

A Defence Of Pope Pius XII

By Fr. William Saunders and Dr. Peter Gumpel, S.J.
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Part I

DID PIUS XII REMAIN SILENT?

Fr. William Saunders

It is common to find in the media a focus on Catholic-Jewish relations. While praising the popes since John XXIII, it seems easy for them to accuse Pope Pius XII of remaining silent about the holocaust during World War II. To begin to understand Pius XII's actions during the World War II, we must remember the world in which he lived. Hitler had assumed control of Germany in 1933. In July of that same year, he began not only persecuting Jews but also Christians. He infiltrated the German Evangelical Federation (the Lutheran Church), removing leaders who were opposed to his agenda. Many of these ministers died in concentration camps or prisons, like the famous Deitrich Bonhoffer. The persecution was even more intense for the Catholic Church. Gestapo agents attended Mass and listened to every homily preached, prepared to arrest any priest attacking or criticizing the regime. Chanceries were searched for any "incriminating" documents (especially Pope Pius XI's encyclical condemning Nazism). Communication with Rome was limited. Nazi propaganda represented the Church as unpatriotic and hoarding wealth with clerics portrayed as idle and avaricious. By 1940, all Catholic schools had been closed, and religious instruction confined to the Church itself or at home. Meanwhile, anti-Christian teaching was imparted in the public schools. Please note that the first concentration camp was established in 1933 at Dachau, outside of Munich; this camp was not so much an "extermination camp" as one for the political prisoners, including priests. At Dachau alone, 2,700 priests were imprisoned (of which 1,000 died), and were subject to the most awful tortures, including the medical experiments of Dr. Rascher.

Such persecution was not confined to Germany.

The Church in Poland also suffered severely. During the first four months of occupation following the September 1939 invasion, 700 priests were shot and 3,000 were sent to concentration camps (of which 2,600 died). By the end of the war, 3 million Polish Catholics had been killed in concentration camps. How many other Catholics — priests, religious, and laity — in other countries died for the faith during the Nazi era? Pope Pius XI, who had condemned Nazism in his 1937 encyclical *Mit Brennender Sorge*, died in February 1939, and Pope Pius XII followed him as the successor of St. Peter on March 12. Think of the world — and the Church — Pope Pius XII had inherited. To make matters worse, by 1940 Hitler controlled Europe and Northern Africa, and was planning the invasion of Britain. The Vatican, officially a neutral country, was isolated. Hitler had plans to depose Pius XII, appoint his own "puppet" pope, and move the Vatican administration to Germany, plans which would have been executed if the war would have gone in the Nazi's favour. Who then was to come to the aid of the Vatican? Pius XII, who had to insure the survival of the Church, was very much alone. Nevertheless, Pius XII spoke out. After the invasion of Poland in

September 1939, he denounced the aggression of the Nazis and proposed a peace plan. In 1940, he called for the triumph of peace and justice over hatred, mistrust, and the spirit of “cold egoism.” The following year, he pleaded for the rights of small nations and national minorities, and condemned total warfare and religious persecution.

In his Christmas message of 1942, he specifically denounced the extermination of the Jews: The New York Times praised this message, writing, “This Christmas more than ever Pope Pius XII is a lonely voice crying out in the silence of a continent. The pulpit whence he speaks is more than ever like the Rock in which the Church was founded, a tiny island lashed and surrounded by a sea of war... When a leader, speaking impartially to nations on both sides, condemns as heresy the new form of national state which subordinates everything to itself; when he declares that whoever wants peace must protect against ‘arbitrary attacks’ the ‘juridical safety of individual’; when he assails violent occupation of territory, the exile and persecution of human beings for no reason other than race or political opinion; when he says that people must fight for a just and decent peace, a ‘total peace’ — the ‘impartial’ judgment is like a verdict in our high court of justice.”

Besides these world-wide pleas for peace, the Vatican persistently issued communications to protest to Hitler which were attested to by Von Ribbentrop at the Nuremberg war trials, who said, “I do not recollect [how many] at the moment, but I know we had a whole desk-full of protests from the Vatican. There were very many we did not even read or reply to.” Pope Pius XII also acted. According to Israeli archives, papal relief programs saved at least 860,000 Jews, more than any other agency or organization. His Holiness also allowed the Vatican diplomatic corps, which were protected by diplomatic immunity, to carry messages between the allied powers. Vatican Information Services also sent over 5 million messages for soldiers. During the Nazi occupation of Rome (September 1943 to June 1944), Pius XII helped to raise the Gestapo’s demand of 50 kilos of gold from the Jewish community for “their safety”; unfortunately, the payment did not prevent the eventual round-up of Jews. He also lifted cloister restrictions, allowing religious houses to offer refuge for Jews. He allowed the issuance of false baptismal certificates to Jews. These deeds do not even include the general relief efforts and distribution of food coordinated by the Vatican for the city of Rome.

We must remember that any defiance of the Nazi regime meant immediate and severe retaliation. Jean Bernard, Bishop of Luxembourg, who was detained at Dachau, later wrote, “The detained priests trembled every time news reached us of some protest by a religious authority, but particularly by the Vatican. We all had the impression that our warders made us atone heavily for the fury these protests evoked.” Cardinal Sapjeha, Archbishop of Krakow in Poland, wrote to Pius XII in 1942, “We must deplore that we cannot communicate Your Holiness’ letter to the faithful, for that would provide a pretext for fresh persecution. We already have many who are victims because they were suspected of being in secret communication with the Apostolic See.” Pius XII was burdened with speaking the truth while safeguarding the survival of the Church. When Pope Pius XII died on October 9, 1958, Golda Meir, then Israeli delegate to the United Nations, sent official condolences: “When fearful martyrdom came to our people in the decade of Nazi terror, the voice of the pope was raised for the victims. The life of our times was enriched by a voice speaking out on the great moral truths above the tumult of daily conflict. We mourn a great servant of peace.” Dr. Raphael Cantoni, a leader in Italy’s Jewish Assistance Committee added, “The Church and the papacy have saved Jews as much and insofar as they could save Christians. Six million of my co-religionists have been murdered by the Nazis... but there would have been many more victims had it

not been for the efficacious intervention of Pius XII.” With all of the talk of Oscar Schindler and “Schindler’s List,” someone ought to make a movie about Pius XII and his courageous efforts.

Part II

CORNWELL’S POPE:

A NASTY CARICATURE OF A NOBLE AND SAINTLY MAN

By Dr. Peter Gumpel, S.J.

[In light of the recent controversy provoked by the promotion of John Cornwell’s new book: “Hitler’s Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII,” ZENIT has obtained an exclusive point by point rebuttal from one of the most respected authorities on the Catholic Church and the Second World War, Dr. Peter Gumpel, S.J. He is postulator of the cause for beatification of Pius XII and has carried out years of extensive research on the life and historical facts surrounding the person and pontificate of Pope Pacelli. During a presentation in Rome of the book “The Jews, Pius XII and The Black Legend,” by Italian journalist and writer Antonio Gasperi, Dr. Gumpel came to the final conclusion: “After reading over 100,000 pages of the documents for the process of beatification, I am more and more convinced that Pius XII was a saint.”]

The cover of the book of Cornwell depicts Archbishop Pacelli leaving a German government building, guarded by two soldiers. This official visit of the then Nuncio took place not later than 1929, that is, four years before Hitler came into power (January 30, 1933). Since Pacelli left Germany in 1929 and never returned there, using this photograph is misleading and tendentious. Against this old and dirty trick protests were repeatedly published. The fact that, in a review in the USA, Cornwell uses this photo on the cover of his book reveals from the outset his intention to denigrate the future Pius XII. At the beginning of the book a list of archives is published which Cornwell says he has consulted. This list is extremely meagre for a pretentious book of this size. Scores of archives which could and should have been consulted are simply ignored. This is in regard to German, Italian, U.S. Archives, the Acts of the Nuremberg Trials, etc. Even those archives which are mentioned, are certainly not fully explored and used. Most sources used by Cornwell are secondary sources and here the choice is extremely selective. Cornwell deals at length with the situation of the Catholic Church in Germany, but never mentions the standard work of Dr. Heinz Hirten which is an extremely well documented, scholarly work that deals with the situation of the German Catholics between 1918 and 1945. Other standard works dealing with this topic are equally ignored by the author.

The first part of the book of Cornwell is wishy-washy. Instead of solid documentation we find a series of gratuitous conjectures, suppositions, and insinuations. Cornwell deals at length with Concordats, totally ignoring their primary pastoral importance, and suggesting and asserting all the time that the only purpose of the Holy See is to strengthen its power and in particular to secure the right to appoint Bishops of its own liking. Cornwell does not mention such abuses as Josephinism, popular in Austria and to a certain extent even in Bavaria. Cornwell speaks about modernism without even mentioning its real dangers (the ideas of Loisy, or Tyrrel), rather concentrating on a witch hunt which in fact did not take place. However, there is not a shred of evidence that Pacelli ever took any part in any latter. Cornwell does not say that Pacelli did take part in this, but he insinuates that he lived in this atmosphere in the earlier stages of his life.

The Serbian Concordat.

It is to be noted that this was requested by Serbia and that the Holy See never refuses negotiations of this kind. Pacelli was then in a subordinate position. Each step of the negotiations had to be examined by his superiors, the Cardinal Secretary of State of that time and Pope Benedict XV. The suggestion that Pacelli in the Concordat with Serbia contributed to the outbreak of World War I is patently absurd and not taken seriously by any competent scholar.

Pacelli, Apostolic Nuncio in Bavaria (1917) and Germany (1920-1929).

The positive aspects of this activity are glossed over. Great emphasis is placed on the uprising in Munich in 1919. In his report to the Secretary of State, the fact that the leaders of these terrorists were of Jewish descent sent from Russia (just as the leaders of the revolutions in Berlin were led by people of Jewish descent sent from Russia [Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg] as well as Bela Kun in Hungary) are historical facts. To mention such facts has absolutely nothing to do with anti-Semitism, as Cornwell wrongly insinuates. It was necessary to mention who the terrorist leaders in Munich were so that the Superior of Pacelli could understand that this was a part of an effort of the Russian Communists to extend their power in various Western countries.

Pacelli and Hitler.

Cornwell refers in the list of works, which he says he has consulted, to one book in which it is explicitly stated that in 1920, that is four years before Hitler came into power (January 30, 1933), Pacelli warned in abrasive terms against Hitler and could not understand that even highly competent Germans did not share his totally negative judgement. Cornwell omits this statement. Either he did not read this book, or he willingly omitted this and other similar easily ascertainable statements of Pacelli, simply because they do not tally with his destructive tendencies.

The Concordat with Nazi Germany.

Here again the request was made by Hitler who at that time made repeatedly positive statements about the two Christian denominations in Germany. If Pius XI had refused the negotiations, Hitler would have said: I extended a hand of peace, but it was brutally rejected. The persecution of the Catholic Church which existed already on local levels would have become an official and severe persecution (N.B.: When the German Bishops protested against local persecutions, Hitler always claimed that this was done without his foreknowledge and without his consent. Cornwell does not mention this. He likewise “ignores” or at least never mentions that the Concordat was “not” the first international pact concluded by Hitler, the Concordat was preceded by the so-called “four countries pact” (England, France, Italy, Germany; signed in Milan). Pacelli knew that he could not trust Hitler and mentioned this to the English diplomat Kirkpatrick a few weeks after the signing of the Concordat (July 20, 1933). Totally false is the assertion of Cornwell that the Concordat impeded political and social activities on the part of Catholics. It was agreed that priests and religious should not engage in “party” politics.

In the Nuremberg Trials, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Joachim von Ribbentrop, admitted that Pacelli, as Secretary of State, had sent scores of protests about infractions of the Concordat but that these were nearly always ignored. Finally in 1937 there came the Encyclical letter “Mit Brennender Sorge” — “with burning preoccupation” and not “with great appreciation” as Cornwell mistranslates. Who was the main author of this flaming protest: Pacelli, “Hitler’s Pope”!!! Cornwell equally plays down or downright omits the sharp condemnation of Nazism made by Pacelli at Lourdes, Lisieux, Paris, and Budapest, where he went as Papal Legate. It is true that neither Hitler nor Nazism were ever mentioned by name, but everybody understood against whom these

condemnations were directed. If Cornwell had made a serious effort to ascertain this — a reading of reviews and newspapers in U.S., England, France, Holland, etc., would have made this clear to him — not to mention the Nazi publications which throughout the book of Cornwell are simply neglected and totally underestimated. To be noticed also: that every utterance of this kind aggravated the situation of Catholics in Germany (just as later in the countries occupied by the Nazis).

Pius XII, Pope.

Cornwell belittles the serious efforts of Pius XII to prevent World War II and makes a ridiculous comment on the first Encyclical of Pius XII (published at the beginning of World War II). In fact, if this encyclical letter was so insignificant as Cornwell wishes us to believe, why then did the Allies airdrop 88,000 copies of this Encyclical letter over Germany, where this Encyclical letter could not be published? Cornwell, of course, does not mention this action of the Allies. Simple ignorance? But the fact was easily ascertainable in the literature which Cornwell pointedly omitted in his notes and bibliography.

Pius XII and The Occupied Countries.

In repeated speeches Pius XII protested against the unjust treatment of the occupied countries. However, especially the Polish Bishops — except those who had fled Poland and lived abroad in safety, such as Cardinal Hlond and Bishop Radonski — begged the Pope not to make these protests because they achieved nothing good, but only aggravated the situation of oppression and persecution. Downright classical and frequently mentioned is the case of messages sent by Pius XII through a chaplain of a Maltese relief train to Archbishop Sapjeha (Krakow). When the latter read this message, he threw the whole lot in the fire, saying that if ever a copy fell into the hands of the Gestapo, they would kill all Polish priests. Typical is the fact that thousands of Polish and other priests were killed by the Nazis and that the standard work of Professor Dr. Olrich von Held (now in its third edition): “Priester unter Hitler’s Terror” (Priests — in Germany — Under the Terror of Hitler) is never mentioned or quoted by Cornwell. On the whole, one must say that Cornwell, who has never lived in a highly organized criminal police state, is totally unaware of the situation prevailing in such a state and that, in consequence, a great many of his judgements, appraisals, suggestions, etc., are completely unrealistic, utopian and anachronistic. From an historical point of view, one must be able to understand the situation as it was then and not judge it with the hindsight from today’s situation in free countries. To proceed in such an irresponsible manner is a capital mistake which is everywhere present in the book of Cornwell.

Cornwell and the German Bishops.

The treatment of the German Bishops by Cornwell is extremely unfair. Prior to the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor, they had repeatedly warned against the Nazis and their pagan “Weltanschauung” (ideology). When Hitler became the legitimately appointed Chancellor of the Reich, a “modus vivendi” had to be found. It was then not clear to the Bishops, the German politicians, and many German Jews, how Hitler would act once he had obtained the government. However, “never” did the Bishops approve his ideology and increasingly they protested against his actions. Bishop Gröber (Archbishop of Freiburg) whom Cornwell calls the “brown Bishop” was initially in favour of a certain effort to come to terms with Hitler, but quite soon he became a bitter opponent of the regime. What Cornwell does not say is the fact that in various reports of the Gestapo one can read that as long as the Catholic Church has any influence on the people, the Nazi

ideology would never be accepted by a large section of the German people. The classic work of Boberach which published the internal reports of the Gestapo is, of course, not even mentioned once by Cornwell.

Pius XII and the statute of impartiality, traditional with the Holy See.

Both parties in the Second World War exercised pressure on Pius XII to declare a “crusade”: the opponents of Hitler wanted the Pope to declare a crusade against Nazism; Hitler exercised pressure on him to declare a crusade against Bolshevism. Both pretences were absurd, considering that Bolshevism had committed and continued to commit numerous crimes and persecuted every form or religion, and the same applied to the Nazis (with the exception of those Protestants who actively supported Hitler).

Pius XII and the Jews.

During the Second World War, and till five years after his death on 9 October 1958, Pius XII was greatly praised by all kinds of Jewish organizations, chief Rabbis of diverse countries and especially from the U.S. (see my article in “The Tablet” and the article “In defense of Pius XII” in Newsweek). The debate, if a flaming public protest against the crimes against the Jews would have had any effect, will probably continue to a large extent due to biased and partial writers who have an interest to denigrate the Catholic Church.

In my considered opinion, a public protest would not have saved a single Jewish life. It would only have aggravated the persecution both of Jews and of Catholics. Moreover it would have impeded and practically made impossible the very extensive silent action of helping Jews in every possible manner. It is well known that no organization has saved so many Jews as the Catholic Church, and this on the formal order of Pius XII. The latter knew well and is on record that this “silence” — which, however, was not a “silence” at all for everyone who wanted to hear and understand — might one day be held against him. However, he was not concerned for his reputation, but with saving Jewish lives and this was the only just decision, which clearly required wisdom and a great amount of courage. Cornwell has simply not understood this. He does not do justice to the facts when, in order to belittle Pinchas E. Lapide who praised Pius XII, he attributes to him second motives without producing a shred of evidence. Lapide, the noted Jewish historian and theologian credited Pope Pius XII with leading efforts that saved hundreds of thousands of Jewish lives. He wrote: “...The Catholic Church, under the pontificate of Pius XII was instrumental in saving at least 700,000, but probably as many as 860,000, Jews from certain death at Nazi hands... These figures, small as they are in comparison with our six million martyrs whose fate is beyond consolation, exceed by far those saved by all other churches, religious institutions and rescue organizations combined.”

Cornwell also has never asked himself why the projected rounding-up of 8,000 Roman Jews was suddenly stopped after about 1,000 Roman Jews were caught in October, 1943. He totally misrepresents the interview which immediately afterwards the Vatican Secretary of State Maglione had with the German Ambassador von Weizsäcker, called to the Vatican on the urgent request made in the name of Pius XII. Weizsäcker played an ambiguous role. Afraid that a formal protest made by the Holy See would enrage Hitler, he gave a too bland impression of the attitude of the Holy See and this became patently clear in the Nuremberg Trials which Cornwell ignores completely. But there is far more. On the order of Pius XII the German military commander of Rome, Brigadier General Rainer Stahel, an Austrian officer of the old school, was approached. This humane man

sent a phonogram directly to Himmler. His reason given: this kind of violent action against the Italian Jews disturbs my military plans to reinforce the German divisions still fighting far to the south of Rome, and can also create serious problems here in Rome. This was a true reason, but no less important was another one: his indignation about the criminal acts of the Gestapo and his compassion for the Jews. His intervention had success. Himmler immediately ordered to stop further deportations. In this way thousands of Jews could be hidden, at the order of Pius XII, in the Vatican and in more than 150 ecclesiastical institutions in Rome. All this is, of course, not said by Cornwell. That Pius XII could do nothing with regard to the reprisal after the killing by (Italian resistance) “partisans” of 33 German — rather South Tyrolian — policemen, has been demonstrated for years. The reprisal was carried out within 24 hours of the attack on personal order of Hitler. A reprisal was certain, but its nature was unknown. Every effort of ecclesiastics sent by Pius XII to various German authorities failed because none of the Germans could be reached in time.

Two more individual remarks.

Cornwell complains that a report sent by Monsignor Riegner from Switzerland to Rome was not published in the “Acts and Documents of the Holy See During the Second World War,” Riegner handed this report to the nuncio in Switzerland in March 1942, thus: a few months after the Worms Conference (20 January 1942) at Wannsee at which the course of the ‘Final Solution’ was determined. This report reached the Vatican only in October 1942 as is clear from the dispatch of the Nuncio published in the “Acts and Documents”, where Riegner’s report is mentioned. However, with a view to the fact — so frequent in times of war — it was not possible to check whether the facts mentioned in this report were objectively true. The U.S. State Department had manifested doubts about this type of report and asked the Vatican whether they would confirm them. The second fact concerns an interview that the U.S. diplomat, Mr. Tillerman had with Pope Pius XII. Cornwell makes much of this. He says that this interview took place on Oct. 18, 1943, thus a few days after the rounding-up of 1,000 Jews. Cornwell accuses Pius XII that he was so little concerned with the fate of the Jews that he did not even mention them. The whole argument falls flat. In fact, the dispatches of Tillerman, in which he says to have had an interview with Pius XII “today,” is dated not Oct. 18, but Oct. 19. In fact, even the date “19” is wrong. The interview took place on Oct. “14.” This results from the very accurate lists of interviews granted to diplomats by Pius XII. The fact that this interview took place on Oct. 14 (fourteenth) is registered in two distinct volumes of the “Acts and Documents”, which Cornwell quotes in his meagre list of archives but, obviously has never read accurately, if at all.

Pius XII, Hitler’s Pope?

Previously I have already pointed out what Pacelli as early as 1929 thought and said about Hitler. To this must be added that he repeatedly went on record saying that Hitler’s victory in World War II would mean the end of the Catholic Church in Europe. Likewise, if he was indeed Hitler’s Pope, why did he transmit to the English government the proposal of a group of anti-Nazi German generals, who asked whether England would make peace with Germany, if they, the group of German generals, succeeded in arresting Hitler and removing him from government? Incidentally, it was not a low-ranking officer, Colonel Oster, who was responsible for this proposal, but Colonel-General (four star general) Ludwig Beck. The latter had been the chief of the German General Staff, but in 1938 resigned from this new post since he had become convinced that Hitler was a criminal who against all promises and treaties would attack other nations. Pacelli had known Beck when

Pacelli was nuncio in Berlin and highly esteemed his honesty and integrity. If Pius XII would have been “Hitler’s Pope” he would never have undertaken this highly dangerous mediation.

And again: when the United States after Pearl Harbor became allies with Russia, many American Catholics had problems of conscience whether they could help produce weapons which would go to communist Russia. Pius XI had, in fact, in his 1937 encyclical “Divini Redemptoris”, forbidden Catholics to do anything in favour of the communists. Pius XII, informed about this situation, ordered the Apostolic Delegate in Washington, Archbishop Amleto Cicognani (who later became Secretary of State) to induce one or more prestigious U.S. bishops to publish the following statement: the position of the Catholic Church with regard to communism remains what it has always been. However, the Church has nothing against the Russian people. It is now the Russian people who have been attacked and thus Catholics should not have any problems in helping a people who have been unjustly attacked. This statement was made public by at least one U.S. bishop and endorsed by others. It was, of course, understood on whose initiative this problem was solved. How then can Pius XII be called “Hitler’s Pope?” If he had been that, he would obviously never have given the above order. He could have even proclaimed a crusade against communist Russia, which, of course, notwithstanding the pressure of Nazi Germany, he steadfastly and courageously refused to do.

Pius XII and Communism.

There is clear historical evidence that Pius XII was deadly opposed both to National Socialism and to Communism. It is equally clear that, everything considered, he thought that in the long run communism was the greater danger for the worlds and for Christianity. Mr. Churchill was of the same idea. He never shared the optimism of President Roosevelt who was convinced that the Russian communists would change their ideology and their attitude to religious communities. Well, history has demonstrated who was right and who was wrong. With regard to this question, Gannon’s book, “The Cardinal Spellman Story”, is highly revealing. Spellman had many personal contacts with Roosevelt and Gannon’s book was published when Spellman was still alive. Cornwell mentions this book, but abstains from making use of the most crucial pages.

Pius XII and the so-called policy of appeasement with regard to Hitler.

I have already mentioned the role which Pacelli played in drafting the encyclical “Mit Brennender Sorge”. I equally referred to his speeches as Papal legate in Lourdes, Paris, Budapest, and Lisieux, According to protocol, a newly-elected pope informs all the governments with which the Holy See has diplomatic relations that this election has taken place. A personal note of Pius XII to Hitler was therefore necessary. The tone is moderate. At the height of the Kulturkampf, the newly-elected Leo XIII sent a similar message to the Germany of Bismarck which had eased the tensions. A similar gesture had to be made by Pius XII, though he had no illusions. He said: “We must show that we want peace; if the other side does not want peace, we will fight”. Speaking about such appeasement, the question must be asked about the actions of England and France. They made, from the outset, concessions to Hitler which they had persistently refused to make to the democratic governments of Germany prior to Hitler. England and France consistently gave in to Hitler (the occupation of the demilitarized territory on the western bank of the Rhine; the Fleet agreement between England and Germany; the introduction of military conscription, that is, obligatory military service of all young German men etc.). But most of all, in 1937 the Holy See, with the encyclical “Mit Brennender Sorge”, had denounced in the clearest and sharpest possible way that Hitler was not trustworthy and

that treaties signed by him were worthless. And then in 1938, a year later, there was the ill-fated Munich Conference (between England, France, Italy, and Germany) and Mr. Neville Chamberlain and Mr. Daladier being so trusting that now there was “Peace for our times, and peace forever!”

Pius XII and Other Activities.

Cornwell has little to say about the great encyclical letters of Pius XII, namely “*Mystici corporis*” (on the Church), “*Divino afflante Spiritu*” (on advanced Scripture Studies), “*Mediator Dei*” (the liturgy’s Magna Charta), nor about his numerous other encyclicals, nor about his speeches which covered the gamut of all modern problems. Cornwell, a rank amateur in these matters, has the impudence to make at times negative remarks on those important documents. Cornwell attacks Pius XII on two issues: a) the document “*Humani generis*”, without even realizing that there were, at that time, some tendencies of theological relativism emerging which needed to be corrected. Today judgements on this whole question are far more just and balanced than they were in previous times. b) The question of the priest-workers. Pius XII did “not” forbid them. He was, however, aware of the fact that in not so few cases, priests played an important role in communist-led trade unions; that they neglected their priestly duties and prayer; that they propagated class struggle; that some had become fervent communists. Pius XII appreciated the generosity of so many priest-workers, but felt it necessary to safeguard their priestly life by reducing the hours as workers in lay occupations. It was John XXIII, former nuncio in Paris, who forbade radically the institute of priest-workers which Paul VI restarted, but insisting on a severe selection and accurate formation and supervision.

Cornwell and Pius XII’s Character.

Cornwell calls Pius XII ambitious and insinuates that he was a careerist. This is not true. The young Pacelli made rapid progress in his career because he was brilliant, conscientious and hardworking. There is not a shred of evidence that there were any other reasons for his rapid advancement, let alone that he himself tried to favour his career. The young priest Pacelli wanted to do pastoral work in the direct sense of the word as every good priest should wish to do. It was only in obedience to higher authority that he entered the diplomatic service of the Holy See. When in 1929, his task as Apostolic Nuncio had come to an end, he desired to become a diocesan bishop and do pastoral work in this way. When he had been elected Pope, he did not accept his election immediately, but insisted on another ballot. When this was overwhelmingly in his favour, he accepted the election as a sign of God’s will, but “*in signum crucis*,” as a heavy cross. Cornwell speaks of Pius XII’s “narcissism.” I frankly cannot see how this outrageous statement can be or is substantiated. Pius XII hated to be photographed but submitted to what for him was distasteful because so many people wanted his photograph and out of goodness he did not want to disappoint them. During his reign Pius XII received many millions of people in public audiences. These audiences were different from those of earlier times. Pius XII went right in the midst of people, talked to them, even heard confessions. Cornwell mocks Pius XII in that he had his hands doused but forgets to say that in shaking so many hands, his own hands were frequently bruised and scratched. Cornwell undoubtedly knew how the people reacted to these audiences and how they saw in Pius a humble, charitable, saintly person.

The use of sources made by Cornwell.

With only one or two exceptions, Cornwell totally ignores the scores of scientific and highly documented volumes published by the “*Kommission für Zeitgeschichte*” (History Commission), which now number well over 40 volumes. Cornwell certainly knew about the book of the Hungarian Jew, Jenő Levai. The prologue and epilogue of this book were written by Dr Robert

Kempner, the Chief Assistant Prosecutor of the United States of America at the Nuremberg trials. Kempner refutes the attacks against Pius XII and his judgement in regard to the Pope's behaviour in World War II and his decision to refrain from too-outspoken protests against the persecution of the Jews in order to help them efficaciously is totally positive. Kempner knew what was possible in the given circumstances and his judgement must be taken seriously. Cornwell omits this for obvious reasons.

Cornwell does not give due importance to the fact that the International Red Cross (with headquarters in neutral Switzerland) came to exactly the same appraisal of the situation as Pius XII and equally refrained from loud protests so as not to jeopardize secret and silent actions helping Jews. The same applies to the then nascent Ecumenical Council of Christian Churches (also situated in neutral Switzerland). Numerous times you find the following entries: "quoted by..." This means that the original sources have not been consulted and that to a large extent secondary sources have been used, hardly an academic procedure, let alone a procedure of accepted standards in a pretentious book of this size. The phenomenon "quoted by..." is very frequently applied to the work of Klaus Scholder which has been severely criticized on various counts. Scholder who is dealing with the Papal Concordats is largely surpassed by the standard works of Ludwig Volk regarding the Concordats with Bavaria and Nazi Germany (of 20 July 1933). Yet though this is known, Cornwell prefers Scholder to Volk, obviously because this suits his negative thesis with regard to Pacelli, Nuncio, and then Secretary of State.

Cornwell seems to have blind faith in what is published in the memoirs of the late Dr. Brüning. The latter was Chancellor of Germany in the years 1930-1932 in a desperate situation (i.e., after "Black Friday" — the New York stock market crash — the recall of loans made to Germany by foreign countries, millions of unemployed, the bankruptcy of numerous German banks and businesses). Brüning tried to do what he could, but he also made serious economic mistakes. In 1932 his cabinet was brought down and this traumatized him for the rest of his life. He blamed Monsignor Kaas as co-responsible for his dismissal, and since Kaas worked with Pacelli, his pathological aversion to Kaas was extended also to Pacelli. Brüning, still Chancellor, but already overworked and in a highly nervous condition, also had a somewhat stormy meeting with Pacelli, as he says. When years later Brüning wrote his memoirs, he was an embittered and frustrated personality. Subjectively, his honesty cannot be questioned, but highly qualified experts have rightly challenged the objective truth of these memoirs. Cornwell quotes these memoirs extensively.

Cornwell claims to have studied all the Acts of the canonical inquiry made with regard to the beatification of Pius XII. He totally omits the nearly 100% positive judgements of all these witnesses and this is not honest. He blindly trusts the deposition of a sister of Pius XII who says only good things about her brother, but is very hostile with regard to Mother Pascalina. Any objective judge realizes that she was envious of Pascalina, who had daily contact with Pacelli, Secretary of State and Pope, whereas she herself saw her brother only rarely. Her accusation that Pascalina came from Berlin to Rome without the request of Pacelli and without leave from her own superiors is, of course, absurd, but Cornwell again, for obvious reasons, accepts this statement without reservation.

After Rolf Hochhuth produced his play "The Vicar", in 1963, Cardinal Montini (later Paul VI) wrote a strong letter in defence of Pius XII, a few days before he himself was elected Pope. This letter was published in "The Tablet" a few days after Montini's election to the papacy. It was also published in "La Civiltà Cattolica" and elsewhere. John XXIII had always expressed his highest

esteem for Pius XII. In a trip to Africa, Pope John Paul II called him a great Pope. When a journalist questioned him about the (alleged) silence on the Holocaust on the part of Pius XII, John Paul II reacted very sharply and advised the journalist to read one Father Blet who had just published a clear defence of Pius XII. (“Pius XII and the Second World War: According to the Archives of the Vatican”) At a later date the Secretary of State, Cardinal Sodano, reacted in an extremely sharp way against the calumnies against Pius XII, and the “sottile persecuzione” (the deceitful persecution) of the latter, which indeed is based on a deliberate falsification of history. Cornwell either ignores or plays down such statements, just as he does not duly appreciate the fact that in the document “We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah”, (1998) there is a long footnote in defence of Pius XII.

Cornwell undoubtedly knew about the obituaries published by the “Sunday Times” in England and elsewhere. Cornwell knew what Field Marshal Montgomery, not exactly an easy character, wrote in the “Sunday Times” of October 12, 1958 about his frequent private audiences with Pius XII. Montgomery, a staunch Anglican and son of an Anglican bishop, had so deep a friendship with Pius XII that in his (Montgomery’s) bedroom there were two photographs: one of his father, the other of Pius XII.

Cornwell also frequently refers to Sir D’Arcy Osborne, the English Minister to the Holy See, but he does not mention that this diplomat, who during the Second World War lived in the Vatican, considered Pius XII the most saintly person it had been his privilege to meet in his long life and that he confided in a private letter that he regretted not being a Catholic to be able to receive Holy Communion at the hands of Pius XII. Many other testimonies could be added, such as that of Evelyn Waugh, beside those of so many other outstanding and honest persons. Of all this is taken into account, one feels bound to say that the vicious book of Cornwell attempts a moral lynching, and an authentic character-assassination. His Pius XII is not “Hitler’s Pope”; it is a fictitious Pius XII, a nasty caricature of a noble and saintly man.

Conclusion.

There are many more things that could be said. For example that Cornwell is totally unaware of the psychological warfare made especially by the English by divulging false reports about transmissions by Vatican Radio and others, or that he obviously has never heard about the Scattolini forgeries which were widely believed. After the war, Scattolini was arrested by the Italian police and admitted that these reports (about 1,000) were purely and simply invented by him in order to make money. Cornwell has never checked whether and to what extent he has fallen a victim of this man who was condemned by the Italian Tribunal and sent to prison. Much more could be said, but the few above remarks give you an idea of what to think about the book of Cornwell who, naturally, also attacks John Paul II. Everything considered, my judgement is the following: Cornwell who is a rank amateur in the field of history, canon law, etc., has produced a shoddy, superficial and totally untrustworthy book which, to say the very least, is objectively biased, tendentious and so unilateral and one-sided that one wonders what really prompted this man to write this book. [Our thanks to the Zenit News Agency]
