

# Vatican Policy in the Second World War

## – By L.H. Lehmann



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### **BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

LEO HERBERT LEHMANN (1895-1950) was an Irish Roman Catholic priest who converted to Protestantism. He edited the *Converted Catholic Magazine* and led Christ's Mission in New York. By education and experience, he is preeminently qualified as an expert on the Catholic Church, its history and trends and political relations.

Born in Dublin, Ireland, he was educated in Mungret College, Limerick, and All Hallows College, Dublin. In 1918, he entered the University de Propaganda Fide, in Rome, Italy, and was ordained a priest of the Roman Catholic Church in St. John Lateran in 1921. In theology he was awarded the degrees of S.T.L. and D.D. He served as a Roman Catholic priest in Europe and in South Africa, and for several years acted as negotiator in legal matters at the Vatican. Later he came to the United States, where he served as a priest in Florida, continued his education at New York University and graduated with the degree of M.A.

### **INTRODUCTION**

THE EXTENT of the influence of the Roman Catholic Church on politics and war is not generally known to the American public. Americans have tried to look upon and treat the Roman Catholic Church in their traditionally tolerant attitude toward all religions, forgetful that its policies have always affected every phase of the life of the nations of the world, and unwilling to believe that a political Church would try to gain ascendancy over their government. This has been aided by the **purposeful silence of the public press in America, which fearfully eschews all adverse comment on Catholic Church affairs.**

Yet, even a cursory examination of the facts that are allowed to become known should convince anyone that **the Roman Catholic Church is no friend of democracy;** that, on the contrary, it has openly collaborated with and abetted

Fascism in all its forms. Catholics from Europe are fully aware of this, and are not afraid to make it known. Catholic Count Kalergi-Coudenove, for instance, in his recent work, *Crusade for Pan-Europe*, admits (p. 173) that: "Catholicism is the Fascist form of Christianity. The Catholic hierarchy rests fully and securely on the leadership principle with an infallible Pope in supreme command for a life-time." Americans have been deceived concerning the aims and activities of the Roman Catholic Church for three main reasons:

- 1) Their indifference to Church-State relations as a factor in government;
- 2) Their forgetfulness of the disastrous effects of Roman political ecclesiasticism in past centuries;
- 3) The purposeful confusion created here in America by Roman Catholic propaganda concerning the real aims of Roman Catholic policy in democratic countries.

Superficially, the temporal policy of the Vatican may vary expediently with the turn of world events. Basically, however, it has always remained constant and inerrant. To the bishops of Austria welcoming the Anschluss with Hitler's Germany in 1938, Pope Pius XI sent special instructions reminding them of "the unchanging goal" of the Catholic Church. **This same Pope once publicly declared that he would make a pact with the devil himself if it would serve the interests of the Church.** Americans should not wonder, therefore, that the Vatican welcomed General Ken Harada as ambassador of Japan to the Holy See after Pearl Harbor and the sweeping conquests of Hirohito's forces in the Philippines and Dutch East Indies.

This unchanging goal of the Catholic Church is the restoration of its status as the only legally recognized Church in Christendom. To attain it, liberal democratic constitutions must be continuously opposed and a type of civil government eventually established in all countries that would extend protection only to the Roman Catholic Church. This protection was secured in Spain, for example, after Franco's Fascist rebellion had destroyed the Spanish Republic in 1938. Franco's Concordat with the Vatican, signed on June 6, 1941, reaffirmed the four articles of the Concordat of 1851, the first of which reads: **"The Roman Catholic religion, to the exclusion of any other, continues to be the sole religion of the Spanish nation."** Even Msgr. John A. Ryan, most liberal of all Catholic churchmen in the United States, is forced to reiterate the fact that if the United States became predominantly Catholic, its Constitution could and would be changed to insure the **"political proscription"** (government banning!) of all non-Catholic sects.<sup>1</sup> The expedient nature of the Catholic Church's attitude toward its status in democratic America is authoritatively summed up in an official textbook of the Law Department of the Catholic University in Washington, D . C., as follows: "The recognition of the Catholic Church's right to function through purely canonical moral persons, established and existing independently of the civil authority, is the ideal arrangement and the plan to which Catholic theology can alone give unqualified assent." Until this claim can be put into effect, it goes on to say: "no better substitute can be presented than the policy which has been worked out by the American people."<sup>2</sup>

1. In his book, *The State and the Church*, p. 39, and repeated in the revised edition under the title, *Catholic Principles of Politics*, p. 320.

2 Cf. Brown, Brendan F., *The Canonical Juristic Personality, with Special Reference to its Status in the United States of America*, p. 196. Published by the Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C., 1927.

The prime effort of Vatican policy, therefore, must always be directed to warding off every trend toward assumption of power by the masses of the common people and resisting every trace of "Leftism" in economic and social matters. On September 6, 1936, a Pastoral Letter of Count Von Preysing, Bishop of Berlin, was read in all churches of his diocese in which it was stated that the Pope had issued an ultimatum "that any and every connection or contact with Leftist currents is forbidden and must be most strenuously fought by the Church." For **the attainment of the Catholic Church's "unchanging goal" can be reached only by the aid of authoritarian government**, never by the consent of democratic regimes. Furthermore, the Papacy must make it its business to extend this policy to all countries of Christendom, to all parts of the Protestant British Empire, the United States and the Orthodox Slavic and Russian countries, as well as the so-called Catholic countries of the world, including South America. For **it claims as its right exclusive jurisdiction over all Christians-Protestants and Orthodox Catholics** as well as its own Roman Catholic members throughout the world. It can truthfully protest that its primary interest is not this or that particular form of government, economics or social order, since its *primary object is the universal reestablishment of its spiritual dominion*. In order to attain this, however, and in the process of attaining it, its immediate object is to see established political, economic and social regimes that, in the first place, will not destroy the freedom of the Catholic Church as at present established, and, in the second place, will aid eventually in the attainment of its real goal. With civil regimes not definitely socialistic or communistic, the Catholic Church can, for a time, manage to exist, for its ways are devious. Bishops in politics, as in chess, move obliquely.

## TRENDS PRIOR TO WORLD WAR I

THE PRESENT reactionary policy of the Vatican has its roots in its opposition to the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century followed by the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, the French Revolution, the further revolutions of the 19th century which spread liberal ideas and increased the rule of the common people, and, most recently, the Russian Revolution of 1917. All these revolutions were definitely condemned by the encyclicals of the popes during the past 200 years. Lewis Mumford, in his *Faith for Living* (p. 162), one of the first Americans to discover the Catholic Church's betrayal of the Christian world by its tieup with Fascism, declares:

"The aims of Fascism are most deeply in conflict with those of a free republic like that of the United States. In this effort, the Catholic Church has been plainly no conservator of tradition; it has been an ally-a potent ally-of the forces of destruction."

Professor J. A. Borgese in *The Nation* expressed a like view: that all the great revolutions, from the French Revolution down to the Russian Revolution, were condemned by the Catholic Church.

For these revolutions destroyed the traditional basis necessary for universal Catholic Church control, namely the union of *Sacerdotium et Imperium*, "the Priesthood and the Empire." Outstanding condemnations of them are to be found: 1) In the Bull of Pope Innocent X against the Treaty of Westphalia-the first legal charter of religious tolerance agreed and sworn to by the heads of both Catholic and Protestant countries in 1648. The Pope declared:

"That all the articles and instruments of both these peace pacts, and everything therein contained, are, and forever will be, null, void, invalid, iniquitous, unjust, damnable, reprobate, inane, and altogether lacking in force; that no one is, or ever will be, obliged to observe them, even if bound thereto by oath; that no right or action, or color of a title, has thereby been acquired by anyone, or can ever be acquired by proscription after possession for any length of time, even for time out of memory ... they must, therefore, be held forever as if they had never been issued, never existing, and as never made."

[2] In the many papal encyclicals against Freemasonry in the 18th and 19th centuries, summed up in the encyclical *Humanum Genus* of Pope Leo XIII in 1886, in which he condemned Freemasons because they favored the following views:

"They teach that all men have the same rights, and are perfectly equal in condition; that every man is naturally free; that no one has a right to command others; that it is tyranny to keep men subject to any other authority than that which emanates from themselves. Hence they hold that the people are sovereign, that those who rule have no authority but by the commission and concession of the people. Thus the origin of all rights and civil duties is in the people or in the State, which is ruled according to the new principles of liberty. They hold that the State must not be united to religion, that there is no reason why one religion ought to be preferred to another, and that all must be held in the same esteem."

This is a plain statement and condemnation of all democratic freedoms.

In his encyclical *Mirari Vos*, Pope Gregory XVI in 1846, after attempts at popular revolution in Italy, spared no words in his condemnation of all civil and religious liberty. Freedom of conscience he called "*deliramentum*" (insanity), freedom of thought "a pestilential error."

Pope Pius IX, in 1864, culminated the Papacy's desperate attempt to stem progress toward these democratic freedoms in his famous "*Syllabus of Modern Errors*," attached to and summarizing more detailed condemnation of them in its accompanying encyclical "*Quanta Cura*." The 80th and final proposition of this "Syllabus" of errors to be condemned reads:

"The Roman Pontiff can and ought to reconcile himself to, and agree with, progress, liberalism, and civilization as recently introduced."

There have been periods in the history of the Catholic Church when victory was won by the liberal elements in the Church. So strong were those elements in the 18th century that Pope Clement XIV in 1773 was persuaded to abolish the entire Jesuit Order irrevocably from the Church and the world. But the pro-Jesuit Pope Pius VII restored the Jesuits in 1821, and from that time on they gradually rebuilt their power over the entire Church. But till the rise of Fascism, the liberal groups within the Catholic Church which recognized and favored, to a certain extent, the victories won by the French Revolution, succeeded in being able to exist side by side with the Jesuit reactionaries—who have always regarded the liberties that flowed from the French Revolution as pernicious and diabolic. The progressive elements did all they could to bring the Catholic Church into line with liberal democratic doctrines, both in politics and theology, and thereby constantly incurred the enmity of the Jesuit faction. But the Jesuits were always able to win the popes over to their side, even those, such as Pope Pius IX and Pope Leo XIII, who at first were not inclined to side with them. The last stand of the liberal parties within the Catholic Church was made at the Vatican Council of 1870, in their attempt to prevent the imposition of the Jesuit planned dogma of the personal infallibility of the Pope. A total of 170 bishops either left the Council before the final vote was cast, or remained and voted *non placet*." Among them were many American bishops. At that time there was a total of 917 Roman Catholic dioceses (bishoprics) in the world. Yet only 433 persons finally voted in favor of papal infallibility at the Vatican Council, and many of these were not bishops, but merely apostolic vicars and lesser church officials. Four-fifths of the 433 who did so vote were Italians.

The history of Vatican policy entered a new phase with the decree of the personal infallibility of the pope. It placed the intransigent ultramontane Jesuit party in an impregnable position to bring their 400-year counter-Reformation to its hoped-for conclusion. The Jesuits, by making the Pope thenceforth the sole, supreme arbiter in the Church, were able to use him to break down all resistance on the part of the liberal elements to align the Church's policy so that it might be more in keeping with democratic trends in the modern world.

The outstanding German-Catholic historian, Father Josef Schmidlin, professor at Tuebingen University, gives a clear picture of the fight between these two factions for the mastery of Vatican policy toward the end of the 19th century. In his *History of the Popes of Modern Times* (Vol. III, p. 1), he tells us:

"The history of the Popes during the 19th Century presents a succession of divergent systems following each other like a game of opposites and of warring forces striving for the mastery, with first one side winning and then another. On one side are the zealots striving in an intransigent and intolerant manner to

preserve fixed traditions and orthodoxy, and who take a hostile attitude towards the progress of modern civilization and the liberal victories that followed on the great revolutions, which are the unremitting enemies of the (Catholic) Church, the State and the principle of authority. On the other side are the liberals who, actuated by a more equitable political sense, endeavor to break free from the traditional restraints bound up with the ideas of old, and who try to reconcile themselves with modern progress in order to live in peace with liberal states and governments, and to integrate the church, as a spiritual force, in contemporary civilization.

"From the beginning, this war-like game of opposites has been going on within the Roman Curia, and especially within the College of Cardinals. It is most evident in the papal conclaves which became the stage for this play of divergent tendencies, which are afterwards openly expressed in the attitudes of successive pontiffs. For the popes support one or the other of these tendencies and personify them by the conduct of their internal and foreign policies after mounting the papal throne."

1. Cf. *Bullarium Romanum*, Vol. XVII, Ch. XVI, p. 173. In this connection it is significant that Hitler and his National Socialist Party are on record as declaring that their real object was not the destruction of the Treaty of Versailles, but of the effects of the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648. Hitler actually declared that he would hold his victorious peace conference that would initiate his "new order" at Osnabrueck. The following was published in the Nazi *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* of May 15, 1940:

"It is not the revision of the Versailles Treaty which is the great thought written on the banner of the German troops, but **the extinguishing of the last remnants of the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648.**"

## TRENDS SINCE WORLD WAR I

THE NEED to bring the Vatican's real policy out into the open became evident to its leaders following the First World War. Liberalism had progressed so far in the early twenties that it began to affect the masses in the Catholic Church itself, even in Germany and other European countries. Friedrich Heiler, professor of history in the University of Marburg, has the following to say on this point:<sup>1</sup>

*"These recent tendencies of Catholicism have spread to a great extent in Germany. German Catholicism is in fact a particular kind of Catholicism, due to the fact that it has been subject, continually i! not visibly, to the influence. of the reformed churches of Christendom, and has constantly absorbed certain features belonging to Evangelical Christianity."*

Added to this there was the failure of the reactionary attempt in 1921 on the part of the victorious Allies to crush the infant Soviet Republic, which so frightened the Jesuit leaders of the Catholic Church that they determined to

initiate counter-measures themselves, without delay. The liberal trend in Italy culminating in the election of a Freemason as the Mayor of Rome caused the Church great anxiety.

Pope Pius XI had reason, in a speech in February, 1929, to call Mussolini: "a gift of Providence, a man free from the prejudices of the politicians of the liberal school." The conditions of the world at that time created in the minds of Vatican politicians visions of the danger of Europe being overrun by Communists. This threat also presented an opportunity, long looked forward to, when action could be openly taken completely to reverse the "disastrous" trend toward full establishment of the freedoms of the common people, so violently condemned by Popes Gregory XVI, Pius IX and Leo XIII. The historian Karl Boka, an ardent supporter of the Catholic restoration movement put it thus:<sup>2</sup>

"At this decisive moment the Pope seized the reins and took in to his hands the unified control of all fields of endeavor in which his predecessors had distinguished themselves. This was the beginning of Catholic Action of far-reaching importance, of the entrance of the Church into the battle for moral and religious renovation, and for the reform of social institutions. And this intervention had for its end the destruction of the liberal spirit of the 19th century and the triumph of the Christian idea.

Few American observers of the European scene were conscious of the fact that, side by side with the rise of Fascism in the political and social sphere, a like Fascist set-up arose within the Catholic Church. This latter set-up, the creation of the same Pope Pius XI, was called Catholic Action, which must not be confused with ordinary Catholic activity, but which was a specially created corporate entity integrating all Catholic activity in the hierarchy centered, in turn, in the Vatican. People in America did not see it in this light, because their vision was obscured by mere surface events, which were the necessary corollary of all Fascist action, both in politics and religion, namely, a brutal purge of anti-Fascist members within the Church itself. Americans focused their thought only on the operational differences between the two Fascisms in Church and State. They noted that the Pope and Mussolini exchanged heated words over the methods by which they had agreed to work together according to the terms of the Lateran Pact they had jointly signed in 1929. They noted that Hitler's regime in the beginning interned individual anti-Nazi Catholic priests in concentration camps; that the heads of some religious orders in Germany and Austria were brought to trial before the People's Court for smuggling money out of the country; that others were arrested and found guilty of crimes against morals; that some priests were jailed even for harboring "communists" in Germany; that Hitler seemed to turn against his best supporters among the Catholic hierarchy, notably Cardinal Innitzer and the Bishop of Salsburg, both of whom had signed the manifesto of the Catholic hierarchy welcoming Hitler into Austria at the time of the Anschluss; that public school education was taken out of the hands of the priests in Austria; that the Catholic Center Party had suffered and its leader, Dr. Klausener, was assassinated in Hitler's blood purge of June 30, 1934. These facts were erroneously confused in America with what was called "Hitler's fight against the Churches." The American public did not see that

Hitler, in persecuting and eliminating the anti-Fascist elements of the Roman Catholic Church, was acting parallel with, and aiding and abetting the Jesuitical element within the Church that wished to bring about the same result.

Brutal cleansing of liberal and heretical members within the Catholic Church itself has always preceded every return to authoritarianism in Europe. The crusades of the Middle Ages began with persecution of the Jews and a purging of Catholic heretical members of the Church. The same happened at the beginning of the wars of religion instigated by the Jesuits in the 17th century. Nazi-Fascism's anti-Semitic ideology, its anti-Masonic and antidemocratic activities, its very propaganda methods were borrowed from the Jesuit Order. As in Inquisition times, the Catholic Church merely used the Ovra and the Gestapo of the Fascist and Nazi regimes as its 'secular arm' to rid Catholicism of its own recalcitrant elements which had become infected with liberal and Protestant ideas during the post-war years. On the other hand, Fascism and Nazism provided the Catholic Church with a new weapon to bring to a successful conclusion its 400-year war against Protestantism and the liberal institutions it had brought into being in the social order, and which had been allowed greater scope than ever to extend its "hated heresy" since the fall of the German monarchy in 1918.

The purge was carried out for both purposes according to the traditional methods of Jesuit strategy. That strategy is now known to us as fifth column penetration-the use of formalized democratic groups and institutions in order to overthrow democracy from within. Jesuit-trained Dr. Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's spokesman and chief propagandist, put it this way:<sup>11</sup> It will always remain the best joke of the democratic system that it provided its deadly enemies with the means to destroy it." Just as Mussolini and Hitler used democratic parties and "elections" to have democracy commit suicide, so the Vatican used its Catholic Popular Party in Italy, led by the liberal priest Don Luigi Sturzo, and the Catholic Center Party in Germany, led by Msgr. Kass, to make its deal with the dictators. Then, by arbitrarily dissolving both parties, the Vatican removed the last obstacle in the way of both dictators to their rise to power. By the same stroke, the Vatican also broke up the last remaining centers of lay Catholic political action within the Church itself. From that time on, the Pope was absolute dictator of the Church, in the political as well as the spiritual field. As stipulated by the set-up of Catholic Action, the Pope alone could now enter into direct political agreements with the dictators.

The popular confusion in America concerning the relations between the Catholic Church and Fascism has been due to ignorance of the inner workings of the Catholic Church, which has never been the rigidly uniform system that it is generally supposed to be. But it was to make it thus rigidly uniform, and to bring the Church into step with the "new order" of Nazi-Fascism, that Pope Pius XI established Catholic Action. To this end he dedicated his encyclical on Labor in 1931, entitled, *Quadragesimo Anno*, which has for its sub-title,<sup>11</sup> On the Reconstruction of the Social Order." For within the Catholic Church, there has always been a dominating reactionary element locked in mortal combat with opposing liberalizing groups.



These two factions came to grips within the Catholic Church at the same time that the conflict in the political and social order came to a head between the opposing ideologies of Fascism and Democracy after the First World War. Hopes had been high, within the Catholic Church as well as in the countries of Europe, that liberalism and democracy could be firmly entrenched in Europe, and that, in line with this, the liberal elements in the Catholic Church would force the Vatican to change its reactionary policy. But these liberal elements lost the battle and the intransigent Jesuit party proceeded to tie up the Vatican's policy to that of the dictators. It 'fascistized' the Catholic Church and made it both the example for, and the ready collaborator with, all would-be dictators in the economic and social order among the nations of Europe. How well the lesson was learned by Mussolini, Hitler, Franco and their lesser imitators in Europe is now clear to everyone. There is now no doubt that the idea of 'totalitarianizing' the entire body of a nation by the ruthless intolerance of a controlling organism within the greater organization was taken from the Jesuit set-up in the Catholic Church. Hitler specially lauds this intolerant Jesuit set-up in the Catholic Church in his *Mein Kampf*, and instructed his National-Socialist Party to make it their model.<sup>3</sup>

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