



HITLER, MUSSOLINI, AND THE VATICAN

POPE PIUS XI AND
THE SPEECH THAT WAS
NEVER MADE

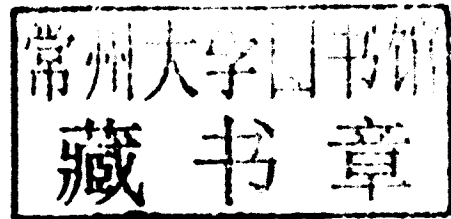
EMMA FATTORINI

HITLER, MUSSOLINI, AND THE VATICAN

Pope Pius XI and the Speech that was Never Made

EMMA FATTORINI

Translated by Carl Ipsen



First published in Italian as *Pio XI, Hitler e Mussolini* © Giulio Einaudi Editore S.p.A, 2007

This English edition © Polity Press, 2011

Polity Press
65 Bridge Street
Cambridge CB2 1UR, UK

Polity Press
350 Main Street
Malden, MA 02148, USA

All rights reserved. Except for the quotation of short passages for the purpose of criticism and review, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

ISBN-13: 978-0-7456-4488-2

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Typeset in 10.5 on 12 pt Sabon by Toppan Best-set Premedia Limited
Printed and bound in Great Britain by MPG Books Group Limited, Bodmin, Cornwall

The publisher has used its best endeavours to ensure that the URLs for external websites referred to in this book are correct and active at the time of going to press. However, the publisher has no responsibility for the websites and can make no guarantee that a site will remain live or that the content is or will remain appropriate.

Every effort has been made to trace all copyright holders, but if any have been inadvertently overlooked the publisher will be pleased to include any necessary credits in any subsequent reprint or edition.

For further information on Polity, visit our website: www.politybooks.com

The translation of this work has been funded by SEPS
SEGRETIATO EUROPEO PER LE PUBBLICAZIONI SCIENTIFICHE



**HITLER, MUSSOLINI,
AND THE VATICAN**

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACDF	Archivio della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede
ACS	Archivio Centrale dello Stato
ADSS	Actes et documents du Saint Siège relatifs à la seconde guerre mondiale
AES	Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari
ASDMEI	Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri Italiano
ASV	Archivio Segreto Vaticano
DBFP	<i>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919–39</i> , London
DDF	<i>Documenti diplomatici francesi</i>
FRUS	<i>Papers relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States</i> , Department of State, Washington
RSCI	<i>Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia</i>
VKZG	Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Zeitgeschichte

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to extend heartfelt thanks to the many friends and colleagues who have helped me with this research, for their support, generosity, and suggestions.

Special thanks go to Cardinal Achille Silvestrini for his valuable suggestions on how to disentangle the complexities of Vatican diplomacy and also to Professor Giuseppe Bonfrate, who offered no less valuable guidance in the area of theology.

I would also like to express profound gratitude to the prefect of the Vatican Secret Archive, Barnabite Father Sergio Pagano, for his availability and the equilibrium he has displayed in managing the difficult opening of these sources. And finally, thanks to all the personnel of the Secret Archive, a rare island of competence and courtesy, and a special thanks to Carl Ipsen for the excellent translation.

This book is dedicated to my father, who in those years was a young physician and a lover of freedom and of the gospel.

PREFACE

On 23 September 1924, Mussolini declared: "A people will not become great and powerful if it does not embrace religion and consider it an essential element of public and private life." And fully consistent with many currents of nineteenth-century reactionary thought, from nationalism to the ideology of Maurras, *il Duce* held throughout his twenty years in power that religion was a necessary *instrumentum regni*. The relationship between the Church and Italian fascism, ranging as it did from enthusiasm to disillusionment, is one of the key elements that make it an "imperfect totalitarianism." The presence of the Vatican in Italy, together with the monarchy and a weak bourgeoisie, made fascism fundamentally different from German National Socialism.

Likewise, the Church sought in Mussolini a "man of providence." It was as though Mussolini would serve not only to settle the Roman Question and the conflict with liberal Italy, but would indeed resolve the situation created by the French Revolution, which saw the Church relegated to a corner, internally divided and lacking its former compactness. The Church had become just one social element and no longer encompassed society in its entirety. The Church expected not just material compensation, but that moral and spiritual comfort it needed to feel less isolated and alone in the modern world. And so there developed an intimate understanding with the new totalitarian order, one in which the Church would once again play the leading role. It was these expectations that explain the sense of elation that welcomed the "man whom providence has sent us." The Church wanted more than an alliance of convenience with fascism or a simple exchange of favors. Mussolini's arrival on the scene responded to deep needs and moral and social expectations that went well beyond

PREFACE

a preference for the lesser of several evils. That elation becomes even more comprehensible if we consider the comforting agreement on certain fundamental principles: authority and hierarchy, family and property, order and discipline.

Reciprocal expectations led, however, to reciprocal manipulations, as Mussolini sought to fascistize the Church while Pius XI sought to Catholicize fascism. It was an alliance cemented by important material interests but founded, as we have suggested, on that intimate understanding and sharing of fundamental values that served to distinguish fascism from Nazism. Ironically, Pius XI preferred the modernist Mussolini while distrusting Hitler, the defender of tradition. Hitler's, though, was a tradition that usurped that of the Church, as his totalitarianism was so complete as to be subjectively and objectively not just in competition with the Church but incompatible with it. This distinction, paradoxical only in appearance, explains the different sorts of relationship Pius XI had with fascism and Nazism.

Messianic expectations for a man of providence found their origin in the firm conviction that the liberal political world, with its array of parties and unrealistic democratic aims, could no longer cope with a situation of increasing disorder. From his first encyclicals (*Ubi arcano* of 1922 and *Quas primas* of 1925), Pius XI seemed to go beyond the condemnation of all forms of secularism to arrive at a true program of re-Christianization. His papacy, indeed, was always demonstrative and regal, entirely in keeping with the authoritarian spirit of the age. With Pius XI, Catholicism shared that regenerative myth of collective participation that had been frustrated by the cathartic expectations issuing from the Great War, expectations that transformed millenarian prophecies into the dangerous myths of nationalism and communism.

So, while the convergence of Church and fascism relied upon fascism's character as a civil religion and the disillusionment of the post-war period, that convergence began to break down as the regime gradually assumed the nature of a true political religion. And it was at that very moment when fascism reached its apogee of sacredness, the very sacredness that had proved so reassuring, that the Church recognized its terrible miscalculation, the trap into which it had trustingly fallen. And so the conflict with the Catholic Church became inevitable when the regime moved from a religion of superficial liturgies to the attempt to penetrate consciousness and control individual subjectivity in permanent and structural ways – that is, to a true political religion. It was no accident that the Church came into

PREFACE

conflict with the regime in 1931 over Catholic Action and the education of youth or in 1938 over the racial laws only insofar as they “violated” Catholic authority relative to mixed marriages.

And so, while the Church had happily supported the “sacralization of politics,” it also constituted the best antidote. For, as Pius XI pointedly summed up his relationships with the totalitarian regimes, the Church was “the only truly totalitarian institution.” The pope, however, made this unshakeable indictment of fascism only after 1937; by then the pact with Hitler seemed inevitable, and, in a threatening crescendo, the more totalitarian characteristics of fascism came to the fore as, according to Pius XI, it ever more dangerously resembled Nazism. The advance of this absolute unitary totalitarianism was incompatible with the only institution that could legitimately define itself as “totalitarian,” namely the Roman Catholic Church. In September of 1938, Pius XI went so far as to state: “. . . if there is a totalitarian regime – totalitarian in fact and by rights – it is the regime of the Church, as man belongs wholly to the Church, must belong to it as man is the creation of the good Lord . . .”

Much has been written about the ambiguous and variable nature of totalitarianism, so that even communism has been included under the rubric; a constant, however, in these discussions is the sacralization and absolutization of politics. We do not encounter a clear theorization of totalitarianism in the thought of Pius XI; his view evolves instead from terms that include statolatry, neo-paganism, authoritarianism, exaggerated nationalism, statist absolutism – often used as neologisms or synonyms.

The pope only spoke of totalitarianism and its many attributes starting in spring 1938; his condemnation derived not from illumination but was, rather, the fruit of a long process in which the interplay of external events and interior reflection led to a highly significant conclusion. Just as the totalitarianisms had initially offered reassuring models, after a decade they appeared instead to threaten a dangerous revolt at the heart of the Church and of faith.

Pius XI’s rejection of totalitarianism was born of the idea that the Church itself was the most true and genuine totalitarian organism – the *societas perfecta* – and of the total identification between man’s belonging to God and, *therefore*, man’s belonging to the Church. He went further still, asserting that the Church legitimately represented the *totality* of humankind and the *totality* of the individual, because only the Church finds the foundation of its authority

PREFACE

and so of its power in transcendence. We will not explore this theme here, but only underline the fact that *Transcendence* and *Power*, so intimately connected, are the cornerstones of that perfect *complexio oppositorum* that is the Catholic Church in the theology of Carl Schmitt.

The pope, then, felt the need to return to universal principles and their roots which lie in *natural rights*, the only true principle of absolute equality. His interpretation of natural rights seemed to suggest a sort of political theology of the Church, a theology that derived from that very encounter and struggle with the totalitarianisms of the twentieth century. Documents from the Vatican Secret Archive reveal that the Vatican's grappling with totalitarian regimes, consisting as it did of moments of convergence and others of conflict, ultimately modified in a profound way the theological and pastoral apparatus of the Church; it would never be the same again.

Pius XI then defended the unity of humankind against the separatisms of racism and nationalism, placing the Jewish question in the theological and pastoral context we have described. His defense of the Jews derived from natural rights and developed into the rejection of anti-Jewishness: "spiritually we are all Semites." Our concern here is not to measure the different gradations of influence that anti-Jewishness had on the more practical anti-Semitism, but rather to understand that the pope's reference to a common descent from Abraham gave greater weight to his condemnation of the persecution of the Jews. For, in the thought of Pius XI, Christian and Jew shared a human identity. The point is not so much to celebrate that the pope overcame anti-Jewishness, but to underline that the root of that condemnation is theological. The common descent from Abraham is invoked because anti-Semitism attacks the heart of Christianity and so the Church. If concern about the fate of the Jews always begins and ends with Christianity, then the religious and even the theological basis of that concern reinforces its value greatly, as nothing could be more radical.

The new sources available from the Vatican Secret Archive draw an extraordinary picture of the evolution, growth, and maturity first of great expectations and then of equally great disillusionment with the concordats. Pius XI was at first surprised, then disappointed, and finally angry. His anxious concern grew as he saw, sooner and more clearly than others, the precipice down which the world was about to plummet; that growth can be reconstructed with great clarity from

PREFACE

the documentation available from the second half of the 1930s, and that is the subject of the present work now offered to an English-speaking audience. At the risk even of falling into apology, my book emphasizes this need for “religious totality” and seeks its roots in areas typically ignored, including, for example, the pope’s relationships with women. These roots are crucial for my purpose, as a pope does not cease to be a man, nor, and fortunately for the Church, does he cease to be a man of faith once he becomes pope. Pius XI regarded the impending situation with a sensibility that was spiritual rather than political, but one that paradoxically allowed him to intuit and decipher the imminent catastrophe more ably than other diplomatic analysts who continued to reason within the logic of the concordats.

Pius XI died at 5:31 a.m. on 10 February 1939, on the eve of the anniversary of the Lateran Pact. Gravely ill and in bed, he had until just a few hours before been at work revising in a shaky hand the text of an address that would have been his strongest condemnation of fascism – a text that was then made immediately to disappear.

The publication of this book in Italy has inspired heated controversy. Many have maintained that Pacelli, who on the death of the pope was no longer secretary of state but instead camerlengo – the individual responsible for administering the vacancy of the Holy See – had no option but to destroy the text of the pope’s last address, one that presaged a complete break with the fascist regime, and so also with the Nazi one.

Certainly, as camerlengo, Pacelli could destroy the last address, but he was not obliged to do so, and he certainly was not prevented from making it public at a later date. He *was within his rights* to follow that course of action, but he certainly was not *forced to*. No one had been closer than he to Pius XI; and no one knew better than he how important that address was to the pope. Our task, though, is not to judge a single act, however significant, but rather to reconstruct the climate of those days, the air of expectation, the pastoral and emotional choices of Pius XI. And while the present work of reconstruction is not intended as yet another occasion to point a finger of accusation at Pacelli, it provides nonetheless a further sign, among many, that the secretary of state, along with the majority of the Curia, did not share the intransigent positions of the dying pope. The camerlengo, soon to be pope himself, had solid reasons to fear should the conclave be conducted with the Church openly defying Mussolini. Indeed, it would have been far more surprising if Pacelli, rather than

PREFACE

suppressing the address, had made sure that it was circulated. And yet one cannot help but wonder at the diligence and speed with which he decided to deny the last wishes of the pope. It all seemed to come as a sigh of relief.

We need not downplay the differences between Eugenio Pacelli (Pius XII) and Achille Ratti (Pius XI), two tragic individuals so different in character and so indissolubly linked together. The make-up of their personalities, their family backgrounds, and their spiritual dimensions were almost diametrically opposed. And yet they were irresistibly attracted one to the other, perhaps because of those very differences and in keeping with the rule that opposites attract in search of a complementarity – complementarity for which both men felt a strong need. The sanguine Ratti would likely never have allowed himself to make such strong attacks had he not known that the diligent and faithful Pacelli was there to smooth things out and heal the diplomatic wounds. The two men held each other in high esteem, but it was above all mutual dependence that tied them together. Pacelli was the perfect secretary of state, so perfect that we might even say that once he himself became pope he nonetheless remained his own secretary of state.

Examination of the relationship between the prudent and diplomatic Pacelli and his impetuous pope can easily get tied up in the interminable debate over the silences of Pius XII, but that would be a distraction. The question of Pius XII's silences has unfortunately become a field of venomous debate, coming even to incorporate inappropriate anachronisms that project post-Vatican II expectations onto the question of the Vatican and the Jews. Only calm and balanced historical research can hope to transcend the temptation to fall either into the apologetic trap of those who would see Pius XII as the greatest saint of the twentieth century or into the opposite one depicting him as Hitler's pope. It is a conflict that the campaign to canonize Pius XII inevitably inspires. The imminent opening of Pius XII's archive may help to shed light on these questions. The last years of Ratti's papacy also add new elements to the debate and confirm Pacelli's prudent approach.

We should not, however, draw quick or simple conclusions. Who can deny, without the benefit of hindsight, that Pacelli's prudence did have its "justifications"? To my mind, we are on more solid ground when we lament that the spirit of Pius XI at the end of his life did not live on in his successor; indeed, Pius XII seems to have done just that in a tortured correspondence with Cardinal Clemens August von Galen, whose resoluteness Pacelli admired. It is right and legitimate

PREFACE

to regret that Ratti's papacy was interrupted too suddenly by his death, just at that moment when, rather than coming to an end, it seemed about to begin anew. It was an end filled with hopes and expectations that, rather than being taken up, were instead and definitively canceled out.

CONTENTS

<i>List of abbreviations</i>	viii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	ix
<i>Preface</i>	x
Introduction	1
1 A Pope's Illusions and the Rebirth of Christian Society	17
"Aim higher"	17
The intrepid mountaineer	22
A first disappointment: the Polish case	24
A "totalitarian Church" for a theocratic society	29
An anti-democratic pope condemns Action Française	33
Mussolini, "the man whom providence has sent us"	36
2 The Spiritual Turn	40
Political religion and religious politics: the heart of the King	40
The spirituality of Thérèse de Lisieux	45
An ailing pope and the virtue of limits	49
A pope alone? Pius XI and his entourage	54
Pius XI's special relationship with Pacelli	56

CONTENTS

3	France and Communism as Christian Heresy	60
	The “proffered hand” and the fear of contagion	60
	Ledóchowski and the <i>Divini Redemptoris</i>	65
	Pacelli’s trip to Paris and to Lisieux	70
	A nocturnal meditation	76
	A disconcerting reflection	80
4	Spain and the Crusade	86
	The Spanish Civil War	86
	Pius XI to Pacelli: “No, cardinal, not that”	90
	Monsignor Antoniutti’s fascination with Franco	93
	Recognition of the Franco government	96
	Against secularism: the condemnation of Mexico	99
5	Nazism as Public Enemy Number One: Pius XI and Hitler	102
	Catholics and the rise of Hitler	102
	The tradition of Catholic anti-Judaism	108
	German protestants	112
	The encyclical against Nazism: <i>Mit brennender Sorge</i>	115
	The international campaign in support of the encyclical	121
	The German bishops	125
	Edith Stein’s appeal	127
6	“Another Cross that is Not the Cross of Christ”: Pius XI, Mussolini, Hitler	131
	Face to face with Mussolini	131
	The case of Cardinal George Mundelein	134
	The <i>Anschluß</i> and the pope’s reprimand of the cardinal of Vienna	137
	“Kill Innitzer”	141
	The Holy See and the alliance between Rome and Berlin	143
	Mussolini suggests that Hitler be excommunicated	147
7	“Spiritually We Are All Semites”	152
	The missing encyclical on racism and anti-Semitism	152
	Mussolini’s racial laws	157
	“Spiritually we are all Semites”	161

CONTENTS

The condemnation of totalitarianism and the conflict over Catholic Action	165
The Munich crisis and “warmed-over broth”	170
8 The End of a Papacy: A Sigh of Relief	177
The pope pressures Gemelli	177
The last weeks of Pius XI	180
Pacelli destroys the pope’s last discourse	187
The last meeting with Gallarati Scotti	193
The pope dies alone	194
 <i>Documentary Appendix</i>	 202
<i>Notes</i>	216
<i>Index</i>	250

INTRODUCTION

If Pius XI, energetic and impulsive man that he was, had lived a bit longer, there would in all likelihood have been a break in the relationship between the Reich and the Vatican.

From the memoir of Ernst von Weizsäcker,¹
German ambassador to the Holy See

In the last years of his life, Pius XI developed a sharp and growing rejection of totalitarianism. From the end of 1936 till his death on 10 February 1939, his condemnation of the “anti-Christian” and “inhuman” aspects of Nazism, and also fascism, became ever more radical. The aging, ill pope came to reject racial discrimination, exaggerated nationalism, and the persecution of Jews as entirely unacceptable. Yet he experienced his intolerance largely in solitude. Now, thanks to documentation newly made available by the Vatican Secret Archive, the rumors of a Pius XI who during his final years found himself isolated in the Vatican and nearly alone in his opposition to Nazism lose their air of legend. Together with the reported sense of relief that came with his death, those rumors now take their place as a confirmed chapter in the contemporary history of the Church.²

My research examines this new material and focuses in particular on the final years of Pius XI’s papacy, the years when he broke openly with Nazism and in many ways also with fascism. By that time, the ideal to which he had aspired in the 1920s of a Catholic front of conservative regimes had been dashed, and there grew in him instead ever greater disillusionment even with Mussolini, the man “whom providence has sent us.”

This line of research has already been identified, if not fully pursued, in the work of Giovanni Miccoli,³ and in some aspects also by