

"IN THE UTMOST ANXIETY"

THE fate of the Encyclical Letter "*In the Utmost Anxiety*," addressed to the German hierarchy, is in itself sufficient to show the state of affairs in the Third Reich. It was not allowed to be published either in any secular newspaper or in any purely religious paper. The printers who dared to print the Encyclical for the bishops' official publication were closed down by the police for the time being and the official papers confiscated. All that was publicly known of the Encyclical was a short notice of a severe protest to the Vatican in respect of it. Following this, the letter was rejected by the Nazi leaders, notably by Adolf Hitler himself who on May 1st made some biting references to critics of the Nazis and allusions to the Pope's Encyclical. In reference to the Churches he said: "So long as they attend to their own affairs the State will not intervene. But if they go against us with sermons and encyclicals and encroach on the business of the State, we shall call them to order and we shall force them back into their proper work of caring for the religious needs of the people."

The very attempt to suppress the Encyclical proves how right the Holy Father was to condemn therein the eluding and violation of the "Reichskonkordat," for the later, established in 1933, distinctly maintained the right of free publication of pastoral letters and encyclicals.

Nevertheless every German Catholic heard the text of the Encyclical; it was read on Palm Sunday from all the Catholic pulpits of Germany, having been only a few hours previously made known to the priests. Copies and reprints are circulating everywhere in spite of the opposition of the police.

The Encyclical has made a very profound impression. It has given the faithful new courage, for while on the one hand it has revealed the destructive struggle against the Church, it is nevertheless in an attitude of arms outstretched towards any possibility of conciliation. And this new courage is indeed necessary in the ever-increasing campaign against

the Church. Had the Pope not received repeated reports that the Faith and Christian proclamations were being menaced, the Encyclical would never have been written. He referred to the reports brought by the German bishops to his sick bedside. The highest authority in the Church was bound on religious grounds, therefore, to raise its voice in warning and instruction. Events that have taken place in the Third Reich since the Encyclical do not show any sign of willingness to accept the Pope's outstretched hand of peace; on the contrary, the struggle has become fiercer. It is true that the Concordat is officially considered as still existent, but the Nazi leaders have put their own interpretation on it and do not in the least consider themselves bound by it. The note of protest sent to the Vatican, the text of which has not been made public, maintains this position. All that is known of the text is that Adolf Hitler's government accuses the Vatican itself of that violation of the Concordat for which the Pope blames the Third Reich when in reality it had always strictly kept to the Concordat. If it had come to take measures against various representatives of the Church, it was merely because they were mixed up in a political Catholicism which still existed. The clergy had only to be German, etc. . . . What in reality is to be understood by this is to be seen in the attempt to suppress the Church's influence in every way. Even after the Encyclical, the struggle against the confessional schools continued, this struggle which had in particular led to the publication of the Encyclical. As the confessional schools had clearly been made secure through the Concordat, it was not by a law of the Reich but by a so-called "parents' vote" that they could be got rid of. These parents' votes are in reality merely comedy. The parents are forced by all manner of devices to decide for the so-called German "Gemeinschafts" Schools, which the bishops are necessarily opposing. As the Bishop of Trier remarked, this led to unbelievable events in the Saar territory, which is ardently Catholic, and was the thanks for the 1935 plebiscite when the people of the Saar voted for the return to Germany. It was announced, for example, that those who were in favour

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of the existence of the Confessional schools were to report to the Town Hall, otherwise it would be taken for granted that they were not in favour. At the same time it was intimated that to enter their names for the Confessional schools was to admit themselves to be enemies of the State, an avowal which involved economic risks and, for an official, the loss of position.

But apparently the Third Reich intends to continue these parents' votes which in reality are simply an application of force. It was to such facts as these that the Pope's statement referred when he wrote: "We realize that a free and secret voting amongst you would have lead to an overwhelming plebiscite for the Confessional schools." Besides which it must be realized that even these Confessional schools in the Third Reich do not guarantee an education satisfactory to the Church, because in these, too, the religious lessons are controlled. Religious studies are greatly handicapped. The teachers have often not a very solid Faith in spite of their baptism certificates, and the spirit of the general education is contrary to the outlook of the Church. The convent schools are set aside whenever possible. They are forbidden to take young schoolchildren. They are advised to unite themselves to the State. Nuns who held positions in the public schools in Bayern have been dismissed, in spite of the protest of Cardinal Faulhaber.

After the Encyclical the campaign against the Religious Orders and the educational influence of the clergy in general began with renewed vigour. This campaign had already begun in 1936, but was tactfully discontinued during the Olympic Games. In the trials of that year religious communities were accused of being centres of covetousness and criminal greed. A tremendous propaganda accompanied these trials, and in 1936 it was alleged that the Religious Orders were discovered to be sexually corrupt. In Coblenz a series of trials was arranged against members of a Franciscan Brotherhood. The Brothers were accused of sexual relationships with each other and with their pupils. This trial, and similar ones against priests and Catholic teachers of youth, were used by the Nazi Propagandists as a pretext

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to attack the morality of Religious Orders in general. Then at the beginning of 1936 some Catholic youth leaders were arrested upon the wholly unfounded grounds of having been mixed up in a communistic machination amounting to high treason. The Nazis were obliged nevertheless to release the most important of the prisoners, Mgr. Wolker, director of the Catholic Young Men's Association, because they were unable to convict him of any crime. His release passed by almost unnoticed whereas the news of his arrest had been tremendously important. And now, after the Encyclical, the Nazi State has decided to continue with increased vigour its campaign against the clergy and the Orders, trying to prove them to be sexual criminals and guilty of high treason.

As an overture to the campaign came the trial against the “Catholic-bolshevist” youth leaders. Chaplain Rossaint, the chief of the accused, was sentenced to eleven years' penal servitude. He had been under arrest since January 1936 on the charge that in 1933-1934, under the cloak of caring for their religious needs, he had spoken with communists and had discussed the possible overthrow of Hitler. But the attempt to find any kind of political alliance or connection with communist activities was in vain, and therefore the case against Rossaint and his companions was hardly over before the great immorality ramp against ecclesiastical institutions began.

The German press excitedly produced the news that within a short period thousands of immorality criminals from the monasteries and from amongst the clergy were to appear before the law. “The German people,” it cried, “and in particular the youth of Germany, must be protected against these corrupt elements.” We can now expect the exclusion of the Religious Orders from all matters concerned with education, and these measures will be exhibited in the light of an act of self-protection. Hitler himself, after he had already opposed the Encyclical, declared on May 1st: “They have no right to attack the morals of the State; they should concern themselves with their own morals.” The

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immorality trials are to be given the greatest possible publicity.

Dr. Goebbels' paper, the "Angriff," urges all parents and teachers to attend the law courts so as to see for themselves the complete corruption of the leaders of the Church. Moreover the wireless will broadcast to the whole world this information of ecclesiastical immorality.

The attitude of the Catholic to these accusations is clearly indicated in the Encyclical. The Pope maintains that any shortcomings and blameworthy deviations from the Faith are but a one-sided picture of an immense sum of genuine sacrifice, virtue, brotherhood and heroic faith amongst the servants of the Church. He exposes the hypocrisy of the National-Socialist pharisaical righteousness: "It is manifest," he says, "that the accusers, while setting up such hard standards for the Church, at the same time forgot to notice other communities whose interests lay nearer to them. And in this way the injured morality of the accuser revealed itself akin to those of whom Christ said that 'they saw the mote in their brother's eye, but the beam that was in their own eye they did not consider'."

Grotesque accusations followed the Pope's Letter. The Nazi paper "Westdeutscher Beobachter," declared that the Pope was a supporter of Bolshevism, because he had blessed the Belgian Cardinal van Roey. It called the Cardinal the patron of a "catholic-communist" alliance, whereas the Pope had given him his blessing because he had opposed the Rexist leader Degrelle for purely religious reasons.

All these things show that the National-Socialist fight against Bolshevism is first and foremost a mere political opportunism. For the Nazi, anyone who does not agree with him is a Bolshevik—therefore even the Pope is a Bolshevik. The State is striving to dechristianize all public life and also to withdraw all Christian influence from the individual. The Nazi State will not subject itself to any higher law, not even to the Law of God. Christianity will have to renounce any kind of independent form of power. The National-Socialist view of life is alone to decide what the Church may or may not do. It maintains that the Church as an institution cannot

save the people from Bolshevism. The youth of the nation and the whole of life in fact must be penetrated with the National-Socialist point of view.

Hitler had spoken in this manner in his speech of May 1st. The older unteachable people could be done without, but their children would be taken away from them. At 8 years old they are put into the *Jungvolk*, then into the *Hitlerjugend* or into the German Young Girls' League, later into the Workers Union and into military service, and finally they become fully-fledged members of the Party. And the Church as an educational factor is to be kept completely out of this chain. The Nazi claim to total education does not therefore confine itself only to the schools and to the young, but covers life in general. The aim of this whole plan is to concentrate everyone's energy on following in blind faith the leadership of the National-Socialist State, which is to be the central expression of the reality of life.

The new anti-Christian and pagan movement has of late not even refrained from making infamous attacks upon Our Lord Himself. But even more dangerous is the subtle poisoning of the whole Christian atmosphere, the systematic avoidance of everything Christian, the twisting of holy words and conceptions such as faith, eternal life, original sin, and so on. As the Pope has forcefully insisted in his Encyclical, Christianity is not being attacked in an open and direct manner, but its terminology is being given another meaning, thereby becoming falsified and void; that it is not those who merely make use of the name of God who believe in Him, but only those who connect the divine name with the true idea of God.

To give an example of their method, an order was issued that all adherents of the "German Faith Movement," who had openly renounced Christianity, should enter their names in the registers as believers in God. To forsake the Church is recommended as a protest of true Faith against the hypocritical religion of priests who mix themselves up in politics.

The Encyclical has made clear to all the real direction in which things are moving. It has clearly shown up the methods and tactics by which the Concordat is completely

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turned upside down. But it cannot change much the external development of affairs, because the Pope has no military power behind him, no battleships nor aeroplanes. And in any case it would not be wise to try to save the Church by such methods; or to expect, for example, the smoothing of the situation through the partnership of Italy in the political Berlin-Rome Axe. But without doubt the growing acuteness of the situation has not found German Catholics unprepared. Already before the Encyclical appeared all true believing Catholics knew, even though they had to keep silence, what lay before them, and since the Encyclical they know for a certainty that it is now a case of a decisive fight for the Faith against the terrible power of a Totalitarian State, the Leviathan of the twentieth century. But against this power, on the other hand, is the strength of souls who are prepared and whose Faith nothing can shake. Every courageous word said by a bishop or cardinal is received with enthusiasm.

Even so, no sensational occurrence is to be expected. The deciding factors are the silent and unknown believers, priests, members of Religious Orders and laymen, who are learning by these various occurrences what is really taking place around them. Christian hope cannot be evaluated merely on natural grounds; it may be present even when it is humanly speaking groundless. In Germany there is this hope, looking to the day when, in the Pope's words, "the *Te Deum* of freedom can rise up to heaven, a *Te Deum* of thankfulness to the Almighty." God will not allow man to replace the divine by a merely earthly power. He is, as the Encyclical reminds us, the King and the lawgiver of all peoples, before whose greatness "all nations are as a drop of a bucket" (Is. xl, 15).

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