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Pius XII,
the Holocaust
and the Revisionists:
Essays

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Introduction

In November 1938, Pius XI suffered a second heart attack. His health had deteriorated as he confronted the mounting crises that gripped the church and the entire world. On January 15, 1939, he met with all of the ambassadors to the Vatican and urged them to obtain visas to their respective countries, "for the victims of racial persecution in Germany and Italy." On February 16, 1939, the SS journal *Das Schwarze Korps* attacked the Pope as "the sworn enemy of National Socialism," and "Chief Rabbi of the Christians, boss of the firm of Judah-Rome."

In late February 1939, the 81-year-old Pope died. Before his death Pius XI had been preparing Eugenio Pacelli, his secretary of state, to be his successor. Pacelli's career was a steady ascent from his appointment first as nuncio to Bavaria, then as nuncio to the Weimar government, under-secretary of state, bishop, cardinal, and papal secretary of state in 1930. Cardinal Pacelli was a trained diplomat and an expert on German affairs. He subsequently registered 43 separate protests in violation of the 1933 Concordat. In April 1935, Pacelli made it abundantly clear in a speech at Lourdes that the church would never come to terms with the Nazis as long as they persisted in espousing a racial philosophy "contrary to Christian faith." He said to the quarter of a million in his audience:

With the illusion of extolling new wisdom, they are really only lamentable plagiarists.... It matters little that they are inspired by a false conception of the world and life. Whether they are possessed by superstition of race and blood, their philosophy ... rests upon principles essentially opposed to those of Christian faith.¹

Pacelli had drafted most of Pius XI's 1937 encyclical, *Mit brennender Sorge* (*With burning anxiety*), that clearly condemned the Nazi regime, its philosophy and its leader. One draft of the encyclical was written in Pacelli's handwriting. *Das Schwarze Korps* immediately responded, "The encyclical,