

*Aus der Diskussion***OWEN CHADWICK: Nachtrag**

In the various enquiries into leakage of information during the war, the leakage at the office of the Bern nuncio came under suspicion more than ten years ago. But the ways of intelligence services are devious. In the embassy to the kingdom of Italy during the nineteen thirties was a butler who regularly copied documents for the benefit of the Italian police. No one was detected until he stole the diamond necklace of the ambassador's daughter which was in the embassy safe. The British Foreign Office naturally instituted a stringent enquiry into the breach of security. But after the enquiry it carefully put about the impression that it needed to take no more precautions than before. But we know from Osborne's reports that they took stringent precautions, even to the extent of making Osborne's life uncomfortable for a time.

In the charge of Hochhuth against the Papacy, apart from trivial nonsense like the Vatican being silent because of anxiety about its investments, there are two main indictments. The first, and central, is the *razzia* of the Jews of Rome in the middle of October 1943. In the *Actes et Documents* Father Robert Graham and his colleagues have published important documents, and one of exceptional importance directly bearing upon the affair, the interview early that morning between the Secretary of State Cardinal Maglione and the German ambassador to the Vatican, Ernst von Weizsäcker. Almost simultaneously with the release of that document came the publication of *Die Weizsäcker-Papiere 1933-1950*, edited by Leonidas Hill (1976), as seen from the German embassy to the Vatican. I have considered the weight of all this evidence in an article in the *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, volume 28, no. 2 (April 1977) "Weizsäcker, the Vatican, and the Jews of Rome".

Different men will take different moral stances about this matter. But my own belief is that if I had been Pope at that moment I doubt whether I should have thought it right to act differently. The Vatican was too late to save the lives of just over 1000 Jews. But perhaps 5000 or 6000 Jews were hidden all over Rome, and the one vital thing was to try to save those lives. In my belief that is a very powerful argument in favour of the behaviour of the Holy See at that terrible moment of October 1943.

As to the wider charge – as to Poland or the Warthegau – there I am not so definite in my mind. When one reads the yearning appeals for help coming out of the Warthegau, one is bound to wonder whether more response could have been given, even though a response could not have helped to save lives. If Pius XI had still been Pope, or if John XXIII had become Pope, we can be sure that something different would have happened.

But whether if Pius XI had still been Pope the Vatican would have continued to be the Vatican, is another question.

I thought Professor Poulat's speech fine and I found myself in warm agreement with it. Theoretically, that is constitutionally, it was possible to elect Cardinal Tisserant Pope in March 1939. But when you know the sources of history for the moment, you realize that it was perfectly impossible for Tisserant to be elected. It was impossible because of the entire historical development of the institution in its relationship to its political and social environment. That is no longer a historical question about persons, but about the nature of a corporation and of its continuity within an elective system. But I agree with Professor Poulat warmly on his instances. I regard the predicament of the Dutch bishops, confronted with a demonic choice, as the most agonizing moral predicament which could afflict Christian leaders in a time of war; and precisely the same moral predicament confronted the Hungarian bishops.

### W. H. C. FREND: Intervention

It is occasionally my privilege to cross a few of the tees of my distinguished friend, Owen Chadwick. It so happens that by the fortune of war I was here in this very place on June 17<sup>th</sup> 1944. Then the roles were slightly reversed; instead of one of the British diplomats taking refuge in the Vatican the Allies had just entered Rome on June 5<sup>th</sup>, and some of the German diplomats of the Rome staff had decided that the journey to North Italy was too perilous and that they did'nt want to stay in their hotels. So a few of them, among whom Wilhelm von Mohnen, the assistant Air attaché and an engineer from Mannheim, came here, and I had the chance of interviewing them. I can confirm that there was this curious situation, where the German embassy under v. Weizsäcker was on the ground floor of what is now the hostel, and then there was a Slovakian embassy on the next floor, and then a Vichy-French embassy, and finally there was the British embassy at the top. This interview which I had with von Mohnen and which had been arranged by Msgr. Flaherty led gradually towards understanding what both the papacy and the German embassy in the Vatican wanted. And little by little information accumulated, for about July 12<sup>th</sup> I had a long interview with Baron Reitz v. Frenzt. I still possess the note which I wrote to my colleagues and which I reported on the standpoint of Reitz v. Frenzt. He stated that the policy of the Holy See was aimed at the reconciliation between Britain and Germany, because, so far as I could learn from him and from Bishop Hudal, what the papacy really wanted was a Europe which would see the Russians far away; Bishop Hudal regarded central Europe as the key to future peace, and he hoped that there would be a confederation of Croatia, Hungary and Austria. This, he said, was what many people in the Vatican wanted. Then on July 15<sup>th</sup> – this was five days before the anti-Hit-

ler plot – a lot of information came in which suggested that the German embassy in the Vatican might be interested in discussing, in having quite literally something to say to the Allies. I remember writing this up as a memorandum and pointing out that the Vatican – and here I mentioned Msgr. Pancratius Pfeiffer – thought in terms of trying to get the war ended within 1944, but above all trying to keep Europe in one piece so that it should not be dominated by the Soviet Union. I think that this was what lay at the heart of the pope's diplomacy. I am convinced of what I have heard about Osborne's reports, for when after the war I was looking at the Secretary of State's file for 1944, one of the first documents in it were the full minutes of the Teheran conference, but they had never been opened; here they were, a star piece of intelligence, and yet, having reached the German Foreign Ministry, they were left on the top of the file and never looked at. So, if Osborne had not been extremely careful about his reports being intercepted, possibly a very grave situation would have arisen for the Vatican as well as for himself. This links up with what I have already found in my experience here and in my work on German Foreign Office documents after the war. I have been very glad to hear this paper.

June 10<sup>th</sup> 1944 I saw Msgr. O'Flaherty and he confirmed that a great many Jews had been hidden by the Vatican in and around Rome. I didn't ask much about it, because I was interested in getting access to von Mohren, but I well remember this, and it was also confirmed by Prof. Praz who was a very well-known Anglo-Italian scholar. When I saw von Weizsäcker July 22<sup>nd</sup> 1944, the German embassy as foreseen in the memorandum which I had written, rang us up (and I still have the telephone number: it was Vatican 636) and said that they had "something important to tell the Allies". That was on the afternoon of July 21<sup>st</sup> 1944. It was the time, when the anti-Hitler plot was in the balance, and they were most anxious that they should not be sent back to Germany as some sort of good will gesture, because they were all involved, all except the consul general (Wenger) and some others whom they managed to get out of the way. I went down in the afternoon about 3.30 on July 22<sup>nd</sup> and I had a long talk with van Kessel, the first secretary, and then at tea-time the ambassador v. Weizsäcker came in. I had tea with him – in the middle of the war, absolutely astonishing! – and he at towards the end of the conversation said: "You know that we haven't done very much about the Jews, but then the international Red Cross hasn't, and the Vatican hasn't spoken out, and therefore – what can we do?" – I remember this very distinctly and wrote it down in my report. (Those reports are published in the "American Foreign Affairs", vol. 1, 522–529.) So you have the two sides of the case, and there perhaps is a link in this with what you, Professor Chadwick, were saying.

## ROBERT A. GRAHAM: Intervention

The question of diplomatic messages intercepted and deciphered by the enemy in wartime (or in peace) seems to me very important for historians. We have already heard here about "hermeneutics" in history. Now, as we have learned from Professor Freund, the British minister to the Holy See during World War II, Sir D'Arcy Osborne knew that his telegrams were being "read" by the enemy. He therefore drafted his telegrams with this danger in mind. It was also an occasion for him to insert misleading information designed to set the possible intruder off the track. Osborne was not alone to have to face this predicament. It is incumbent on the historian not to attach too literal importance to such messages, but to subject them to intelligent "hermeneutics". How many critics do that?

It is only in recent years that we have been told the extent of the interceptions practiced by both sides during the war (Ultra, Magic, etc.). In the war and also after the war, the tightest secrecy was maintained on this operation. It was highly important that the enemy should not be allowed to learn that his messages were intercepted. Hence ensued a systematic process of camouflage and concealment. Official reports were made giving spurious explanations of decisions and intentions. Later, these official (and mendacious) reports were trustingly read by authorized editors of Official Histories. Now, it appears that in many cases these official versions, composed in the heat of war to conceal the real facts, must be rewritten. We have assisted at a veritable poisoning of the wells. And if the official historians are so easily deceived, what of the beginner, working on a subject to him still quite new? The problem is all the greater because of the increasing masses of documentation open to any doctoral candidate for his research. Even experienced scholars have been misled by failing to take into account what was or should have been uppermost habitually in the communication between an ambassador and his Minister.

The shadow of possible and even probable interceptions therefore hung over every ciphered dispatch. Imagine then the position of the Cardinal Secretary of State, drafting a message to a nuncio in Germany, or Great Britain or Budapest or Washington, and vice versa. It was early known in the Vatican that the Italian secret service (Servizio Informazioni Militare = S. I. M.) were in possession of the Vatican's code. In fact the Italians had the codes of most of the important diplomatic missions in Rome. A special section was very adept at breaking into diplomatic missions, opening the safe where the code book was supposedly safely guarded, photographing the contents – and the contents of any other correspondence found there – after which they could replace everything and depart. In Rome, we know, the British embassy, the French embassy and the American embassy were subject to this treatment with serious consequences for diplomatic and military

situations. Sir d'Arcy Osborne's own butler, planted by S. I. M. (they first harassed and drove out his old faithful cook and thereby created a vacancy in Osborne's household) waited each afternoon until his master took the dog out for a walk in the Vatican gardens. He removed the code book from its supposed "secure" place and brought it out to a waiting S. I. M. photographer. The job had to be done in three successive occasions.

Unmistakable proof that from 1943 onward, if not before, the Italians easily read everything Osborne sent in code, came up after the war. The Roman newspaper "Il Messagero", published many of Osborne's telegrams in full. Subsequently, when the Public Record Office released Osborne's reports, it was seen that indeed the documents of "Il Messagero" were absolutely authentic. The coup of S. I. M. in stealing (copying) Osborne's book had serious implications. When in July-August 1943 the emissaries of the Badoglio government wanted to sue for peace, possibly through Osborne, they had to warn Osborne and everyone else involved, not to use any encoded messages. If the Italians were "reading" Allied messages, the Germans, too, powerfully ensconced on Monte Cavo overlooking Rome, were possibly intercepting Osborne. At one point Osborne in a message to Whitehall denied rumors that any Italians had approached him to intervene for peace. It was a deliberate falsification, meant for the Germans. But a novice naturally takes it at face value.

How the Italians (and the Germans) were able to decipher the Vatican's own incoming and outgoing messages is not clear. One version is that the newest and best cipher was betrayed by an unworthy and venal Vatican employee. Another is that the codes were too simple in the first place (the Italians in the first world war regularly deciphered Vatican messages) and could be broken by the usual scientific or intuitional techniques. Another explanation which seems entirely credible is that the S. I. M. simply burglarized the Vatican in the same way it had broken into the British, French, American and other embassies. This likelihood becomes less improbable when we consider that the chief of the Public Security in the Vatican was himself a member of the O. V. R. A., the Italian secret police.

The published exchanges of the papal Secretariate of State with the Vatican representatives abroad are understandably characterized by restrained language, especially in military matters but also in political and even religious issues. Names were mentioned to the minimum possible (*Nomina sunt odiosa*). Here obviously is a challenge for the serious student of Vatican relations who might possibly on certain occasions expect more forthright and explicit language. The "hermeneutics" of diplomatic history, in short, must give more importance to the influence of the dangers of interceptions than historians have thus far accorded it.

Professor Frend referred also, in his paper, to the marginal notes that one finds in diplomatic reports conserved in the Public Record Office. It was Foreign Office practice for advisers or officials to put their personal

opinions on reports, under their own signature. These brief comments are indeed interesting, often amusing and even more often startling. Their value is not as expressions of policy but rather as indications and reflections of the intimate sentiments and mentality of FO personnel. Can you imagine what Lord Vansittart could have said, and did say, about the Pope, on various occasions? But one does not have to cite the picturesque language of Vansittart to find strong anti-Italian and anti-Vatican opinions in these marginal notes. That the notes should be anti-Italian is understandable, since Italy was a declared belligerent enemy. But these comments are also noteworthy for revealing a strong conviction in FO circles that in the final analysis, the Holy See is an Italian institution. The Pope and his aides, all Italians, were Italian first and Catholic second. Hence, when the Pope spoke, he spoke because Mussolini had whispered in his ear what to say. In the course of the war, consequently, it can be said that nearly every gesture, every request, made by the Pope to the British government was refused (or delayed or suspect) because of the FO's insuperable conviction that Mussolini stood behind the papal moves.

In the early years of the war, when Lord Halifax was Foreign Secretary, this anti-Vatican sentiment was not so much in evidence (except thanks to the dissents written by Halifax himself on the opinions of his anti-Vatican aides). With the coming of Anthony Eden, the basic anti-Vatican sentiment of the FO came again to the surface. In 1944 the Pope himself, in delicate language, had to lament to Osborne that unfortunately the good relations between Britain and the Holy See were no longer as effective as they had been in the first years of his pontificate. How far Eden shared this anti-Vatican sentiment needs closer examination. It is sufficiently evident that this curious form of "No Popery", prevailed in the lower echelons. And this was fully realized in the Vatican where on one occasion, Msgr. Tardini noted that the British had a "fixation" (*chiodo fisso*) that the Vatican is only the instrument of Mussolini.

This aspect of British-Vatican relations has hardly been studied. It did not come to the surface, thanks to the discretion of everyone concerned. It was never betrayed by London and, except for the one-time complaint of Pius XII in 1944, it was played down by the Vatican. Yet it existed and this anti-Vatican sentiment is easily evident in the systematic rejection by the Foreign Office of a great many of the desires of the Pope in the interest of his mission of peace and mercy.

Prof. Frend referred to his own personal wartime (counter-intelligence) experiences in Rome in 1944, when he was able to interrogate certain German personalities and officials. Those safely residing in the Vatican were ready to talk, including the Reich ambassador Ernst von Weizsäcker. We hope that Prof. Frend's reports at the time can eventually be made public. He also mentioned the name of Bishop Alois Hudal, rector of the "Anima". I would recommend caution and perspective in his regard. Bishop Hudal

was a well-known would-be "bridge-builder" to National Socialism. For this reason he had no standing and no hearing in the Vatican, least of all with Pius XII. It is easy to demonstrate that Bishop Hudal (the "Anima" is a church and hostel for German-speaking pilgrims, tourists and students) and Pius XII had absolutely nothing in common in their judgments on National Socialism.