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CRITICAL ONLINE EDITION OF THE NUNCIAL  
REPORTS OF EUGENIO PACELLI (1917–1929)\*

Eugenio Pacelli is one of the most controversial personalities of the 20th century. For some he simply is “Hitler’s Pope” (John Cornwell)<sup>1</sup>, for others he is “the greatest benefactor of the Jewish people” (Pinchas Lapide)<sup>2</sup>. Ever since the publication of Rolf Hochhuth’s drama *The Deputy, a Christian tragedy* there is a continuing debate on his “silence” regarding the Holocaust and the guilt of the Catholic Church for the systematic murder of more than six million Jews. Consequently, research is focussed on the period of his pontificate as Pius XII (1939–1958) and more precisely on the period of the Second World War.

\* My thanks go to Giovanna de Serio and Elisabeth-Marie Richter, who translated the present text into English. The oral style was deliberately maintained and the text was enhanced by footnotes. For more detailed information on the edition see [www.pacelli-edition.de](http://www.pacelli-edition.de). The edition is also presented in: H. Wolf, *Digitale Edition neuzeitlicher Quellen (DENQ) Pius XII. als Nuntius in Deutschland oder Vom Recht auf eine eigene Biographie anhand der Quellen*, in: M. Matheus/H. Wolf (ed.), *Bleibt im Vatikanischen Geheimarchiv vieles zu geheim? Historische Grundlagenforschung in Mittelalter und Neuzeit. Beiträge zur Sektion des Deutschen Historischen Instituts (DHI) Rom, organisiert in Verbindung mit der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Seminar für Mittlere und Neue Kirchengeschichte. 47. Deutscher Historikertag, Dresden 30. September-3. Oktober 2008, Rome, 2009*. URL: [http://www.dhi-roma.it/Historikertag\\_Dresden.html](http://www.dhi-roma.it/Historikertag_Dresden.html), (date 2011-09-26); H. Wolf e.a. (ed.), *L’edizione critica online dei rapporti delle Nunziature di Eugenio Pacelli (1917–1929)*, in: A. Guasco/R. Perin (ed.), *Pius XI: Keywords. International Conference Milan 2009 (Christianity and History)*, Münster, 2010, p. 49-62; H. Wolf (ed.), *Eugenio Pacellis als Nuntius in Deutschland. Forschungsperspektiven und Ansätze zu einem internationalen Vergleich*, Paderborn, 2011 (in preparation).

<sup>1</sup> J. Cornwell, *Hitler’s Pope. The Secret History of Pius XII*, London, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> H. Wolf, *Pope and Devil. The Vatican’s Archives and the Third Reich*, Cambridge – London, 2010, p. 15.

Pacelli's contribution to the Vatican's perception of Germany and Europe first of all in his role as nuncio in Germany from 1917 to 1929 and later as cardinal secretary of state from 1930 to 1939 has been scarcely considered, especially as far as his "silence" as Pope regarding the Second World War and the Holocaust is concerned. The twelve years as nuncio, however, must have been crucial in shaping his view of Germany and with it his pontifical politics.

Ever since 2003 and 2006, the altogether roughly 7.000 nuncial reports by Pacelli, which he sent to Rome from Munich and Berlin, are accessible in the Vatican Secret Archives. As we are editing the drafts as well as the definitive versions, we are confronted with about 14.000 documents. Moreover, there are about 5.000 directives, which were sent to the Nuncio from Rome. Moreover, about 5-6.000 enclosed documents were attached to the reports and the dispatches – namely letters from Pacelli to third parties or vice versa, memoranda, newspaper articles and so forth. Altogether there are about 25.000 documents that are to be edited. It is impossible to imagine this edition in a printed version; no research support institution would ever finance a classical edition of such a large amount of text. Only as an online edition can a project of this kind be put into practice. The DFG (German Research Federation) has approved a long-term project with the duration of twelve years. It has been initiated in January 2008 and aims to present an online edition of the reports, dispatches, and enclosed documents. The project is directed by Professor Hubert Wolf at the Department of Medieval and Modern Church History of the University of Münster and developed in cooperation with the Vatican Secret Archives and the German Historical Institute of Rome.

Under which point of view does this gigantic corpus of sources offer anything really new? I would like to emphasize two aspects. On the one hand, it is extremely interesting to see Pacelli analyzing the ecclesiastical, political, and cultural conditions and developments in Germany and in the world from a Roman perspective – not to forget the reactions of the Roman Curia. On the other hand, the reports permit an extraordinary view of Pacelli's personality.

As far as the first aspect is concerned, Pacelli, the Roman, dispatches

his observations on the situation in Germany and the world daily or even several times a day. From 1920 onwards he resides in Berlin, in the whirl of the events. While most of the facts and events themselves are already well-known, the valuation of those facts by Pacelli in those twelve years is completely new. This “view from Rome” (quoting David Schultenover)<sup>3</sup> does not only have internal importance but is ever more important on a worldwide scale.

Just to give an example: on the level of world politics Pacelli as a Roman agent residing in Rome instructed by the Pope opened secret negotiations with the Soviet Union. Moreover the Nuncio was involved in the dismissal of the Apostolic Administrator of the diocese of Vilnius, Kazimierz Mikołaj Michalkiewicz, in 1918 – I will come back to this topic later.

As far as the second aspect is concerned, the reports permit an extraordinary view of Pacelli’s personality and of his “German” conditioning. He admires many German qualities as for example punctuality, tidiness, and neatness as well as decent behavior during Mass. He was enchanted by German technical standards. This is what he refers to the Cardinal Secretary of State after his settlement in Munich in May 1917, enthusiastic because of his new official car: “It is a beautiful Benz 18/45 H. P. , strong and elegant. It has all the innovations of the automotive industry, from the gear shift lever on the electric cigarette lighter, then the speed gauge, the gradient gauge, and the safety catch. It is really a car worthy of a Pope’s Representative.”<sup>4</sup> This is the typical way Pacelli used to express himself. For the Nuncio, as a representative of the Pope, it was very important to be recognized and adequately esteemed by everyone.

With the edition of the reports and directives of Pacelli’s nunciature the research on Pius XII is consciously called into question again. On the basis of the new sources several hypothesis can be verified or

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18, 21; D. G. Schultenover, *A View from Rome. On the Eve of the Modernist Crisis*, New York, 1993.

<sup>4</sup> Document no. 9390, nuncio report, final version, Pacelli to Gasparri, 1917-05-29, in: “*Kritische Online-Edition der Nuntiaturreporte Eugenio Pacellis (1917–1929)*”, URL: [www.pacelli-edition.de/Dokument/9390](http://www.pacelli-edition.de/Dokument/9390) (date 2011-09-26).

rejected. If we bear in mind the suppositions on the “silence” of Pius XII often reported with moralizing verve, it becomes evident that this way of proceeding is not only desirable because it corresponds to professional historical science, but also because it deals with the safeguard and protection of ethical standards: ill-considered judgments are as inopportune as uncritical apologies. Like every other personality that becomes the object of historical analysis, Pius XII has the right to a multifaceted biography, which is the result of comprehensive scientific analysis of the sources.

The critical online edition of Nuncio Eugenio Pacelli’s reports is based on the software system DENQ. This is the acronym of “Digital Edition of Contemporary History’s Sources”. The German Historical Institutes in Rome and London cooperated in developing this software. To go a bit more into details, the software is based on an open source XML (Extensible Mark-up Language) database, expanded by PHP and Java modules. Hence, it does not depend on commercial software products. When developing the system we were careful to use only those formats and techniques that can guarantee time stability. XML is the leading open license-free standard and can be read and written with any text editor whatsoever. This format is also particularly appreciable as the development of specific XML databases allows immediate filing, data management and data analysis. It is therefore possible to keep data in a safe format for a long time; at the same time complex solutions are made available in the form of a web database system. Last but not least, the perhaps greatest advantage for the scientific community is that the user’s technical requirements are very low.

Let us have a look at the possibilities our database offers. From the homepage [www.pacelli-edition.de](http://www.pacelli-edition.de) the user is directed to the database by clicking on “Datenbank”. The chosen example fits quite well with the town in which this conference has taken place. Kazimierz Mikołaj Michalkiewicz was apostolic administrator of the diocese of Vilnius from 1908 to 1918. During the German occupation in the First World War there was harsh antagonism between the Germans and Michalkiewicz. The occupying power wanted to establish a Lithuanian satellite State and considered Michalkiewicz as an obstacle, while the Germans blamed

him for “polonizing” the diocese. The latter wanted to remove him from his office and to appoint a pro-German Lithuanian bishop. If we look for Michalkiewicz in the index of the biographies in our data base, we are directed to his biographical datasheet, written in German, which contains the most important steps of his life as well as the respective references. If we scroll down, we see a list of documents which contain a link to Michalkiewicz’s name. At present there are 100 documents, but we may presume that in the future it is going to be longer; – after all, Michalkiewicz is one of the most-mentioned persons in our database in the years 1917 and 1918. As we can see here, many letters written by Michalkiewicz or directed to him have been included in our data base as enclosures to the reports.

Let us scroll to the document no. 2125, which is the final version of a report written by Pacelli to Gasparri on June 24, 1917, and click on it. By doing so we open a window that contains an edited report. In the heading section of the document we find basic information on the kind of document, sender, addressee, date, archive shelf mark and so on. This is followed by a summary of the document in italics, which abstracts the content of the Italian report in German, as well as by the subject and the text. By clicking on the name “Michalkiewicz” we open a window, which includes the entire name of the person quoted, his biographical details and the position he held. If we click on “mehr” (more), the window is enlarged, and we are provided with additional information. Clicking on “Vollansicht” (full frame) we are redirected to the previous page, which includes the references. Let us, however, return to the report.

Pacelli reports on the director of the Military Administration in Lithuania, Franz-Joseph Prince of Isenburg-Birstein, who called on him at the Nunciature in Munich to deliver a complaint about Michalkiewicz, which was supposed to be forwarded to the Cardinal Secretary of State, as Pacelli indeed did. As we can see here, ten documents were enclosed to the report. A mouse-over reveals a brief list of the documents enclosed. The fifth document, for instance, is a letter written by the Vilnius canon Johannes Ellert to Michalkiewicz on June 2, 1916. Let us click on it to be immediately directed to our

document.<sup>5</sup> To get back to the former nuncio report, we click on the report's respective number, which is to be found in the document's heading section.

Let us analyze the passage in which Pacelli judges both parties involved in the conflict, just to have a first impression of his "way of rendering information". "Mi permetto qui soltanto di notare subordinatamente come la lettura del documento in questione sembra rivelare un'eccessiva ingerenza della Autorità militare tedesca nelle cose ecclesiastiche. Può ben essere che Mgr. Michalkiewicz, e specialmente il Canonico Ellert, Arciprete della Chiesa di S. Giovanni in Vilna, abbiano mancato di prudenza e di moderazione."<sup>6</sup>

Pacelli notes mistakes by both parties: the German authorities meddle in interior ecclesiastical questions and both Michalkiewicz and the canon Ellert lack prudence and moderation.

I would like to show you another feature of the data base, our so-called "layer model". The drafts, most of which we were able to find in the Vatican Secret Archives, are particularly interesting for the genesis of a report. The very first draft of a report may be followed by other revision stages, sometimes also by different people, although it is always Pacelli who corrects the last version and therefore has the last word. Let me show you an example. This is the draft of a nuncio report by Pacelli, sent to Gasparri on June 24, 1918, in which he refers to a letter by the Bishop of Cologne, Felix Cardinal von Hartmann. It says that the German authorities took Michalkiewicz to Cologne, whereupon the Cardinal provided him with accommodation at the abbey of Maria Laach.<sup>7</sup>

Several things catch our eye: drafts are not furnished with summaries and there is no link to persons or keywords. The green font colour indicates that we have to do with a draft first written by the auditor

<sup>5</sup> Document no. 8633, enclosure, letter, Ellert to Michalkiewicz, 1916-06-02, in: *Ibid.*, URL: [www.pacelli-edition.de/Dokument/8633](http://www.pacelli-edition.de/Dokument/8633) (date 2011-09-26).

<sup>6</sup> Document no. 2125, nuncio report, final version, Pacelli to Gasparri, 1917-06-24, in: *Ibid.*, URL: [www.pacelli-edition.de/Dokument/2125](http://www.pacelli-edition.de/Dokument/2125) (date 2011-09-26).

<sup>7</sup> Document no. 9213, nuncio report, draft, Pacelli to Gasparri, 1918-06-24, in: *Ibid.*, URL: [www.pacelli-edition.de/Dokument/9213](http://www.pacelli-edition.de/Dokument/9213) (date 2011-09-26).

of the Nunciature, Lorenzo Schioppa. We find his name in the field “Schreiber” (writer). Here we see the first draft of the writing. If we click on the second “Schioppa”, his cancellations and additions appear in angled brackets; in this case the only word deleted is “č ora”, which was corrected by “trovasi”. After finishing his version, Schioppa handed the report to Pacelli, who mainly made stylistic corrections, which appear when we click on “Pacelli”. He, for instance, added a “rispettoso” before “cifrato”, “il Sig. Amministratore” becomes “Mons. Amministratore Apostolico” and “Chiostro” becomes “Monastero”.

Moreover, we can compare the different stages of the draft with the final version in a second window by clicking on “Ausfertigungsnummer” (final version’s number). Here the same possibilities to comment as before are at our disposal.