

VATICAN PURSUED THE SAME COURSE FOR NAZIS, REDS

Hitherto Secret Documents
Published for First Time
By State Department

POPE FIRM WITH HITLER

Adherence to Principles,
Insistence Upon Human
Rights Marked Policy

That the Catholic Church has always been the uncompromising foe of all forms of totalitarianism and the staunch defender of human freedom and the rights of man, is borne out by the contents of hitherto secret documents seized from the Germans and published last week by the United States Department of State.

A 1,220-page book, Department of State publication 3277, for sale by the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., at \$3.25 a copy, contains 97 documents dealing with the relations of the Vatican Secretariate of State with the Hitler Regime.

The documents provide a complete refutation of Communist charges of pro-Nazi sympathies on the part of the Church.

The policy of the Holy See towards the Communist-dominated governments of Hungary, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and other countries behind the Iron Curtain is entirely consistent in its opposition to tyranny and persecution with the Vatican policy towards Hitler and the Nazis in 1937 and 1938, the documents show.

The documents are messages and memoranda from Dr. Carl Ludwig Diego von Bergen, German ambassador to the Holy See at that time, to the Berlin Foreign Office, notes and letters by German officials and instructions to German officials abroad on matters concerned with the resistance of the Church to Nazism.

Pope Adhered to Principle

According to the documents, the present Pope, then Cardinal Pacelli, Papal Secretary of State, was the spearhead of the opposition of the Church to Nazi tyranny and persecution. During those years Cardinal Pacelli manifested the same unshakable firmness in defense of the rights of the Church and of human rights, coupled with extreme patience and constant eagerness to establish a *modus vivendi* with the civil authority, which His Holiness is demonstrating at the present time towards the Communist regimes in countries behind the Iron Curtain.

Inflexible in matters of principle, His Holiness now, as when he was Papal Secretary of State,

shows a willingness to lessen the tensions for the good of souls, wherever no essential principle is concerned.

The German documents reveal the divisions of opinion, the fumbling and improvising of policy from day to day on the part of high Nazi officials caused by the strong, forceful, and consistent adherence to principle on the part of the Vatican.

One telegram, marked "secret and urgent," underlines the reasons behind the Encyclical "Mit Brennender Sorge" of Pope Pius XI in which he vigorously condemned Nazism. The telegram says, in part: "The Pope wished first to exhaust all possibilities of reaching an understanding through diplomatic channels, in the hope that the Reich government would understand that it was impossible for the head of the Church to yield in certain essential matters. . . ."

"On the other hand, the necessity of an express condemnation by the Holy See of Communism in all its forms and workings was becoming more and more urgent. The Vatican, however, feels that certain features of national socialism might lead to Communist theories, to which the Church could not remain indifferent: a condemnation of Communism therefore necessitated a like action against the similar phenomena which . . . were resulting from it."

Thus the attempt of the Nazis to win Vatican support because of the purported antagonism between Nazism and Communism was frustrated by the far-sighted

policy of the Holy Father who spurned any alliance with Nazism even as a means of thwarting Communism, as involving the false principle that the end would justify the means.

The reaction of the Nazis to this forthright Vatican policy is typical of the reaction of the Hungarian and Czechoslovak governments at the moment towards similar forthrightness and steadfast adherence to principle.

False Charges Familiar

With only a minor change in names, one of the documents, a letter of Mr. Kerrl to Cardinal Bertram, would be almost identical with statements of Hungarian and Czechoslovak Communist officials concerning official statements by Church authorities. The letter states, in part: "Involved in this encyclical (are) not only religious but, in the last analysis, political objectives. . . . Catholic clergymen, members of Orders and laymen, have, with astounding cleverness, been conducting a deliberate attack upon the economic security of the German Reich through misdemeanors and felonies in foreign exchange."

The last phrase suggests the false charges leveled against Archbishop Stepinac and Cardinal Mindszenty.

A long note addressed by Cardinal Pacelli, dated April 30, 1937, in reply to a German protest against the Encyclical of Pope Pius XI, has the same ring of force, strength and righteousness which mark the words of Pope Pius XII in reply to the current allegations of leading Communists. The note stated: "The Holy See is neither accustomed nor willing to be guided in doctrinal matters by any point of view other than the conviction of their spiritual necessity. In this procedure its only ally is the truth."

"It is not necessary, then, to point out that, for the Church, its freedom in the fulfillment of its mission of salvation is of prime

importance and that no material interests can deter the Church from demanding this freedom as its divine right rather than begging for it as alms from every state, whatever its individual constitutional form."

"The Holy See, which has friendly, correct or at least tolerable relations with states of one or another constitutional form and orientation, will never interfere in the question of what concrete form of government a certain people chooses to regard as best suited to its nature and requirements. . . ."

Blandishments Scorned

The documents thus show clearly how inflexibly and consistently the Holy See withstood the blandishments of the Nazis, rejecting their offers of friendship which would mean the sacrifice of principle, and vigorously denounced the evils of Nazism as akin to the evils of Communism, even though, as the documents again show, such a rejection of Nazism was the signal for the stepping up of the Nazi persecution of the Church and the imprisonment and death of priests and Religious.

Another collection of documents concerns the Nazi reaction to the remark made in May, 1937, by the late Cardinal Mundelein, Archbishop of Chicago, in which he was quoted as calling Hitler "an alien, an Austrian paper-hanger and a poor one at that." In answer to Nazi protests over the remark, Cardinal Pacelli answered for Pope Pius XI in vigorous terms. He said he had not read the Chicago prelate's statement and then threw the protest back into the teeth of the Nazis, asking what the German government was doing, had done or planned to do "against the malicious slander and defamation, against the disgraceful calumnies directed at churches, ecclesiastical institutions, the Pope, the Cardinals, Bishops and priests which appear day after day in German newspapers . . . and in speeches of prominent personages."

That the Holy See, despite all the friction between the Vatican and the Nazi regime, was willing and ready to come to an agreement in which essential principle would not be compromised, is shown from the documents dealing with Hitler's visit to Rome in 1938. According to a report from Ambassador von Bergen Pope Pius XI had expected the Hitler "in accordance with the

customs heretofore observed by chiefs of state, heads of government, etc., would pay a visit to the Pope."

Recall Hitler's Rome Visit

Hitler's crude and coarse neglect of protocol caused Pope Pius openly to express his condemnation of Hitler by closing the Vatican museums during Hitler's visit and by alluding to the fact that "it was not found too inappropriate and untimely, on the day of the Holy Cross, to raise another cross which is not the Cross of Christ"

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The facts brought out in these hitherto secret documents are of timely and vital importance in establishing the truth that the Catholic Church was not conducting any "war" against the German government, as it is not now conducting any "war" against the Kremlin or against the governments of Communist-dominated countries. In 1937 and 1938 the Catholic Church was fighting a defensive fight for the rights of God, for human freedom and for the rights of man, even at the cost of bitter persecution by the Nazis.

These documents serve to dem-

onstrate the consistency of the policy of the Church, her willingness to encourage her sons and daughters to suffer and die rather than yield on matters of religious principle. Archbishop Stepinac, Cardinal Mindszenty and Archbishop Beran in their respective countries today are suffering for the very same ideals and principles for which the leaders of the Catholic Church and millions of sincere Catholics suffered in Germany under Hitler.

The publication by the State Department of these documents gives a timely and impressive background for the present struggle between the Church and Communism with human freedom and human rights, as well as religious liberty, at stake.