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Vatican Radio and Modern Propaganda A Case Study

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Abstract The essay deals with the employment of Vatican Radio as a modern instrument, which supplied the Catholic Church with a tool of modernisation. A special focus is put on the changes, in terms of method and content, that the radio effected in the apostolate. In order to demonstrate the increasing importance acquired by Vatican Radio for the diplomatic and propaganda aims of the Holy See, it will be considered the case-study of the condemnation of the Croatian anti-Semitic laws during World War II.

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Keywords Vatican Radio. Pius XI. Pius XII. Racial Laws. Modernization.

In the summer of 2013, the British Library hosted the exhibition *Propaganda: Power and Persuasion*, which explored the international state of propaganda since 1900. The word “propaganda” was used for the first time during the Reformation, and was closely linked to the spread of Christianity: the creation of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide by the Catholic Church in 1622, as was revealed in the exhibition panel’s opening section. Actually, the evangelization has always been a preeminent concern of the Apostolic See and consequently it has always tried to employ the best methods to conceive a successful propaganda strategy.

From the late 1930s the radio is surely to be considered one of the modern instruments utilized by the Church to disseminate the Catholic doctrine. During the Second World War it was the voice that encouraged peoples to resist occupation; monitored by the BBC, it provided news and talks for the Allied’s anti-Nazi propaganda; it reached the faithful living in countries where any form of religious message was considered enemy indoctrination. Nonetheless, the path to achieving radio’s full potential was characterized by a careful weighing up of its pros and cons by the Holy See during the pontificate of Pius XI.

This essay will consider the use of the radio by the Vatican as a modern, even avant-garde, construct, which supplied the Catholic Church with the tools of modernization. Furthermore, it will focus on the changes that the radio effected in the apostolate, as far as the method and the content are concerned. Finally, the case-study of the condemnation of the Croatian anti-Semitic laws during the war will be considered, examining how the Holy See realised the importance of Vatican Radio.

1 “The Radio Has No Rivals”. Pius XI and the Birth of Vatican Radio

In the early Twenties, Pope Achille Ratti decided to invest in the creation of a radio station, and no less a person than Guglielmo Marconi was asked to assume the task.¹ Actually, Pius XI inherited the idea from his predecessor, Benedict XV, who first thought of a *radiotelegraphic* instrument to connect the Vatican with the Apostolic Nunciatures all over the world.² It was the First World War that highlighted the importance of wireless communications: Great Britain, France, the United States, and Germany soon understood the necessity of developing the transmission of messages over the airwaves, for example in the maritime operations. Consequently, the postwar period saw the birth of the most important radio companies, such as the American National Broadcasting Company (NBC), the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), the Compagnie générale de TSF (CSF), the German Telefunken and the Italian EIAR. All these new radio stations improved technologically and became more and more efficient starting with the simple transmission of telegraphic messages. Vatican Radio followed the same path.

The supervision of the development of the radio station in Vatican territories was entrusted to the president of the Pontifical Academy of New Lynxes (from 1936 Pontifical Academy of Sciences), the Jesuit Father Giuseppe Gianfranceschi, and it was decided to situate it in the Specola Vaticana (the Vatican Observatory). The radio was equipped with the newest technologies by Guglielmo Marconi and his Company, and at the end of 1930 it was ready for its inauguration.

The ceremony took place on 12 February 1931. Pius XI pronounced the first radiomessage that could be heard simultaneously all over the world.

1 Generally, historians concerned with the birth of Vatican Radio could hitherto base their research on the story told by the Jesuit Father Fernando Bea, re-edited in Bea, *Da Pio XI*. Further information can be found in Cabasés, *Cronistoria*. A recent summary in Pollard, “Electronic pastors”. The history of Vatican Radio from its birth to the Second World War is also the subject of Perin, *La radio del papa*.

2 The information is inferable from the diary of Marconi’s daughter, Paresce Marconi, *Marconi*, 237. See also Raboy, *Marconi*, 563-9.

The speech in Latin was an *urbi et orbi* blessing to clergy and laypeople, infidels and dissidents, rulers and subjects, riches and poor.³ The new medium of communication offered the opportunity to the Pope to reach a wider number of people with his speech, not only geographically but also theoretically detached. The possibility of reducing the communication barriers enabled by radio led the Pontiff to break the conceptual boundary of Christianity's regime and to address all kinds of people, not exclusively the Catholic faithful. The sweeping away of physical limits on the spread of ideas carried by the radio facilitated the dissemination of the Pope's message and therefore of his apostolate activity.

Nevertheless, it took several years before Vatican Radio started a regular broadcasts. The aim of the initial investments was the technological improvement, therefore experimental programs were executed in the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. In order to implement the radio-telegraphic and the radio-telephonic activity "radio exercises" were broadcast every day at given hours. The experimental emissions were made in different languages to observe the technical reception of Vatican Radio abroad and to accustom the audience to its presence in the ether. These exercises consisted of the reading of articles from the *Osservatore Romano* or news from the *Agenzia Fides*.

On 19 April 1931, in the closure day of the Academic Week of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences Vatican Radio broadcast the first talk of the *Scientiarum Nuncius Radiophonicus*. It conveyed a series of lectures on scientific topics read on the radio until January 1936 and published in the Academy's *Atti Lincei*. On that occasion, recorded as a "second inauguration of Vatican Radio", Pius XI gave a speech on the nonexistent contradiction between science and faith:

The very Holy Scripture tells us that God is the author of the Faith as well as the science. The Vatican Council made follow from this beautiful truth one of its proclamations: there is no contradiction between science and Faith, since of Faith and science the only author is God himself.⁴

Infact, the Dogmatic Constitution on the catholic faith *Dei Filius* decreed that:

Even though faith is above reason, there can never be any real disagreement between faith and reason, since it is the same God who reveals the mysteries and infuses faith, and who has endowed the human mind with

3 "Il primo radiomessaggio a tutte le genti e ad ogni creatura": Bertetto, *Discorsi di Pio XI*, 2: 479-83.

4 "Per la prima radiotrasmissione del *Giornale scientifico*": Bertetto, *Discorsi di Pio XI*, 2: 530-1.

the light of reason. [...] Not only can faith and reason never be at odds with one another but they mutually support each other [...]. Hence, so far is the church from hindering the development of human arts and studies, that in fact she assists and promotes them in many ways. [...] Nor does the church forbid these studies to employ, each within its own area, its own proper principles and method: but while she admits this just freedom, she takes particular care that they do not become infected with errors by conflicting with divine teaching, or, by going beyond their proper limits, intrude upon what belongs to faith and engender confusion.⁵

Coming in contact with a product of *modernity* required that it could be inscribed within the teachings of the Sacred Scripture, tradition and magisterium.⁶ On 20 December 1931 Pius XI reaffirmed in another speech at the Academy that there was harmony between faith and science since the first was “brightly demonstrated” by the latter.⁷ With regard to the radio, as Father Gianfranceschi wrote, it was science in the service of faith and it could not aspire to a higher service.⁸

In the meantime a certain number of states were refining the use of radio for social and political purposes, Vatican Radio acquired new chances freed by technological improvements, so it became soon practicable to turn it into more than just a simple transmitting station. In 1934 Father Gianfranceschi died and Pius XI decided Father Filippo Soccorsi would be his successor. Under Soccorsi's direction, – held until 1953 – Vatican Radio developed, was enhanced and became a real radio station. From 1936 it could count on an editorial staff composed only of Jesuits and on a quite regular schedule of broadcasting news in Italian, French, English, German and Spanish twice a day. Two years later an information agency was set up and the radio service was reinforced with regular news bulletins and talks on religious topics. The potential of the modern medium was definitively understood as explained in an article of the *Illustrazione Vaticana*:

Together with the cinema, the radio is one of the most powerful modern means through which the collective is subject to the influence of an in-

5 “Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, Vatican I 1869-1870” (Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, II, ch. 4, 809).

6 The relationship between modern science and catholicism is examined in “Fra darwinismo e creazionismo: la Chiesa di fronte alla rivoluzione scientifica” (Filoramo, *La Chiesa*, ch. VI, 131-53).

7 “Alla Pontificia Accademia delle Scienze. Scienza e fede - verità e carità”: Bertetto, *Discorsi di Pio XI*, 2: 614-16 (614).

8 As Gianfranceschi wrote in *Illustrazione Vaticana*. *L'Illustrazione Vaticana* was a fortnightly review edited by the Vatican and directed by Giuseppe Dalla Torre, who was also the director of *L'Osservatore Romano*.

spiring centre. [...] For the radio it is sufficient an agent's will anywhere in the globe so that the sound has no obstacles and can reach the device in his wavelength, hence the audience. Therefore the radio has a more universal character, and benefits a greater limitless than the cinema.⁹

In the second half of the Thirties the *Secretariatus defensionis contra atheismus* gave support to Vatican Radio supplying three Jesuits in charge of animating the fight against communism: Friederich Muckermann, Joseph Ledit and Francesco Pellegrino. The German writer, known for his anti-communist and anti-nazi campaigns, leading to his exile from 1934, was hired as editor of the review "Lettres de Rome sur l'athéisme moderne" while he was in Rome. Ledit was the creator and the leader of the *Secretariatus*, whereas Pellegrino would provide news or whatever could be useful to contrast the communist propaganda.¹⁰ Broadly speaking, the main topics of Vatican Radio's broadcasts in Italian, English, Spanish and German from 1936 to 1938 concerned communism.¹¹ These broadcasts would discuss the "reds" in Russia and in Spain together with the anti-catholic campaign in Mexico and the dangerous influence they could exercise in other states. Fearing the expansion of the communist ideals, Vatican Radio provided talks propagating alternative solutions, in consonance with the Catholic doctrine, to the global economic and social disease.

In the frontline of the Church's fight against communism, was the radio. As a member of the *Union Internationale de Radiodiffusion* (UIR), Vatican Radio could promote its own viewpoint on international broadcasting regulations. For example, in 1936 Father Soccorsi tried through the UIR to persuade the League of Nations to insert an article preventing anti-religious broadcasts in the *Convention Internationale concernant l'emploi de la radiodiffusion dans l'intérêt de la paix* that was being discussed.¹² His target was Soviet propaganda. Radio Moscow, inaugurated in 1929, was employed in the foreign policy of the Soviet Union, to preach the virtues of the Bolshevik Revolution. It had been a pioneer in the field, considering

9 "La radiodiffusione e i cattolici", 591-2.

10 On the *Secretariatus* see Frangioni, "L'Urss", 305-6. On the *Lettres de Rome* see Petracchi, "I gesuiti"; Chenu, *L'ultima eresia*, 63-4. On Friederich Muckermann see Gruber, "Friedrich Muckermann", and the diary: Junk, *Im Kampf*. On Joseph Ledit see Menozzi, "Regalità", 166-7, 170. On Francesco Pellegrino see Monticone, "La radio".

11 Archivio Centrale dello Stato (ACS), Min. Int., Dir. Gen. di PS, Div. Affari Generali e Riservati, 1938, bb. 37 e 38/A.

12 The UIR, established in the Twenties, was not formed by States but by corporations that exercised the radiodiffusion in their own nations. Vatican Radio joined the UIR in March 1936 as a "special member" since she did not broadcast inside her State. Fickers, "Visibly audible", 419. See also Archivio della Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari (S.RR.SS., AA.EE.SS.), Stati ecclesiastici, 536 P.O., fasc. 559.

that Great Britain launched its Empire Service only in 1932.¹³ Pius XI had realized that the Church had to adopt the same instruments of secularized society in order to oppose to its assertions, otherwise the non-catholic and anti-catholic ideologies would have prevailed. Probably, with his approach to the radio Ratti went further than Pius X did, when he had to accept the growing importance of the press. At that time, he had encouraged even the Catholic press reluctantly, reviving and revising Leo XIII's attitude towards it.¹⁴ On the other hand, during Pecci's pontificate there was a sort of international fascination for the "fourth estate" and even in the Vatican documents we can find records characterizing the press as "a modern apostolate".¹⁵

2 Vatican Radio as a New Instrument of Apostolate

Pius XI did not demonize the radio, on the contrary, he appreciated its potentialities. The evidence of his awareness were in a speech he pronounced in front of a delegation of the *Bureau Catholique International de Radiodiffusion* (BCIR) on 10 November 1936 in Rome for a meeting of its executive committee.¹⁶ The BCIR was an international organism with its headquarters in Amsterdam, gathering the Catholic radio stations worldwide. Its aim was to collect the Catholic efforts in radio broadcasting to neutralize the anti-catholic broadcasts and to "serve the civilizing cause",¹⁷ and Father Soccorsi desired the support of Vatican Radio. In his speech Pius XI explained the increasing relevant function of the radio: "such an imponent apostolate, which every day is extended, and grows in importance to humanity". The radio reduced the distance of evangelization as never before, brought the Pope's words and his priviously unheard voice to distant lands in real time. Conceivably, it conveyed a strengthening of the Pontiff's sovereignty and of the focus on his person, which had their theoretical origins in the centralization began by Pius XI's predecessors. Ratti was acquainted with fact the Church had to rationalise its use of the radio. In his speech to the BCIR he claimed: "There are no terms for comparison with the radio: the radio has no rivals". He was impressed by the remarkable scientific improvements and he expressed his gratitude to

13 See Rawnsley, *Radio*, 7.

14 Vian, *La riforma*, 492-3 fn. 575; Dieguez, "Se fossi Papa".

15 Viaene, Vincent. "Wagging the dog".

16 "All'Ufficio Cattolico di Radiodiffusione": Bertetto, *Discorsi di Pio XI*, 3: 588-91.

17 Mgr. Bernhard Marshall, "Rapport sur nos travaux" in S.RR.SS., AA.EE.SS., Stati ecclesiastici, 472 P.O., fasc. 473, ff. 14-15.

the men who had put “the radio in service of faith, religion, Church and God himself”. And he added:

It is indeed this service that gives to the radio a great value; rather its unique value. The radio is surely a great thing in itself; but it must not be forgotten that it is a force of nature, one of those things that the God’s hand has filled the creation with; a force of nature that does not escape the destiny of all things created.

Again, it was the radio, or science, in the service of faith, as proclaimed in previous *magisterium* documents.

During the meeting the executive committee of the BCIR discussed the possibility of creating a world-wide radio station which could support the Catholic cause. As a result, in the following months the role of Vatican Radio was defined. On 31 July 1937, Father Soccorsi wrote in a note to the Secretary of the Congregation of Ecclesiastical Extraordinary Affairs, Monseigneur Giuseppe Pizzardo: “The Vatican Radio station is in a favoured position for its independence, for the world-service it can provide with its new equipments [...]. We must therefore try to commend as much as possible Vatican Radio”.¹⁸

The relation of the Holy See with the technological progress in broadcasting influenced the one with the mass society, and consequently the general relationship of the Church with modernity. In the last few years, historians have asserted that in the interwar period the image of modernity and the attitude of the Catholic Church towards it were less hostile than before.¹⁹ For instance, with regard to Father Agostino Gemelli’s project, Renato Moro wrote that the transition that he represented started exactly “from the integration of the results of modern science: it does not reject the achievements of modern rationality”, but he fought their anti-religious outcomes.²⁰ The reception of technological instruments and the products of modernity were used to foster the spread of the Catholic point of view, passing from a “defense position” to a “conquest position”. The restoration project of Pius XI included the modernization of the means (pastoral, of evangelization, organization of the Catholic mass) without approving or accepting other substantial issues of modernity like the acknowledgement of the rights and liberties of man’s self-determination.

18 S.RR.SS., AA.EE.SS, Stati ecclesiastici, 472 P.O., fasc. 474, ff. 38-9.

19 See Moro, “Il ‘modernismo buono’”; Moro, “La religione”.

20 Moro, “La religione”, 538.

3 Radio Diplomacy and Propaganda: Denouncing Croatian Racial Laws During World War II

On 16 October 1939, Włodimir Ledochowski, the General of the Company of Jesus, wrote a letter to the Fathers entrusted with the broadcasts of Vatican Radio, in which he claimed:

Since speaking on the radio is an art, everyone is called to refine this art more and more by listening to the best speakers of other countries. Listeners are attracted not only by the content but also the style of broadcasts.²¹

There are no sound recordings of Vatican Radio's broadcasts during the war but the available sources demonstrate that the speakers talked carefully and slowly in order to make the words more audible, above all when they feared the possibility of being jammed. In regard to the style, it appears that the texts read at the microphones were written without any sensationalism, using a register more close to a homily than to modern propaganda. Not to mention the fact that broadcasts often consisted in reading articles from the *Osservatore Romano* or noteworthy pastoral letters of well-known bishops. It seems that the way in which Vatican Radio produced transmissions is barely comparable to the one of the contemporary powers (e.g. Great Britain, Germany, Soviet Union, and United States), which employed various propaganda methods to persuade people. In effect, Vatican Radio did not take part in the 'war of the airwaves', despite being urged to communicate Catholic view as to current affairs. Considering the close connection between the Nazi ideology and the propaganda machine set up by the Third Reich or the link between the British Ministries and the BBC during the war, the structure distinguishing Vatican Radio is slightly different. As formerly mentioned, Pius XI was very much in favor of Vatican Radio, but it was immediately entrusted to the Jesuits. Broadcasts were subject to censorship, by the Fathers Soccorsi and Ledochowski, while the Secretariat of State was not informed in advance of the radio schedule. A document written presumably in 1936 claimed that Vatican Radio had an official character only in two cases: when papal documents were read, and when the speaker announced "Officially speaking...". Any other broadcast had a private nature.²² Therefore, it might be suggested that Vatican Radio was not created as the official radio of the Holy See, since the Pope and his Secretariat of State did not exercise a strict control on it. Nonetheless, they conceivably had some influence on its editorial leaning.

21 Letter of Ledochowski, 16 October 1939, in Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI).

22 S.RR.SS., AA.EE.SS., Stati Ecclesiastici, 409 P.O., fasc. 309, ff. 66-70.

Something altered in the first years of Pius XII's pontificate during the Second World War. Broadcasting became more regular with a stable schedule. Every speaker in charge to broadcast in the assigned language was responsible for his talk, and despite the General's instruction not to add anything which was not written and approved by the censors,²³ this order was sometimes ignored. The speakers' personal sensitivities and political opinions often came across. Sometimes they did not follow the prudent official neutral line adopted by the Pope, causing the governments of the nations involved to react. As a result, in June 1941, due to the complaints of the German Embassy to the Vatican, and Italy, that followed several anti-Nazi broadcasts of Vatican Radio, Pius XII ordered Cardinal Luigi Maglione, his Secretary of State, to designate someone to review Vatican Radio transmissions before broadcast.²⁴

Consequently, it may be observed that the attitude of the Holy See towards Vatican Radio was not as linear as might have been expected. Inexperience and diffidence might be some reasons why Pius XII took time before consciously exploiting all radio's resources. Yet, as the attention of foreign governments to Vatican Radio broadcasts gradually became evident, the Pope understood that he could use the radio not only as an instrument to disseminate Catholic teachings but also as diplomatic medium. Both the BBC Monitoring Service and the *German Sonderdienstseehaus* daily monitored Vatican Radio's broadcasts in principal languages (Italian, French, German, and English), and for important items the ones in Polish, Dutch, Ukrainian and Russian too. There is evidence of the BBC's re-use of the news transmitted from Rome and the publication of several talks and news stories in a number of Catholic newspapers and weeklies (e.g. *The Tablet*, *The Catholic Herald*, *The Catholic Times*).

If it is true that Nazi control had once convinced Pius XII to interrupt the broadcasts on the situation of the Church in the territories of the Third Reich, it is likely that Vatican Radio was occasionally employed to indirectly convey messages to defend the Holy See from the accusation of having been silent when it came to the struggles of the war. The case of Croatia is emblematic of this use of the radio.

When the Independent State of Croatia was proclaimed on 10 April 1941 it had a population of approximately 6.5 million; 30% were Orthodox Serbs (1.845.000 people) and 0.6% were Jews (39.000).²⁵ The fundamental principle of the Ustasha ideology was "the call for Catholic-Islamic Croat ethnic unity against the Balkan-Asiatic Serbs", a racial nationalism corroborated

23 Letter of Ledochowski, 16 October 1939, in ARSI.

24 Note of Giovanni Battista Montini, 15 June 1941, Ex Aud. SS.mi, ADSS, 4, 552, doc. 406.

25 Bartulin, *Honorary Aryans*, 62.

by anti-Semitism.²⁶ Only twenty days after the birth of Ante Pavelić's State two racial decrees were issued: the Law Decree on racial Affiliation and the Law Decree of Protection of the Aryan Blood and Honour of the Croatian People. If for Serbian Orthodox minority it was complicated to manage the question in term of racial identity, with regard to Jews and Roma the task was easier, since they just have to be inspired by the Nuremberg Laws. The first Law Decree stated that an individual was to be considered "aryan" if he/she could prove his/her "aryan" descent through the birth, baptismal and marriage certificates of his/her ancestors in the first and second generations.²⁷ Moreover, the first decree determined who was to be counted as a Jew by race, namely who had at least three Jewish grandparents.²⁸ The second racial law prevented marriages between 'aryans' and 'non-aryans'. The archbishop of Zagreb, Aloysius Stepinac, immediately intervened sending several letters to the Minister of Interior, Andrija Artukovic, in order to defend Jews converted to Catholicism affected by the racial laws, to ask for the suppression of the Jewish insignia that Jews were obliged to wear.²⁹ In the Croatian Episcopal Conference that had taken place from 17 to 20 November, the bishops decided to address a petition to the Poglavnik. The plea, which was sent by Stepinac to Pius XII together with a brief report of the Conference, said:

Let the personal and civil liberty of Jews, or the descendents of Jews, who after their conversion to the Catholic Church no longer consider themselves Jews but who take part in all Croatian activities, religious and patriotic, be protected; and let their property and possessions be restored to them.³⁰

Round-ups of Jews and deportations to Jasenovac concentration camp had begun soon, in May 1941, ordered directly by the Ustasha. Before thousands of Croatian Jews were deported to Auschwitz in August 1942, Stepinac tried to make the government desist from proceeding with the massacre of "innocent people", "citizens who individually can be accused of no wrong".³¹

26 For a summary of Ustasha ideologists see Bartulin, *Honorary Aryans*, 49-56.

27 Regarding the Muslims, they had to present a written statement of two credible witnesses who could testimony their 'aryan' descent. Bartulin, *Honorary Aryans*, 68-9.

28 For further details concerning 'half-Jews' and Roma people, see Bartulin, *Honorary Aryans*, 69.

29 See letters of 23 April, 22 and 30 May 1941, in Pattee, *The Case*.

30 For the text of the plea see Pattee, *The Case*, 305-6. The letter of Stepinac to Pius XII is published in ADSS, 8, 368-70, doc. 216.

31 Letter of Stepinac to Artukovic, 7 March 1942, in Pattee, *The Case*, 306.

Beyond the persecution of Croatian Jews, the Yugoslavian region was the theatre of mass displacements and massacres of Serbs and Roma people. The Serbs resident in Croatia were obliged to move to German-occupied Serbia; those who remained were forced to convert to Catholicism or interned in concentration camps, where many were murdered.³²

The Holy See had sent a Benedictine Abbot, Giuseppe Ramiro Marcone, to Croatia as an Apostolic Visitor in order to maintain relationships with the Ustasha's government.³³ The Secretary of State addressed him a reply to Stepinac's letter to Pius XII praising the Croatian bishops' care for the Jews, and above all for having claimed the right to provide for conversion to Catholicism, which had to be sincere and not enforced.³⁴ He renewed the importance of free and intimate "return of dissidents to the Catholic Church" against any external pressure in another letter to the archbishop of Belgrade a few months later.³⁵ In fact, the international press had talked about "forced conversions" occurring in Croatia, therefore Vatican Radio was charged with dissociating the Catholic Church from such an accusation. It broadcast in English:

Religious provocation... alleged provocation of the Orthodox people in Croatia, "My enquiries" said Monsignor Berghof, "have yielded the following results: It is true that the majority of the inhabitants of the village of Papovit in the Karlovac region have become Catholics, but it was a spontaneous act, without any such pressure as was alleged to have been exercised by the civil and ecclesiastical authorities. The (village people?) have been informed of the true situation".³⁶

As to the general religious situation, Vatican Radio was employed to respond to anti-Catholic propaganda:

Monsignor Berghof recalls the usual conflicts in the country between Catholics and Orthodox in which the Catholics were not always the wolves, nor the Orthodox always the lambs. Allegations as to harsh conduct on the part of the Catholic people must be received with the greatest caution.

32 See Longerich, *Holocaust*, 365-6; Tomasevich, *War and revolution*, 392.

33 On Marcone's mission in Croatia see Miccoli, *I dilemmi*, 67 ff.

34 Maglione to Marcone, 21 February 1942, ADSS, 8, 442-3, doc. 289.

35 Maglione to Ujčić, 1 May 1942, ADSS, 8, 523-4, doc. 363.

36 *Daily Digest of Foreign Broadcasts*, in BBC Written Archives, in English for Great Britain and Ireland, Vatican City, 12 June 1942, 21:15. The reception was poor, I maintained the original monitor's transcription.

Concerning the 'Jewish question', on 30 March 1943 Maglione asked Marcone to address to the government to avoid the deportation of the remaining baptized Jews in Croatia.³⁷ The request was solicited in a telegram from the Apostolic Delegate in Washington, Amleto Cicognani, who had sent a plea signed by several rabbis to ask the Pope publicly speak against further deportations of Jew.³⁸ Furthermore, three days later Maglione wrote again to Marcone to inform him that "Serbian-orthodox" propaganda was accusing the Catholics, in particular the Croatian episcopate, of not having protested against the mistreatments of the Serbian population inflicted by the Croatian government, and even of connivence.³⁹ The Secretary of State warned the Visitor that these accusations "could cause serious damage to the prestige of the Catholic Church". Therefore, he asked him to refer to the Archbishop of Zagreb, in order to highlight the baselessness of such claims, and invited him to collect and then communicate to the Secretariat of State "all those elements that are useful, should the circumstances require it, to properly enlighten the public opinion". Published documents do not specify who was responsible for the anti-Catholic propaganda: either the Yugoslav government-in-exile, the Cetniks (the pan-Serbian resistance movement) or Tito's Communist Partisans.

On 8 May 1943, Marcone sent to the Secretariat of State a memorandum on the attitude of the Catholic clergy towards the Orthodox Serbs, asserting that the episcopate complained about the "interference of the government on the conversion of the schismatics", reclaiming the jurisdiction on peoples' evangelization with respect for the "freedom of conscience".⁴⁰ The Archbishop of Zagreb, in his visit to Rome from 28 May to 4 June, brought with him the proofs of what the Croatian Church had done for the Serbian and Jewish minorities.⁴¹ The Secretariat of State prepared a list of the 34 documents presented by Stepinac.⁴²

Meanwhile, Vatican Radio had started to get involved in Croatian affairs. On 12 May a summary of Stepinac's intervention to protest against racial discrimination conducted by the government was broadcast in German:

In Croatia, early in March this year, all Jews, including those who had become Catholics but who, according to the Nurnberg Laws, are still

37 Telegram of Maglione to Marcone, 30 March 1943, ADSS, 9, 214, doc. 123.

38 Telegram of Cicognani to Maglione, 26-27 March 1943, ADSS, 9, 206-7, doc. 117.

39 Letter of Maglione to Marcone, 2 April 1943, ADSS, 9, 218-19, doc. 130.

40 Letter of Marcone to Maglione, 8 May 1943, ADSS, 9, 219-21, Annexe I.

41 ADSS, 9, 221-4, Annexe II. On Stepinac's cover letter, in which he highlights the positive attitude of the Croatian government towards the Catholic Church and his tendency to use anti-Jewish stereotypes to justify some anti-semitic measures, see the comments of Shelah, "The Catholic Church in Croatia", 335-6, and Miccoli, *I dilemmi*, 80.

42 31 May 1943, ADSS, 9, 224-9, doc. 130, Annexe III.

regarded as Jews, were requested to register with the police. As it was feared that they would be taken to concentration camps, the Archbishop of Zagreb lodged an energetic protest with Dr. Pavelitch as soon as the order was published. On the following Sunday the Archbishop defined his attitude to this order in a sermon. He said: "No worldly power, no political organization, has the right to persecute a man on account of the race to which he belongs. Christian bishops oppose this, and will fight against such persecutions". A few days later the orders were withdrawn by the State authorities.⁴³

The Archbishop's statement concerned the attempt to deport the Croatian Jews remained in the German occupied zone.⁴⁴ On 6 March 1943 Stepinac had turned to Pavelić to prevent the annulment of mixed marriages, to ask him "to protect the most elementary right, the right to life" of all the converted to Catholicism, both from Judaism and from Orthodoxy, and to not permit the deportation of innocent people any longer.⁴⁵ One week later he made a sermon in which he claimed that "every man, of whatever race or nation, [...] carries equally on himself the stamp of God the Creator and possesses inalienable rights which must not be taken from him nor arbitrarily limited by any human power".⁴⁶ The fact Jewish spouses and their children were neither arrested nor sent to concentration camps was achieved by Stepinac.⁴⁷

In July 1943 Vatican Radio in German returned on the question of racism presenting Stepinac's zeal as a model of the fight engaged by the Catholic Church against the violation of human rights.⁴⁸ The talk opened as follow:

At the present time it is more necessary than ever to point out the inviolability of human rights granted by God. In this we follow the words of the Supreme Shepherd of the Church and other priests of the Catholic world, and a special importance must be given to utterances of the bishops. Tonight we will hear the voice of a Bishop who has constantly

43 *Daily Digest of Foreign Broadcasts* in BBC Written Archives, Vatican City, in German for Germany, 12 May, 1943, 21:45. The same text was published in "News, Notes and Texts, Yugoslavia. An Archbishop and the Jews", *The Tablet*, 22 May, 1943, 247.

44 See Hilberg, *La distruzione*, 1, 735.

45 Letter of Stepinac to Pavelić, 6 March 1943, in Pattee, *The Case*, 310-12.

46 The Sermon of Stepinac, 14 March 1943, in Pattee, *The Case*, 271-6 (273).

47 Shelah, "The Catholic Church in Croatia", 334. On the limits of Stepinac's protest, who ascribed the responsibility for the racial legislation to "irresponsible persons" or to "irresponsible and unwelcome elements", see the remarks of Miccoli, *I dilemmi*, 413 fn.

48 For a further knowledge of the meaning of human rights' concept in the Catholic context see Menozzi, *Chiesa*.

reminded the population of Croatia of the inviolability of man's rights. The Bishops of Croatia have made their position clear on this question, both in a body and individually. One of the best known fighters for the rights of man and moral freedom is the Archbishop of Zagreb [...]. In many sermons he has branded the violation of morals and of the doctrines of the church. In innumerable written memoranda and verbal interventions he fought the cause of all those who are unjustly persecuted, be they Jews, Serbians, Gypsies or Catholic Croats. He was, and it is, the only refuge for these people.⁴⁹

The broadcast continued with an excerpt from Stepinac's sermon for the Feast of Christ the King delivered the previous year, brought to Rome and presented to the Pope on 30 May by the Archbishop, within the other documents proving what the Croatian Catholic Church had done for Jews and Serbs:

What are the races and the peoples of the earth before God? This is a question we must all ask, since the theory of race has become the subject for discussion by all peoples. The first thing we assert is that all peoples are as nothing before God. All peoples are nothing without Him. [...] The second thing we assert is that all races and peoples come from God. The races, in fact, exist, and their birth certificate is to be found in Genesis. [...] The members of this race may have a higher or a lower culture, they may be white or black, parted by oceans, they may live at the North Pole or at the South Pole, the essential thing is that this is the race which comes from God and which is to serve God according to the norms and natural law of God, Jesus Christ, the Lord of all nations. The third thing we assert is that every people and every race which has been formed on earth today has the right to a life and to treatment worthy of man. All of them without distinction, be they members of the gipsy race or of any other, be they negroes or civilised Europeans, be they Jews or Aryans, all have an equal right to say: "Our Father which art in Heaven". If God has granted this right to all human beings, what worldly power could deny it? Therefore the Catholic Church has always, and will always condemn every injustice and compulsion perpetrated in the name of social, racial and national theories. No one is allowed to exterminate the educated classes of this earth because that might be good for the working classes. Neither can

⁴⁹ *Daily Digest of Foreign Broadcasts*, in BBC Written Archives, Vatican City, in German for Germany, 6 July 1943, 21:45. Again *The Tablet* gave a detailed account of the broadcast: see "News, Notes and Texts, Yugoslavia. The Archbishop of Zagreb and the Jews", *The Tablet*, 17 July 1943, 31. A few sentences in German of the original broadcast are published in ADSS, 9, 337-8, doc. 226, n. 4.

this be done with the Jews and the gipsies merely because they are regarded as inferior races.⁵⁰

The speaker of Vatican Radio explained that Stepinac had preached this sermon in October '42, when an Ustasha State Decree had ordered the registration of all Jews, obliged to wear a distinguishing mark, the confiscation of their properties and finally their internment. Actually, as mentioned above, the decree dated back to April 1941, whereas between July and October 1942, the first round of deportation to Auschwitz had already occurred. In August 1941 Maglione, knowing that deportations had already begun, had instead written to Marcone:

If His Eminence can find the right occasion, should recommend in a careful way, which has not to be interpreted as an official plea, to use moderation towards the Croatian Jews. His Eminence should act in such a way that... the impression of a loyal cooperation with civil authorities will be preserved.⁵¹

The history of events do not coincide with the one indicated by Vatican Radio, which not only waited two years before denouncing Croatian racial laws, but also altered the truthfulness of news without talking about deportations.

To our knowledge, the quoted broadcasts of 1943 were the only ones denouncing racial discrimination in Croatia since it had become national law. Presumably, there is a connection among the rumors against the Catholic Church reported by Maglione to Marcone, the documents brought to Rome by Stepinac, and the broadcasts of Vatican Radio. The latter could have been ordered to broadcast and thus to let people know what the Croatian episcopate had done to defend the persecuted minorities under the Ustasha regime, in order to demonstrate the groundlessness of anti-Catholic propaganda. If in summer 1941 Pius XII did not want to compromise the relationship with Pavelić's regime, although he was aware of the Ustasha's crimes, and the year after he left Stepinac to handle it, in 1943 he probably decided it was not opportune to rise his voice from Rome, even mediated by the radio, which in turn referred to the Croatian bishop's actions.

The unresolved question is the reason why they chose to transmit these texts in German. Several hypotheses could be proposed. First, if they were directed to the Balkans it must be considered that Vatican Radio did not broadcast in Serbo-Croatian, and maybe the most comprehensible lan-

50 Sermon delivered in Zagreb, 25 October 1942. To read the entire sermon see Pattee, *The Case*, 276-81, who wrongly dated it 1943.

51 Cf. Phayer, *Il papa*, 48-57.

guage in those territories was German, given the enduring domination of the Hapsburg Empire. As an alternative, if the target of the broadcasts were the propaganda of the Serbian resistance, in which the British government could have been involved, German was still the best language to be employed for two reasons. On the one hand, replying in English would have been a too direct manner and it could have been read as an *excusatio non petita*. On the other hand, the Vatican was perfectly aware that its radio was monitored by the Britons and that they could easily grasp broadcasts in German. Infact, the BBC as well as Radio New York, retransmitted the Vatican Radio's broadcast of 6 July in German, and in Serbo-Croat on 7 and 8 July.⁵² Thus, showing Archbishop Stepinac's action in German defying Nazi jamming or complaints reinforced the counterpropaganda of the Catholic Church in the eyes of world public opinion.

Yet, the choice of German had another implication that led to further consideration of the way Vatican Radio could be useful. After Cicognani's telegram,⁵³ asking what the Holy See could do with regard to the deportation of Jews, Cardinal Maglione wrote a note in which he listed the Nuncios involved in obtaining information.⁵⁴ In addition, he asked himself if it were advantageous to make "explicit mention" of the Holy See's concern in the telegram replying to Cicognani. He decided that:

An explicit mention seems inappropriate, not only because you will never know what can happen at any moment..., but also to prevent that Germany, having learnt about the declarations of the Holy See, worsens anti-Jewish measures in its occupied territories and hardens its line with the governments of the Axis powers.

Three months later Vatican Radio used German to broadcast the dedication of the Catholic Church towards the Jews. Since the Holy See was not directly involved and Vatican Radio was said not to be its official agency - thence formally the Secretariat of State could not have been accused by the Nazis - broadcasts in German could have been a way to break the Holy See's silence. This tactic had already been tested in 1940-41: whenever a member of the staff of the Embassy of Germany to the Vatican or a delegate of another diplomatic representation complained about Vatican Radio's broadcasts, the Secretariat of State replied that the Curia was not informed of their content since it was not the official radio of the Holy See.⁵⁵

52 See Graham, "La riabilitazione", 552; Gitman, "Archbishop", 508.

53 See *supra*: Telegram of Cicognani to Maglione, 26-27 March 1943, ADSS, 9, 206-7, doc. 117.

54 Note of Maglione, 1 April 1943, ADSS, 9, 216-17, doc. 127.

55 See documents contained in ADSS, 4, *passim*.

During the Second World War Vatican Radio was often employed as means either of propaganda or of diplomacy. According to available sources, the Holy See became more and more aware of the various ways in which the radio could help the Pontiff to extricate himself and the Catholic Church from the difficulties of the war. It is likely that there was no pre-determined plan for how to use the radio. Pius XII, his Secretary of State and all the rest of his entourage gradually grew to understand and become familiar with Vatican Radio. They learnt this little by little, trying to face every new situation created by the conflict.

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