the Pope well-informed about the condition of the Jews or they were aware that he knew about the Jewish plight in the German Reich.
28. ADSS,9, nr.82, p.170. See also note 9, ADSS, 2, nr. 105, p.323.
29. ADSS, 2, nr 105, p.318-327.
30. ADSS, 3, nr. 510, p.801; 7, nr. 225, p.396-400. It is also mentioned in ADSS, 9, nr. 213, p.327.
31. ADSS, 2, nr. 123, p.376.
32. ADSS, 8, nr. 496, pp. 669-70. In particular, see note 4.
33. Sergio Minerbi, "Pius XII: A Reappraisal," paper presented at the symposium, "Memories, Intertwined and Divergent: Pius XII and the Holocaust, Kings College, Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania, April 9-11, 2000.
34. ADSS, 8, nr. 374, p. 534.
35. ADSS, 8, nr. 454, pp.625-7; nr. 463, pp.635-6; nr. 468, pp.638-40; nr. 484, p.658.
36. New York Times, September 10, 1942, p. 7,8,9.
37. ADSS, 3.2, nr. 497, p. 781.
38. In addition, Papée is on record as saying that not all of his memos appear in the ADSS volumes. What do his other letters contain? It would be important to know the contents of these communiqués in order to better understand the Polish question.
39. For example, see ADSS, 10, nr. 165, p.239-42; nr. 463, p.554.
40. ADSS, 10, nr. 40, p.115.
41. For example, see ADSS, 10, nr. 127, p.198; nr. 249, p.335; nr. 253, p. 341, nr. 254, p.342, n.1; nr. 260, p. 347; nr. 270, p. 357, n.3; nr. 273, p. 359; nr. 295, p.378.
42. ADSS, 10, nr. 53, p.129.
43. ADSS, 10, nr. 153, p.224-29; nr.172, p.247-49.
44. See Rotta's activities as described in ADSS, 10.
45. ADSS, 10, nr. 408, p.497.
46. Stein herself describes her letter, stating: "I know that my letter was sealed when it was delivered to the Holy Father some time later, I even received his blessing for myself and my loved ones. But nothing else came of it. Is it not possible that he recalled this letter on various occasions later on? My fears concerning the future of German Catholics have been gradually realized in the course of the years that followed." "Je sais que ma lettre était cachetée quand elle a été remise au Saint-Père ; quelque temps plus tard, j'ai même reçu sa bénédiction pour moi-même et mes proches. Mais il n'en est rien sorti de plus. Est-il impossible que cette lettre lui soit plusieurs fois revenue à l'esprit par la suite? Mes appréhensions en ce qui concerne l'avenir des catholiques allemands se sont progressivement vérifiés au cours des années suivantes." Notes d'Edith Stein citées par Teresia Renata de Spiritu Sancto, Edith Stein, Nuremberg, Glock und Lutz, 1952.
47. See ADSS, 8.
48. ADSS, 8, nr. 314, p. 466. The memorandum is reprinted in John Morley, Vatican Diplomacy and the Jews during the Holocaust 1939-1943 (New York: KTAV, 1980), Appendix B, 212. As Riegner notes, this important document was not included in the ADSS, only the letter of

transmission by Bernardini. See Gerhart Riegner, "Observations on the Published Vatican Archival Material," unpublished paper, December 5, 1999, pp.9-10. "I consider the omission in the Vatican documentation of [this document of March 18] and the accompanying letter of appeal to the Vatican a serious mistake," writes Riegner. "It would have shown that important Jewish organizations had called the attention of the Vatican already in a very early stage of the application of the final solution (six weeks after the so-called Wansee Conference) to the tragic situation of European Jewry." Ibid, 10.

49. "La Santa Sede non ha mai approvato il progetto di far della Palestina una home ebraica...La Palestina è ormai più sacra per i cattolici che ... per gli ebrei." "The Holy See has never approved the project of making Palestine a Jewish homeland...Palestine is by now more sacred for Catholics than...for Jews." ADSS, 9, nr.94, p.184.
50. ADSS, 9, nr. 324, p.469.
51. ADSS, 9, nr. 91, p.182.
52. ADSS, 6, nr. 29, pp.92-4.
53. ADSS, 6, nr.134, p.222.
54. ADSS, 5, nr. 189, pp.361-2.
55. See Richard Lukas, *Forgotten Holocaust: the Poles Under German Occupation 1939-1944* (Lexington 1986) p.16.
56. One of many examples appears in ADSS, 8, nr. 441, p.611, in which the chief Rabbi of Zagreb appeals to the Pope for help. See also Maglione's response in a footnote to this letter, in which he says that the Holy See "has not neglected to involve itself...in favor of the recommended persons" (611-612).
57. For example, in a letter to the Bishop of Wurtzbourg, Matthias Ehrenfried, on 20 February 1941, Pius writes , "There where the Pope would like to shout, he is forced to wait and keep silence; where he would act and help, he must wait patiently..." (ADSS, 2, nr.66, p.201); and in a letter to the Archbishop of Cologne, Joseph Frings, on 3 March 1944, Pius writes "It is painfully difficult to decide whether reserve and prudent silence, or frank speaking and forceful action are called for." (ADSS, 2, nr.119, p.365).
58. In a passage of Roncalli's diary concerning an audience with Pius XII of October, 10 1941. Roncalli writes that the Pope "Si diffuse a dirmi della sua larghezza di tratto coi Germani che vengono a visitarlo. Mi chiese se il suo silenzio circa il contegno del nazismo non è giudicato male." "Continued to tell me of his generosity towards the Germans who visit him. He asked me if his silence regarding nazism was not judged badly." See Alberto Melloni, *Fra Istanbul, Atene e la guerra. La missione di A.G. Roncalli (1935-1944)*, p.240.

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