

■ Was Pope a friend and protector of Hitler and the Nazis? This was a question that excited and disturbed many people in America and Europe.

## POPE PIUS XII AND THE NAZIS

There are few subjects in recent history which have aroused more passionate feelings than the record of Pope Pius XII's attitude towards National Socialist Germany; and, it must be admitted, such evidence as has appeared tends to give more support to the anti-clerical side than to the defenders of Vatican policy. Dr. S. Friedlander has assembled an interesting collection of documents, most of them not previously published, mainly from the archives of the German Foreign Ministry, with the addition of some valuable evidence from the Zionist archives and other sources.

There is no doubt that the successive German Ambassadors to the Holy See were delighted to be able to report to their government the repeated expressions of the Pope's sympathy for Germany. Pius XII did have deep feelings of affection for Germany, where he had spent

many years of his life as Nuncio. He was genuinely worried that open opposition to the Nazis might lead to further difficulties for the Church in Germany. He believed deeply in the dangers of Bolshevism and thought that the Germans alone could save Europe at a moment when, in his view, Britain and the U.S.A. were pursuing policies which would open the door to Russia. There is already evidence for all these attitudes in the published American documents on the Foreign Relations of the United States and elsewhere. We know too that the Pope was slow and devious in condemning the massacres of the Jews (and Dr. Friedlander produces some convincing evidence that he knew what was happening by the end of 1942); but he was also slow and devious in protesting against what was being done to Catholics in Poland.

Some important evidence

has been released by the Vatican itself which has to be taken into account in any attempt to assess the reasons for the Pope's attitude. This new evidence is contained in the letters of Pius XII to the German bishops, which were published earlier this year, 1966, in both French and German editions. Much of this correspondence deals with purely ecclesiastical and administrative questions. Often when the Pope criticizes obliquely the German government's action one has the feeling that he was reacting to pressure from the German bishops themselves, rather than initiating policy. Above all, he was intensely aware of the difficulties of his position. When, for example, Mgr. Lichtenberg, who later died in a 'concentration camp', was arrested after offering prayers for the Jews in the Catholic cathedral in Berlin, the Pope, prompted by Count Preysing, the Bishop of Berlin, expressed his concern and issued a Christmas message in which he made a brief somewhat elliptical reference to the 'hundreds of thousands of people who... solely because of their nation or race

have been condemned to death or progressive extinction'. Yet Pius XII remained pessimistic about the effects of any direct or open intervention and believed that an attitude of 'impartiality', which he tried to distinguish from one of 'neutrality', would save the Church from worse difficulties.

This did not prevent some bishops and a number of lower clergy from speaking out or from taking action whatever the consequences. How far Pius XII encouraged such actions we still do not know; his successor certainly maintained later that he himself had been acting on the Pope's instructions in his own efforts to help Jews in the Balkans and in Turkey. Equally we do not know how far rival factions in the Vatican were urging rival courses. Although the publication of Vatican documents is to be welcomed, it is unlikely to tell the whole story.

The truth is that non-Catholics as well as Catholics perhaps expect too much of the Pope. The Vatican is an elaborate bureaucracy; its instructions are — even when not in Latin, as some of the

Pope's letters to the German bishops still were in 1944 — often extremely obscure. It is rare for the Pope to take an open and unequivocal stand on any issue in which the actual immediate interests of the Church are not directly concerned. Only by realizing the nature of Vatican administration and traditions and by treating the Vatican as a political institution — as stu-

dents of the Soviet Union regard the Kremlin — will we begin to analyze and understand, even if we do not forgive, the Pope's dealings with the Nazis, and for this reason we must welcome any publication of documents, especially when presented as impartially as in Dr. Friedlander's volume. — *James Joll in The Listener, October, 1966.*

## PROLIFERATION IN COLLEGE

The bloated college curriculum is, I believe, the major impediment to increased effectiveness of most American colleges. One need not deprecate the hundreds of specialized courses of professional or graduate schools to point out that the liberal arts college ought not to offer such instruction. Able undergraduates who have had sound teaching in a selected but limited number of courses in their major fields rarely encounter academic difficulties in their advanced education, and if they do not have the ability and the desire to learn, no amount of premature and specialized forced feeding will give them any lasting advantage over their classmates who seize the opportunity to get a broader liberal education. — *By Earl J. McGrath in The Liberal Arts College and the Emergent Caste System.*