

# The Vatican, Nazi-Fascism, and the Making of Transnational Anti-communism in the 1930s

**Giuliana Chamedes**

University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA

Journal of Contemporary History

2016, Vol. 51 (2) 261–290

© The Author(s) 2015

Reprints and permissions:

sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav

DOI: 10.1177/0022009414566291

jch.sagepub.com



## Abstract

Given the recent scholarly interest in the history of anti-communism, it is surprising that relatively little has been written on the ambitious transnational anti-communist campaign launched by the Vatican in the early 1930s. Drawing on new archival material, this article explores how the Vatican founded an organization known as the Secretariat on Atheism, which disseminated a form of anti-communism grounded in Catholic teachings. The Secretariat sought to buttress the position of the Roman Catholic church in international affairs and unite Catholic groups across Europe and the Americas, all the while maintaining its independence from other forms of anti-communism – particularly those espoused by Nazi and Fascist forces. However, the Secretariat was only partially successful in preserving its independence. For if the Vatican campaign avoided the antisemitic and nationalistic motifs that characterized Nazi-Fascist propaganda, the key protagonists of the movement cooperated with Nazi, Fascist and proto-Fascist forces on the ground. The Vatican campaign led to joint surveillance efforts, the toning down of the Pope's public denunciations of Nazi-Fascism, and the papal sanction of violence against purportedly communist enemies. Despite its potentially damning association with Nazi-Fascist forces, the Vatican anti-communist movement would outlive both Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy and leave a lasting mark on Cold War politics.

## Keywords

communism, Fascism, interwar, Nazism, religion, Roman Catholic church

---

Thank you to Victoria De Grazia, Samuel Moyn, Marla Stone, and Warren Breckman for their probing questions and helpful feedback on versions of this piece. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to present parts of this project at Harvard's Center for European Studies, the University of Pennsylvania, Occidental College, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

---

## Corresponding author:

Giuliana Chamedes, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 455 North Park Street, Madison, WI 53706 USA.

Email: [chamedes@wisc.edu](mailto:chamedes@wisc.edu)

'If Moscow's Comintern is at the head of the Communist International, [then] Rome is the center of the Catholic International!'<sup>1</sup> So ran the rallying cry of the Vatican's anti-communist campaign, launched in the early 1930s. The campaign was headquartered within the Secretariat on Atheism, a new institution conceived as a branch of the Vatican's foreign policy apparatus. In the interwar years, the Rome-based Secretariat stood at the helm of numerous anti-communist initiatives across Europe, the Americas, and in certain countries in Africa and Asia. It issued a monthly journal, organized traveling exhibitions, created anti-communist radio and film propaganda, and contributed decisively to the drafting of an influential papal condemnation of communism through its work on two statements of doctrine issued in 1937. As exemplified by its juxtaposition of the Communist International with the 'Catholic International', the Secretariat sought to present the Vatican as an independent institution capable of answering the Soviet challenge. When it came to the details of implementing the anti-communist campaign, however, the Secretariat would not act alone. For if the Secretariat did contribute to the rise of a transnational anti-communist movement, its success was in part due to its ability to capitalize on an existing network of anti-communist activists. In particular, the Vatican Secretariat on Atheism was willing to work in partnership with Nazi, Fascist and proto-Fascist anti-communist forces based in Europe and the Americas.

The Vatican's interwar mobilization against communism has received scant attention in the literature on Vatican diplomacy and in recent monographs on transnational anti-communism before and after the Second World War. Scholarship on the Holy See has either ignored or tended to downplay the highly centralized nature of the Vatican's campaign, its transnational reach, and its ambitious scope. At best, this scholarship has suggested that the Vatican's campaign against communism constituted a natural response to developments within Soviet borders.<sup>2</sup> The archival evidence, however, suggests otherwise. It indicates that Vatican anti-communism was part and parcel of the institution's reinvention after the First World War as an international actor bent on disseminating a positive, theocentric, alternative to existing political solutions through the tools of public diplomacy, international law, and civil society organs.<sup>3</sup> Far from simply reactive, the Vatican anti-communist campaign should be understood as a proactive attempt to strengthen Rome as the center of global Catholic life, reaffirm

1 *Lettres de Rome* (henceforth *LdR*), 1, 1 (May 1935), 1. Archivium Romanum Societatis Iesu, Rome (henceforth ARSI), JESCOM, the Private Library of Father Ledóchowski (henceforth Ledóchowski), *LdR*. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are the author's.

2 Only three scholars address the Secretariat in cursory form: P. Chenaux, *L'Église catholique et le communisme en Europe (1917–1989)*, *De Lénine à Jean-Paul II* (Paris 2009); G. Petracchi, 'I gesuiti e il comunismo tra le due guerre', in V. Ferrone (ed.), *La Chiesa cattolica e il totalitarismo* (Florence 2004), 123–53; and L. Pettinaroli, *La politica russa del Saint-Siège (1905–1939)* (Rome 2015).

3 See J. Pollard, *The Unknown Pope: Benedict XV (1914–1922) and the Pursuit of Peace* (London 1999); R. Ventresca, *Soldier of Christ: The Life of Pope Pius XII* (Cambridge 2013); and G. Chamedes, 'The Vatican and the Reshaping of the European International Order after World War I', *The Historical Journal*, 56 (December 2013), 955–76.

the prominence of the Catholic Church in international affairs, and protect the Church and its recent victories against perceived existential threats. Finally, attention to the Vatican anti-communist campaign sheds light on the bedeviling question of how and why the universal Roman Catholic Church established relations with Nazi-Fascist forces in the interwar years.

Most historians interested in Catholic anti-communism have touched on the topic in the context of studies of Pope Pius XII, who reigned from 1939 to 1958. Scholars on both sides of the Pius Wars have appealed to Eugenio Pacelli's anti-communist views either to explain his unwillingness to clearly oppose Nazi Germany during the Second World War or, conversely, to argue that the Pope was just as anti-communist as he was anti-Nazi.<sup>4</sup> This article will offer a new perspective by showing the centrality of Eugenio Pacelli in the making of the Vatican's anti-communist campaign, all the while emphasizing that Vatican anti-communism was considerably larger than this single Roman diplomat. It will also suggest that 'anti-communism' has become an over-vague explananda in the Pius Wars, insofar as the term fails to distinguish between the nonalignment with Nazi-Fascist teachings in the Vatican's theoretical attack on communism, and its tactical cooperation with Nazi-Fascist forces on the ground, in the practical fight against communist expansion.

By writing the history of the Vatican's understudied anti-communist campaign, this article hopes to contribute to the broader task of reconstructing the genealogy of transnational anti-communism. The first generation of historians of anti-communism focused narrowly on the United States after 1945. This approach reinforced Cold War binaries by presenting anti-communism as an American, liberal-democratic response to increased postwar tension with the Soviet Union. Newer scholarship has emphasized the complex nature of anti-communist coalition building, proposing new periodizations, and revising assumptions about US exceptionalism. The new literature has shown that anti-communism was a nebulous concept that accommodated a variety of contradictory positions, and that those who joined forces against communism spanned the gamut from liberal democrats to disillusioned partisans of the radical left; from isolationists espousing nationalistic and nativist motifs to Nazi internationalists keen on building racist utopias. Much of the recent literature has also challenged Cold War chronologies by illustrating the interconnection between interwar and postwar anti-communism.<sup>5</sup>

4 Recent work defending the first position includes F. Coppa, *The Policies and Politics of Pope Pius XII: Between Diplomacy and Morality* (New York, NY 2011); M. Phayer, *Pius XII, The Holocaust and the Cold War* (Bloomington, IN 2008); and P. Kent, *The Lonely Cold War of Pope Pius XII: The Roman Catholic Church and the Division of Europe, 1943–50* (Montréal 2002). For the second perspective, see H. Wolf, *Pope and Devil: The Vatican's Archives and the Third Reich*, trans. K. Kronenberg (Cambridge, MA 2010); E. Fattorini, *Hitler, Mussolini, and the Vatican: The Speech That Was Never Made*, trans. C. Ipsen (Cambridge 2011); and Ventresca, *Soldier of Christ*.

5 L. van Dongen, S. Roulin, and G. Scott-Smith (eds), *Transnational Anti-communism and the Cold War: Agents, Activities, and Networks* (Basingstoke 2014). M. Ruotsila, *British and American Anti-communism before the Cold War* (London 2001); J. Luff, *Commonsense Anti-communism: Labor and Civil Liberties between the World Wars* (Chapel Hill, NC 2012); R.J. Goldstein (ed.), *Little 'Red Scares': Anti-communism and Political Repression in the United States, 1921–46* (Aldershot 2013); A. Goodall, *Loyalty and Liberty: American Countersubversion from World War I to the McCarthy Era* (Urbana, IN

Complicating the notion of anti-communism as a specifically US phenomenon, new work has highlighted the contribution of Western and Eastern European emigres, Latin American activists, rehabilitated Nazi-Fascists, and influential Christian Democrats in the forging of anti-communism before and after the Second World War.<sup>6</sup> Many have also focused on religious groups, with Protestant organizations and individuals receiving the lion's share of attention.<sup>7</sup> The relatively scant interest in the Vatican contribution is peculiar in that all the major works on interwar and postwar anti-communism mention the centrality of Catholic groups, though they tend to present Catholic anti-communism as a given and as a specifically US phenomenon.<sup>8</sup>

This article hopes to fill the gap in the literature by highlighting how the Vatican Secretariat on Atheism arose in response to international developments, and worked to export Catholic anti-communism both as an ideology and as a set of practices to a large number of countries. It will suggest that the study of Vatican anti-communism helps us better understand the interwar years by shedding light on the origins of trans-Atlantic anti-communism. Additionally, studying the Vatican campaign provides new insights on the relationship between the Catholic Church

---

2013); W. Wall, *Inventing the 'American Way': The Politics of Consensus from the New Deal to the Civil Rights Movement* (New York, NY 2008); E. Schreker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Princeton, NJ 1999); and R.G. Powers, *Not Without Honor: The History of American Anti-communism* (New York, NY 1995).

6 F. Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism: Ideology, Violence, and the Sacred in Argentina and Italy, 1919–1945* (Durham, NC 2010); P. Hanebrink, *A Spectre Haunting Europe: The Idea of Judeo-Bolshevism in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA forthcoming); A. Goodall, 'Diverging Paths: Nazism, the National Civic Federation, and American Anti-communism, 1933–9', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 44, 1 (January 2008), 49–69; A. Holian, 'Anti-communism in the Streets: Refugee Politics in Cold War Germany', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 45, 1 (January 2010), 134–61; L. Wildenthal, *The Language of Human Rights in West Germany* (Philadelphia, PA 2012); M. Mitchell, *The Origins of Christian Democracy: Politics and Confession in Modern Germany* (Ann Arbor, MI 2012); M. Durham and M. Power (eds), *New Perspectives on the Transnational Right* (New York, NY 2010); E.D. Weitz, 'The Ever-Present Other: Communism in the Making of West Germany', in H. Schissler (ed.), *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949–1968* (Princeton, NJ 2001); and U. Greenberg, *The Weimar Century: Democracy, German Émigrés, and the Foundations of the Cold War* (Princeton 2014).

7 A.M. Lahr, *Millennial Dreams and Apocalyptic Nightmares: The Cold War Origins of Political Evangelicalism* (New York, NY 2007); W. Inboden, *Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945–60: The Soul of Containment* (Cambridge 2010); D. Dochuck, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York, NY 2012); D.K. Williams, *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (Oxford 2012); M. Kimmage, *The Conservative Turn: Lionel Trilling, Whittaker Chambers, and the Lessons of Anti-Communism* (Cambridge, MA 2009); and M.C. Brennan, *Wives, Mothers, and the Red Menace: Conservative Women and the Crusade against Communism* (Boulder, CO 2008). For a helpful review of the literature, see A. Preston, 'Introduction: The Religious Cold War', in P. Muehlenbeck (ed.), *Religion and the Cold War: A Global Perspective* (Nashville, TN 2012), xi–1.

8 J. Herzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex: America's Religious Battle Against Communism in the Early Cold War* (New York, NY 2011); P. McNamara, *A Catholic Cold War: Edmund A. Walsh, S.J., and the Politics of American Anti-communism* (Fordham, NJ 2005); S. Jacobs, *America's Miracle Man in Vietnam: Ngo Dinh Diem, Religion, Race and U.S. Intervention in Southeast Asia* (Durham, NC 2005); J.W. Stevens, *God-Fearing and Free: A Spiritual History of America's Cold War* (Cambridge, MA 2010); and Powers, *Not Without Honor*, 51–7. Several essays offering a different perspective can be found in D. Kirby (ed.), *Religion and the Cold War* (New York, NY 2003; 2013).

and Nazi-Fascist organizations. As will be argued, the theological, supra-national, Vatican-led, anti-communist campaign increasingly became imbricated with the racialized and nationalistic anti-communism of Nazi and Fascist forces, as Vatican diplomats sought to claim leadership over a range of already existing anti-communist movements.

There was nothing pre-determined about the Vatican's turn against communism and the Soviet Union in the early 1930s. Following the Russian Revolution of 1917, many Vatican officials had encouraged the establishment of diplomatic relations to carry out a Catholic re-conquest of territories traditionally dominated by Orthodox Christianity. After a formal meeting on the fringes of the 1922 Conference of Genoa between the Vatican Under-Secretary of State Giuseppe Pizzardo and the Soviet People's Commissar Georgij Vasilevich Chicherin, the two sides held regular meetings up through 1927.<sup>9</sup> Though negotiations initially appeared promising, they ultimately deteriorated due in no small part to the Vatican's rising fear of revolution, stoked by a string of uprisings across Eastern and Western Europe. Short-lived experiments like the Hungarian and Bavarian Soviet Republics greatly worried Vatican diplomats on the ground, as did the advances of the Red Army in Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Following the unraveling of the Habsburg and Russian Empires, the Pope had asked a new generation of papal diplomats to travel to many of these territories, to convince local leaders to conclude church-state agreements that would vastly expand the Vatican's powers in both public and private domains. In this way, papal diplomats were uniquely poised to witness Red Army incursions – and their disruptive effect on church-state negotiations. Closer to home, the 'red years' in Italy (1919–1920), characterized by dramatic factory occupations and peasant strikes, heightened clerical fears of revolution. Many onlookers – including the Polish Superior-General of the Jesuits, who was soon to become a protagonist of the Vatican anti-communism campaign – interpreted pan-European developments in strongly antisemitic terms, arguing that Jewish plots for world conquest advanced by 'Judeo-Bolsheviks' explained the rising revolutionary tide. More broadly, Ledóchowski and Vatican diplomats also noted that the unrest might hinder the Holy See's post-First World War attempt to expand its influence, through the conclusion of formal treaties with Europe's new state leaders, and the establishment of greater ties between a flourishing grassroots Catholic associational life and the Pope in Rome.<sup>10</sup>

9 See A. Wenger, *Rome et Moscou: 1900–1950* (Paris 1987); H. Stehle, *Eastern Politics of the Vatican, 1917–1979* (Athens, OH 1981); E.S. Tokareva, 'Le relazioni tra l'URSS e il Vaticano: dalle trattative alla rottura (1922–9)', in *Santa Sede e Russia da Leone XIII a Pio XI* (Vatican City 2002), 199–261; and W. Becker, 'The Role Played by the German Embassies in Moscow and Rome in the Relations between Russia and the Vatican from 1921 to 1929', *The Catholic Historical Review*, 92, 1 (2006), 25–45.

10 See P. Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary: Religion, Nationalism, and Antisemitism, 1890–1944* (Ithaca, NY 2006); E. Fattorini, *Germania e Santa Sede: le nunziature di Pacelli fra la Grande guerra e la Repubblica di Weimar* (Bologna 1992); N. Pease, *Rome's Most Faithful Daughter: The Catholic Church and Independent Poland, 1914–1939* (Athens, OH 2009); Ventresca, *Soldier of Christ*; C. Falconi, *The Popes in the Twentieth Century: From Pius X to John XXIII* (Boston, MA 1968);

Vatican–Soviet relations further deteriorated due to the launching of several anti-religious campaigns in the Soviet Union, starting from 1921. Though the campaigns had originally targeted the Orthodox Church, by the late 1920s they entered into a new phase, as the Catholic Church also came under fire. New laws proscribed religious activity, curbed Christian evangelism, and introduced anti-religious materials in schools and universities.<sup>11</sup> Soon, a rising chorus of Vatican diplomats began warning the Pope that, ‘It would be a vain illusion to hope to reach an agreement with the present government of Moscow’.<sup>12</sup> In early 1930, the Pope announced the indefinite suspension of Vatican–Soviet talks through an open letter published in the official Vatican daily newspaper, the *Osservatore Romano*. The letter condemned the Soviet Union’s anti-religious campaign but made little mention of communism as an international movement or as a set of ideals that clashed with Catholic teachings. In a sense, this was surprising; after all, popes since the late nineteenth century had issued sporadic condemnations of both socialism and communism on account of their ‘materialistic’ denial of divine power in the shaping of human history.<sup>13</sup>

Only in 1932–3 would the Vatican shift from its mild protest of internal Soviet practices to a centralized, broad-based, and transnational campaign, which aimed to vilify communism as the greatest existing threat to the survival of Catholicism and the Catholic Church. The transformation came about in response to the rise of anti-clericalism in traditional Catholic strongholds, like Spain and Mexico, and the wave of strikes and demonstrations that accompanied the Great Depression. It was institutionalized by a newly empowered cadre of Vatican diplomats, who both feared contemporary developments, and sought to capitalize on the popularity of anti-communism in the broader Catholic world. Foremost among these Vatican officials was the former German nuncio Eugenio Pacelli. In early February of 1930, Pacelli succeeded Pietro Gasparri who in early February of 1930 succeeded Pietro Gasparri as Vatican Secretary of State and took control of what some scholars have termed the Vatican equivalent to a secular state’s Foreign Ministry: the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs.<sup>14</sup> Pacelli used his position

A. Rhodes, *The Vatican in the Age of the Dictators* (New York, NY 1974). On the popularity of the charge of ‘Judeo-Bolshevism’, see Hanebrink, *A Spectre Haunting Europe*.

11 D. Peris, *Storming the Heavens: The Soviet League of the Militant Godless* (Ithaca, NY 1998); W.B. Husband, ‘*Godless Communists: Atheism and Society in Soviet Russia, 1917–1932* (DeKalb, IL 2000); and J. Anderson, ‘The Council for Religious Affairs and the Shaping of Soviet Religious Policy’, *Soviet Studies*, 43, 4 (1991), 689–710.

12 E. Pacelli to P. Gasparri, Berlin, 14 June 1927. Secret Vatican Archive, Rome (henceforth ASV), Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari (henceforth AES), Pro Russia, quarto periodo (henceforth PR4), 1924–1941, sc.13, fasc.83, ff.11-2.

13 See *ibid.*, fasc.84, ff. 44-45; and Pope Pius XI to Cardinal B. Pompili, *Osservatore romano* (9 February 1930). The earliest papal condemnation of communism can be found in Pope Pius IX’s 1864 *Syllabus of Errors*.

14 Following Pacelli’s appointment, key foreign policy decisions – for instance on Vatican–German relations – were taken out of the hands of Congregation members, and Pope Pius XI intervened only in 6 per cent of cases to modify Congregation decisions. During Gasparri’s period at the head of the Congregation, Pius XI had modified 38 per cent of the decisions. R. Regoli, ‘Il ruolo della Sacra Congregazione degli AES durante il pontificato di Pio XI’, unpublished paper (2009).

of influence to disseminate a view already underwritten by a hand-picked group of conservative interlocutors in the Catholic hierarchy in the United States of America, Mexico, Spain, France and Germany. Simply put, the idea was as follows: the Soviet anti-religious campaign was not circumscribed to Russian territories. In fact, it was global rather than a local attack, and its primary target was the Catholic Church.

The ground for the Vatican anti-communist turn was laid by Pacelli in the spring of 1931. At this point, Pacelli's notes to the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs become preoccupied with the newly proclaimed Spanish Republic. In particular, Pacelli used his platform at the Congregation to argue that the Spanish Republic was in fact a sinister Bolshevik plot to conquer 'Catholic Spain', as evidenced by supposed covert Soviet funding and Spain's launching of an anti-religious campaign.<sup>15</sup> There was little originality in Pacelli's claim: in fact, he was simply echoing opinions he read in letters directed to him by a large number of Spanish bishops. But Pacelli was also doing something more than endorsing a popular Catholic conspiracy theory. In fact, he was arguing against the position espoused by the Vatican nuncio in Spain, Federico Tedeschini, as well as Pope Pius XI, both of whom favoured a more moderate approach open to the possibility of pragmatic dealings with Republican officials.<sup>16</sup> Rather than adopting a wait-and-see approach to the Republic, Pacelli decided to use his new platform at the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs to undermine the Tedeschini-Pius XI line. Interestingly, the Vatican Secretary of State did the same in his interpretation of events in Mexico. Drawing on questionable information culled from local sources, Pacelli argued that Soviet agents were actively spreading 'communistic propaganda' through the Mexican school system and among Mexico's lower classes – ignoring the fact that Mexico had broken off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in 1930. To buttress his claims, Pacelli was again drawing on a hand-picked clique of conservative Catholic 'advisers'. In particular, archives suggest that many of Pacelli's interlocutors in these key countries were Jesuits, whose letters were forwarded to the Vatican Secretary of State by Ledóchowksi, the Superior-General of the Jesuits, with whom Pacelli had a long-standing personal relationship.<sup>17</sup> They too were convinced that a wave of communist, anti-Catholic, revolution was spreading from the Soviet Union to Spain to Mexico.

In early 1932, the Vatican Secretary of State unveiled a plan to launch a campaign against communism and the Soviet Union. The announcement – rubber-stamped by

---

15 Pacelli, 'Sacra Congregazione degli AES: Spagna', 23 April 1931. ASV, AES, Spagna, quarto periodo, 1931–1934, pos.784 P.O., fasc.119, 1; Pacelli, 'Sommario', October 1931. Ibid., pos.833 P.O., fasc.208, ff.31; and pos.784 P.O., fasc.116, fasc.119; 122. Pacelli echoed his interlocutors on the Spanish Catholic Right, including the Archbishop of Toledo, Cardinal Segura y Saenza, and the Jesuit Fathers Otaño and Vidal.

16 G. Jackson, *The Spanish Republic and the Civil War, 1931–1939* (Princeton, NJ 1965), 106ff.

17 ASV, AES, Stati Ecclesiastici, quarto periodo (henceforth SE4), pos.474 P.O., fasc.482, ff.12-5. On American fears of 'Mexican Bolshevism', see Goodall, *Loyalty and Liberty*, Ch. 5; and M. Redinger, *American Catholics and the Mexican Revolution, 1924–1936* (Notre Dame, IN 2005).

the Pope – was made through a circular letter sent to Vatican officials stationed in at least thirty-nine different countries. Pacelli's call to arms defined communism as a system of belief that aimed at the dissolution of the Catholic Church and the Catholic religion.<sup>18</sup> In particular, the circular letter argued that the Soviet Union had become extremely adept at disseminating its worldview through the employment of itinerant propagandists, including sailors, university students, telegraph employees, train conductors and pilots. Because Russian agents had established several organizations and entertainment services that directly competed with Catholic alternatives, and because Catholic efforts to oppose communist propaganda were highly unsystematized, the Pope was preparing to launch a multi-pronged, centralized campaign to curb the Soviet Union's international activism. The campaign's central goal would be to 'unmask' the Soviet Union as principally concerned with waging an all-out war against God, Catholicism, and the Vatican itself. The campaign would support existing Catholic anti-communist political lobbies in Europe and in North and South America. It would also make use of new media, without, however, foregoing traditional means such as 'pilgrimages, expiatory communions, [and] prayers for the persecuted of Russia, Mexico, and Spain'. Finally, the campaign would buttress the anti-communist work of the world-wide lay organization, known under the umbrella term of Catholic Action, which had been recently centralized by Pius XI.<sup>19</sup>

1932 was a critical year for the Vatican's re-orientation against communism for another reason as well. Not only did the Vatican Secretary of State announce its ambitious campaign against international communism through the spring 1932 circular letter; in the fall of that year, Vatican officials put the finishing touches to a wide-ranging anti-communist encyclical, *Divinum Mandatum*. Interestingly, the encyclical bore several striking resemblances to the 1932 circular letter, most likely due to Pacelli's involvement in this project as well. Particularly, the encyclical emphasized the notion that the international Catholic Church could permanently weaken international communism, which was defined as a militant form of atheism. However, the document was never published in its original form. Why? So far, the archives do not give us a full answer to this question. Perhaps the Pope – in line with his previous tendencies – wanted to keep open the path of communication with Republican officials in Spain? Perhaps certain Vatican officials were wary that speaking out against communism would be read as a celebration of Mussolini's Italy? Hopefully new research will reveal why this 'secret encyclical' (like others during Pope Pius XI's reign) was never published in its original form.<sup>20</sup>

18 Pacelli, 'Circular', 14 April 1932. ASV, AES, SE4, pos.474 P.O., fasc.475, ff.28f. As evidenced by this folder, Pacelli went through considerable trouble to ensure that his letter reach clerics in Austria, Argentina, Albania, Australia, the Belgian Congo, Belgium, Brazil, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, France, Haiti, Hungary, Indochina, Iraq, Iran, Ireland, Japan, Kenya, Latvia, Lithuania, Libya, the Netherlands, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, South Africa, Switzerland, Syria, Turkey, Venezuela and Yugoslavia.

19 Ibid.

20 See *Divinum Mandatum* draft, 10 September 1932. ASV, Epis. Ad Princ. Positiones et minutae, 1930–1932, b.168, fasc.23, ff.1-12.



Despite the likely internal disagreements that sank the anti-communist encyclical project, Pacelli's plan to launch a Vatican campaign against communism continued, uninterrupted. In line with the recommendations outlined by Pacelli's 1932 circular letter, in January of 1933, a group of Vatican officials agreed to found a central institution to direct the initiative, which would be administered by members of the Jesuit order, maintain constant communication with the Vatican Secretary of State, and have Vatican City as its base of operations. The institution would engage in its own internationalist counter-revolution: it would disseminate Catholic anti-communism and pressure partner and non-partner state to band together, in a bid to marginalize the Soviet Union. The initiative would take the name 'the Secretariat on Atheism', to signal its importance and place it on par with the Secretariats of secular governments, the Secretariat of the League of Nations, and the Soviet Union's Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.<sup>21</sup> In an era of competing internationalisms, the Vatican was joining the fray with its very own internationalist Secretariat, complete with the rhetorical cues needed to signal its (imagined) power and scope.

According to its founders, the Secretariat on Atheism represented the Vatican's first 'plan of concerted action' in the 'momentous struggle' against international communism, which 'had declared open war against God Himself, Whom it considers as its personal enemy'.<sup>22</sup> Placed under the formal leadership of the Superior-General of the Jesuits, and the immediate direction of a Franco-Canadian Jesuit who had traveled to the Soviet Union in the 1920s, Father Joseph-Henri Ledit, the Secretariat would use the Vatican's global influence to counter the Soviet Union through the tools of public diplomacy. The extensive involvement of the Jesuits spoke to the high regard in which the order was held by Pope Pius XI and Eugenio Pacelli in the interwar years, and the close personal ties that connected these men to the staunchly anti-communist Superior-General. Under Ledóchowski's leadership, the Jesuits had already established a reputation as efficient translators of many of Pius XI's encyclicals, and as leaders of the Vatican's major new-media undertaking: Vatican Radio, founded in 1931.<sup>23</sup> Now, they were being given the opportunity to stand at the forefront of an institution tasked with exporting Vatican anti-communism far and wide.

Based within the limits of Vatican City and funded by the Vatican Secretariat of State, the Secretariat on Atheism placed itself at the helm of numerous anti-communist initiatives across Europe, the Americas, and in countries in Africa and Asia. It did so by coordinating already active actors and by urging less involved members of the Catholic hierarchy and laity to rally around the anti-communist cause.

21 Father J.-H. Ledit to W. Ledóchowski, Superior General of the Jesuit Order, Rome, 8 January 1933. ARSI, JESCOM 1038 (De comm. Atheo, 1933-1943) (henceforth DcA), fasc. "Secretar. AntiCom. Rome" (henceforth SAR).

22 Ledóchowski to the Provincials of the American Assistancy and Canada, Rome, 17 April 1934. Ibid., fasc. "Defensio contra Comm". (henceforth DcC).

23 On this, see, inter alia, P. Eisner, *The Pope's Last Crusade: How an American Jesuit Helped Pope Pius XI's Campaign to Stop Hitler* (New York, NY 2013).

Through letters issued by the Superior General of the Jesuit order, local clergy were ordered to name regular correspondents to report on the progress of leftist forces *in situ* and help produce Catholic anti-communist propaganda fitted to local circumstances. Clerics were also asked to write articles for the Secretariat's monthly journal, which was issued in French, Spanish, German and English.

The Secretariat soon became a pioneer in the art of public diplomacy. Through its use of cultural products and propaganda, the Secretariat mobilized people of many nationalities towards diplomatic goals. It put together a number of traveling exhibitions, created anti-communist radio programs and films and encouraged youth to shun communist teachings by developing curricula for local schools and after-school Catholic civil society groups and summer camps. Additionally, it organized conferences and regular courses of study detailing the Vatican's doctrinal and tactical response to the Soviet Union. Finally, it sought to reach parish priests (including those in remote locations) by training them to use the pulpit as a loudspeaker to denounce 'the spread of atheism under communistic auspices'.<sup>24</sup>

The Secretariat also provided Catholics with tools to launch local initiatives. For instance, it helped activists in Switzerland exert pressure on the League of Nations to block Soviet membership to the League and develop strategies for making the international labour movement immune to communist influence.<sup>25</sup> In the United States the Secretariat worked with charismatic local emissaries like the Jesuit Father Edmund Walsh (founder of Georgetown's School of Foreign Service) to discourage diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union.<sup>26</sup> Finally, the Secretariat expanded its surveillance of global communist forces and improved its covert response to the communist penetration of civil society and government structures – measures that evidently made it an attractive partner for a range of secular governments.<sup>27</sup> Though the Secretariat was not always successful in its efforts, failures and setbacks only hardened its resolve to reach the masses through the tools of public diplomacy.

The overarching aim of the Secretariat on Atheism was to present the Vatican as an international institution uniquely capable of responding to the Soviet Union's international challenge. As such, the initiative was part and parcel of the centralization and 'Romanization' the Catholic Church and the expansion of the Church's diplomatic and social activism after the First World War. Proclaiming itself to be ready to 'fight against communism with the same efficacy that communism fights

24 Ibid.

25 Father A. Arnou to Pacelli, League of Nations, Geneva, 6 July 1932. ASV, AES, PR4, 1924–1935, sc.4, fasc.29, ff.22-23; G. Lodyginsky and B. Nicolski to M. d'Herbigny, Geneva, 10 July 1933. Ibid., ff.50-2; and 'Exposé du Dr G. Lodyginsky', Ibid., 1921–1944, pos. sc.37, fasc.215, ff.21-2.

26 When the United States of America extended diplomatic recognition to the Soviet Union in 1934, US Catholics nonetheless celebrated their 'success', arguing that they were responsible for the fact that guarantees of religious liberty were one of the conditions of recognition. See comments on the letter of FDR to Litvinoff, Washington, 16 November 1933. ARSI, JESCOM 1038, DcA, fasc. 'Comm.Russia'. For a broader discussion, see McNamara, *A Catholic Cold War*, 74–84.

27 ARSI, JESCOM 1038, DcA, fasc. DcC.

against Christian civilization’,<sup>28</sup> the Secretariat announced that ‘here in Rome, it is not difficult to build universal connections’. Thus, ‘If Moscow’s Comintern is at the head of the Communist International, Rome is the center of the Catholic International!’<sup>29</sup> The First Rome and seat of the universal Catholic Church would face off with Moscow, the Fourth Rome, the mecca of secular culture: ‘in this way shall center be opposed to center – the Roman to the Moscovite’.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the Vatican was the only ‘dynamic and truly global organization’ that stood ‘above all nations and nationalities’, and was capable of competing with international communism on account of its time-worn capacity to reach the masses, accumulate funds, and disseminate winning ideas.<sup>31</sup> Instead of following those Nazi and Fascist theorists who presented communism as a Judaic plot for world conquest, the Secretariat argued that communism was at heart Godless and atheistic: the latest manifestation of efforts to sustain the legacy of the French Revolution and remove the Catholic Church from public life. These ontological claims served to differentiate Vatican anti-communism in ideological terms from its Fascist and Nazi analogues, and justified the need for the Vatican to take the reins of an emergent global anti-communist movement. It is within this framework that we can understand the call in the Secretariat’s first journal issue to ‘Catholicize’ anti-communism, centralize it, and place it in the hands of the Pope.

The papacy’s attempt to disseminate a distinctly *Catholic* form of anti-communism may also explain why the Secretariat’s publications by and large avoided antisemitic and nationalistic motifs.<sup>32</sup> It was perhaps no accident that shortly after the Secretariat’s founding, Hitler would remark that the Vatican was attempting to deprive ‘National Socialism of the historic credit of having started the anti-Bolshevik campaign’.<sup>33</sup> However, the Secretariat’s attempt to assert independence from Nazi-Fascism was imperfectly echoed by its on-the-ground initiatives. In this

28 ‘Unité révolutionnaire et unité chrétienne’, *LdR* (July 1936), 139–42. JESCOM, Ledóchowski, *LdR*.

29 *LdR* (May 1935), 1. *Ibid*.

30 Ledóchowski, ‘A Letter to the Fathers Who, in Their Respective Provinces, Direct and Promote the Fight against Atheism’, Rome, 28 October 1934. In *Selected Writings of Father Ledóchowski* (Chicago, IL 1945), 606–8. On Moscow as the Fourth Rome, see K. Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931–1941* (Cambridge, MA 2011); and J. Koehler, *Spies in the Vatican: The Soviet Union’s Cold War against the Catholic Church* (New York, NY 2011).

31 *LdR*, 1, 6 (October 1935), 4. JESCOM, Ledóchowski, *LdR*.

32 *LdR* (May 1935), 1. On the grounding of Nazi anti-communism in antisemitism, see J. Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, MA 2006), *passim*; L.L. Waddington, ‘The Anti-Komintern and Nazi Anti-Bolshevik Propaganda in the 1930s’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 42, 4 (October 2007), 573–94; and L.L. Waddington, *Hitler’s Crusade: Bolshevism and the Myth of the International Jewish Conspiracy* (London 2007). On how antisemitism was inscribed within Fascist and proto-Fascist anti-communism, see M. Stone, *Enemies in An Age of Ideology: Anti-Communism and the Making of Italian Democracy* (under contract); S. Sanos, *The Aesthetics of Hate: Far-Right Intellectuals, Antisemitism and Gender in the 1930s* (Stanford, CA 2012); P. Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain* (New York, NY 2012); M.C. Athans, *The Coughlin-Fahey Connection: Father Charles E. Coughlin, Father Denis Fahey, and Religious Antisemitism in the United States, 1938–1954* (New York, NY 1991); Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism*; and Hanebrink, *A Spectre Haunting Europe*.

33 As cited in Powers, *Not Without Honor*, 450, fn.30.

practical domain, Vatican anti-communism became increasingly imbricated with the anti-communism of Nazi, Fascist and proto-Fascist forces. To be sure, the cooperation of the Church with these forces did not prevent clashes over the proper scope (and relative autonomy) of Catholic activism in social and civic domains in Italy and Germany. As many scholars have noted, there were many such clashes throughout the 1930s. But the Vatican's relationship with Nazi-Fascist figures never deteriorated entirely; in domains like anti-communist cooperation, they actually expanded. For a sense of how this was the case, two transnational undertakings of which scholars have failed to take note will be discussed in detail: the Secretariat's launching of three travelling exhibitions and its organization of an anti-communist book competition. Attention will also be paid to how the Secretariat's decision to cooperate with Nazi-Fascist forces shaped Pope Pius XI's theological condemnation of communism, which was issued in the spring of 1937.

\*\*\*

The former librarian Pope Pius XI was, it seems, the first to propose the idea of creating a Catholic anti-communist literary culture. Several papal advisors rallied to the idea, noting that using literature 'as a weapon in the fight against Bolshevism... denote[d] a comprehension of the role that literature and novels play in contemporary life [and] of the profound influence novels can have on ideas and mores'.<sup>34</sup> An international book competition would lead to a 'flowering of compositions' in numerous languages, 'which – even if they were not all given a prize – would appear in nearly all countries'.<sup>35</sup> Thus it was hoped the prize would assist the Vatican anti-communist campaign by incentivizing talented writers to take upon themselves the task of spreading Catholic anti-communism far and wide.

The prize's administration was entrusted to the Secretariat on Atheism and to two well-known French Catholic members of the Académie Française. The Frenchmen drafted the competition announcement and assembled a jury of prominent multilingual writers, while the Secretariat – whose involvement in the project was kept secret – contributed the funds to award prizes and translate the winning novels. Crucially, the Secretariat also withheld veto powers, in case the Académie's proposed winning novels ran counter to the theory and practice of Vatican anti-communism. But even in an age of emergent 'authoritarian fictions', creating an anti-communist literary culture out of thin air was no easy feat. As a result, the Vatican increasingly leaned on a network of existing extremist right-wing groups to advance its own, increasingly imbricated, anti-communist campaign.<sup>36</sup> The two main prize administrators – Georges Goyau and Henry Bordeaux – were declared Fascist and proto-Fascist sympathizers: the first known for his ties with radical

34 R. De Cressier to H. Bordeaux, Fribourg, 19 January 1933. ASV, AES PR4 1921–1944, pos. scatola 37, fasc.216, ff.50-1.

35 M. D'Herbigny to G. Goyau, Vatican City, 11 July 1932. *Ibid.*, fasc.215, ff.73.

36 The term is borrowed from S.R. Suleiman, *Authoritarian Fictions: The Ideological Novel as a Literary Genre* (Princeton, NJ 1992).

right-wing and antisemitic movements,<sup>37</sup> and the second outspoken in his support for Mussolini and his aversion to parliamentary democracy.<sup>38</sup> Of the more than 500 manuscripts submitted to the competition, those to receive positive evaluations were largely written by publicists with direct or indirect ties to radical right-wing movements. For instance, the Berlin-based Deutsche Buch-Gemeinschaft – responsible for publishing the novel awarded first place – issued works by prominent past and present members of the Nazi cultural establishment, including Hans-Friedrich Blunck, the first President of the Reich Chamber of Literature or *Reichsschrifttumskammer*, and the antisemitic Christian nationalist Paul de Lagarde, hailed as National Socialism’s ideological progenitor by Alfred Rosenberg, among others.<sup>39</sup>

The winner of the Vatican book prize, Alja Rachmanova, was a Vienna-based Russian emigre who was one of several Russian writers to receive applause in the Vatican competition.<sup>40</sup> Her novel, entitled *The Factory of New Men*, profiles two heroic women who attempt to preserve their Christian purity in the midst of inhospitable conditions.<sup>41</sup> ‘I want to keep my soul and body pure, especially because they ridicule these things; I want some religion, especially because they reject all religions’, the protagonist laments. Though the Soviet Union imagines itself a ‘factory of new men’, it is destroying human personhood: ‘I want to be myself, not a part of the mass, not a brick that is supposed to be part of the foundation of some future paradise’, sighs the novel’s heroine.<sup>42</sup> Ultimately, the novel presents the triumph of Christianity against Bolshevik violence and moral destitution. As the prize administrators noted with pleasure, it ‘maintains the hope of redemption for the Russian people alive’.<sup>43</sup> Tellingly, the Pope read the novel in full as well, deeming it ‘a persuasive and impressive ... collection of snapshots of a fierce tragedy’.<sup>44</sup> So enthusiastic was Pius XI that he even requested a copy of Rachmanova’s memoirs.<sup>45</sup>

37 Gen. Castelnau to Goyau, Paris 19 July 1921. Archives de l’Académie française (henceforth AAF), Fonds Goyau, correspondance Gen. Castelnau, 7 AP 5; and Cardinal Baudrillart to Goyau, Paris, n.d., *ibid.*, correspondance Mgr Baudrillart, 7 AP 1.

38 Bordeaux to Goyau, Paris, 17 September 1932. ASV, AES, PR4 1921-1944, pos. sc. 37, fasc.216, ff.18; and AAF, Registre des procès-verbaux, 27 December 1934, detailing Bordeaux’s private meeting with Mussolini.

39 H.-F. Blunck, *Die Urvätersaga: frühgeschichtlicher Roman unseres Volkes* (Berlin 1933); P. de Lagarde, *An die Deutschen: eine Auswahl aus den ‘Deutschen Schriften’* (Berlin 1934). On Blunck, see W.S. Hoerle, *Hans-Friedrich Blunck: Poet and Nazi Collaborator, 1888–1961* (Oxford 2003); on de Lagarde, F. Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley, CA 1974), 3–97, and F.R. Nicosia, *Zionism and Antisemitism in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge 2008), 25–6. Deutsche Buch-Gemeinschaft also published the work of the Austrian National Socialist Bruno von Brehm, the pro-Hitler German poet Wilhelm von Scholz, and Werner Beumelburg, one of best-established literary figures of the Third Reich.

40 This was perhaps unsurprising, given the importance of Russian emigres in fomenting anti-communism in interwar Europe. See M. Kellogg, *The Russian Roots of Nazism: White Russians and the Making of National Socialism, 1917–1945* (New York, NY 2005).

41 A. Rachmanova, *Die Fabrik der Neuen Menchen* (Berlin 1937). Many thanks to Felix Gerlsbeck for his help in translating this novel.

42 *Ibid.*, 62.

43 Bordeaux, ‘Rapport du concours de romans sur le bolchévisme’, Paris, 28 November 1935. ASV, AES PR4 1921-1944, pos. sc. 37, fasc.217, ff.9-17.

44 D’Herbigny to Baudrillart, Rome, 14 February 1936. *Ibid.*, fasc.217, ff.6

45 ASV, Segr di Stato, 1937, Public.922.

The memoirs had been recently translated into German by an Austrian press featuring pro-Franco Spanish literati alongside Austrian members of the National Socialist party.<sup>46</sup>

With its heavy-handed moralizing and starkly Manichean depiction of Soviet life as the struggle between good (Christianity) and evil (communism), Rachmanova's novel hoped to impart a strong lesson to its readers. Though this lesson was fully endorsed by the publishing house that showcased her work, Rachmanova's novel did not have explicitly Nazi-Fascist motifs. This was not the case with the novel awarded second prize in the competition, penned by the well-known anti-liberal theorist, Erik Maria Ritter von Kühnelt-Leddihn. Combining the adventure novel, the political tract, and the religious *apologia*, *Jesuiten, Spiesser und Bolschewicken* follows a German-Italian, lay-clerical, trio of handsome and clever men on their rambling adventures to show up (and in many cases, beat up) communists across Europe and North Africa. The characters demonstrate that the only viable alternative to communism is a Catholic, authoritarian, political system, which creates unity without flattening out social distinctions. The use of violence is an absolutely acceptable means of spreading the message: the novel's hero seizes opportune moments to show off his Jiu-Jitsu skills, while his Jesuit partner 'packs a terribly strong punch', as all too many communist upstarts discover.<sup>47</sup> Written in 1933, the novel's celebration of a muscular Vatican-German-Italian alliance against communism bore a clear message.

The central motifs in the gold and silver-awarded novels were repeated in various forms by other feted authors. For instance, the fourth-place novel promoted a Catholic, proto-fascist, and anti-parliamentary politics, and interspersed scenes of Bolshevik theft and contempt for basic morality with abundant theoretical debates between the novel's pro-communist and anti-communist protagonists.<sup>48</sup> Though Académie Française judges deemed the novel's 'literary value mediocre', they noted that because its message was sound, it 'would make an excellent film' and hence merited recognition.<sup>49</sup> The novel's author may also have received special treatment because, like von Kühnelt-Leddihn, he wore his political allegiances on his sleeve: he had actively participated in the rise of French right-wing movements like the Liges des Patriotes, and, like Georges Goyau, was in close correspondence with the reactionary French General Edouard de Castelnau.

The Secretariat's book prize competition thus awarded the translation in literary terms of Vatican anti-communism – a form of anti-communism that in practice appeared increasingly imbricated with the anti-communism espoused by existing radical right-wing political movements. That it did so cannot simply be chalked up

46 A. Rachmanova, *Tragödie einer Liebe* (Salzburg 1937), published by Otto Müller, which also issued works such as J.M. Pemán, *Flammendes Spanien: Der Freiheitskampf des spanischen Volkes in Kreuzzugsreden und Kriegsberichten* (Salzburg 1938); and E. Winter, *Tausend Jahre Geisteskampf im Sudetenraum. Das religiöse Ringen zweier Völker* (Salzburg 1938).

47 E. von Kühnelt-Leddihn, *Jesuiten, Spiesser, Bolschewicken* (Salzburg 1933), 81.

48 P. de Croidys, *L'Empire des sans-Dieu: roman de moeurs soviétiques* (Paris 1936).

49 Bordeaux, 'Rapport du concours', Paris, 28 November 1935. ASV, AES PR4 1921-1944, pos. sc. 37, fasc.217, ff.9-17.

to circumstance or chance, as revealed by private correspondence between the Pope and prize administrators. 'I have stopped believing in democracy and in the effectiveness of democratic governments', Fascist sympathizer Henri Bordeaux informed the Pope in a private letter, explaining how his personal biases might shape his literary judgments. Democratic governments, he noted, 'lead people slowly but surely to socialism and communism!' Instead, what was needed was a strong, nationalistic government interested in protecting 'order and religious authority'. Perhaps – Bordeaux noted – some of these viewpoints could be encouraged by the competition announcement and play a mandated role in the selection process.<sup>50</sup> Having expressed his 'immense pleasure' with Bordeaux's recommendations, Pius XI agreed on the need to restore 'authority, order, and hierarchy', according to 'the principles of the Catholic Church'. Because communists and liberal 'individualists' (*qua* partisans of democracy) did not understand this, prize-winning novels should certainly celebrate authority and the Catholic religion.<sup>51</sup> Differing from Bordeaux on one small but important point, the Pope noted that prize administrators should not too explicitly encourage the production of works with strongly nationalistic motifs. The reason for this was twofold. First, 'the idea of nationalism was opposed to the supra-nationalism of the Church'. Second, certain 'Hitlerians' had recently disseminated an anti-religious form of hyper-nationalism, as had communists keen on inciting revolt among imperial subjects. The Pope accordingly suggested that it would be best for the book prize to reward anti-democratic, authoritarian, and religious political thinking, but be wary of lending support to extreme forms of nationalism that might be damaging to the Church and dilute its claims to standing at the helm of a trans-national anti-communist movement.<sup>52</sup>

However, it soon became increasingly difficult to keep Vatican anti-communism separate from that of 'Hitlerians' and Fascists. As Franco prepared his troops for an attack on the Spanish Republic, Mussolini and Hitler transformed their early concern with rooting out the communist enemy within their own borders into a broad-based mobilization against Soviet influence writ large. Doing so, the leaders reasoned, was geostrategic commonsense, for standing with Franco and against Stalin would likely win them a stronghold in the Mediterranean and facilitate mastery of Europe as a whole.<sup>53</sup> Convinced that if the Vatican lost its role as

50 Bordeaux to Pius XI (via Goyau), Paris, 17 September 1932. *Ibid.*, fasc.216, ff.18.

51 Pius XI (via D'Herbigny) to Bordeaux, with copy to Goyau, Vatican City, 29 September 1932. *Ibid.*, ff.24-28. This letter indicates that despite Pius XI's pragmatic decision to work with several democratic governments, condemn monarchist movements like the Action Française, and support the *ralliement* of French Catholics to the Republic, he remained quite suspicious of democracy as a political form. On this broad question, see Menozzi and Moro (eds), *Cattolicesimo e totalitarismo. Chiese e culture religiose tra le due guerre mondiali (Italia, Spagna, Francia)* (Brescia 2004).

52 *Ibid.*

53 The shift in Nazi-Fascist strategy is discussed in M. Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (New York, NY 2008), 114–15, 320, 341; K. Pätzold, 'Antikommunismus und Antibolschewismus als Instrumente der Kriegsvorbereitung und Kriegspolitik', in N. Frei and H. Kling (eds), *Der nationalsozialistische Krieg* (Frankfurt am Main 1990), 122–45; D. Orlow, *The Lure of Fascism in Western Europe: German Nazis, Dutch and French Fascists, 1933–1939* (New York, NY

leader of the global anti-communist campaign its claims to international influence might also diminish, the Secretariat on Atheism followed developments closely and tried to maintain relevance.

In the spring of 1936, the Secretariat on Atheism entered the public sphere in a new way. On the eve of the Spanish Civil War, the Secretariat organized a large-scale traveling anti-communist exhibition to incite the masses against the Soviet Union and show Nazi-Fascists the distinctive (albeit, mutually compatible and thus useful) nature of Vatican anti-communism. In this way, the Secretariat's activities increasingly embodied Pius XI's early motto towards Mussolini: *cooperazione, ma non confusione* – cooperation yes, but 'confusion' and loss of a distinctly Catholic identity, no. The purpose of the Secretariat's traveling exhibition was outlined in a letter penned by the Jesuit Superior General. He explained that the exhibition would make use of the latest propaganda strategies to convince viewers that the Vatican was the leading force in the 'war against atheistic communism'.<sup>54</sup> Through its bellicose language, the exhibition foreshadowed the imminent confrontation in Spain and echoed Mussolini's recent Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution (1932–4), which celebrated the bloody triumph of Fascist squads against leftist forces.<sup>55</sup> An accompanying visitor booklet emphasized the compatibility of Vatican anti-communism with that of Nazi and Fascist groups, noting that communism had been destroyed in limited national settings like Italy.

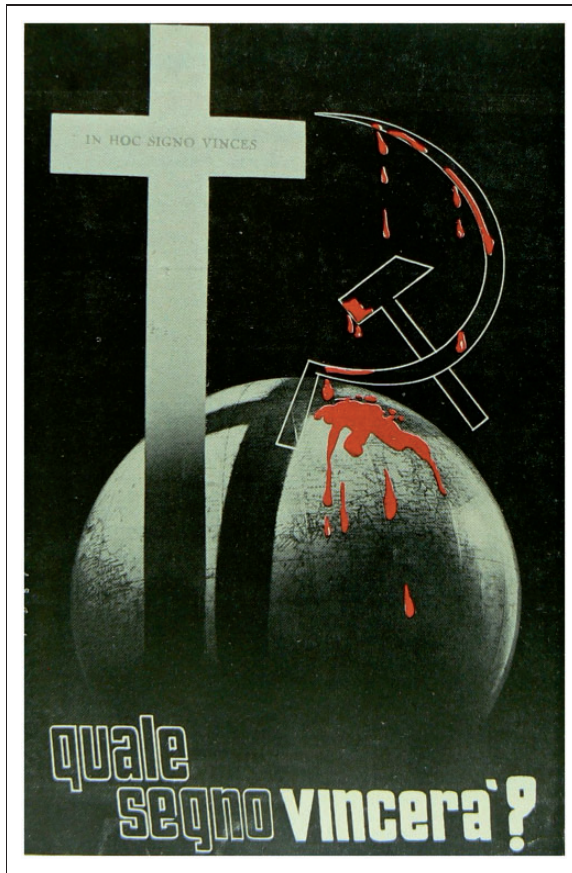
The core message of the Vatican anti-communist exhibition was the following. International communism would be fully eliminated only when civil governments went international themselves, and partnered with an expert in transcending national borders: the universal Catholic Church. This core message was also carried by a single image present in nearly all exhibition rooms and the visitor booklet (Figure 1). The image depicted a white crucifix and a black hammer and sickle dripping with blood hovering above planet Earth, and was framed by the question 'Which Sign Will Win?' The word 'win' was written in white, to reference the bright crucifix to which viewer's eyes were then drawn, and upon which lay the question's answer: *in hoc signo vinces*, 'in this sign, you will win'. Good old Constantine: during his mythic march toward battle, the Emperor Constantine had supposedly seen this phrase scrawled in the sky, at which point he had embraced Christianity and transformed the Roman Empire into a powerful tool for the religion's expansion. The poster thus suggested that the Soviet Union could only be defeated through the collaboration of

2009), 77, 89–121; A. D'Orsi, 'Antibolscevismo', V. De Grazia and S. Luzzatto (eds), *Dizionario del fascismo* (Turin 2002), 65–6; M. Stone, 'The Changing Face of the Enemy in Fascist Italy', *Constellations*, 15, 3 (2008), 332–50; M. Knox, *Common Destiny: Dictatorship, Foreign Policy and War in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany* (Cambridge 2000), 55, 144; and Waddington, *Hitler's Crusade*, *passim*. Only D'Orsi and Waddington argue that Nazi-Fascist anti-communism was ontological rather than instrumental.

54 Ledóchowski, 'On Furthering the Fight Against Atheism: A Letter Addressed to the Whole Society', 19 June 1936. *Selected Writings*, 608–14.

55 M. Stone, 'Staging Fascism: The Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 28 (1993), 221, 231–2.





**Figure 1.** The caption asks: 'Which sign will win?' The crucifix answers: 'in this sign, you will win'.

Source: 1937 advertisement, JESCOM 1038, DcA, fasc. SAR. Picture by the author.

state powers with the Vatican: with the sign of the crucifix, states would win the battle for land and influence, while without it their power would inexorably wane.

In the spirit of the contemporary mass exhibitions of the day, the Secretariat drove home its simple message through elaborate staging techniques. For instance, the long entryway staircase contained a chronological summary of the progress of Bolshevism, with each step corresponding to a year and anti-religious event. The installation showed that the Soviets were literally escalating their tactics in a bid to completely destroy the Vatican's global power (Figure 2). Soviet progress was also highlighted spatially, as each exhibition room corresponded to a different region of the world and suggested that the globe was carved up between the Soviet Union and the Vatican. Rather than celebrating in World-Fair spirit the technological and cultural innovations of these geographic regions, the Secretariat presented even



**Figure 2.** The central stairway of the 1938 exhibition graphically represented Soviet religious persecution.

Source: JESCOM 1038, DcA, fasc. SAR.

regions traditionally associated with Catholicism as overrun by communist propaganda, which lined the walls and ceilings in an oppressive montage (Figure 3). Maps of all shapes and sizes filled rooms and hallways, underscoring the idea that all of the propaganda on display originated from Moscow and that Vatican City was capable of rising to the challenge (Figure 4). The final exhibition room put on display the Secretariat's publications and prominently featured the iconic *in hoc signo vinces* poster. It suggested that amid the disaster wrought by communism, there was hope — again, on the condition that the Vatican be allowed to take action against the Soviet Union and work in close partnership with like-minded governments (Figure 5).

Numerous high-profile Fascist officials, Catholic journalists from around the world, and at least three members of the Gestapo visited the exhibition. They encouraged the Secretariat to pack up the exhibition and re-install it in a series of major European capitals, which indeed it would. The Secretariat had run the exhibition's contents by Fascist censors, who had noted that 'everything was correct, according to civil authorities'. It was not least thanks to this cooperative attitude, Ledóchowski affirmed, that 'the Exhibition was a great success' — and



**Figure 3.** Unmasking Soviet violence at the 1938 exhibition. The handwritten caption reads, ‘Our army is the army of the world revolution – Stalin’.  
Source: JESCOM 1038, DcA, fasc. SAR.

that in addition to bringing the 1936 show on the road, the Secretariat would host two additional such exhibitions in 1938 and in 1939.<sup>56</sup>

In sum, the Secretariat on Atheism’s exhibition depended on the approval of Fascist censors; enjoyed the attendance of Nazi and Fascist representatives; employed Fascist aesthetic tropes; tipped a hat to anti-communist activism in Italy and Germany; and called on anti-communist states to work with the Vatican to defeat the Soviet Union. Thus, despite the climate of tension regarding Catholic civil society activism in Italy and Germany, the Vatican did not scorn tactical cooperation with Nazi-Fascist forces on matters of shared concern.

From the mid 1930s, the Vatican and Nazi-Fascist groups began to work even more actively together in pursuit of a shared anti-communist agenda. Shortly after the conclusion of the Rome exhibition, Ledóchowski asked the Secretariat’s head to travel to Munich and take part in the opening ceremonies of an exhibition organized by a so-called ‘independent’ organization, the Gesamtverband Deutscher antikommunistischer Vereinigungen e.V. (Coalition of German Anti-

<sup>56</sup> Father Ledit’s obituary of Ledóchowski, written between 14 December 1942 and 31 January 1943 (henceforth Ledóchowski obituary). JESCOM, Ledochowski, “Varia ad eius Vitam” n.1025/355.



**Figure 4.** The exhibition room dedicated to France is dominated by a statue of the Virgin Mary to the right (representing the Vatican) and a map of the world (upper left). The sign on the map reads, ‘La pieuvre communiste étend ses tentacules’ (The communist octopus spreads its tentacles). Moscow is the black dot/octopus irradiating communist propaganda worldwide. Source: JESCOM 1038, DcA, fasc. SAR.

communist Associations). Of course, it was no secret that the Gesamtverband was in fact a creature of Joseph Goebbels’s Ministry of Propaganda and Popular Enlightenment.<sup>57</sup> Entitled ‘Bolschewismus ohne Maske’ (Bolshevism Unmasked), the exhibition sought to reveal the ‘true face’ of international communism (Figure 6). Though the Gesamtverband exhibition was much-admired by the Italian and German media, a somewhat more skeptical reporter for the Catholic newspaper *Avvenire d’Italia* noted that it was ‘much more cumbersome’, than the Vatican equivalent, despite its evident debt to the Secretariat’s ‘scholarly and universal touch’. Father Ledóchowski ‘did not hide his satisfaction’ upon reading this article and learning of the positive response to Ledit’s Munich trip, which in his view

<sup>57</sup> On the Gesamtverband, see J.C. Behrends, ‘Back from the USSR: The Anti-Comintern’s Publications on Soviet Russia in Nazi Germany (1935–41)’, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 10, 3 (2009), 527–56; and Waddington, ‘The Anti-Komintern’.



**Figure 5.** The kiosk in the final exhibition room sold copies of *Lettres de Rome* and other Vatican anti-communist literature, and was framed by the statement, ‘Per Vincere, Bisogna Lottare’ (To win, you must fight). The classic in hoc signo vinces poster can also be seen on the wall, in the upper left-hand corner.

Source: JESCOM 1038, DcA, fasc. SAR.

reinforced the Vatican imperative of ‘cooperation but not confusion’ with Nazi-Fascist forces.<sup>58</sup>

In the increasingly polarized political climate of the late 1930s, the Fascist regime and Nazi Germany began to work more closely with the Secretariat. The Fascist secret police granted the Secretariat special permission to import over 50 banned publications to facilitate up-to-date coverage of communism’s real and imagined expansion. The Gestapo – having welcomed the circulation of the Secretariat’s German-language journal – likely offered similar dispensations.<sup>59</sup> Additionally, the Secretariat finalized a complex three-way agreement in the spring of 1936 between Italy, Germany and the Vatican, regarding the joint surveillance and jamming of signals of Radio Moscow.<sup>60</sup> Given its close ties to Vatican

58 Ledóchowski obituary.

59 P. Tacchi Venturi to A. Bocchini, 10 December 1934. Archivio Centrale di Stato, Rome (henceforth ACS), Polizia di stato (henceforth PS), A1, 1937, b.37, fasc. “Ledit”.

60 C. Orsenigo to Pacelli, Berlin, 29 January 1933. AES, SE4, 1932-1942, pos.474 P.O., fasc.477, ff3f-5v; Pacelli to Soccorsi, SJ, Vatican, 24 April 1936. Ibid., 1936-8, pos.533 P.O., fasc.556, ff.5; Circular



**Figure 6.** Propaganda poster for the Berlin edition of the Gesamtverband exhibition, 'Bolschewismus ohne Maske', held from 6 November through 19 December 1937. Despite the Gesamtverband's claims to independence, the poster presents the exhibition as an NSDAP affair. Source: *Bolschewismus ohne Maske*, 1937. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., POS Ger .A37, no.1 (C size). Available online at <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2009631995/> (Accessed 19 July 2013).

Radio, which by now broadcast its signal across Europe and the Americas, the Secretariat could ever more confidently claim leadership of a campaign waged through new media across national borders.<sup>61</sup>

1478/36, from Pacelli, Vatican, 30 April 1936. Ibid., ff.29-30; and ACS, Ministro degli Interni (MI), Direzione Generale di Pubblica Sicurezza (DGPS), Divisione di Polizia Politica (DPP), b.44, fasc.C11/48 Germania Polizia.

61 See M.J. Matelski, *Vatican Radio: Propaganda by the Airwaves* (Westport, CT 1995), xviii; and F. Bea, 'Qui, Radio Vaticana'. *Mezzo secolo della radio del papa* (Vatican City 1981), 96-7.

It would be a gross oversimplification to suggest that the Vatican anti-communist campaign was roundly endorsed by Catholics around the world. To the contrary, many Catholics expressed their dismay at the Secretariat's willingness to work closely with Nazi and Fascist forces. The German Jesuit Gustav Gundlach – no less than the figure to whom Ledóchowski had initially offered leadership of the Secretariat – worried that Hitler might gain 'moral sustenance' from the Secretariat's actions. The Secretariat's willingness to partner with the Nazis in particular might well have had the effect of 'confusing Catholics in Germany and elsewhere weakening the moral influence of the Church'.<sup>62</sup> Other clerics voiced similar concerns.<sup>63</sup> Their worries would be partially addressed following the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War and Pope Pius XI's condemnation of communism and of Nazism on theological grounds in the spring of 1937.

Much has been written on Pope Pius XI's triple encyclicals of March 1937, which addressed Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, and Mexico, respectively. However, few scholars have noted the extent to which the Pope conceived of the three texts as integrally interrelated, and none have commented on the fact that the Secretariat on Atheism contributed decisively to their drafting. In April of 1936, the Superior General of the Jesuits responded to the news that Vatican theologians were in the midst of writing a theological critique of Nazism by informing the Pope that it was more urgent to draft an encyclical condemning 'atheistic communism', given the Soviet's 'ever-more intense propaganda', and the need for 'Catholics and others to unite in a more energetic and better-organized resistance'. 'Your Holiness will pardon my boldness', Ledóchowski affirmed, suggesting that Secretariat personnel would be ideally suited to composing said text.<sup>64</sup> Pius XI immediately accepted the proposal and put the head of the Secretariat on Atheism to work.<sup>65</sup> Drawing on a range of Catholic critiques of both communism and Nazi-Fascism, Ledit argued that communism was anti-religious and 'totalitarian', in that it deprived the Catholic Church of its rightful place in human society and sought to control all aspects of human life. Additionally, he noted, communism trampled individual rights, including the right to education, the right to a religious marriage, the right to the priesthood, and the right to worship the Catholic religion.<sup>66</sup>

62 As cited in J. Schwarte, *Gustav Gundlach, SJ (1892-1963): massgeblicher Repräsentant der katholischen Soziallehre während der Pontifikate Pius' XI und Pius' XII* (Munich 1975), 29ff.

63 E.g., see Cardinal Faulhaber to A. V. di Torregrossa, Munich, 5 March 1933. Archivio della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede, Rome (henceforth ACDF), *Rerum Variarum* (henceforth RV) 1933, n.15, ff.41-2.

64 Ledóchowski to Pius XI, 1 April 1936. ASV, AES, *Stati Ecclesiastici*, pos.548, f.577, enciclica *Divini Redemptoris*. Domenico Tardini, Secretary of the Congregation of Ordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, wrote by hand next to the letter: 'prima idea per l'enciclica del comunismo' (*first idea for the encyclical on communism*).

65 See 'Voto del P. Gillet, Consultore', in 'Nazionalismo, razzismo, stato totalitario' (henceforth NRST), April 1936, ff. 1-3. ACDF, S.O., RV 1934, n.29, f.4; and 'Voto del Mons. Tardini, Consultore', *ibid.*

66 J. Ledit, 'Nota d'Ufficio', in NRST, July 1936, ff.1-7. *Ibid.*, f.9. On the origins of Catholic rights talk, see D. Hollenbach, *Claims in Conflict: Retrieving and Renewing the Catholic Human Rights Tradition* (New York, NY 1979).

In November of 1936, the clerics responsible for the as-yet-unpublished theological critique of Nazism received the cryptic news that the Pope was going to 'do something' about their work,<sup>67</sup> and in mid March of 1937 the Pope informed them that an encyclical 'in preparation' would supersede their efforts.<sup>68</sup> When Pius XI issued three encyclicals for global consumption shortly thereafter, the work on Nazism was marginalized, as the theologians involved in the theological attack on Nazism noted with displeasure.<sup>69</sup> Ledit's reflections, however, figured prominently, as did the Secretariat on Atheism's underlying message: while the Vatican could work with Nazi-Fascist forces, any form of reconciliation with the Soviet Union was impossible.

The 1937 encyclical on communism, *Divini Redemptoris*, closely followed Ledit's draft. Referencing Ledit's critique of totalitarianism, the text affirmed that in the Soviet Union, human beings are 'a mere cog-wheel in the communist system'. Echoing his references to rights, the text affirmed that the Soviet Union 'defraud[ed] men of [their] God-granted rights', including the right to private property, the right to marriage, and the right to education.<sup>70</sup> In a nod to the Secretariat's interpretation of current events, the encyclical stated that Soviet-led revolution 'has actually broken out or threatens everywhere, and exceeds in amplitude and violence anything yet experienced'. Russian agents were 'directing the struggle against Christian civilization' not only 'in Mexico and now and Spain', but even farther afield. To the communist declaration of war on 'all that is called God', it stood to reason that Christ's vicar on earth, the Pope, had a lasting reply.<sup>71</sup> Echoing the Secretariat's core premise, the encyclical emphasized that the Vatican could counter the Soviet 'collectivistic terrorism' because it possessed a strong ideology, which provided a positive, Catholic, alternative to the 'most atrocious barbarity' of communism.<sup>72</sup> Additionally, because it was endowed with transnational influence, the Vatican could respond to the Soviets' 'truly diabolical' propaganda, 'directed from one common center', and 'shrewdly adapted to the varying conditions of diverse peoples'. Not only did the unnamed Secretariat wield influence in the press, motion pictures, radio programs, schools and universities; it had also cultivated a network of tightly allied partner states. Thus, the Vatican's Catholic International could counter the Communist International and directly rival the Soviet Union's 'great financial resources, gigantic organizations, and international congresses'.<sup>73</sup>

67 Ottaviani notes following papal audience, 19 November 1936. ACDF, ACTA C.G. 1936.

68 'Dilata post publicationem Enciclicae quae est in praeparatione', 17 March 1937. ACDF ACTA C.G. 1937.

69 'De Communismo', in NRST, March 1937, ff.13-22. ACDF, S.O., RV 1934, n.29, f.16.

70 Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris* (19 March 1937), §10; §11; §28; §30; §50. All citations are drawn from the official English-language translation of the encyclical, available online at: <[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/pius\\_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xi\\_enc\\_19031937\\_divini-redemptoris\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19031937_divini-redemptoris_en.html)>. (Accessed 1 July 2013.)

71 *Ibid.*, §2; §7; §22.

72 *Ibid.*, §17; §20; §22; §33; §35-6; §46.

73 *Ibid.*, §2; §15; §17; §19; §22; §57.



*Divini Redemptoris* constituted an important component of the manufacture of consent to the Secretariat's transnational anti-communist campaign, insofar as it explained, celebrated, and imposed the Vatican turn against the Soviet Union upon the entire Catholic world.<sup>74</sup> By claiming that the Soviet Union posed the greatest existing threat to world peace and global Catholicism, *Divini Redemptoris* implicitly prepared the Catholic world for *Firmissimam Constantiam*, the March 28th encyclical sanctioning a violent response to communist penetration in Mexico. In his expositions to the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, Eugenio Pacelli had argued that Soviet agents were plotting a communist revolution in Mexico from the early 1930s. New reports reaching the Secretary of State corroborated this view. They affirmed that 'authentic Russians' were taking over Mexican government offices, and 'that the ultimate aim of the [Mexican] government is to create a new communist generation'.<sup>75</sup> Through its translation and distribution of like-minded interviews and first-hand accounts to European newspapers, the Secretariat on Atheism participated in the project it termed 'enlightening public opinion on the danger of communist penetration in Mexico'.<sup>76</sup>

The Catholic battle against communism was not simply a metaphorical one. During his unprecedented 1936 trip to the United States of America, Eugenio Pacelli received several requests of papal support for the use of violence in Mexico from a range of English- and Spanish-language clerics. In place of the Vatican's network of civil society organizations known as Catholic Action, Pacelli's interlocutors affirmed that Mexico needed 'Civic Action'. They defined 'Civic Action' as the same 'liberty of action against communism' accorded 'to Spanish Catholics': that is, 'armed defense'.<sup>77</sup> As a Mexican Bishop who had expressly traveled to New York to meet with Pacelli asserted, 'Faced with the danger of communism and the fear that its deeds succeed as in Spain, everyone understands that it is necessary to be ready to defeat force with force, and that this defense is legitimate'.<sup>78</sup> The Vatican Secretary of State rushed the message back to Rome and in December of 1936 – following papal sanction – began drafting an encyclical defending armed revolt, in collaboration with members of the Secretariat on Atheism. After having read a rough draft of the text, Pius XI added a passage of

74 It was no accident that around the time of the encyclical's release, the Vatican began to clamp down on purportedly communist and leftist forces within the Catholic world through the censure of Catholic publications and the surveillance of Catholic lay organizations deemed potentially dangerous, as evidenced by ample files in ACDF. Also see P. Doria, *La condanna della 'dottrina Maritain'* (Rome 2008); and M. Della Sudda, 'La suppression de l'hebdomadaire dominicain *Sept: Immixtion du Vatican dans les affaires françaises?*', *Vingtième siècle*, 104, 4 (2009), 29–44.

75 Father Alba, 'Pro Memoria', March 1936. ARSI, Registro-Allegata, Epistolae ad Romanam Curiam, n.1-100, 1934–1938, ff.303-312.

76 *LdR*, 4 (March 1936), 63–4. See Pizzardo to Ledóchowski, Vatican City, 20 November 1935. ARSI, Documenta, 1020: Congregat. Romanae, 1935-6, fasc.XIII, Secr. Status Privata; and Ledóchowski to Pizzardo, 28 Nov 1935. ARSI, Registro – Epistolae, Apud Curiae Romanae, 1935–7, ff.159.

77 Pacelli, 'Messico: Commissione Messicana diretta dal Vescovo di Chiapas', 14 December 1936, ASV, AES Messico (quarto periodo) (henceforth M4), 1936, pos.590, fasc.388, ff.13-16; Bishop of Chiapas, Gerardo, Busto, Castiello and P. Arámburu memorandum for Pacelli, 6 November 1936. *Ibid.*, ff.32.

78 Gerardo to Pacelli, New York, 8 November 1936. *Ibid.*, ff.17-20.

his own which urged the avoidance of ‘certain abuses of Armed Defense’ manifest during Mexico’s recent Cristero War (1926–9). These included the Cristeros’ willingness to ‘kill and mutilate male teachers, chop off ears, rape female teachers, [and] pillage, all the while crying out: “Long Live Christ the King!”’ Judging Pius XI’s amendments too harsh and in need of ‘mitigation’, Ledóchowski noted that the encyclical should ‘keep to more general language’.<sup>79</sup> Tellingly, it was the Jesuit’s recommendations that were incorporated in the encyclical’s final version, which considerably downplayed the potential excesses of armed revolt and eschewed the Pope’s revisions.<sup>80</sup>

When *Firmissimam Constantiam* was published in March of 1937 as part of the Vatican’s new diplomatic turn against the Soviet Union, the encyclical justified armed resistance noting that, ‘it is quite natural that when the most elementary religious and civil liberties are attacked, Catholic citizens do not resign themselves to passively renouncing these liberties’. The text claimed that the armed revolt of Catholics must be ‘licit’ and waged through acts that were ‘not intrinsically evil’. Acts should in fact conform to the Catholic definition of just war: they should have ‘reason [ratio] of means’, be ‘proportionate to the end’ they sought to achieve, and ‘not cause the community greater damages than those they seek to repair’.<sup>81</sup>

Despite its somewhat circuitous language, the encyclical’s endorsement of violence was clear. So was the willingness of figures like Pacelli and Ledóchowski to overstep both the Pope and clerics who worried that the encyclical’s justification of armed revolt renounced the Church’s tradition of pacifism, and could be interpreted as an open ‘exhortation to revolt’.<sup>82</sup> The decision for when to publish *Firmissimam Constantiam* exacerbated these worries. Released on Easter day of 1937, the papal call to just war coincided with the most important festival of the liturgical year. Clerics across the Americas already mobilized around the Mexican issue exulted, while the mainstream non-Catholic US press celebrated the encyclical’s protest of ‘the spread of atheism and communism’. The surprised apostolic delegate to the United States of America, Monsignor Amleto Cicognani, noted that US journalists had failed to grasp the import of the encyclical’s core message, for they ‘made no particular reference to the extremely delicate point, that of armed resistance’.<sup>83</sup>

The theological and geopolitical condemnation of communism undergirded the Vatican’s recommendation to resist communism with force. This was driven home when *Firmissimam Constantiam* was published in Mexico, paired in a two-cent pamphlet with *Divini Redemptoris*.<sup>84</sup> The third text issued in March of 1937 – about Nazi

79 Ledóchowski to Pizzardo, Rome, 9 March 1937. ASV, AES, M4, 1937, pos.591 P.O., fasc.388, ff.62-3.

80 New draft encyclical integrating Ledóchowski’s edits, *ibid.*, ff.55.

81 Pius XI, *Firmissimam Constantiam* (28 March 1937), §26-9. The official English-language translation can be consulted online, at: <[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/pius\\_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xi\\_enc\\_19370328\\_firmissimam-constantiam\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19370328_firmissimam-constantiam_en.html)>. (Accessed 24 March 2013.)

82 See, for example, the critical memorandum of Mons. Antonio Colonna of the Secretariat of State, n.d. ASV, AES, M4 1937, pos.591 P.O., fasc.388, ff.58.

83 A. Cicognani to G. Pizzardo, 29–30 March 1937. *Ibid.*, ff.89-90.

84 Ruíz to Pizzardo, San Antonio, Texas, 24 April 1937. *Ibid.*, fasc.389, ff.3.

Germany – was not included in the pamphlet, most likely because this text was more narrowly directed at a German audience. *Mit Brennender Sorge*, written in German rather than Latin, contained a strong critique of extreme racist ideology, and reminded German officials of the importance of keeping to the terms of the concordat they had signed with Vatican diplomats in 1933.<sup>85</sup> Pacelli played a central role in the drafting of the text, which had been written with the assistance of Pacelli's old friend Cardinal Michael Faulhaber. Despite his opposition to Hitler, Faulhaber deemed Nazism a less dangerous threat to Catholicism than communism, and per his suggestions, the text avoided mentioning Nazism by name, though it did present Nazi race theory and Nazi ultra-nationalism as potentially idolatrous.<sup>86</sup> However, the encyclical did not go as far as the other two encyclicals of 1937, which explicitly named a leading global threat to Catholicism, and sanctioned war against it. As a whole, the encyclicals of 1937 can thus be read as efforts to consolidate and further radicalize the Secretariat's anti-communist movement by using the most official tool available to the Pope to underscore the message that the Soviet Union posed a global threat to the survival of Catholicism. The encyclicals defended the notion of the Vatican as the leader of a transnational anti-communist movement, and authorized the use of violence against communist groups. They also clarified the Church's doctrinal opposition to certain key elements of Nazi ideology, all the while keeping open the path of tactical cooperation between the Vatican and Germany.

The encyclicals of 1937 and the launching of the Spanish Civil War helped the Vatican Secretariat on Atheism further bolster the image of Catholic unity against a supposedly unified communist enemy – thus presenting the picture of two, strong, well-organized, forces, in place of that messier reality of weak and fractured networks of shifting elements, many of which did not in fact recognize Moscow or Rome as their command post. The notion of a single, unified leftist movement, which took its cues from Stalin, helped feed the illusion of a single 'Catholic International' led by the Pope and held together by the Secretariat on Atheism.

By the latter half of the 1930s, participant observers were noting that throughout the Western hemisphere, the influence of the Vatican Secretariat on Atheism 'had already penetrated in the highest governmental spheres',<sup>87</sup> and that the globe's 'leaders and rulers' were increasingly convinced that they must unite with the Vatican 'to ward off calamity'.<sup>88</sup> Though these claims were certainly inflated, it is remarkable how all sides actively courted the Vatican during the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War, citing its anti-communist activism and its presumed nonalignment with Nazi-Fascist anti-communism. In November of 1938, for

85 On the limits of the encyclical's dealings with race theory, see J. Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother: The Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews, 1933–1965* (Cambridge, MA 2012), 47.

86 See L.E. Jones, 'Franz von Papen, Catholic Conservatives, and the Establishment of the Third Reich, 1933–4', *Journal of Modern History*, 83 (June 2011): 272–318; Wolf, *Pope and Devil*, Ch.5; and Fattorini, *Hitler, Mussolini, and the Vatican*, Ch.5.

87 Father Lambert, Provincial of Paris, to four unspecified Jesuit Provincials, Rome, 9 February 1936. ARSI, JESCOM 1038 DcA, fasc. DcC.

88 Ledóchowski, "On furthering the fight against atheism: a letter addressed to the whole society", 19 June 1936. In *Selected writings of Father Ledochowski*, 608–14.

instance, the US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt asked the Pope to intervene in the Spanish Civil War by participating in the joint naming of a three-man provisional ruling government for Spain.<sup>89</sup> (The Pope politely declined.) In August of 1941, the US President again approached Vatican officials, and this time convinced them to suspend locally the anti-communist campaign so as reduce Catholic opposition to wartime collaboration with the Soviet Union.<sup>90</sup> Hitler and Mussolini's men also urged the Pope to speak out clearly in favor of Nazi-Fascist anti-communism during the Spanish Civil War,<sup>91</sup> and insistently demanded Vatican support for Operation Barbarossa. As they did so, they referenced, inter alia, the Secretariat's interwar activities and the consonance of Vatican and Nazi-Fascist diplomatic aims.<sup>92</sup>

However, it was not long before the Secretariat on Atheism began to struggle to reconcile the contradictions that defined its anti-communist crusade. As the international situation worsened – and as the Pope came under pressure from all sides – it became more difficult to maintain the fiction of an independent and genuinely supra-national anti-communist movement. Shortly after the declaration of the Second World War, the Secretariat on Atheism ceased operation. Many of its files were shipped overseas for safekeeping or concealment.<sup>93</sup> In keeping with tradition, the Vatican bought time and declared neutrality in the war – thus preserving the illusion of standing *super partes*. Only once the outcome of the war became clear did the Vatican anti-communist campaign roar back to life. Perhaps because of its controversial interwar cooperation with Nazi-Fascist forces, the Secretariat on Atheism was not resurrected, though many of its main propagandists resumed activity and deployed tried-and-true strategies from the interwar years. By 1945, a multiplicity of trans-Atlantic Catholic anti-communist initiatives were once again operative, as Vatican intermediaries worked to convince the US administration and newborn Christian Democratic parties that the war for 'Christian civilization' would end only once the Soviet Union was defeated. In 1946, European and US Catholics organized massive protests against the imprisonment of the Archbishop

89 D. Tierney, *FDR and the Spanish Civil War: Neutrality and Commitment in the Struggle that Divided America* (Durham, NC 2007), 75ff.

90 See FDR and M. Taylor conversation notes, Locust Valley, Long Island, 30 August 1941. FDR Presidential Library (henceforth FDRL), President's Secretary's File (PSF), Box 51, "Diplomatic Correspondence: Vatican: Taylor, Myron C., 1941"; and Tardini to Cicognani, 20 September 1941, in *Actes et documents du Saint Siège relatifs à la Seconde Guerre Mondiale* (henceforth ADSS), V: 240 (doc.95).

91 See, for example, Valeri to Maglione, 11 June 1939. ASV, Arch. Nunz. Parigi, b.609, fasc. 853, ff.17; and Pacelli's Udienze notes, 18 January and 13 February 1937, ASV, AES Stati Ecclesiastici, pos. 430a, f.354, ff.13f; 24f. The Vatican was the first 'neutral' state to recognize Francisco Franco as Spain's new ruler.

92 See, for example, note of D. Tardini, 5 September 1941, ADSS, V: 182-184 (doc. 62); and Attolico to Ciano, 16 September 1941, in *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani*, IX, vol.7, 580ff (doc.570). In this case, the Vatican refused to openly endorse the invasion, having been sufficiently burned by the recent Nazi-Soviet pact. However, national Catholic Action publications celebrated the attack: see, e.g., 'Lettera dal Fronte Russo', *Gioventù nova* (25 October 1941).

93 Private US funders and the North American College M.L., 'La 'centrale anti-ateistica' istituita da Padre Ledit cessa la sua attività', October 1941. ARSI, JESCOM 1038 DcA, fasc. SAR.

Stepinac of Yugoslavia, swaying even the US Secretary of State James F. Byrnes.<sup>94</sup> Leaning on the just war appeals of the interwar campaign, the Pope also secretly called for the rearmament of Italy and Germany to prevent Soviet expansionism.<sup>95</sup> Finally, in a little-contested rhetorical maneuver, the Vatican yoked its purportedly long-standing opposition to Nazi-Fascist ‘totalitarianism’ to the battle against the Soviet Union – a battle, of course, that won new followers by the day, in a climate of increased tension soon branded the ‘Cold War’.<sup>96</sup>

The Vatican anti-communist campaign waged by the Secretariat on Atheism in the interwar years left several important legacies, despite its potentially damning association with Nazi-Fascist forces. By uniting a range of already active local anti-communist movements and convincing less active Catholics to see the Vatican-Soviet conflict in existential terms, the campaign provided logistical contacts for lay and clerical groups in Latin America, North America and Europe. Well after the Second World War, the Vatican’s doctrinal condemnation of communism provided a common language for these groups, and grounded many of their anti-communist civil-society initiatives. Additionally, the Secretariat’s campaign bolstered the perceived power of the Vatican in international affairs, preparing the ground for the ‘hour of the Church’ after 1945.<sup>97</sup> Finally, Vatican interwar anti-communism presaged the uneasy alliances that would characterize the Cold War consensus. For if the Vatican’s words had indicated the existence of a Catholic anti-communist movement that was fully independent of Nazi-Fascist forces, its actions suggested otherwise. The willingness of the Vatican to inhabit this ambiguous space prefigured the untidiness of the Cold War consensus, which rested on the alliance between anti-liberal defenders of religious anti-communism, former communists, semi-atoned Nazi-Fascists and champions of liberal democracy. Thus, one might conclude that the fragile construct of the Cold War West was prefigured by the Vatican’s interwar behavior. In order to weaken the Soviet Union and the global appeal of communism, the Vatican agreed to a tactical cooperation with Nazi-Fascist forces in a number of on-the-ground campaigns. The Vatican

94 Notes of NCWC national secretary Monsignor Howard Carroll after conversation with James F. Byrnes, Paris, 11 October 1946. National Catholic Welfare Conference Archives, Catholic University of America, Washington, DC (henceforth NCWC), box 8, Communism: General 1946. As cited in Kent, *Lonely Cold War*, 178–9.

95 Pius XII’s request is cited in the cable from J.G. Parsons to the Secretary of State, 19 December 1947, Cable # 4378. National Archives in College Park, Maryland (henceforth NACP), Record Group (henceforth RG) 59: General Records of the Department of State, Entry 1071: Records of the Personal Representative of the President to Pope Pius XII, Box 30, Folder, ‘Airgrams (Outgoing) 1947’.

96 J.K. Wyneken, ‘The Western Allies, German Churches, and the Emerging Cold War in Germany, 1948–52’, in *Religion and the Cold War: A Global Perspective*, 18–43.

97 See M. Alpert, *A New International History of the Spanish Civil War* (New York, NY 2004); M. Richards, *After the Civil War: Making Memory and Re-Making Spain since 1936* (Cambridge 2013); M. Vincent, ‘The Spanish Civil War as a Religious Conflict’, in N. Valis (ed.), *Teaching Representations of the Spanish Civil War* (New York, NY 2007), 54–62; J.S. Rossi, *Uncharted Territory: The American Catholic Church at the United Nations, 1946–72* (Washington, DC 2006); S. Brown-Fleming, *The Holocaust and Catholic Conscience: Cardinal Aloisius Muench and the Guilt Question in Germany* (Notre Dame, IN 2006); Greenberg, *Weimar Century*; Mitchell, *Origins*, 35ff; Kent, *The Lonely Cold War*.

often took the initiative in doing so, even as it increasingly distanced itself in doctrinal terms from the Fascist and Nazi project.

**Biographical Note**

**Giuliana Chamedes** is Assistant Professor of European International History at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Recent publications include 'The Vatican and the Reshaping of the European International Order after World War I', *The Historical Journal* (December 2013), and 'Pius XII, Rights Talk and the Dawn of the Religious Cold War', in D. Pendas (ed.), *Religion and Human Rights*, Devin Pendas (New York forthcoming). She is currently working on a book manuscript, which is provisionally titled *Catholic Internationalism and the Making of the Atlantic Order, 1920–1960*.